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Factors Influencing the Perceived Effectiveness of the Transition Assistance Program among Exiting Military Servicemembers at Military Installations in Louisiana

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FACTORS INFLUENCING THE PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS OF THE TRANSITION
ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AMONG EXITING MILITARY SERVICEMEMBERS AT
MILITARY INSTALLATIONS IN LOUISIANA

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The School of Human Resource Education and
Workforce Development

by

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The essence and purpose of my life is given to one universal spirit for whom I give all the glory. With this understanding, I was given one spirit through two souls: my grandmother and mother. Some 50 years ago, half of this precious spirit named Mary Frances Morgan began her academic study at a small historically black college in Jacksonville, Florida. Mary Frances' goal was to leave an imprint on her community by teaching elementary education. As a student leader, she led the charge to make a difference by engaging in the issues of the day—her dream was intact and her desire to make a difference was on its way to being realized. As Mary Frances approached her halfway mark in completing her graduate coursework, the next step was to leave Jacksonville and complete her teaching certification at Florida State University in Tallahassee, Florida. There she would receive her master's degree and teaching credentials and transition to become an elementary school instructor—Mary Frances never made it. Fifty years later, her son repeats the same act, completing the graduate coursework for his master's degree but not graduating. It had become a cycle of broken transitions and dreams unfulfilled.

In December 2008, I was standing in the showroom window in my downtown Jacksonville, Florida office. Standing there, I had a revelation about my life—a major transition awaits. Thirty days later, the United States was in the early stages of the biggest recession since the Great Depression. At that moment, I knew there was a higher calling for the purpose on my life—I just had to find it.

Because I did not plan to continue my education, I was forced to retool. For that reason, I dedicated myself to returning to school to finish my first master's degree. I began the transition in the fall of 1992. The journey to complete my master's degree was started 18 years earlier, but I did not complete the exit papers and, therefore, did not finish my degree. This doctoral journey

began by looking into my mother's unwavering hazel brown eyes, providing me with the necessary strength to break the cycle. The educational journey to make a difference begins with me—by leading myself out of the depths of life to viable economic and leadership possibilities.

Today, I dreamed of Mary Frances receiving what is rightly her graduation robe and wearing the terminal garment of universal love, analytical thought and sacrifice—because she is the most intellectual spirit in our family. Obstinate in my approach, the doctoral journey is a small token of my appreciation—given the name Timothy (a biblical preacher with immense faith that Paul counseled), which has theological significance. Every day I attempt to live up to the character of my name. Understandably so, my life is better because of my mother's (Mary Frances) personal sacrifices 50 years ago, and my life's transition is lighter as a result. I have the finest living heart and spirit given to a human—it's a surreptitious behavior I have held my whole life, and I am grateful for these 50 years of life.

On that note, a few noteworthy friends are worth mentioning: Raymond Doe, my academic confidant and friend. I am proud to have shared this journey and transition with you. Keep the sunshine upon your face and the wind at your back. I am looking forward to your return home to make a difference in your community and the world. I will be watching! Secondly, the depth of my imagination is the depth of my faith. Dr. Earl Johnson opened my spirit to appreciate the intellectual ideals that promoted the popular wisdom and deep-thinking messages of those before us. I am humbly grateful for our relationship, and you are the focus of my academic lenses and the oracular deliberator of European ideals—thanks for sharing. Thirdly, the first time I visited Louisiana, I met Dr. Michael F. Burnett and he supported my evolution on many fronts. He has played an integral part while serving as my academic father and is the reason I started this doctoral journey. Dr. Burnett championed me and I paid the price and it was

worth it! At every academic turn, Dr. Burnett stayed with me. When I believed I could not continue because of the events of the day—you were born to educate students from all demographics and your dream has been fulfilled by the many you have touched. I am forever grateful for your dedication to the university's graduate students and the patience you share with each. LSU has been immensely blessed because of your commitment to us all—Cheers!

Lastly, the heart of my doctoral journey rests with a promise and hope that I would return back to entrepreneurship prosperity. Dr. William B. Richardson afforded me hope, when hope was seemingly lost, opportunity when everyone said no, and allowed me the chance when the doors were closing. He is my academic godfather and the reason the glass is always half full. The greatest compliment is that when he refers to me, I am a *friend*. Gentlemen, thank you for fulfilling my transition.

I end this note with the beginning in mind. The magnificent Christian philosopher St. Augustine Augustus would so eloquently say, “I lived and exercise my eternal and everlasting faith every day.”

Also, I would like to mention Eddie Gibbons, Raymond Doe, Steven Perret, Carey Hamburg, Anne Sang, Ronnetta Smith, and Dr. Charles Turner, my friends and academic confidants. I am inspired by my immediate and distant family: Grandmother Mattie, Aunt Helen, Florine, Adrienne, Terrance, Lajuene, Lauren and Aseanti, Frankie, Kecia, and Cathy D. Ross—the transition has been fulfilled.

May the grace and peace be with you always!

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

Army Career Alumni Program (ACAP)

Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC)

Budget Control Act of 2011 (BCA)

Bureau Labor Statistics (BLS)

Career Resource Management Center (CRMC)

Cognitive Information Processing (CIP)

Department of Defense (DoD)

Department of Labor (DOL)

Department of Transportation (DOT)

Department of Veteran Affairs (DVA)

Disability Evaluation System (DES)

Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP)

Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP)

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

End of Active Service (EAS)

End of Current Contract (ECC)

Exiting Military Servicemembers (EMSs)

Expiration of Service (ETS)

Fiscal Year (FY)

Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC)

Government Accountability Office (GAO)

Government Accountability Office Transition Assistance Program (GAO/TAP)

Homeland Security Administration (HAS)

Individual Development Plan (IDP)

Individual Transition Plan (ITP)

Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS)

Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER)

Military Command Office (MCO)

Military Family Life Consultant (MFLC)

National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA)

Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base (NAS JRB)

Office of Personnel Management (OPM)

Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF)

Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF)

Public Law (P.L.)

Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (G.I. Bill)

Transition Assistance Manager (TAM)

Transition Assistance Program (TAP)

Transition Assistance Program Memorandums of Understandings (TAPMOUs)

Veterans and Employment & Training Service (VETS)

VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 (VOW)

Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program (VR&EP)

ABSTRACT

As proven in the aftermath of World War II, whenever the U.S. government shifts its efforts from wartime mobilization to peacetime demobilization, the Department of Defense (DoD) faces the complex task of transitioning military personnel to civilian life. In March of 2015, the researcher began an exploratory evaluation of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) employment workshops. The primary purpose of this study was to determine the influence of selected personal and professional demographic characteristics on the perceptions of the effectiveness of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) in accomplishing its stated purposes among exiting military servicemembers at military installations in Louisiana. The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) identified “Education level,” “Job Search Skills/Counseling” and “Military Occupational Specialty” (MOS) in the literature as indicators of exiting military servicemembers (EMS) toward the TAP. A total of 67 EMS participated in the study and a sample of 53 exiting military servicemembers provided useable responses from a researcher-designed survey and reported the perceptions of the effectiveness of the TAP. Based on this study, 86.8% of EMS reported having at least a four-year degree. Of the 53 study participants who provided useable data for the survey, the majority reported “Yes” to whether or not “Job Search Skills/Counseling” was covered in the TAP. Of the 53 respondents, 38 (71.7%) reported “Yes.” No relationship was found between whether or not “MOS” was transferable to the civilian labor force” and the perceived effectiveness of TAP. Study participants indicated all survey items had a mean rating of “Agree.” Four of the 11 correlations were found to be statistically significant. The highest correlation was EMS’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the TAP and “Job Search Skills/Counseling,” which asked study participants “Was your Job Search Skills/Counseling covered in the TAP?” The remaining three correlations were “Income level,”

“Active Duty Status” and “Length of Service.” Based on these findings, the researcher found the systems are currently in place to explore more personal and professional demographic characteristics and that more accountability is needed among the federal agencies to provide more quantifiable research on EMS’ perceptions toward the effectiveness of the TAP.

Keywords: Transition Assistance Program, perceptions, exiting military servicemembers, conflict, war, military drawdowns and demobilizations.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“Our nation is at a moment of transition.”
(Excerpt from President Barack Obama
Speech: Sustaining U. S. Global Leadership:
Priorities for the 21st Century. January 3,
2012). (Obama, 2012, p. 1)

Rationale

The U.S. military has long played a significant role in the American landscape. In part, servicemembers have protected the many freedoms that Americans enjoy and people around the world envy. However, this protection comes with a tremendous cost; “America has paid for some of our prior decisions with the lives and welfare of our troops” (Lynn, 2011a, p. 4). The sacrifice of U.S. military servicemembers cannot be measured by freedoms alone, but is realized in the way that Americans live their lives every day. The founding fathers of this country believed in fighting for the fundamental freedoms of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. These fundamentals were the focus from the beginning, and the human sacrifice has always been there. Last year, the American Continental Army celebrated its 240th year of existence and, in June 2015, America commemorated the 100th anniversary of World War I. One could point to many reasons that America has fought for its freedom, but the commitment to these fundamental principles continue to be lived out in shaping the American landscape, and the American dream is still one of the most coveted goals on the planet (Rifkin, 2005).

Fundamental Purpose of the U.S. Military and Its National Security Strategy

One of the basic purposes of the U.S. military has been to protect the U.S. borders. Whether to protect American shores, support business interests overseas, or prevent terrorist attacks, the U.S. military has paid a tremendous price for the right of Americans to continue to exercise their freedoms. A unique perspective was provided by one of the U.S. presidents at the turn of the 20th century, President Woodrow Wilson, who stated in 1917, “we shall fight for the

things which we have always carried nearest our hearts—democracy” (Wilson, 1917, p. 16). This philosophy has resonated for over two centuries and has provided the foundation of the nation’s principles, values, and military.

According to Burkett, “Throughout the 20th century, Americans struggled to define the fundamental purpose of its U.S. foreign policy” (Burkett, 2013, p. 1). In this century, defining the role of the military has presented its own challenges, including whether the U.S. should intervene in international affairs to promote the welfare of others and to secure the lives and liberty of American citizens (Burkett, 2013). Describing that role has been very challenging for the American government. For instance, if the American government has a commitment to freedom they must acknowledge American exiting military servicemembers for their service. The immediate challenge for the Department of Defense is to create a national strategy to guard against terrorists’ threats that has impacted the independence Americans have come to appreciate. Additionally, the leaders of the American military must emerge with a strong foreign policy, keeping in mind the importance of strong diplomacy (Panetta, 2012).

A Strong Military and National Security

Over the last 50 years, the U.S. military has played an important role in national security through its strong presence in the protection of its national boundaries and interests abroad (Bartholomees, 2010). The American president has been a central figure in crafting the national security strategy of working with the National Security Agency (NSA) “to respect the integration of domestic, foreign and military policies” (Santacroce, 2013, p. 4). This strategy is a huge undertaking and the President, along with the Department of Defense (DoD) and other federal agencies, must address the military policies that may be needed to ensure national security. For example, one of the issues that currently faces the military is how to approach force reductions,

military drawdowns, and demobilizations. Additionally, a decision regarding how to eliminate installations and systems after conflicts must be made (Feickert, 2014).

As part of crafting the U.S. military strategy for national security, the federal government is faced with the immediate challenge of how to balance protecting America while cutting costs—which has become part of the national security focus. Budgets cuts that occur while maintaining defense readiness during a drawdown influence the strategic process set forth by the DoD. Former Secretary of Defense Gates and Chairmen Mullen mentioned in a drawdown report that fiscal pressures impacted their ability to maintain defense readiness (Feickert, 2014). Also, former Defense Secretary Lynn stated in his March 17, 2011 speech,

No great power can project military force in a sustained manner without the underpinnings of a sound economy . . . and the economy of our country has been the wellspring of our military might. (Lynn, 2011a, p. 4)

Former Secretary of Defense Gates argued, “The U.S. military should be able to fight two wars at the same time” (Gates, 2011, p. 1). According to Cordesman, Burke, and Bosseman, (2012), over the years, the “The national security spending is now averaging between. 4% and 5% of the GDP— in spite of the fact the U.S. has been fighting two wars in Iraq and Afghanistan” (Cordesman, Burke, & Bosseman, 2012, p. 3). National security remains one of the leading factors influencing decisions regarding defense readiness within the armed forces.

Brief History of Military Drawdowns

The U.S. has a long history as it relates to military drawdowns. Dating back to the American Revolution, the armed forces “have restructured, repositioned and reduced after each major conflict” (Rostker, 2013, p. 5). The basic objectives behind military drawdowns and demobilizations are to close bases and to cut taxpayer costs associated with the federal budget. (Russell & Pendleton, n.d.). The Department of Defense (2012): Defense Strategic Guidance Report stated that managing the practice of demobilization consists of downsizing the force and

shrinking the budget and infrastructure, while maintaining defense readiness (Defense, 2012). A 2014 Congressional Research Service report by Feickert entitled *Army Drawdown and Restructuring: Background and Issues for Congress*, described military drawdowns as a process, headed by the DoD, to downsize its armed forces through the voluntary or involuntary departure of soldiers from the military while maintaining a reasonable post-war strength. Additionally, the report identified some of the aspects of military restructuring, including “downsizing organizations, modifying or eliminating weapon systems programs, and force reductions” (Feickert, 2014, p. 1). This process also includes maintaining a balance of capable full-time active duty soldiers and part-time reserves to meet the welfare and protection needs of the nation.

Limited information was available that provides a historical timeline of military drawdowns and demobilizations of the U.S. armed forces. However, the researcher found one congressional research report outlining the U.S. Army’s attempt to drawdown and restructure.

According to Feickert’s (2014) report, after World War II, President Truman’s administration dealt with a shrinking national budget, enduring national security issues, and a new defense strategy while adhering to pressures from the public to bring the troops home. Congress also pressured President Truman to move swiftly to end World War II, causing greater instability in the federal government’s capacity to appropriately drawdown and demobilize the army. The pressures that Truman experienced represent important priorities that still exist today in military drawdowns and demobilizations.

Military downsizing and demobilizations are serious tasks undertaken by the U.S. Department of Defense. “These drawdowns have been nearly universal since the conclusion of the American Revolution in 1783” (Charles, 2015). “Since 1945, the United States has been involved in five major conflicts requiring massive deployment of troops and materiel—Korea,

Vietnam, the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan and Iraq” (McNeely, 2015, p.1). According to the GAO-14-144 report by Sherrill, the Department of Defense has exercised a concerted effort with other federal agency partners to improve the oversight of military transition to the civilian labor force (Sherrill, 2014b). As a result, DoD’s role of managing military drawdowns and demobilizations have presented unique priorities.

Priorities for Drawdowns & Demobilizations

Military drawdowns and demobilizations are high priority processes that challenge the DoD as it continues to learn lessons from mistakes made while managing drawdowns (Rostker, 2013). The DoD’s primary responsibility is to serve and protect while maintaining a competitive armed force for defense readiness. Many priorities must be considered when the federal government announces a drawdown. One priority is the development of a new defense strategy with “Congress determining the appropriate size of the active force and the balance between active and reserve components” (Feickert, 2014, p. 2). Another priority is defense readiness, which is the primary aim of the DoD’s new national strategy when demobilization occurs after a conflict. The U.S. military must maintain an adequate force to meet its national strategy goals. Arguably, this concern is primary because the DoD must sustain a competitive armed force while rebuilding the military.

The DoD has also identified budget reduction as one of the most important priorities that impacts military drawdowns, because it influences the level of defense readiness necessary to protect the nation and to rebuild the armed forces. For example, Solis stated, “the drawdown from Iraq included over 128,000 servicemembers and another 100,000 contracted personnel and over 290 military installation closures” (Solis, 2009, p. 29). The two unique priorities to create a new national strategy and to manage budget cuts are critical to the DoD’s goal of maintaining defense readiness—its sole purpose. First, “a reduction in force better known as a ‘RIF’ is used

to downsize the military” (Feickert, 2014, p. 27). The DoD views this process as a mechanism for preparing exiting military servicemembers to either enter the workforce and/or return home to attend school. Second, the reduction in force may be exercised through both voluntary reduction and involuntary methods for exiting military servicemembers. As explained by Gebicke, “Among the voluntary actions are early release options prior to their normal end of enlistment or use of financial separation incentives to induce persons to leave” (Gebicke, 1993, p. 6). The reduction in force resulting from military downsizing and demobilizations cuts costs, saving taxpayers money, as well as impacts the national security of the nation. A strong U.S. economy impacts the success of military drawdowns and demobilizations because if the economy is strong, it will allow the federal government to spend more on the necessary demobilization processes and use additional funding on transition programs. Furthermore, it will allow the federal government more spending flexibility as it sets forth a new national strategy for the armed forces. Typically, this is not the case for the federal government—the past four drawdowns have been impacted by a weak economy.

Managing Military Drawdown Problems

Now more than ever, the defense strategic management and planning of resources is more apparent to meet the demands of all military servicemembers’ career readiness and transition. (Lepore, 2013, p. 1)

Since 9/11, over two million soldiers have served in the military and participated in conflicts. The transition for these soldiers has not been a seamless process. The immediate impact for exiting military servicemembers is felt in the loss of health and retirement benefits. Therefore, the government must have a functional strategy to assist exiting military servicemembers with their re-integration into the civilian world. According to the U.S. DoD Fiscal Year 2014 Budget Request, the aim of the federal budget is to support the goal of a “ready force,” to become better stewards of taxpayers’ dollars, and take better care of veterans and their

families (Defense, 2013b). “Over the last quarter century, budget issues have hindered defense spending and ultimately impacted spending on transition programs” (Defense, 2014, p. 3). The DoD’s “expenditures comprise the fourth largest category of budgetary expenditure in the United States” (Bilmes, 2013, p. 1). Furthermore, since 2012, the U.S. federal government has proposed over half a trillion dollars in cuts, impacting the military’s budget and its capacity for supporting transition programs, veterans’ family programs, quality child care, education, and medical benefits (Budget, 2012). With over two million soldiers having served, this population is faced with the complex task of transitioning to the civilian labor force. The role of the DoD is not clear and other federal agencies must assist the Department of Defense in developing a comprehensive strategy to support exiting military servicemembers’ transition (Feickert, 2014).

Exiting Military Servicemembers’ Transition

According to Anderson, Goodman, and Schlossberg’s book, *Counseling Adults in Transition*, Fourth Edition, the authors provide the following perspective for transitioning:

To summarize impact: Assessment of a transition’s impact on relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles is probably the most important consideration in understanding an individual’s reactions. . . . To understand the meaning a transition has for a particular individual, we need to examine the type of transition (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2014, p. 47).

Traditionally, servicemembers join the military right after high school or college. This enlistment is probably their first major transition and could comprise the first strategic planning a soldier will encounter. Early mobilization represents a formative process because it has consequences delaying the transition to adulthood by preceding the most definitive events such as marriage, parenthood, and completion of higher education (Hogan, 1981). The completion of a servicemember’s tour of duty or fulfillment of his or her military commitment usually marks the beginning of a second professional career. Often, military servicemembers have the option to

retire from the armed forces and transition onto a new career path. According to a Transition Assistance Program brochure,

No later than the end of 2014, all Service members will be required to incorporate civilian career development throughout the span of their military careers ensuring Service members are ‘career ready’ (Defense.gov, n.d., p. 2).

The Goal of the Transition Assistance Program

The Transition Assistance Program (TAP) was created in 1990 to assist veterans with career readiness (TAOnline, 1996). The program was created by the DoD as the marquee program to assist exiting military servicemembers in their transition. According to The Federal Register: Transition Assistance Program (TAP) for Military Personnel reported, “The goal of DoD’s Transition Assistance Program is to prepare all eligible members of the armed forces for transition to civilian life, including preparing them to meet Career Readiness Standards (CRS)” (Siegel, 2015, p. 1). According to the DoD description of TAP, “The mandatory Pre-Separation Counseling portion of the TAP process represents the most holistic, personal, and extended component of TAP” (Military.com, 2016, p. 1). One of the aims of TAP “is to help exiting military servicemembers and their spouses make the initial transition from military service to the civilian workplace with less difficulty and at less overall cost to the government” (Labor, 2014, p. 1). Many exiting military servicemembers have struggled with their transition to the civilian labor force, as the DoD and other federal agencies have struggled to assist veterans (Phillips & Bullocks, 2007). The perception of a soldier’s transition assistance is important in understanding the offerings and how those outcomes may be realized. A critical analysis of veterans’ perceptions is one of the first steps in understanding transition assistance. This study will examine the factors influencing the perceived effectiveness of the Transition Assistance Program among exiting military servicemembers at military installations in Louisiana.

Purpose Statement

The primary purpose of this study was to determine the influence of selected personal and professional demographic characteristics on the perceptions of the effectiveness of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) in accomplishing its stated purposes among exiting military servicemembers at military installations in Louisiana.

Objectives

1. The first objective of this study was to describe the exiting military servicemembers at military installations in Louisiana who participated in TAP on the following selected personal and professional demographic characteristics:
 - (a) Highest level of education completed;
 - (b) Whether or not exiting military servicemembers' military occupational specialty training was transferrable to the civilian labor force;
 - (c) Whether or not exiting military servicemembers received job search skills/counseling covered in the TAP;
 - (d) Age;
 - (e) Income level;
 - (f) Length of service in the military;
 - (g) Pay Grade;
 - (h) Gender;
 - (i) Race/Ethnicity; and
 - (j) Active Duty Status.
2. Objective two was to determine the perceptions of exiting military servicemembers at military installations in Louisiana regarding the perceived effectiveness of the TAP in accomplishing its stated purposes as measured by a researcher-designed opinionnaire.

3. Objective three was to determine if a relationship exists between the perceptions of exiting military servicemembers in Louisiana regarding the perceived effectiveness of the TAP in accomplishing its stated purposes and the following selected personal and professional demographic characteristics:

- (a) Highest level of education completed;
- (b) Whether or not exiting military servicemembers' military occupational specialty training was transferrable to the civilian labor force;
- (c) Whether or not exiting military servicemembers received job search skills/counseling covered in the TAP;
- (d) Age;
- (e) Income level;
- (f) Length of service in the military;
- (g) Pay Grade;
- (h) Gender;
- (i) Race/Ethnicity; and
- (j) Active Duty Status.

4. Objective four was to determine if a model exists that explains a significant portion of the variance in the perceptions of exiting military servicemembers at installations in accomplishing its stated purposes from the following selected personal and professional demographic characteristics:

- (a) Highest level of education completed;
- (b) Whether or not exiting military servicemembers' military occupational specialty training was transferrable to the civilian labor force;

- (c) Whether or not exiting military servicemembers received job search skills/counseling covered in the TAP;
- (d) Age;
- (e) Income level;
- (f) Length of service in the military;
- (g) Pay Grade;
- (h) Gender;
- (i) Race/Ethnicity; and
- (j) Active Duty Status.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

The U.S. Wars and the Impact on Military Drawdowns and Demobilizations

Over the course of American history, there is only one government entity that has the ability to declare the beginning of war and that is the U.S. Congress. The U.S. military servicemembers have served in over 35 wars, conflicts, or military actions since 1898. However, the U.S. has not declared war since 1942. The definition of “war” is very vague in the study of the U.S. armed forces, a lack of clarity that makes it very difficult to describe the U.S. military’s engagements around the world. For example, in a recent interview, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry was very careful in his description of military action, stating, “We’re engaged in major counterterrorism operations” (McGrath, 2014, p. 1). Linda Bilmes at Harvard University and Michael Intrilligator at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) have offered a definition of “war” that includes “conflicts where the US is launching extensive military incursions, including drone attacks, but that are not officially ‘declared’” (Bilmes, 2013, p. 1).

The act of war can impact servicemembers’ transitions, as it can determine when they become eligible for benefits. One analyst at the Defense Budget and Military Manpower office has defined a “period of war” as the span between the beginning and ending time of a war or conflict, an interval of time that serves as a qualifier for exiting servicemembers’ benefits (Torreon, 2015). According to the Congressional Research Service Report: U.S. Periods of War, the dates for exiting military servicemembers to start their benefits—“. . . are important for qualification for certain veterans’ pension or disability benefits” (Torreon, 2008, p. 1).

The U.S. military “‘periods of war’ since 1817 included the following: Indian Wars, Spanish-American War, Mexican Border Period, WWI, WWII, Korean Conflict, Vietnam Era, Tonkin Gulf Resolution, Conflicts in Lebanon and Grenada, and Persian Gulf War” (Torreon,

2015, p. 5). In addition, the early years of the 21st century found the U.S. at war in Afghanistan and Iraq in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on 9/11 (Yonkman & Bridgeland, 2009). These military actions have played a decisive role in shaping order and peace around the world. “With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the United States found itself the world’s sole superpower” (Goure, 2013, p.1). In order to sustain that reputation, the U.S. military must maintain a capable force at all times.

The Structure & Management Team Leading the Military Drawdown & Demobilization

After a war or conflict, the DoD manages the military drawdown and demobilization. Understanding the structure of the military is key to understanding how military decisions are made and how drawdowns are managed. The U.S. armed forces consist of the Army, Navy, Marines, and Air Force; the Coast Guard falls under the Department of Homeland Security (unless otherwise stated by the President). The National Guard (the oldest military branch, established in 1636) serves a dual mission, bearing state and federal responsibilities for protecting life and property, and, when not mobilized, reports to the governor of its respective state (National Guard Overview, n.d.). The President and the Secretary of Defense receive advice and support on military affairs from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS). The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) consists of the head of each of the armed forces. In addition to advising the President on military affairs, including defense readiness, the seven-member JCS oversees the armed forces. The President also is advised by the National Security Council (NSC), which is headed by a National Security Advisor (NSA) who participates in crafting the national security strategy. In conjunction, these entities form the structure of the military and orchestrate military downsizing and demobilization strategies.

Leaders at the Department of Defense (DoD), the White House, and the National Security Agency must craft downsizing and demobilization strategies after each conflict. The strategies begin with the Secretary of Defense, who heads the DoD and serves as the military adviser to the President of the United States, the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. Included in each strategy are new objectives for rebuilding the military to maintain defense readiness.

The Economics of Defense Readiness

During difficult financial times, the strength of the economy ultimately impacts military downsizings and demobilizations. Because “defense readiness” is a critical aspect of the DoD’s core mission, the armed forces must re-tool to protect American interests. The 2011 National Military Strategy report defines readiness as “the ability to provide and integrate capabilities required by Combatant Commanders to execute their assigned missions” (Harrison, 2014, p. 38). Similarly, the FY 2017 Budget Summary Request report states,

The FY 2017 budget request is designed to protect capabilities that are most closely aligned with the defense strategy’s objectives to protect the homeland, build security globally, and project power and win decisively. The budget also maintains a ready force, continues to take care of service members and their families. (Defense, 2016c, p. 1)

In 2016, the “ready force” cost taxpayers \$580 billion dollars (Defense, 2016a). The DoD’s Fiscal Year 2017 President’s Budget Proposal states that the U.S. spends more money than any other country in the world on its military and over \$218 billion dollars on defense-related programs (e.g., the veteran affairs) to assist soldiers (Defense, 2016b). “The Fiscal Year 2012 Defense Budget Report, for example, included \$8.3 billion to provide education support, high-quality child care and dependent assistance programs” (Budget, 2012).

A “ready force” depends on the available resources in the federal budget and ultimately the ability for DoD leaders to maintain defense readiness. However, when it comes to financial

austerity, the federal government has shown a reluctance to allocate additional personnel for transition assistance programs to immediately influence successful “career readiness.”

Moreover, to sustain a “ready force” takes volunteers to fight. According to the DoD Fiscal Year 2017 President’s Budget Proposal, the active duty end strength will consist of 1.3 million active duty soldiers and over 800,000 reserves to occupy the new military (Defense, 2016b).

The Manpower Determination Glossary defines end strength as the “number of active-duty military and civilian personnel in the military forces on the last day of the accounting period” (Glossary, 2003. p. 6).

As military drawdowns and demobilizations have occurred after the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts, the DoD’s focus has broadened to include transition assistance for exiting military servicemembers’ spouses and families. A drawdown calls for strategic transition management, beginning with a strong economy that can provide financial support. The need to strategically manage the priorities and activities of the budget becomes paramount during a military drawdown. Currently, “the DoD is experiencing declining budgets that have already led to significant ongoing and planned reductions in military modernization, force structure, personnel costs and overhead expenditures” (Defense, 2013a, p. 1). Understanding the various components and their significance helps the Secretary of Defense and the Department of Defense manage spending and soldiers’ transitions.

Thus, the fiscal management of the federal government is a critical factor that the DoD must consider after each military drawdown and demobilization. In order for the armed forces to meet transition-planning objectives, a strong economy is needed to support veteran transition assistance. Therefore, the federal budget plays a vital role in military drawdowns and demobilizations. According to the Budget Control Act (BCA) of 2011, the DoD committed to a

\$487 billion cut (spread over 10 years) to assist the federal government in balancing the budget (Defense, 2014). These cuts began in 2012 and will lead to the largest military drawdown in U.S. history (Obama, 2012). The Secretary of Defense will lead the planning efforts for base closures and realignments to meet the new challenges of rebuilding the military. According to Lepore, “Now more than ever, defense readiness and transition planning of resources are more apparent to address exiting military servicemembers’ career readiness and transition” (Lepore, 2013, p. 1). According to Yonkman and Bridgeland, “We must help their families deal with the myriad of challenges of re-integration” (Yonkman & Bridgeland, 2009, p. 5).

The Department of Defense’s Responsibility to Exiting Servicemembers

Less than 1 percent of the American population has served on active duty in an all-volunteer, professional military—an historic low—resulting in a so-called “military-civilian” gap. While Americans generally hold the military in high regard, there is a reported lack of awareness and understanding of the difficult challenges many post-9/11 servicemembers have faced while transitioning from the military to civilian life. (Sherrill, 2014a, p. 5)

In a 2012 Military Personnel Subcommittee House Armed Services Committee report, Bostick stated that the DoD has a responsibility to support exiting military servicemembers “by providing training and the necessary tools to assist this population in their transition to enable their success” (Bostick, 2012, p. 1). The DoD has established the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) to assist the nation’s servicemembers in that transition (Veterans Opportunity to Work, 2016). Although the DoD does not specify the responsible department for the TAP anywhere in the literature, the DoD has an interagency agreement with other federal agencies. The DoD provides comprehensive services to assist exiting military servicemembers and their families in their transition to the civilian world. The goals and objectives of the TAP are to provide pre-separation counseling, benefit briefings, and employment assistance (Veterans Opportunity to Work, 2016).

Since its inception in 1990 under President Clinton's administration, the TAP has been financed by the DoD. Although the literature does not clearly define the role and responsibilities of the DoD or the VA, the funding comes from the Department of Defense. Congress has requested ongoing reviews and evaluations of the TAP from the Government Accountability Office reports, and it has been very difficult to pin the sole responsibility on a single federal agency (Bascetta, 2002). Because of the lack of clarity, it has been very difficult to evaluate the program and hold one particular agency responsible for the TAP.

Factors that Influence Transition

The Influence of Education Levels on Exiting Military Servicemembers

If employment is the door to a successful transition to civilian life, education will be the key to employment in the information age (Affairs, 2007, p.1). At base, there are multiple factors that can influence or contribute to the career readiness of exiting military servicemembers. A 2002 GAO report on TAP identified education as one of the primary factors that influences servicemembers' successful transition to the civilian labor force. However, to date, little is known about the overall impact of education levels on the transition of veterans. Until the DoD and VA provide ongoing evaluations of the education levels of separating and retiring servicemembers, it will be very difficult to assess a soldier's transition towards career readiness. What is known is that education is a suitable option for supporting career choices as soldiers readjust to civilian life (Bascetta, 2002).

Additionally, education is a critical factor in the recruitment of prospective soldiers and can be used to assess specialized skills for civilian career placement for soldiers. The GAO reported that approximately 15% of enlisted servicemembers were recruited during the 2004 fiscal year (Office, 2005). Yet fewer than 4% of enlisted servicemembers hold 4-year college

degrees as compared with retiring officers, who typically enter the U.S. military with undergraduate or advanced degrees (Clemens & Milsom, 2008). Thus, education levels differentiate enlisted servicemembers from officers upon entry into the military (Bascetta, 2005). Over the course of their military service, soldiers often continue their education. Educational attainment can be mutually beneficial for the soldier and the military. For instance, a soldier may choose to take additional classes while in the service to receive his degree, and thus become eligible for officer candidacy school or a higher rank.

According to the GAO Veterans Education Benefits report by Scott (2011), Public Law No. 110-252 clarified the new education benefits for separating and retiring servicemembers as follows:

With the passage of the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 (Post-9/11 GI Bill), Congress created a comprehensive education benefit program for veterans, service members, and their dependents pursuing postsecondary education. (Scott, 2011, p. 1)

The VA has encountered many challenges while implementing the Post 9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act, including its timeliness, accuracy and processes. In the past, student benefits have been delayed, causing enrollment challenges and uncertainties with the GI Bill (Scott, 2011).

As more soldiers exit the military, distance-learning opportunities for earning 4-year or master's degrees are now available. Educational attainment also may influence other ways veterans find satisfaction in their return to civilian life. Veterans' goals and intentions as active servicemen and servicewomen help define whether they consider their new lives successful (Smith-Osborne, 2009).

The Influence of Military Occupational Specialty on Exiting Military Servicemembers

In order to facilitate the objective of the TAP, which is to become “career ready,” the Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) translation to a equivalent civilian job is critical to the EMS in his transition to the civilian labor force. Many specialized skills, such as combat skills, are not transferable to the civilian labor force, highlighting the need for an MOS plan to assist the nation’s servicemembers. The first step requires understanding the factors that influence successful transition. According to the Veterans News Network (2012),

Our service members receive training of the highest quality to ensure they have the skills necessary to protect our country, yet service members who are preparing to leave the military lack access to expansive, personalized training and counseling necessary for success in the civilian sector. (Veterans News Network, 2012, p. 1)

As servicemembers prepare for career readiness, the MOS must be transferable to the civilian resume in order to communicate effectively all specialized skills and training received in the military. A GAO report “defined employment training as one specifically designed to enhance the specific job skills of individuals in order to increase their employability, identify job opportunities, or help job seekers obtain employment” (GAO, 2012, p. 1). Likewise, it was reported that the Department of Defense and Veteran Affairs have spent over \$1B dollars on six employment training programs and these programs have an enormous chance for duplicative outcomes (Sherrill, 2014a). “In addition, the number of programs shown by type of services does not total to the 87 that we identified because some programs provide more than one type of service” (Sherrill, 2014a, p. 16). Figure 1, Transition to Civilian Life: Number of DoD and VA Programs by Type of Service, provides a snapshot of federal training assistance programs available to exiting military servicemembers to support their MOS. (See Figure 1).



Figure 1. Transition to Civilian Life: Number of DoD and VA Programs by Type of Service. Note. Source GAO, 2014, p. 16. GAO-15-24 Analysis of Department of Defense (DoD) and Department of Veterans (VA) programs.

Employment assistance workshops are critical components in understanding the MOS, because they provide guidance on transferring skills to the civilian labor force. Also, these programs support servicemembers' MOS by explaining how military skills transfer to civilian employment and how civilian resumes are prepared (Veterans Opportunity to Work, 2016). In a GAO Veterans' Employment and Training report, Sherrill identified "six veterans' employment/training programs the government spent an estimated \$1.2 billion to serve almost 900,000 participants—of the six, five were administered by the DOL and one administered by the VA" (Sherrill, 2011, p. 1). Sherrill (2011) stated that since fiscal year 2009, "nine federal agencies spent \$18 billion to administer 47 federal employment training programs that have multiple outcomes" (Sherrill, 2011, p. 1). Under this format, it is difficult to track outcomes and even more difficult to evaluate the programs. Of the programs offered, many have redundant outcomes (Sherrill, 2014a). Sherrill's report mentions, "many of the employment training programs performed below pre-2007 levels" (Sherrill, 2012, p. 1). As a result, veterans still have a higher unemployment rate than their civilian counterparts (Sherrill, 2012). The main principle of MOS is that it provides the history of a servicemember's work, which the servicemember must explore with counseling assistance to become "career ready."

The Influence of Job Skills/Counseling on Exiting Military Servicemembers

In order to determine if the TAP is effective, researchers look closely at the job search skills/counseling that servicemembers are offered to better understand how they transition. According to Bullock, Braud, Andrews and Phillips (2009), “the relationship of the career counselor with the individual has a critical impact on how one prepares for the job market” (Bullock, et al., 2009, p. 4). Yet, very little is understood or even mentioned when it comes to the career development of veterans (Bullock et al., 2009). Many career researchers believe that the psychological component of counseling is critical in the personal and career transition of veterans. For example, Kraaij and Garnefski. (2006) have argued, veterans encounter traumatic challenges once they leave the military and the information they receive about the world is oftentimes inconsistent. In spite of little information concerning job search skills and counseling, a GAO Military and Veterans Benefits report by Bascetta identified counseling as one of the leading indicators of a successful transition:

Counseling services include, but are not limited to, educational and vocational counseling and guidance; testing; analysis of and recommendations to improve job-marketing skills; identification of employment, training, and financial aid resources; and referrals to other agencies providing these services. (Moore, Lawhorne-Scott, & Philpott, 2012, p. 123)

Individual one-on-one sessions with personal attention and Pre-Separation Counseling can play an important role (Bascetta, 2005). Similar sessions occur in the Army and Marines; servicemembers who are seeking transition assistance are common at the larger installations around the country (Hansen, 2003). Counseling may create or increase awareness and planning, resulting in a more intimate experience with and understanding of what it takes to become career ready. According to the GAO report by Bascetta (2005), “this personal attention may take the

form of individual briefings, depending in part on the time available and the numbers of servicepersons to be counseled” (Bascetta, 2005, p. 1).

In TAP’s Pre-Separation Counseling, many of the sessions are intended to assist with benefits, vocational rehabilitation, career goals, and employment opportunities that are available to veterans (Veterans Opportunity to Work, 2016). Career development research on best practices and modeling has helped advance knowledge about job search skills/counseling. Issues that have been studied include how to assist exiting military servicemembers make successful career choices and how to go about receiving training when seeking employment (Hansen, 2003). In the Career Development Quarterly report, Herr stated,

Career counselors will increasingly take on roles as planners, applied behavioral scientists, and technologists as they tailor their career practices to the settings and populations that they serve. (Herr, 2001, p. 49)

One of the most widely-used models in the field of career development is the Cognitive Information Processing (CIP) model. Bullock et al., have explored the “significance of the model and whether it could serve as a useful and effective intervention for transitioning servicemembers” (Bullock et al., 2009, p. 4). According to Peterson, Sampson, and Reardon (1992), the model, which was developed by a team of researchers at Florida State University’s Center for the Study of Technology in Counseling and Career Development, emphasizes career development and career problem solving. Peterson et al., state, “The CIP theory asserts that the major components involved in determining career decision making and problem solving effectiveness are the content and process of career decisions” (Peterson et al., 1992, p. 41). According to Peterson et al., CIP’s purpose is to assist individuals with their career choice and problem solving skills and ultimately provide a model for how individuals are to learn how to make future choices about their careers.

As career counseling enters the 21st century with a new focus on career problems and scholarly research, the attention paid to veterans still lags far behind that paid to other civilian populations.

Establishment of the TAP

Transition from the military to the civilian world is a complex undertaking. Many soldiers struggle in their transition routinely because of injuries attained while in the military, health problems and even marital or relationship problems (Sherril, 2014b). As stated earlier, the DoD introduced the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) in 1990 as a strategic plan for servicemembers exiting after military drawdowns and demobilizations. Based on observations of the TAP, the GAO has reported growing concerns with transition assistance for exiting military servicemembers. “The GAO’s “mission [is] to audit, evaluate, and serve as the investigative arm to support Congress in meeting its constitutional responsibilities and to help improve the performance and accountability in government” (GAO, 2016, p. 1). One of the concerns with the TAP is a lack of clearly defined goals, as well as the lack of consistent evaluation and measurement of the program. Overall effectiveness and follow-up with veterans are critical factors in measuring the TAP’s effectiveness. Many of the concerns regarding the effectiveness of the TAP have been raised in the GAO reports. According to Wells (1991), Congress has sought ongoing evaluations of the TAP for many years. Despite attempts to seek reviews and the results of exiting military servicemembers’ transitions, very limited information has been presented in congressional hearings and other government reports, causing more problems and uncertainty. Despite the problems, the TAP continues to be financed by the DoD and administered by the Department of Labor, yet these agencies do not provide any consistent evaluations of its effectiveness.

For this study, the researcher reviewed relevant reports from congressional hearings, the Bureau of Labor & Statistics, the Government Accounting Office, several governmental and congressional reporting agencies, and Veterans Affairs as well as scholarly databases such as ERIC and dissertations. This analysis of the literature included articles and journals from 1991 to the present that dealt with program effectiveness and evaluation, military pre-separation counseling (a component of TAP), the TAP processes, and the new TAP. Still, much information on the participation in, delivery of, and access to TAP was not known (Bascetta, 2002). No comprehensible study on the perception of exiting military servicemembers of the TAP, including the critical factors raised in early GAO TAP reports, has been located. Furthermore, at the time of this study, the U.S. government has no plans to investigate the perception of the TAP.

In March 2015, a re-employment of military veterans study explored the perceived utilization of the TAP, but the focus on employment was limited to participation, recommendations, and services rendered (Faurer, Rogers-Broderson, & Ballie, 2014). As Bascetta has stated, “only two program evaluations from the early 1990s evaluated the effectiveness of transition assistance on employment placement” (Bascetta, 2002, p. 1). The TAP is a necessary program, but continues to be too complex for the DoD to track its effectiveness. As Lunardi states, “Returning to civilian life is an exciting time for servicemembers; yet it is also a complex undertaking” (Lunardi, 2012, p. 1).

Soldiers face many transition obstacles prior to entering their military commitments, including a significant transition from the civilian world to that of a soldier (Early, 2001). Exiting military servicemembers face similar challenges as they complete their military obligations and return home to enter the civilian labor force. Degroat and Crowley reported “an estimated 2.6M soldiers of the Gulf War were ill-prepared to transition to the civilian labor

force” (Degroat, & Crowley, 2013, p. 2). Similarly, Yonkman and Bridgeland (2009), claimed “only 13 percent of exiting military servicemembers believed their transition was going well after Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation Enduring Freedom (OIF/OEF) conflicts” (Yonkman, & Bridgeland, 2009, p. 9).

TAP’s Pre-Separation Counseling

The first mandatory step of the TAP is Pre-Separation Counseling. In Bascetta’s 2002 report, the author stated that one of the first steps for exiting military servicemembers is to attend Pre-Separation Counseling no later than 90 days prior to their separation or retirement from the U.S. armed forces. According to Bascetta (2002), the “goal of the workshops and other transitional assistance services to be accessible to all servicemembers two years prior to retirement and one year prior to separation” (Bascetta, 2002, p. 2). In the armed forces, eligibility for retirement is defined by years of service as “20 years of active duty service or 20 satisfactory years of reserve” (Branch, 2013, p. 4).

Pre-separation is the foundational component of TAP. Pre-separation counseling, according to the law,

Shall include information about education and vocational rehabilitation benefits, selective reserve options, job counseling and job search and placement information, relocation assistance services, medical and dental benefits, counseling on the effects of career change, and financial planning. (Bascetta, 2002, p. 3)

Included in the Pre-Separation Counseling is a checklist that indicates what services are available to support servicemembers’ transitions and participation in TAP workshops. In addition, for both Pre-Separation Counseling and TAP workshops, participants receive guidebooks or manuals covering topics that are mandated by law.

One GAO (Bascetta, 2002) report mentioned that Pre-Separation Counseling was the only component of the transition assistance model for which attendance was federally mandated

(Bascetta, 2002, p. 2). Perhaps more importantly, according to a Military and Veterans Benefits report,

Each military service is required to provide Pre-Separation Counseling prior to release or discharge as specified by law and military data indicated that not all servicemembers received Pre-Separation Counseling. (Bascetta, 2002, p. 3)

Pre-Separation Counseling is available at all military branches, but separating and retiring servicemembers are not always able to attend due to their military commitments. Transition assistance workshops that meet TAP guidelines are available in most stateside military installations (GAO, 1991). Even though federally mandated, the Pre-Separation Counseling has presented many challenges for exiting military servicemembers. The Army and Air Force have

Table 1. Participation in Pre-Separation Counseling and Transition Assistance Workshops by Military Branch, Fiscal Year 2001

Participation	Army	Air Force	Navy	Marines	Coast Guard	Total or Average
Total Separated/ Retired	43,756	85,190	31,319	57,452	4,037	221,754
Number of Pre-Separation Counseling sessions	39,375	77,146	27,849	30,508	N/A	174,878
Percent receiving Pre-Separation Counseling	90%	91%	89%	53%	N/A	81%
Number attending transition assistance workshop	27,815	28,464	21,397	41,181	1,155	120,012
Percent attending workshop	64%	33%	68%	72%	29%	53%

Note. Source GAO, 2002, p.5. Analyses of Data Provided by the Military Branches (taken from GAO-02-914T Military and Veterans' Benefits: Observations on the Transition Assistance Program).

had the highest percentage of servicemembers receiving Pre-Separation Counselings, with 90% and 91% rates, respectively (see Table 1). Servicemembers are allowed the option to “participate in as many as 18 separation briefings on various topics such as legal and medical issues, and scheduled activities, such as physical examinations” (Bascetta, 2005, p. 3). “Military branches provide required services, but participation varies. . . except all military branches provide Pre-Separation Counseling” (Bascetta, 2002, p. 2) (See Table 1). In the 2002 GAO Analyses of Data Provided by the Military Branches report, the U.S. Army led the way in TAP participation and attendance. At the same time, the U.S. Army is the largest military branch and has spent more money on transition assistance than the other military branches (see Table 2). Accordingly, the Departments of Defense and Transportation state in the same report, “the U.S. military held 3,950 transition workshops with average class sizes ranging from 24 in the Army to 41 in the Navy” (GAO, 2002, p. 5). (See Table 2).

TAP’s Purpose and Objective

During his quest for the presidency, Bill Clinton announced to the American public that he would address the federal budget and it would be a priority in his administration. By 1994, the

Table 2: Transition Assistance Funding by Military Branch, Fiscal Year 2001						
	Army	Air Force	Navy	Marine	Coast Guard	Total
Funding (in Millions)						
DOD	13.5	8.9	4	10.3	0	36.7
*Other	5.3	0	0	0	0.5	5.8
Total	18.8	8.9	4	10.3	0.5	42.5
**Transition Assistance Workshops						
Number Held	1,207	1,115	520	1,075	33	3,950
Length (in days)	2-3	3	3-4	4	4	N/A
Average class size	24	25	41	38	35	N/A

Note. Source GAO, 2002, p.4. (taken from GAO-02-914T Military and Veterans’ Benefits: Observations on the Transition Assistance Program).

U.S. was operating in the black, sustaining a strong economy through the last quarter of 2001. The Clinton Administration responded to the increasing awareness that a transition assistance model was needed to provide direction and support to exiting servicemembers after military drawdowns and demobilizations. In 1990, when Congress established the Transition Assistance Program by the enactment of Public Law 101-510, a specific mandate was issued. Bascetta's (2002) report summarizes the law as follows:

The Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Defense, shall establish and maintain a program to furnish counseling, assistance in identifying employment and training opportunities, help in obtaining such employment and training, and other related information and services to members of the armed forces. (Bascetta, 2002, p. 2)

Title 10 of the U.S. Code requires the VA, DoD, and DOL, to administer TAP to meet the needs of exiting military servicemembers transitioning to civilian life (Veteran Affairs, 2008). DOL contractors administer the TAP, and many questions have been raised over the years about their qualifications and expertise.

The TAP provides four active service components:

1. Employment workshops;
2. Veterans benefits briefings;
3. Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP); and
4. Special needs of disabled servicemembers. (GAO, 1991)

Exiting military servicemembers, along with the Reserves and National Guard, “with at least 180 days of active duty who separate or retire are eligible for TAP participation” (Bascetta, 2005, p.

1). Under the Bush Administration, “The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal

Year 1991 mandated that GAO review the TAP” (GAO, 1991, p. 1). However, the act does not mandate the frequency of evaluations or reviews.

The Disability Transition Assistance Program

Exiting military servicemembers with service-connected disabilities comprise a major component of the TAP. The Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP) is vitally important after a military drawdown or demobilization so that disabled vets can make informed decisions about their career (TAOnline, 1996) According to a GAO report, “more than 1 million service members are projected to separate from the military and transition to civilian life from 2011 to 2016, and the number of veterans with service-connected disabilities is increasing” (GAO, 2012, p. 2). “Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP), which is also facilitated by the VA and is designed to focus on the special needs of disabled service members.” (VetsFirst, n.d., p. 1). Exiting military servicemembers are eligible for DTAP during the same timeframe as the TAP (Ciccolella, 2007).

Transition Assistance Program Components

The overall “career ready” objective starts with enrollment in the Transition Assistance Program. The program is administered by the Department of Labor and the Office of Veteran Affairs “to provide successful assistance to soldiers and their families in adjusting to the civilian world” (Bascetta, 2005, p. 1). This process can start immediately after a soldier receives notice that the military is downsizing or after a conflict.

According to Bascetta (2005), “In fiscal year 2004, about 309,000 servicemembers were released from active duty after serving at least 180 days and were eligible for the Transition Assistance Program, including 38% who were members of the Reserves and National Guard” (Bascetta, 2005, p. 2). Transition Assistance Program consists of three days of workshops

whereby exiting military servicemembers begin the transition cycle with the federally mandated Pre-Separation Counseling, which lasts for a maximum of two hours. According to a report by Kelly (2013), the aim of all servicemembers should be career readiness, with a better understanding of and plans for the next steps in their career development. According to Sherrill (2014b),

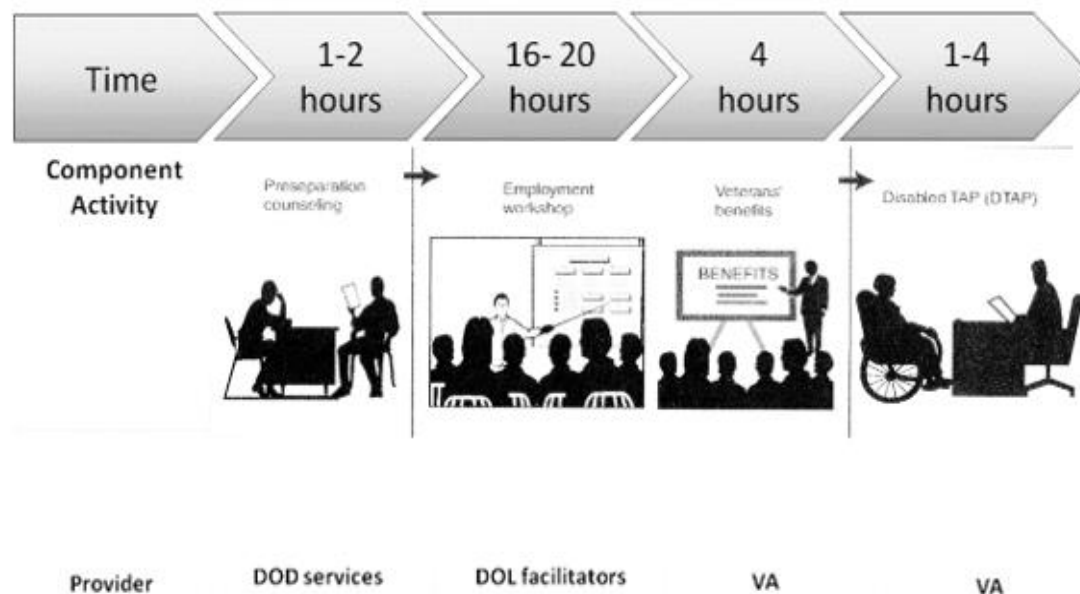


Figure 2: Time Frames, Components, and Providers

Note. Source GAO, 2005, p. 9. (taken from GAO 05-544 Military and Veterans' Benefits: Enhanced Services Could Improve Transition Assistance for Reserves and National Guard).

Over each of the next [3] years, the Department of Defense estimates that approximately 170,000 to 185,000 active duty servicemembers will separate from the military and about 60,000 National Guard and Reserve members will be demobilized and deactivated from active duty" (Sherrill 2014b, p. 1).

According to Bascetta (2005), one of the more immediate challenges with this model is that each military branch has had its own version of the TAP's federally mandated Pre-Separation Counseling. (See Figure 2).

The Objectives of the Memorandum of Understanding of the TAP

The original Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) regarding TAP expired in 2006. In 2007, “a new MOU charged the Department of Labor (DOL), Department of Defense (DoD), Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Department of Homeland Security (HSA), and the Small Business Administration (SBA) with implementing the Transition Assistance Program” (Bascetta, 2002, p. 2). According to Ciccolella, the

Objectives of the MOU included preventing and reducing long-term unemployment, reducing unemployment compensation paid to veterans, and improving retention of retired and separated servicemembers who have become employed through involvement with TAP. (Ciccolella (2007, p. 3)

The MOU provided a framework for improving the overall effectiveness of the TAP. Given its ability to assist in providing sustainable employment services or military occupational specialty information for servicemembers and their spouses, the TAP model was chosen by the DoD as the best vehicle for the reintegration of military servicemembers into the civilian labor force (Bascetta, 2002). Furthermore, the objective of the shared responsibility is to provide more oversight as the DoD moves to improve the process of transition assistance for exiting servicemembers.

TAP's New Approach

Over the last 25 years, little was done to revamp the TAP. For many years, it was a one-size fits all program. As servicemembers leave the military, they are considered some of the best fighting soldiers in the world, yet as they transition to the civilian labor force, they lack the necessary skills to compete in today's job market (Cloud, 2012). In August 2011, under President Obama's guidance, the name of the program was changed to the Transition Assistance Program GPS (Goals, Plans and Success). In the new program, each exiting servicemember will participate in the Pre-Separation Counseling, TAP workshops have been extended from three to seven days, and the new TAP “will integrate career and education counseling and training across

military life cycle” (Cloud, 2012, p.1). According to Cloud (2012), under these new guidelines, the focus is more holistic in its emphasis on the exiting servicemember’s needs, including education options, employment training, and counseling. These areas support the goal of becoming “career ready,” as specified

Summary of Literature Review

Exiting military servicemembers volunteer to protect the freedoms of this country. More importantly, they sacrifice the freedoms of all Americans. The Department of Defense funds the Transition Assistance Program, yet ongoing reviews and evaluations point to many factors that influence successful transition to the civilian labor force to become “career ready.”

According to Bascetta (2002) “implementations of TAP vary, in part, because the military branches are able to exercise their administrative discretion to tailor the program to best meet the circumstances of their servicemembers” (Bascetta (2002, p. 3). Additionally, “a number of services are available to help exiting military servicemembers adjust to the civilian employment market, limited data are available on the effectiveness, outcomes, and perceptions of servicemembers toward the TAP” (Bascetta., 2005, p. 5). In part, only a few evaluations of the TAP have been conducted, making it difficult to measure its effectiveness and outcomes. Additionally, without the pressure of competition or the unforgiving bottom line of profit or loss, governmental units are apt to neglect performance measurements as they focus on other matters. When participation rates become constant and measureable across all military branches, then appropriate improvements can be made to the DoD’s Transition Assistance Program.

There are many issues to consider when affording veterans the access and the opportunity to take advantage of the TAP. Clemens and Milsom (2008) have argued that “Frequent relocation while serving in the U.S. military might make it difficult for military personnel to

establish or to maintain civilian professional and social networks” (Clemens & Milsom, 2008, p. 248). In addition, transition assistance can be difficult when servicemembers are constantly moving to fulfill their military commitments (Clemons & Milsom, 2008). While these issues are complex, the factors influencing the perceived effectiveness of the TAP among exiting military servicemembers at military installations in Louisiana is a good first step for advancing knowledge about veterans’ perceptions about their transitions.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Purpose Statement

The primary purpose of this study was to determine the influence of selected personal and professional demographic characteristics on the perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) in accomplishing its stated purposes among exiting military servicemembers at military installations in Louisiana.

Objectives

The following objectives define this study:

1. Describe the exiting military servicemembers at military installations in Louisiana who participated in TAP on the following selected personal and professional demographic characteristics:
 - (a) Highest level of education completed;
 - (b) Whether or not exiting military servicemembers' military occupational specialty training was transferrable to the civilian labor force;
 - (c) Whether or not exiting military servicemembers received job search skills/counseling covered in the TAP;
 - (d) Age;
 - (e) Income level;
 - (f) Length of service in the military;
 - (g) Pay Grade;
 - (h) Gender;
 - (i) Race/Ethnicity; and
 - (j) Active Duty Status.

2. Objective two was to determine the perceptions of exiting military servicemembers at military installations in Louisiana regarding the perceived effectiveness of the TAP in accomplishing its stated purposes as measured by a researcher-designed opinionnaire.
3. Objective three was to determine if a relationship exists between the perceptions of exiting military servicemembers in Louisiana regarding the perceived effectiveness of the TAP in accomplishing its stated purposes and the following selected personal and professional demographic characteristics:
 - (a) Highest level of education completed;
 - (b) Whether or not exiting military servicemembers' military occupational specialty training was transferrable to the civilian labor force;
 - (c) Whether or not exiting military servicemembers received job search skills/counseling covered in the TAP;
 - (d) Age;
 - (e) Income level;
 - (f) Length of service in the military;
 - (g) Pay Grade;
 - (h) Gender;
 - (i) Race/Ethnicity; and
 - (j) Active Duty Status.
4. Determine if a model exists that explains a significant portion of the variance in the perceptions of exiting military servicemembers at installations in Louisiana accomplishing its stated purposes from the following selected personal and professional demographic characteristics:

- (a) Highest level of education completed;
- (b) Whether or not exiting military servicemembers' military occupational specialty training was transferrable to the civilian labor force;
- (c) Whether or not exiting military servicemembers received job search skills/counseling covered in the TAP;
- (d) Age;
- (e) Income level;
- (f) Length of service in the military;
- (g) Pay Grade;
- (h) Gender;
- (i) Race/Ethnicity; and
- (j) Active Duty Status.

Population and Sample

The target population for this study was separating (within 365 days) and retiring (within 24 months) servicemembers from military bases in the state of Louisiana. In this study, the definition of the accessible population was the same as that of the target population. The researcher used Cochran's sample size determination formula, which determined that a minimum of 173 useable responses were needed to maintain the margin of error in the measurements established by the researcher. Calculations are as follows:

$$N_0 = \frac{t^2 s^2}{d^2}$$

$$N_0 = \frac{(1.96)^2 (0.5)^2}{(0.12)^2}$$

$$N_0 = \frac{(3.8416) (0.25)}{(0.0144)}$$

$N_0 = 67$

Where t^2 = alpha level of .05

s^2 = estimated variance in population

d^2 = acceptable margin of error (3.0%)

Instrumentation

Data for the study were collected using a researcher-designed instrument. The Productivity Consultants & Career Support Services (PCCSS) Transition Inventory was designed to measure the perceptions of exiting military servicemembers regarding the Transition Assistance Program. The inventory was developed based on a review of the literature and input from experts in the field. The content validity of the inventory was established through a review by a panel of experts consisting of workforce development practitioners, a federal training professional, a former TAP participant, a TAP employee, and Louisiana State University Human Resource Development faculty. The experts were asked to review the PCCSS Transition Inventory to enable the researcher to accomplish the purpose and objectives of the study. Appropriate revisions were made based on input provided by the expert panel.

Data Collection

The researcher used an electronic medium distribution approach for data collection. The inventory was distributed by the proxy (federal training program officer) to a database of Transition Assistance Program participants who attended the workshops. An introductory e-mail was sent to the TAP attendees requesting their participation in completing the inventory. The e-mail included the IRB-required informed consent information and stressed protection of confidentiality. Follow-ups occurred weekly for five weeks, giving participants a total of four weeks to respond to the inventory. This data collection method entailed a total of four distributions over a 30-day period. Once the survey was active for four weeks, the survey closed

and no more responses were accepted. The researcher downloaded all responses from the Qualtrics program into an Excel spreadsheet and erased any and all identifying information before uploading the data to SPSS.

To accomplish this research effort, the researcher took the following steps. First, the researcher completed the “Human Subjects Training” with the National Institute of Health and submitted the Institutional Review Board application which was approved by the Louisiana State University Graduate School. Second, letters were sent to the military installations to seek permission to participate in the study. Third, a proxy (federal training official) appointed by the researcher introduced the study to the exiting military servicemembers at the end of their last TAP session by email, explaining the inventory and how to proceed (see Appendix D). Fourth, the proxy communicated to each participant that the study consisted of voluntary participation. Fifth, the proxy electronically distributed the PCCSS Transition Inventory to each participant after the servicemembers were notified that it was a voluntary activity. Each servicemember had the option to complete the inventory or not over a four-week period. This process included dates of distribution from the researcher to the proxy. The system notified the researcher when each inventory was submitted and confirmed complete. This study electronically reached a total of 9300 exiting military servicemembers who attended the TAP workshops in Louisiana.

Finally, the rationale for this technique was necessary because the Department of Defense contractors and administrators provide a strict timing protocol, and this cooperative effort must take place immediately after the TAP workshops in order for respondents to participate. The administration of the PCCSS Transition Inventory instrument met the criteria for survey administration with the assistance of the federal employment training program proxy.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

The primary purpose of this study was to determine the influence of selected personal and professional demographic characteristics on the perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) in accomplishing its stated purposes of exiting military servicemembers at military installations in Louisiana.

Objectives

The following objectives were examined in this study:

1. Describe the exiting military servicemembers at military installations in Louisiana who participated in TAP on the following selected personal and professional demographic characteristics:
 - (a) Highest level of education completed;
 - (b) Whether or not exiting military servicemembers' military occupational specialty training was transferrable to the civilian labor force;
 - (c) Whether or not exiting military servicemembers received job search skills/counseling covered in the TAP;
 - (d) Age;
 - (e) Income level;
 - (f) Length of service in the military;
 - (g) Pay Grade;
 - (h) Gender;
 - (i) Race/Ethnicity; and
 - (j) Active Duty Status.

2. Determine the perceptions of exiting military servicemembers at military installations in Louisiana regarding the perceived effectiveness of the TAP in accomplishing its stated purposes as measured by a researcher-designed opinionnaire.
3. Determine if a relationship exists between the perceptions of exiting military servicemembers in Louisiana regarding the perceived effectiveness of the TAP in accomplishing its stated purposes and the following selected personal and professional demographic characteristics:
 - (a) Highest level of education completed;
 - (b) Whether or not exiting military servicemembers' military occupational specialty training was transferrable to the civilian labor force;
 - (c) Whether or not exiting military servicemembers received job search skills/counseling covered in the TAP;
 - (d) Age;
 - (e) Income level;
 - (f) Length of service in the military;
 - (g) Pay Grade;
 - (h) Gender;
 - (i) Race/Ethnicity; and
 - (j) Active Duty Status.
4. Determine if a model exists that explains a significant portion of the variance in the perceptions of exiting military servicemembers at installations in Louisiana in accomplishing its stated purposes from the following selected personal and professional demographic characteristics:

- (a) Highest level of education completed;
- (b) Whether or not exiting military servicemembers' military occupational specialty training was transferrable to the civilian labor force;
- (c) Whether or not exiting military servicemembers received job search skills/counseling covered in the TAP;
- (d) Age;
- (e) Income level;
- (f) Length of service in the military;
- (g) Pay Grade;
- (h) Gender;
- (i) Race/Ethnicity; and
- (j) Active Duty Status.

Objective One

Objective One was to describe the exiting military servicemembers at military installations in Louisiana who participated in TAP on the following selected personal and professional demographic characteristics:

- (a) Highest level of education completed;
- (b) Whether or not exiting military servicemembers' military occupational specialty training was transferrable to the civilian labor force;
- (c) Whether or not exiting military servicemembers received job search skills/counseling covered in the TAP;
- (d) Age;
- (e) Income level;

- (f) Length of service in the military;
- (g) Pay Grade;
- (h) Gender;
- (i) Race/Ethnicity; and
- (j) Active Duty Status.

A total of 67 respondents began the survey, and 53 exiting military servicemembers provided useable responses. These respondents attended the Transition Assistance Program workshops and completed the Productivity Consultants & Career Support Survey (PCCSS) Transition Inventory for this study. The results for each of these variables are as follows.

Education Level

The first variable examined was “Education level.” Of the 53 study participants who provided useable data for the survey, the largest group ($n = 24$, 45.3%) reported having a master’s degree as their highest level of education completed. The next largest group of respondents ($n = 21$, 39.6%) reported having a bachelor’s degree, and the smallest group ($n = 1$, 1.9%) reported having a Ph.D. (see Table 3).

Table 3. Education Level of Exiting Military Servicemembers Who Attended Transition Assistance Program Workshops in Louisiana

Education Level	Frequency	Percent
High School Graduate/GED	2	3.8
Associate Degree	5	9.4
Bachelor’s Degree	21	39.6
Master’s Degree	24	45.3
Ph.D. Degree	1	1.9
Total	53	100.0

Military Occupational Speciality (MOS) Transferable to the Civilian Labor Force

The second variable examined was whether or not the respondent's "MOS" was transferable to the civilian labor force. There were two response options for the variable (Yes or No). Of the 53 respondents, 38 (71.7%) reported "Yes" and 15 (28.3%) reported "No."

Job Search Skills/Counseling Covered in the TAP

The third variable examined was whether or not "Job Search Skills/Counseling" was covered in the TAP. There were two response options for the variable (Yes or No). The majority of respondents ($n = 38$, 71.7%) reported "Yes" to "Was your Job Search Skills/Counseling covered in the TAP." However, 15 (28.3%) reported "No" to "Was your Job Search Skills/Counseling covered in the TAP."

Age

The fourth variable examined was "Age." The largest group ($n = 21$, 39.6%) of exiting military servicemembers indicated that they were in the "Age" category of 40 to 49. The next largest group indicated that they were in the "Age" category of 50 to 59 ($n = 14$, 26.4%). The smallest group of exiting military servicemembers indicated that they were in the the 60 or older "Age" category ($n = 2$, 3.8%) (see Table 4).

Table 4. Age of Exiting Military Servicemembers Who Attended Transition Assistance Program Workshops in Louisiana

Age	Frequency	Percent
17 to 29	5	9.4
30 to 39	11	20.8
40 to 49	21	39.6
50 to 59	14	26.4
60 or older	2	3.8
Total	53	100.0

Income Level

The fifth variable examined was “Income level.” The largest group of respondents reported that they earned \$60,000 or more ($\underline{n} = 26$, 49.1%), and the income category that was reported by the smallest number of respondents was the \$30,000 to \$39,999 category ($\underline{n} = 3$, 5.7%) (see Table 5).

Table 5. Income Level of Exiting Military Servicemembers Who Attended Transition Assistance Program Workshops in Louisiana

Income	Frequency	Percent
\$18,000 to \$29,999	10	18.9
\$30,000 to 39,999	3	5.7
\$40,000 to 49,999	6	11.3
\$50,00 to 59,999	8	26.4
\$60,000 or more	26	49.1
Total	53	100.0

Length of Service in the Military

The sixth variable examined was the “Length of Service in the Military.” The Length of Service category that was reported by the largest group of respondents was 21 or more ($\underline{n} = 21$,

Table 6. Length of Service in the Military of Exiting Military Servicemembers Who Attended Transition Assistance Program Workshops in Louisiana

Length of Service in the Military	Frequency	Percent
0 to 3 Years	2	3.8
3 to 5 Years	3	5.7
6 to 10 Years	10	18.9
11 to 15 Years	1	1.9
16 to 20 Years	6	30.2
21 + Years	21	39.2
Total	53	100.0

39.2%); and the smallest number of respondents fell in the 11 to 15 Years category ($\underline{n} = 1$, 1.9%) (see Table 6).

Pay Grade

The seventh variable examined was “Pay Grade.” The pay grade category that was reported by the largest group of respondents was the “E7 to E9” category ($\underline{n} = 18$, 34.0%). The second largest group of respondents reported the “E4 to E6” pay grade category ($\underline{n} = 17$, 32.1%). The smallest group of respondents reported the “E1 to E3” category ($n = 1$, 1.9%) (see Table 7). No participants, were identified in the category “O7 to O10.”

Table 7. Pay Grade of Exiting Military Servicemembers Who Attended Transition Assistance Program Workshops in Louisiana

Pay Grade of Exiting Military Servicemembers	Frequency	Percent
E1 to E3	1	1.9
E4 to E6	17	32.1
E7 to E9	18	34.0
W1 to W5	3	5.7
O1 to O3	9	17.0
O4 to O6	5	9.4
O7 to O10	0	0.0
Total	53	100.0

Gender

The eighth demographic variable examined for the respondents was “Gender.” There were two response options: “Female” or “Male.” Of the 53 respondents, 17 (32.1%) were “Female” and 36 (67.9%) were “Male.”

Race/Ethnicity

The ninth variable examined was “Race/Ethnicity.” There were five response options, including: White, Black, Asian, Hispanic and Other. Of the 53 respondents, the largest group

reported “White” as their Race/Ethnicity (\underline{n} = 28, 52.8%). The second largest group of the respondents reported “Black” (\underline{n} = 19, 35.8%), and the smallest group of respondents reported “Asian” (\underline{n} = 1, 1.9%) (see Table 8).

Table 8. Race/Ethnicity of Exiting Military Servicemembers Who Attended Transition Assistance Program Workshops in Louisiana

Race/Ethnicity	Frequency	Percent
White	28	52.8
Black	19	35.8
Hispanic	3	5.7
Other ^a	2	3.8
Asian	1	1.9
Total	53	100.0

^aNo specification for “Other” was requested.

Active Duty Status

The tenth variable examined was exiting military servicemembers’ “Active Duty Status” at the time that they attended the TAP. There were two response options available (“Yes” or “No”). Of the 53 respondents, 47 reported “Yes” (88.7%), they were on active duty status when they went through TAP. Six (6) reported “No” (11.3%) to being on “Active Duty Status” when they went through TAP.

Objective Two

Objective two was to determine the perceptions of exiting military servicemembers at military installations in Louisiana regarding the perceptions of perceived effectiveness of the TAP in accomplishing its stated purposes as measured by a researcher-designed opinionnaire. This analysis began with determining the means and standard deviations of each item in the PCCSS Transition Inventory scale. Participants rated their level of “Agreement” with the 16 statements on a 4-point Likert-type scale using the following descriptors: 1= Strongly Disagree,

2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, and 4 = Strongly Agree. As seen in Table 9, exiting military servicemembers indicated the highest level of “Agreement” with the statement “I was allowed time to attend the TAP classes by my unit commander” ($M = 3.36$, $SD = .73$). The lowest level of “Agreement” was indicated with the statements “Participation in TAP has helped my career-readiness” ($M = 2.77$, $SD = 0.912$) and “I am better prepared for life after the military since I attended the TAP” ($M = 2.77$, $SD = 0.933$) (see Table 9). In addition, the following Interpretive Scale was developed by the researcher to aid in reporting exiting military servicemembers’ perceptions: 1.0 - 1.5 = Strongly Disagree; 1.51 - 2.5 = Disagree; 2.51 - 3.5 = Agree; 3.51 - 4.0 = Strongly Agree. Using this Interpretive Scale, all items had a mean rating that was classified in the “Agree” category (see Table 9).

A Cronbach’s alpha was conducted on the 16 items in the PCCSS Transition Inventory scale to estimate the reliability of the scale. The findings showed the scale to have a “high” degree of internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.964$). Tavako and Dennick (2011) indicated that alpha values above .70 are acceptable levels of internal consistency. (See Table 9).

To further examine the perceptions of exiting military servicemembers regarding the Transition Assistance Program, the researcher conducted a factor analysis to determine if underlying constructs existed in the scale. The researcher first examined the items for degree of deviation from normality using the Shapiro Wilkes test. In addition, the Measure of Sampling Adequacy (MSA) was computed, and all individual item MSA’s as well as the overall MSA were above the 0.5 threshold required (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006). Therefore, all data met the assumptions for the use of factor analysis. The factor analysis was conducted using a principal components analysis with varimax rotation.

Table 9. Effectiveness of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) Statements as Perceived by Exiting Military Servicemembers Who Attended TAP Workshops in Louisiana.

Perception Statement	Mean ^a	Standard Deviation	Interpretive Scale ^b
I was allowed time to attend the TAP classes by my unit commander.	3.36	.736	A
The goals of the Transition Assistance Program were clearly communicated to me.	3.25	.806	A
The time of the day for the TAP workshops was good for me.	3.21	.689	A
TAP classes were held in an appropriate classroom environment.	3.17	.826	A
I understand the overall mission of the TAP.	3.17	.778	A
The TAP instructors are very knowledgeable of the subject matter.	3.06	.842	A
The delivery of the content in the TAP classes was effective.	3.04	.808	A
I have an understanding of where to get career assistance.	3.02	.747	A
I know the benefits of the TAP as a result of participating in the workshops.	3.00	.760	A
The goals of the TAP sessions attended were accomplished.	2.96	.831	A
The objectives of the TAP sessions attended were appropriate.	2.96	.831	A
The technological resources used in the TAP classes were up-to-date.	2.96	.876	A
Participation in TAP has helped my career readiness.	2.77	.912	A
I am better prepared for life after the military since I attended the TAP.	2.77	.933	A

Table 9 continued

Note. $n = 53$

^aMean: Response scale used was: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, and 4 = Strongly Agree

^bInterpretive Scale was coded: 1.0-1.5 Strongly Disagree (SD); 1.51-2.5, Disagree (D); 2.51-3.5, Agree (A); 3.51 – 4.0, Strongly Agree (SA)

To determine the number of factors to be extracted from the scale, the researcher used the Latent Root criterion and the Cattell Scree plot technique.

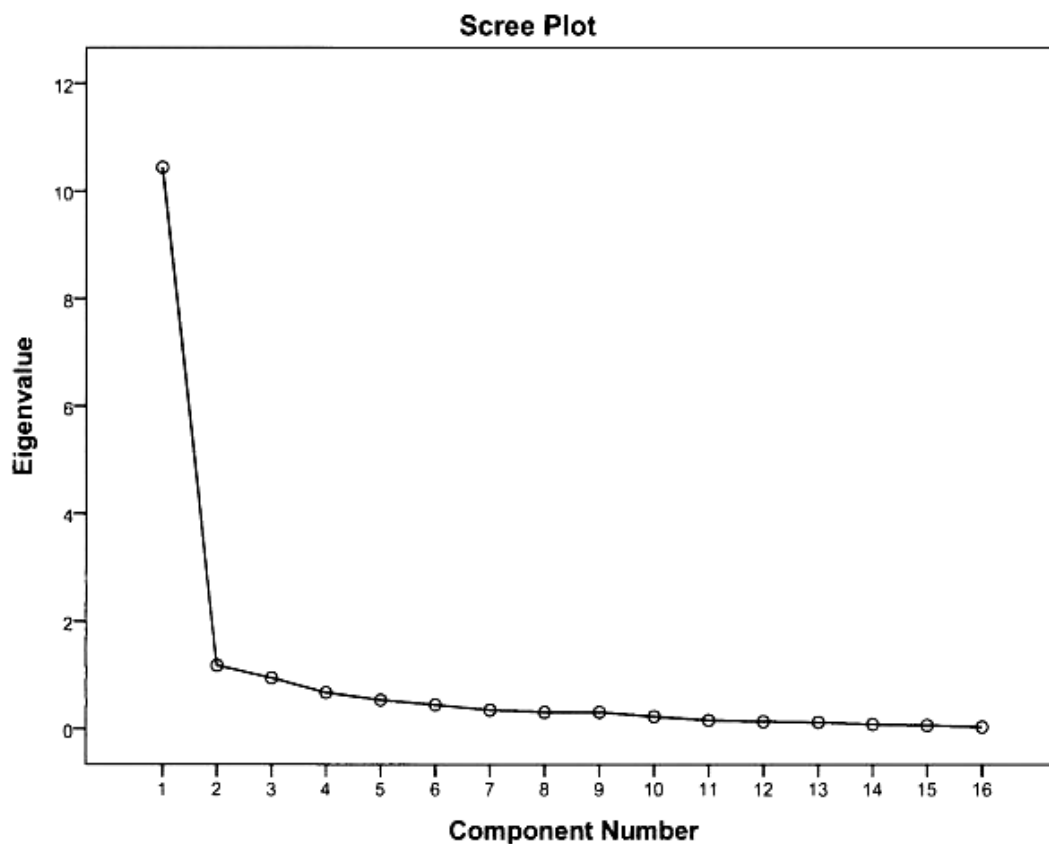


Figure 3. Perceived Effectiveness of Exiting Military Servicemembers' Perceptions One Factor Solution Scree Plot

Initially, two factors were extracted with a default minimum value of 1.00 on the latent root measure. Then, the researcher identified the optimum number of factors to extract by identifying the most pronounced bend in the Scree Plot curve. (See Figure 3).

Table 10. Factor Analysis of “Perceptions Regarding Effectiveness of the TAP” Among Exiting Military Servicemembers Who Attended the Transition Assistance Program Workshops in Louisiana.

Items	Loadings
I am better prepared for life after the military since I attended the TAP.	0.868
Participation in TAP has helped my career-readiness.	0.862
The delivery of the content in the TAP classes was effective.	0.848
I am better prepared for making decisions about my career after participation in the TAP.	0.848
I have an understanding of where to get career assistance.	0.846
The goals of the TAP sessions I attended were accomplished.	0.842
The TAP instructors are very knowledgeable of the subject matter.	0.836
The TAP classes were held in an appropriate classroom environment.	0.827
The technological resources used in the TAP classes were up-to-date.	0.819
The objectives of the TAP courses were appropriate.	0.812
I know the benefits of the TAP as a result of participating in the workshops.	0.811
I have an understanding of my veteran benefits.	0.785
I understand the overall mission of the TAP.	0.778
The time of the day for the TAP workshops was good for me.	0.739
The goals of the Transition Assistance Program were clearly communicated to me.	0.689
I was allowed time to attend the TAP classes by my unit commander.	0.684

Note. Eigenvalue = 10.44, Total Variance Explained = 65.2%.

The optimum number of factors was determined to be two, plus or minus one. Each of these solutions was then computed and examined for two criteria. The researcher reviewed the

loadings for each analysis to determine whether they met the minimum acceptable loading criteria as specified by Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham (2006). For exploratory research, Hair et al. (2006) suggest that this criterion may be as low as .30. In addition, the two and three factor solutions were surveyed for number and extent of significant cross-loadings.

As a result, the researcher found that the most appropriate number of factors was one (see Table 10). Subsequently, an overall perception score was computed for each participant as the mean of the 16 items in the PCCSS scale. The overall mean of these scores was 3.02 (SD = .67) and the values ranged from a minimum of 1.13 to a maximum of 4.00. This overall mean score was also classified using the researcher designed Interpretive Scale as “Agree.” (See Table 10).

Objective Three

Objective three was to determine if a relationship existed between the perceptions of exiting military servicemembers in Louisiana regarding the perceptions of perceived effectiveness of the TAP in accomplishing its stated purposes and the following selected personal and professional demographic characteristics:

- (a) Highest level of education completed;
- (b) Whether or not exiting military servicemembers’ military occupational specialty training was transferrable to the civilian labor force;
- (c) Whether or not exiting military servicemembers received job search skills/counseling covered in the TAP;
- (d) Age;
- (e) Income level;
- (f) Length of service in the military;
- (g) Pay Grade;

- (h) Gender;
- (i) Race/Ethnicity; and
- (j) Active Duty Status.

For the variables measured on a nominal level, a t-test was used to compare the categories regarding the perceptions of TAP by exiting military servicemembers. This method of analysis was chosen to facilitate the interpretation of the findings. The most appropriate correlation coefficient was used to determine the relationship between the perceptions of exiting military servicemembers who attended the TAP and selected ordinal and interval variables.

Education Level

The first demographic variable examined for a relationship with exiting military servicemembers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the TAP workshops was their "Education level." Since the variable was measured as ordinal data in five response categories (High School Graduate/GED, Associate Degree, Bachelor's Degree, Master's Degree, and Ph.D. Degree), the technique chosen for analysis was the Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient. The computed coefficient was $r = .07$, ($n = 53$, $p = .61$); therefore, no significant relationship was found between exiting military servicemembers' education level and their perceived effectiveness of the TAP.

Military Occupational Speciality (MOS) Transferable to the Civilian Labor Force

The second variable examined for a relationship with exiting military servicemembers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the TAP workshops was whether or not their "MOS was transferrable to the civilian labor force." The researcher measured this variable with a dichotomous "Yes" or "No" response. The researcher chose to use the independent samples t-test procedure for ease of interpretation of the findings. When the perceptions of the effectiveness of

the TAP were compared by categories of the variable whether or not their “MOS” was transferable to the civilian labor force (“Yes” – $M = 3.07$, $SD = .659$ and “No” – $M = 2.93$, $SD = .708$), the test was not statistically significant ($t_{(51)} = .702$, $p = .486$). Therefore, no relationship was found between whether or not “MOS was transferable to the civilian labor force” and the perceived effectiveness of TAP.

Job Search Skills/Counseling covered in TAP

The third variable examined for a relationship with exiting military servicemembers’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the TAP was whether or not their “Job Search Skills/Counseling was covered in the TAP.” Since this variable was measured as a dichotomous variable with a “Yes” or “No” response, the researcher chose to use the independent samples t-test procedure for ease of interpretation of the findings. When the perceptions of the effectiveness of the TAP were compared by categories of the variable whether or not their “Job Search Skills/Counseling was covered in the TAP,” the respondents who said “Yes” were significantly different from those who said “No.” Those who indicated “Yes” ($M = 3.17$, $SD = .638$) had significantly higher perceptions of the effectiveness of TAP than those who said “No” ($M = 2.64$, $SD = .606$), ($t_{(51)} = 2.777$, $p = .008$).

Age

The fourth variable examined for a relationship with exiting military servicemembers’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the TAP workshops was their “Age.” Since the variable was measured as ordinal data in five response categories (17-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, and 60+), the Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient was chosen as the most appropriate statistical procedure to examine the relationship between the two variables. The computed coefficient was

$r = -.09$, ($n = 53$, $p = .54$); therefore, no significant relationship was found between exiting military servicemembers' "Age" and their perceived effectiveness of the TAP.

Income level

The fifth variable examined for a relationship with exiting military servicemembers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the TAP workshops was their "Income level." Since the variable was measured as ordinal data in five response categories (\$18,000 to \$29,000; \$30,000 to \$39,000; \$40,000 to \$49,000; \$50,000 to \$59,999; \$60,000 or more), the Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient was chosen as the most appropriate method to examine the relationship between the two variables. The computed correlation coefficient was $r = .330$, ($n = 53$, $p = .016$); therefore, a significant relationship was found between exiting military servicemembers' "Income level" and their perceived effectiveness of the TAP. Respondents who reported higher income levels tended to have higher perceptions of the effectiveness of the TAP.

Length of Service in the Military

The sixth variable examined for a relationship with exiting military servicemembers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the TAP workshops was their "Length of Service." Since the variable was measured as ordinal data in six response categories (0-3, 3-5, 6-10, 11-14, 16-20, and 21+), the technique chosen for analysis was the Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient. The computed coefficient was $r = .22$, ($n = 53$, $p = .11$); therefore, no significant relationship was found between exiting military servicemembers' "Length of Service" and their perceived effectiveness of the TAP.

Pay Grade

The seventh variable examined for a relationship with exiting military servicemembers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the TAP workshops was their "Pay Grade." This variable was

measured using seven categories that listed the various officer, enlisted, and warrant ranks. However, due to the small numbers in several of the categories, the variable was collapsed into two groups (“Officer” and “Enlisted”). The small number ($n = 3$) of respondents who chose the “Warrant” category was insufficient to use in this comparison, and the “Warrant” category could not reasonably be combined with either “Officer” or “Enlisted.” Therefore, the researcher investigated this factor as a dichotomous variable with “Officer” and “Enlisted” as the two categories.

The researcher chose to utilize an independent samples t-test as the statistical procedure for ease of interpretation of the findings. When the perceptions of the effectiveness of the TAP was compared by categories of the variable “Pay Grade” (“Enlisted” – $M = 2.94$, $SD = .683$ and “Officer” – $M = 3.11$, $SD = .644$), the test was not statistically significant ($t_{(51)} = .814$, $p = .423$). Therefore, no relationship was found between “Pay Grade” and the perceived effectiveness of the TAP.

Gender

The eighth variable examined for a relationship with exiting military servicemembers’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the TAP workshops was their “Gender.” The demographic variable “Gender” had two response options: “Male” or “Female.” The researcher chose to utilize an independent samples t-test as the analysis method for ease of interpretation of the findings. When the perceptions of the effectiveness of the TAP were compared by categories of the “Gender” variable (“Female” – $M = 3.04$, $SD = .745$ and “Male” – $M = 3.02$, $SD = .641$), no significant difference was found ($t_{(51)} = .111$, $p = .913$). Therefore, no relationship was found between “Gender” and the perceived effectiveness of the TAP.

Race

The ninth variable examined for a relationship with exiting military servicemembers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the TAP workshops was their "Race/Ethnicity." The variable was measured using five response categories (White, Black, Asian, Hispanic, and Other). However, three of these groups had insufficient data to make statistical comparisons ("Asian", $n = 1$; "Hispanic," $n = 3$, "Other," $n = 2$). Therefore, two variables were created from these categories: "White" or "non-White" and "Black" or "non-Black." Since both of these variables were measured as dichotomous data, the researcher chose to utilize the independent samples t-test statistical procedure for each comparison. This method was chosen for ease of interpretation of the findings.

When the perceptions of the effectiveness of the TAP was compared by categories of the variable "White" or "non-White" ("White" – $M = 3.03$, $SD = .688$ and "non-White" – $M = 3.02$, $SD = .664$), no significant difference was found ($t_{(51)} = -.017$, $p = .986$). Similarly, when the perceptions were compared by categories of the variable "Black" or "non-Black" ("Black" – $M = 3.02$, $SD = .682$ and "non-Black" – $M = 3.03$, $SD = .664$), no significant difference was found ($t_{(51)} = -.090$, $p = .929$). Therefore, no relationship was found between either of the "Race/Ethnicity" measurements ("White" or "non-White" and "Black" or "non-Black") and the perceived effectiveness of the TAP.

Active Duty Status

The tenth variable examined for a relationship with exiting military servicemembers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the TAP was their "Active Duty Status." Since this variable was measured as a dichotomous variable with a "Yes" or "No" response, the researcher chose to use the independent samples t-test procedure to compare the responses by categories of the

variable. When the perceptions of the effectiveness of the TAP was compared by categories of the variable “Were you on active duty when you went through TAP,” the respondents who said “Yes” were significantly different from those who said “No” ($t_{(51)} = .319, p = .016$). Those who indicated “Yes” ($M = 3.10, SD = .595$) had significantly higher perceptions of the effectiveness of TAP than those who said “No” ($M = 2.41, SD = .945$). Therefore, a significant relationship was found between “Active Duty Status” when servicemembers attended the TAP workshops and their perceptions towards the perceived effectiveness of the TAP.

Objective Four

Objective four was to determine if a model exists that explains a significant portion of the variance in the perceptions of exiting military servicemembers at installations in Louisiana in accomplishing its stated purposes from the following selected personal and professional demographic characteristics:

- (a) Highest level of education completed;
- (b) Whether or not exiting military servicemembers’ military occupational specialty training was transferrable to the civilian labor force;
- (c) Whether or not exiting military servicemembers received job search skills/counseling covered in the TAP;
- (d) Age;
- (e) Income level;
- (f) Length of service in the military;
- (g) Pay Grade;
- (h) Gender;
- (i) Race/Ethnicity; and

(j) Active Duty Status.

A multiple regression analysis was used to accomplish this objective. The dependent variable was the perceptions of exiting military servicemembers regarding the effectiveness of TAP. The selected personal and professional demographic characteristics collected in the study were treated as independent variables, and stepwise entry of the variables was used due to the exploratory nature of the study. In this regression analysis, variables were added that increased the explained variance by 1% or more as long as the overall regression model remained significant.

Of the 10 independent variables utilized in the study, four were measured as dichotomous variables (“MOS transferable to the civilian labor force,” “Job Search Skills/Counseling Covered in the TAP,” “Gender,” and “Active Duty Status”) and were therefore entered into the analysis in this form. Four of the variables (“Education,” “Age,” “Income level,” and “Length of Service”) were measured as ordinal variables containing five or more levels and, due to the limited number of study participants, were entered into the analysis directly. The last two variables, “Pay Grade” and “Race/Ethnicity,” were recoded in preparation for entry into the analysis.

One of these variables (“Pay Grade”) was ordinal in nature, but had a very limited number of responses for several of the response categories. These limited responses made entering the variable directly into the analysis inappropriate in the view of the researcher. Consequently, to effectively utilize this variable in the regression analysis, the variable was restructured to create two categories. One of these categories was “Enlisted,” into which all of the categories of respondents who reported their “Pay Grade” was in one of the enlisted categories (E1 to E3, E4 to E6, E7 to E9) was collapsed. The other category was “Officer,” into which all of the categories of respondents who reported that their “Pay Grade” as one of the

officer categories (O1 to O3, O4 to O6, and O7 to O10) was collapsed. The “Warrant” category (W1 to W5) had insufficient responses to use it as a separate dichotomous variable; however, in the judgment of the researcher this category could not be combined with either the “Enlisted” category or the “Officer” category. Therefore, this variable was entered into the analysis as a dichotomous variable with the categories of “Enlisted” and “Officer.”

The other variable (“Race/Ethnicity”) was nominal but, due to the small number of responses in three of the five categories, it had to be restructured. “Race/Ethnicity” was designed for participants to originally self-identify in five categories: “White,” “Black,” “Hispanic,” “Asian,” and “Other.” Three of these categories “Asian,” “Hispanic” and “Other” had insufficient response numbers to treat them as separate dichotomous variables for entry into the regression analysis. Additionally, these response categories could not reasonably be combined with any of the response categories that had sufficient numbers. Therefore, two dichotomous variables were created from these categories: “White” or “non-White” and “Black” or “non-Black.” It was in this format that the variable “Race/Ethnicity” was entered into the analysis.

The first step in conducting the regression analysis was to examine the bivariate correlations. Two-way correlations between factors used as independent variables and the Perception Scores are presented in Table 11. (See Table 11).

Four of the 11 correlations were found to be statistically significant. The highest correlation with the exiting servicemembers’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the TAP was with “Job Search Skills/Counseling,” which asked study participants “Was your Job Search

Skills/Counseling covered in the TAP?” ($r = .42$, $p = .001$). The second highest correlation with the perceptions of the effectiveness of the TAP were found with “Income level” ($r = .32$, $p = .011$) and “Active Duty Status,” which asked study participants “Were you on active

duty when you went through TAP?” ($r = .32$, $p = .011$). The only other variable that was significantly related with the exiting servicemembers’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the TAP was “Length of Service” ($r = .25$, $p = .040$).

Table 11. Relationship Between Selected Demographic Characteristics and “Perceptions Regarding the Effectiveness of the TAP” Scores Among Exiting Military Servicemembers Who Attended the Transition Assistance Program Workshops in Louisiana

Variable	<u>R</u>	<u>P</u>
Job Search ^a	.42	.001
Income level	.32	.011
Active Duty Status ^b	.32	.011
Length of Service in Military	.25	.040
Age	-.16	.129
Pay Grade ^c	.11	.216
MOS ^d	.07	.317
Education	.05	.367
Gender ^e	.03	.424
White ^f	.01	.478
Black ^g	-.01	.472

Note. N=50

^aWas your job search skills/counseling covered in the TAP? Yes = 1, No = 0.

^bWere you on Active Duty when you went through TAP? Yes = 1, No = 0.

^cWhat is your Pay Grade? “Pay Grade” was recoded to “Officer = 1” and “Enlisted = 0.”

^dIs your Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) transferable to the civilian labor force? Yes = 1, No = 0.

^e“Gender” was coded to “Female” = 1, “Male” = 0.

^f“White” = 1, “non-White” = 0.

^g“Black” = 1, “non- Black” = 0.

The researcher examined the variables entered into the regression analysis for excessive collinearity. To accomplish this examination, the variance inflation factor (VIF) was calculated for each independent variable in the analysis. The values ranged from 1.088 to 2.207. According

to Hair et al., “ a common cutoff threshold is a tolerance value of .10 which corresponds to a VIF value of 10” (Hair et al., 2006, p. 230). Therefore, no excess multicollinearity was present in the data.

The variable that entered the regression model first was “Job Search Skills/Counseling covered in the TAP,” which explained 17.5% of the variance in perceptions of the effectiveness of the Transition Assistance Program. The variable that entered the regression model second was “Income level,” which explained an additional 7.1% of the variance in perceptions of the effectiveness of the Transition Assistance Program. At this point, the three remaining variables were individually non-significant. However, they were included in the model since they added more than 1% to the explained variance, and the overall model remained significant. The first of the three non-significant variables that entered the regression model was “Active Duty Status,” which explained an additional 4.0% of the variance in perceptions of the effectiveness of Transition Assistance Program. The second of the three non-significant variables that entered the regression model was “Age,” which explained an additional 2.2% of the variance in perceptions of the effectiveness of Transition Assistance Program. The last of the three non-significant variables that entered the regression model was “Military Occupational Specialty,” which explained an additional 1.5% of the variance in perceptions of the effectiveness of Transition Assistance Program. In combination, all five of these variables explained 32.3% of the variance in the perceptions of the effectiveness of the TAP. Results of the regression analysis are presented in Table 12. (See Table 12).

Those participants who indicated “Yes” to “Job Search Skills/Counseling covered in the TAP” tended to have a higher perception of the effectiveness of TAP. Those participants who indicated higher “Income levels” tended to have a higher perception of the effectiveness of the

Table 12. Multiple Regression Analysis of Perceptions Regarding Effectiveness of the TAP Scores on Selected Personal and Professional Demographics Among Exiting Military Servicemembers Who Attended the Transition Assistance Program Workshops in Louisiana.

ANOVA						
Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
Regression	7.125	5	1.425	4.206	.003	
Residual	14.905	44	.339			
Total	22.030	49				
Model Summary						
Model	R Square	R Square Change	F Change	Dfs	Sig. F Change	Standardized Coefficients Beta
Job Search ^a	.175	.175	10.216	1,48	.002	.389
Variables Not In the Equation						
Model	<u>T</u>			<u>p</u>		
Length of Service in the Military	.256			.799		
White ^e	-.116			.908		
Gender ^f	-.289			.739		
Black ^g	-.344			.774		
Education	-.575			.588		

Note. N=50

^aWas your job search skills/counseling covered in the TAP? Yes = 1, No = 0.

^bWere you on Active Duty when you went through TAP? Yes = 1, No = 0.

^cIs your Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) transferable to the civilian labor force? Yes = 1, No = 0.

^dWhat is your Pay grade? Officer = 1, Enlisted = 0.

^eWhat is your Race/Ethnicity? "White = 1," "non-White = 0."

^gBlack = 1," "non-Black = 0."

Table 12 continued

^fWhat is your Gender? "Female" = 1, "Male" = 0.

TAP. Those participants who indicated "Yes" to "Were you on Active Duty when you went through TAP" tended to have a higher perception of the effectiveness of the TAP. Those participants who were younger tended to have a higher perception of the effectiveness of the TAP. Finally, those participants who indicated "Yes" to "Military Occupational Specialty

transferable to the civilian labor force” tended to have a higher perception of the effectiveness of the TAP.

CHAPTER V: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Purpose and Objectives

The primary purpose of this study was to determine the influence of selected personal and professional demographic characteristics on the perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the

Transition Assistance Program (TAP) in accomplishing its stated purposes among exiting military servicemembers at military installations in Louisiana.

Objectives

Objective one was to describe the exiting military servicemembers at military installations in Louisiana who participated in TAP on the following selected personal and professional demographic characteristics:

- (a) Highest level of education completed;
- (b) Whether or not exiting military servicemembers' military occupational specialty training was transferrable to the civilian labor force;
- (c) Whether or not exiting military servicemembers received job search skills/counseling covered in the TAP;
- (d) Age;
- (e) Income level;
- (f) Length of service in the military;
- (g) Pay Grade;
- (h) Gender;
- (i) Race/Ethnicity; and
- (j) Active Duty Status.

Objective two was to determine the perceptions of exiting military servicemembers at military installations in Louisiana regarding the perceived effectiveness of the TAP in accomplishing its stated purposes as measured by a researcher-designed opinionnaire.

Objective three was to determine if a relationship exists between the perceptions of exiting military servicemembers in Louisiana regarding the perceived effectiveness of the TAP in accomplishing its stated purposes and the following selected personal and professional demographic characteristics:

- (a) Highest level of education completed;
- (b) Whether or not exiting military servicemembers' military occupational specialty training was transferrable to the civilian labor force;
- (c) Whether or not exiting military servicemembers received job search skills/counseling covered in the TAP;
- (d) Age;
- (e) Income level;
- (f) Length of service in the military;
- (g) Pay Grade;
- (h) Gender;
- (i) Race/Ethnicity; and
- (j) Active Duty Status.

Objective four was to determine if a model exists that explains a significant portion of the variance in the perceptions of exiting military servicemembers at installations in Louisiana in accomplishing its stated purposes based on the following selected personal and professional demographic characteristics:

- (a) Highest level of education completed;
- (b) Whether or not exiting military servicemembers' military occupational specialty training was transferrable to the civilian labor force;
- (c) Whether or not exiting military servicemembers received job search skills/counseling covered in the TAP;
- (d) Age;
- (e) Income level;
- (f) Length of service in the military;
- (g) Pay Grade;
- (h) Gender;
- (i) Race/Ethnicity; and
- (j) Active Duty Status.

Summary of Methodology

Population and Sample

The target population for this study was exiting military servicemembers who were separating within 12 months or retiring within 24 months and attended the Transition Assistance Program workshops in Louisiana. In this study, the definitions of the accessible population and the sample were the same as that of the target population.

Instrumentation

The Productivity Consultants & Career Support Services (PCCSS) Transition Inventory was developed by the researcher to collect data on the perception of the effectiveness of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP). The instrument was based on the Government Accountability Office's Transition Assistance Program reports. The PCCSS Transition Inventory

included closed-ended items (Likert-type response scale and “Yes” / “No” or categorical formats) related to servicemembers’ experience, knowledge, perceptions and demographic information. The content validity of this researcher-designed instrument was established through a review by a panel of experts, including a federal employment training program director, university faculty and administrators, and doctoral candidates at a research university. Revisions were made as a result of input from the expert panel before distribution to exiting military servicemember participants.

Data Collection

The researcher obtained permission from the university’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) office before the inventory was electronically distributed using Qualtrics. The e-mail link from Qualtrics was forwarded to the federal employment training professional (proxy), who announced the inventory and the data collection effort. The e-mail link, which was sent to all participants, included an Informed Consent form requesting them to complete the survey. Each exiting military servicemember was afforded the opportunity to opt out of the inventory. In addition, exiting military servicemembers were apprised in the Informed Consent form that their responses would be kept confidential.

Limitations of the Research

The researcher recognizes the limitations of using surveys in research. Understanding the guidelines set forth by the federal government in conducting independent research and working with a federal employment training proxy to distribute the surveys, the researcher understood the real time or short periods of time to collect the data from military installations in Louisiana. Because of this limitation, it was difficult to have the survey available for an extended period of time. Therefore, it presented a bias in this study producing a small number of respondents.

The researcher also acknowledges the limitation of acquiring data on a federal employment training program from federal employees can be risky. Even though the participants signed a disclaimer of confidentiality, participants could be reluctant to participate for personal reasons or the desire to fully express their perception of the TAP because of the fear of consequences.

Other constraints to using surveys in this study to collect data:

- Lack of time (availability) to complete the survey;
- Does not feel the survey will improve the TAP process;
- Participant may not place great value or understand the importance of the survey;

The researcher will continue to conduct research on the perceptions toward the perceived effectiveness of TAP and gather information on this population with the intent to publish in business and career development journals— as well as provide information to the DoD and local/ or regional veteran agencies.

Summary of Findings

The major findings of this study are discussed below by objective.

Objective One

Objective one was to describe the exiting military servicemembers at military installations in Louisiana who participated in TAP on the following selected personal and professional demographic characteristics:

- (a) Highest level of education completed;
- (b) Whether or not exiting military servicemembers' military occupational specialty training was transferrable to the civilian labor force;

- (c) Whether or not exiting military servicemembers received job search skills/counseling covered in the TAP;
- (d) Age;
- (e) Income level;
- (f) Length of service in the military;
- (g) Pay Grade;
- (h) Gender;
- (i) Race/Ethnicity; and
- (j) Active Duty Status.

Of the 53 study participants who provided useable data for the survey on their “Education level,” 86.8 % had at least a four-year degree. The largest group reported having a master’s degree as their highest level of “education” completed ($\underline{n} = 24$, 45.3%). The next largest group reported having a bachelor’s degree as their highest level of “education” completed ($\underline{n} = 21$, 39.6%). The smallest group reported having a Ph.D. ($\underline{n} = 1$, 1.9%).

Of the 53 study participants who provided useable data for the survey, the majority reported “Yes” to whether or not the respondent’s “MOS” was transferable to the civilian labor force. Of the 53 respondents, 38 (71.7%) reported “Yes” and 15 (28.3%) reported “No.”

Of the 53 study participants who provided useable data for the survey, the majority reported “Yes” to whether or not “Job Search Skills/Counseling” was covered in the TAP. Of the 53 respondents, 38 (71.7%) reported “Yes” and 15 (28.3%) reported “No.”

Of the 53 study participants who provided useable data for the survey, the largest group ($\underline{n} = 21$, 39.6%) indicated they were in the 40 to 49 “Age” category. The next largest group of

respondents was in the “Age” category of 50 to 59 ($\underline{n} = 14$, 26.4%). In combination, the majority of the respondents ($n = 39$, 66%) were in these two categories.

Of the 53 study participants who provided useable data for the survey, the largest group of respondents reported that they earned an income in the \$60,000 or more category ($\underline{n} = 26$, 49.1%). The category that was reported by the smallest number of respondents was the \$30,000 to \$39,999 “Income level” category ($\underline{n} = 3$, 5.7%).

Of the 53 study participants who provided useable data for the survey, the “Length of Service” category reported by the largest group of respondents was “21 + Years” ($\underline{n} = 21$, 39.2%), and the smallest number of respondents was in the “11 to 15 Years” category ($\underline{n} = 1$, 1.9%).

Of the 53 study participants who provided useable data for the survey in the “Pay grade” category, the largest group of respondents was in the “E7 to E9” category ($\underline{n} = 18$, 34.0%) and the second largest group reported the “E4 to E6” category ($\underline{n} = 17$, 32.1%). No participants, however, were identified in the category “O7 to O10.”

Of the 53 study participants who provided useable data for the survey on their “Gender,” 17 (32.1%) were “Female” and 36 (67.9%) were “Male.”

Of the 53 study participants who provided useable data for the survey in the “Race/Ethnicity category,” the majority reported “White” ($\underline{n} = 28$, 52.8%). The second largest group ($\underline{n} = 19$, 35.8%) reported “Black” as its “Race/Ethnicity” category.

Of the 53 study participants who provided useable data for the survey in the “Active duty” category, 47 reported “Yes” (88.7%) that they were on “Active duty” status when they went through TAP. Six (6) reported “No” (11.3%) to being on “Active duty” when they went through TAP.

Objective Two

Objective two was to determine the perceptions of exiting military servicemembers at military installations in Louisiana regarding the perceived effectiveness of the TAP in accomplishing its stated purposes as measured by a researcher-designed opinionnaire.

This analysis began by determining the means and standard deviations of each item in the PCCSS Transition Inventory scale. Participants rated their level of “Agreement” on a 4-point Likert-type scale using the following response options: 1= Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, and 4 = Strongly Agree, rating a total of 16 statements. Exiting military servicemembers indicated the highest level of “Agreement” with the statement “I was allowed time to attend the TAP classes by my unit commander” ($M = 3.36$, $SD = .73$). The lowest level of “Agreement” was indicated with the statements “Participation in TAP has helped my career-readiness” ($M = 2.77$, $SD = .912$) and “I am better prepared for life after the military since I attended the TAP” ($M = 2.77$, $SD = .933$). In addition, the following Interpretive scale was developed by the researcher to aid in reporting exiting military servicemembers’ perceptions: 1.0 - 1.5 = Strongly Disagree; 1.51 - 2.5 = Disagree; 2.51 - 3.5 = Agree; 3.51 - 4.0 = Strongly Agree. Using this Interpretative scale, all items had a mean rating that was classified in the “Agree” category.

A Cronbach’s alpha was conducted on the 16 items on the PCCSS Transition Inventory scale to estimate the reliability of the scale. The findings showed the scale to have a “high” degree of internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.964$). Tavako and Dennick (2011), indicated that alpha values above .70 are acceptable levels of internal consistency

To further examine the perceptions of exiting military servicemembers regarding the TAP, the researcher conducted a factor analysis to determine if underlying constructs existed in

the scale. The factor analysis was conducted using principal components analysis with varimax rotation.

The researcher found that the most appropriate number of factors was one. Subsequently, an overall perception score was computed for each participant as the mean of the 16 items on the PCCSS scale. The overall mean of these scores was 3.02 (SD = .67), and the values ranged from a minimum of 1.13 to a maximum of 4.00. This overall mean score was also classified using the researcher-designed Interpretive scale as “Agree.”

Objective Three

Objective three was to determine if a relationship existed between the perceptions of exiting military servicemembers in Louisiana regarding the perceived effectiveness of the TAP in accomplishing its stated purposes and the following selected personal and professional demographic characteristics:

- (a) Highest level of education completed;
- (b) Whether or not exiting military servicemembers' military occupational specialty training was transferrable to the civilian labor force;
- (c) Whether or not exiting military servicemembers received job search skills/counseling covered in the TAP;
- (d) Age;
- (e) Income level;
- (f) Length of service in the military;
- (g) Pay Grade;
- (h) Gender;
- (i) Race/Ethnicity; and

(j) Active Duty Status.

In order to accomplish this objective, the researcher examined 10 variables; and three were found to have statistically significant relationships with the perceived effectiveness of the Transition Assistance Program. The three variables are “Job Search Skills/Counseling covered in the TAP,” “Income level,” and “Active Duty status.” Therefore, seven variables in this study, “Education,” “Military Occupational Specialty transferable to the civilian labor force,” “Age,” “Length of Service,” “Pay Grade,” “Gender,” and “Race/Ethnicity had no statistically significant relationships to the perceived effectiveness of the Transition Assistance Program.

Objective Four

The final objective was to determine if a model exists that explains a significant portion of the variance in the perceptions of exiting military servicemembers at installations in Louisiana in accomplishing its stated purposes from the following selected personal and professional demographic characteristics:

- (a) Highest level of education completed;
- (b) Whether or not exiting military servicemembers’ military occupational specialty training was transferable to the civilian labor force;
- (c) Whether or not exiting military servicemembers received job search skills/counseling covered in the TAP;
- (d) Age;
- (e) Income level;
- (f) Length of service in the military;
- (g) Pay Grade;
- (h) Gender;

- (i) Race/Ethnicity; and
- (j) Active Duty Status.

Regression and Models

A multiple regression analysis was used to analyze this objective. The dependent variable was perceptions of exiting military servicemembers regarding the effectiveness of the TAP. The collected personal and professional demographic characteristics were treated as independent variables, and stepwise entry of the variables was used due to the exploratory nature of the study. In the regression analysis, variables were added that increased the explained variance by one percent or more as long as the overall regression model remained significant.

The variable that entered the regression model first was “Job Search Skills/Counseling covered in the TAP,” which explained 17.5% of the variance in perception of the effectiveness of the TAP. The variable that entered the regression model second was “Income level,” which explained an additional 7.1% of the variance in perception of the effectiveness of TAP. At this point, the three remaining variables were individually non-significant. However, they were included in the model since they added more than one percent to the explained variance, and the overall model remained significant. The first of the three non-significant variables that entered the regression model was “Active Duty Status,” which explained an additional 4.0% of the variance in perception of the effectiveness of TAP. The second of the three non-significant variables that entered the regression model was “Age,” which explained an additional 2.2% of the variance in perception of the effectiveness of TAP. The last of the three non-significant variables that entered the regression model was “Military Occupational Specialty,” which explained an additional 1.5% of the variance in perception of the effectiveness of TAP. In

combination, all five of these variables explained 32.3% of the variance in the perceptions of the effectiveness of the TAP.

The researcher examined the bivariate correlations in the regression analysis. Two-way correlations between factors used as independent variables and the Perception Scores were determined.

Four of the 11 correlations were found to be statistically significant. The highest correlation with the exiting servicemembers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the TAP was with "Job Search Skills/Counseling," which asked study participants "Was your Job Search Skills/Counseling covered in the TAP?" ($r = .42$, $p = .001$). The second highest correlation with the perceptions of the effectiveness of the TAP were found with "Income level" ($r = .32$, $p = .011$) and "Active Duty Status," which asked study participants "Were you on active duty when you went through TAP?" ($r = .32$, $p = .011$). The only other variable that was significantly related with the exiting servicemembers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the TAP was "Length of Service" ($r = .25$, $p = .040$).

The researcher examined the variables entered into the regression analysis for excessive collinearity. To accomplish this examination, the variance inflation factor (VIF) was calculated for each independent variable in the analysis. The values ranged from 1.088 to 2.207. According to Hair et al., "a common cutoff threshold is a tolerance value of .10 which corresponds to a VIF value of 10" (Hair et al., 2006, p. 230). Therefore, no excess multicollinearity was present in the data.

The variable that entered the regression model first was "Job Search Skills/Counseling covered in the TAP," which explained 17.5% of the variance in perceptions of the effectiveness of the Transition Assistance Program. The variable that entered the regression model second was

“Income level,” which explained an additional 7.1% of the variance in perceptions of the effectiveness of the Transition Assistance Program. At this point, the three remaining variables were individually non-significant. However, they were included in the model since they added more than 1% to the explained variance, and the overall model remained significant. The first of the three non-significant variables that entered the regression model was “Active Duty Status,” which explained an additional 4.0% of the variance in perceptions of the effectiveness of Transition Assistance Program. The second of the three non-significant variables that entered the regression model was “Age,” which explained an additional 2.2% of the variance in perceptions of the effectiveness of Transition Assistance Program. The last of the three non-significant variables that entered the regression model was “Military Occupational Specialty,” which explained an additional 1.5% of the variance in perceptions of the effectiveness of Transition Assistance Program. In combination, all five of these variables explained 32.3% of the variance in the perceptions of the effectiveness of the TAP.

Those participants who indicated “Yes” to “Job Search Skills/Counseling covered in the TAP” tended to have a higher perception of the effectiveness of TAP. Those participants who indicated higher “Income levels” tended to have a higher perception of the effectiveness of the TAP. Those participants who indicated “Yes” to “Were you on Active Duty when you went through TAP” tended to have a higher perception of the effectiveness of the TAP. Those participants who were younger tended to have a higher perception of the effectiveness of the TAP. Finally, those participants who indicated “Yes” to “Military Occupational Specialty transferable to the civilian labor force” tended to have a higher perception of the effectiveness of the TAP.

Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

Based on the findings from this study, the researcher discusses the overall and specific conclusions, implications and recommendations in this section. Recommendations for future studies and suggestions for best practices are also proposed below.

Conclusion

1. The exiting military servicemembers (EMS) who participated in the TAP were highly educated.

This conclusion is based on the finding that 86.8% of the responders reported having at least a four-year degree and that the largest group ($n = 24$, 45.3%) reported having a master's degree as their highest level of education completed. In Bascetta's 2002 report on Military and Veterans' Benefits: Observations on the TAP, education was mentioned in the Government Accounting Office (GAO) report as an indicator associated with the effectiveness of the TAP.

Implications

Education serves as a vehicle to career and professional development. According to Bascetta, education could play an integral role in the successful transition of exiting military servicemembers (Bascetta, 2002). The more education afforded exiting military servicemembers, the greater the chance for successful career transition. At the time of this study, the number of military servicemembers who pursued their education after exiting the military was not known; but the implication of furthering their academic pursuits have always been attractive to a soldier entering and staying in the military. Servicemembers can continue their education depending on their assignment and oftentimes this is one of the many benefits of serving in the military. While this study received data from a biased sample, and the breakdown of education levels produced a high level of educated exiting military servicemembers, more research is needed to delineate the education level of a more representative sample. Having more information about education

levels will help the DoD better understand the demographics of this transitioning population. Currently, there are more enlisted soldiers than officers and the breakdown of education levels would be useful knowledge for the transition counselor. Most EMS in this study reported having at least a four-year degree; therefore, another implication is that these EMSs could reasonably be expected to understand the value of education and the influence it could play in their transition to civilian employment.

Recommendations

The education level of veterans and the on-going pursuit of education can help veterans become “career ready,” playing an important role in their transition. In many cases, education supports or complements the training necessary to compete for employment. Since this sample was small and was highly biased with respect to education level, this study should be replicated with a larger and more representative sample. Education remains constant in the literature as an indicator towards exiting military servicemembers’ effective transition to civilian life.

Correspondingly, the researcher recommends that the DoD support legislation to make community colleges and vocational schools tuition free for veterans over their lifetime, as well as continue to diffuse negative perceptions concerning the employment of veterans. One of the many benefits of military service is the G.I. Bill, which servicemembers can use to pay for college upon exiting the service. Many EMS continue their education after leaving the service; therefore, their VA benefits provide them with the opportunity to gain additional education and pursue career opportunities otherwise unavailable to them (Ackerman & Garza-Mitchell, 2009). Tuition-free community colleges and vocational schools could serve as a baseline for veterans to receive and exercise their educational benefits. This policy would necessitate capturing quantitative data on the efforts of EMS to pursue further educational and training opportunities.

Currently, the state of Tennessee and the city of Chicago offer free community college and vocational school education and training to underprivileged communities. A similar model could be used for veterans, particularly in their transition to the civilian labor force.

The researcher recommends the Department of Defense investigate further the relationship between the educational levels of EMS and the perceived effectiveness of TAP. Specifically, research should be conducted regarding the impact of educational level on the post-military success of EMS with the goal of better understanding how education influences their transition towards career readiness. Congress has requested similar information from the DoD to better understand the significance of education as veterans' transition to the civilian labor force. As so few studies regarding the education levels of EMS exist in the literature, an obvious place to start would seem to be with the agencies responsible for the TAP. But the fact that the MOU does not clearly delineate who is responsible for the TAP makes this approach very difficult. Until the education level of veterans is clearly understood as an indicator, the influence of the TAP on EMS will not be known. However, the systems for tracking this information are already in place.

First, the education levels of servicemembers as they enter the military can be tracked on the DD 214 (the complete military service record and separation document entailing all military training), which could serve as a starting point for capturing initial education levels. Second, if a servicemember is interested in continuing his or her education, that intent could be tracked either on the DD 214 or through the implementation of an Individual Development Plan (IDP). Third, in lieu of an IDP, each servicemember could be placed on an Individual Transition Plan (ITP) before they enter the TAP. The purpose of the ITP is to provide a guide or map for career goals. It does not serve as a "career readiness" tool as defined by the TAP, but with some overhauling,

the ITP could serve as a data collection tool for assessing career readiness upon entering or exiting the military. Also, the ITP could be used to support the training efforts necessary for transition to the civilian labor force. Fourth, DD Form 2958 (ITP Checklist), Section III – Accessing Higher Education/Career Technical Training Readiness Standards, captures the educational information and interests of EMS via “YES,” “NO,” or “NA” responses to the following items (see Appendix I).

- 16a. Completed an assessment tool to identify aptitudes, interests, strengths, or skills
- 16b. Completed a comparison of academic or training institution choices
- 16c. Completed a college, university or career technical application or received an acceptance letter, respectively
- 16d. Confirmed one-on-one counseling with a higher education or career technical training institution advisor or counselor

The problem with DD Form 2958 (ITP Checklist) is that it does not capture the current education level of EMS, which is critical for the career transition process. However, this document could be used as a reporting tool with the following addendum: “16e. Completed a four-year degree or currently enrolled in a higher education institution.”

Finally, although the researcher found that many of the tools and forms are already in place to capture the necessary information on education levels, the information is not registered or used to support EMS career transition. As mentioned earlier in this study, the federal government spent over \$18 billion dollars in 2009 on federal employment training programs including the TAP. Taxpayer dollars can be saved if the DoD tracks the education levels of EMS using existing tools/forms and provides the GAO and other government reporting agencies with this information to improve EMS career transition. However, without clear ownership of the TAP, this information will never be captured because it would invoke questions concerning why more is not being done for EMS. These recommendations could advance the knowledge of this population and their education levels, facilitating the development of career readiness.

Conclusion

2. The inclusion of Job Search Skills/Counseling in the TAP has a positive influence on its perceived effectiveness.

This conclusion is based on the finding that those who indicated “Yes” ($M = 3.17$, $SD = .638$) in response to the Job Search Skills/Counseling item had significantly more positive perceptions of the effectiveness of TAP than those who said “No” ($M = 2.64$, $SD = .606$), ($t_{51} = 2.777$, $p = .008$). Job Search Skills/Counseling also was mentioned in the Government Accounting Office (GAO) reports as an indicator associated with the effectiveness of the TAP (Bascetta, 2002). However, the goals of the TAP regarding the inclusion of job search skills/counseling have not been clearly defined to date.

Implications

After 25 years of TAP existence, all military branches had their own version of the TAP until it was redesigned in 2013. The Department of Defense has revamped the TAP for all EMSs to receive Pre-Separation Counseling, and job search skills/counseling is federally mandated for all exiting military servicemembers. To date, no post transition data on the impact of Job Search Skills/Counseling have been provided in the literature. Based on this study, one major implication is that job search skills/counseling is a critical factor in the delivery of the TAP. Government reports support the notion that transition produces uncertainty, ultimately producing stress for veterans and their families (Labor, 2002). Until this study, Job Search Skills/Counseling in the TAP and its perceived effectiveness was unknown among exiting military servicemembers.

Recommendations

In order for veterans to become “career ready,” Job Search Skills/Counseling is probably the most critical component in their career transition because it involves career choice skills.

Many veterans leave the military with good employment training that will translate to the civilian labor force, but lack the necessary Job Search Skills/Counseling or understanding of how to appropriately communicate these skills in a civilian labor market. This complex struggle for all transitioning populations including college students because of the myriad of factors that influence *career choice* and *career readiness*.

More important is the Job Search Skills/Counseling component that is seamlessly present throughout the TAP, but not programmatically regulated at each check-point. A perception could be that EMS lack the full understanding of the value of Job Search Skills/Counseling. Arguably, with the lack of understanding, each EMS will never know the significance of their employment transition and the many factors that should be considered such as their values, interests, continuing education programs, job settings and occupational change. Furthermore, if the soldier is married, the ability to transition the entire family brings forth additional counseling and support challenges that could make a difference in a soldier's decision making. These beliefs are realized in the literature and every EMS must overcome these challenges as they consider their transition needs.

First, Schlossberg and Waters (1995), leading counseling psychologists on transition, have identified work transition as a major occurrence in life. Not only is a servicemember impacted by his or her job change, but Schlossberg and Waters (1995) explain that adults today find themselves charting unfamiliar and unexpected waters while coping with the impact of living with uncertainty for themselves and their families. Second, in chapter II of this study, the researcher mentioned the importance of career choice and provided the Cognitive Information Processing theory as a useful model for EMS to understand the values and interests that go into making the appropriate career decisions (Peterson, Sampson & Reardon, 1992). According to

Peterson, et al., the model lends credence to understanding more about the individual in order to make sound career decisions (Peterson, et al, 1992). Every EMS should be pre-assessed prior to the start of their career transition to ensure career choice fundamentals are in place to support the career readiness model.

Third, the DoD conducts and records the results of pre-testing when a servicemember enters the military to better understand his or her strengths and interests. By administering an intense battery of tests, the DoD is better equipped to place soldiers in the appropriate training to meet the goal of the military to maintain defense readiness. This approach has served the U.S. military very well and supports a competitive and well-trained defense. However, if the DoD simply pays closer attention to this area, the administration could provide a smoother career transition for soldiers. Fourth, career choice and Job Search Skills/Counseling are somewhat interchangeable. Research shows that career choice modeling is necessary before sound career choices can be made. EMS should undergo a series of tests to best support his or her career choices and career transition. A detailed battery of tests similar to those used upon entry into the military should be conducted on each EMS to better understand his or her adult learning style and support the career choice and job search skills/counseling provided by the TAP. This information could prove to be very useful and critical for a TAP counselor who is counseling the EMS. This recommendation presumes that the Job Search Skills/Counseling training has significance, but no research was found on the impact of this area on career readiness.

Finally, the researcher recommends that the DoD establish a federal mandate requiring Job Search Skills/Counseling pre-testing to be included as one of the domains in the new TAP (distinct from the Pre-Separation Counseling). This approach could improve the effectiveness of the TAP, help EMSs accomplish their career transition goals and better understand the aptitudes

necessary for making a career choice, and improve the job search skills/counseling domain. The researcher also recommends that additional data be collected from veterans to determine how Job Search Skills/Counseling benefited their career transitions. These recommendations could advance the knowledge of this population toward career readiness and improve the current TAP model for exiting military servicemembers.

Conclusion

3. Those participants who reported higher income levels tended to have a more positive perception of the effectiveness of the TAP.

This conclusion is based on the finding that the computed correlation between Income level and perception of the effectiveness of the TAP was $r = .330$, ($n = 53$, $p = .016$). Therefore, a significant relationship was found between exiting military servicemembers' income level and the perceived effectiveness of the TAP.

Implications

One of the major implications of this finding is to have a better understanding of how exiting military servicemembers sustain their income level. For servicemembers to sustain their income, they must have financial knowledge and personal information that they can prepare during the TAP workshop. Over the last 20 years, the TAP has offered financial planning as part of the federally mandated Pre-Separation Counseling, but the researcher could not locate any previous literature that specifically addressed income and the relationship between income level and the perceived effectiveness of the TAP.

According to this study, participants who indicated higher income levels tended to have a higher perception of the effectiveness of the TAP. Therefore, understanding why their perceptions are more positive is important for understanding the relationship between income level and the perceived effectiveness of the TAP. Future researchers need to find better ways to

understand the impact of exiting servicemembers' income levels on their perceived effectiveness of the TAP. In particular, this relationship is important for servicemembers as they manage the many financial challenges during their transition to the civilian labor force.

One reason for this result could be that the TAP helps EMSs understand how to sustain or improve their current situation as they make decisions about their career transition. According to Peterson et al., the CIP theory mentioned in chapter two, the first step for moving towards good career decision-making skills is important to understanding one's values and personal interests. These foundational tenets enable exiting servicemembers to have a better understanding of their chances of sustaining or improving their income level, perhaps affecting their perceived effectiveness of the TAP.

Recommendations

The researcher recommends that future research develop a detailed financial/income plan that can be personalized for every EMS. In a broader context, income level would fall under the financial planning domain, which is currently a part of the Pre-Separation checklist (Sherrill, 2014b). Providing EMS with information about civilian jobs and income, as well as the location of opportunities, could impact their career decision-making skills and their perceived effectiveness of the TAP. Because TAP workshops provide tools for *career readiness*, financial/income planning could be a critical factor in helping EMS understand how to prepare for their career transitions. In addition, the researcher recommends that the DoD/DOL use a financial/income plan model to further assist EMSs to better understand how to sustain or improve their financial situations.

Conclusion

4. Being on active duty when respondents attended the TAP had a positive influence on their perceptions of the effectiveness of the program.

This conclusion is based on the finding that, of the 53 respondents in this study, the 47 who reported “Yes” (88.7%) to “Were you on active duty when you went through TAP” had significantly different perceptions from those who reported “No” (6, 11.3%). Those who indicated “Yes” ($M = 3.10$, $SD = .595$) had significantly better perceptions of TAP than those who said “No” ($M = 2.41$, $SD = .945$). Therefore, a significant relationship was found between “Active Duty Status” when servicemembers attended the TAP workshops and their perceived effectiveness of the TAP. Active duty status was not generalized in the Government Accounting Office (GAO) reports as a factor associated with the effectiveness of the TAP.

Implications

There could be several reasons for this result. Base commanders must sign off on every EMS as they complete the TAP workshops. Regardless of their perception of the TAP, it is mandatory. Also, the literature does not give any reasons for active-duty participation concerns, but mentions active duty as a possible factor affecting TAP attendance. GAO studies have reported that unit and base commanders have been asked to play a larger role in ensuring that all EMSs receive and participate in all of the TAP workshops (Sherrill, 2014a). In the past, TAP participation has been associated with the effectiveness of TAP; therefore, most of the findings that have been generalized in the literature regarding participation in the TAP have been based on attendance and not on active duty status.

Recommendations

The researcher recommends that the DoD continue to emphasize the importance of requiring the full participation of all EMS in all career transition programs, including the TAP

workshops. Thus, the creation of an EMS career transition model is needed to better track servicemember status as they enter the TAP. This study found that active duty status had a positive influence on perceptions of TAP effectiveness; however, further research is needed to better understand that influence. As part of the EMS' Pre-Separation Counseling, the DOL administrators could record the active duty status of all EMS upon enrollment in the TAP. As part of the career transition model, the DoD could track active duty participation in the TAP. In addition, the federal government should mandate that both the career counselor and the base commander sign off on each EMS' TAP form to ensure compliance. Finally, little is known about Reservist, National Guard, and Coast Guard participants enrolled in the TAP. More information on active duty and Reservist TAP participants is needed to better understand their participation.

Conclusion

5. Participants' perceptions regarding whether or not the "MOS" was transferable to the civilian labor force had no influence on their perceptions of the effectiveness of the TAP.

This conclusion is based on the finding that when perceptions of the effectiveness of the TAP were compared by categories of the variable "whether or not MOS was transferable to the civilian labor force" ("Yes" – $M = 3.07$, $SD = .659$ and "No" – $M = 2.93$, $SD = .708$), the test was not statistically significant ($t_{51} = .702$, $p = .486$). Therefore, no relationship was found between whether a Military Occupational Specialty was transferable to the civilian labor force and the respondent's perception of the effectiveness of the TAP.

Implications

The "MOS" was generalized in the GAO reports as a factor associated with the effectiveness of the TAP (Bascetta, 2002). As part of the new TAP Goals, Planning, Success (GPS), all servicemembers are required to know and understand their "MOS" and its civilian

equivalent as they prepare to leave the military. The “MOS” was generalized in the Government Accounting Office (GAO) This was not the case in the previous TAP and is now mandatory of the new Transition Assistance Program GPS. Now, EMSs must understand the value and importance of the “MOS” and becoming *career ready* as they transition to the civilian labor force.

Recommendations

The researcher recommends that the DoD make it common practice for all EMSs understand their “MOS” translation to the civilian job equivalent when they receive their job orders to further assist their personal career transition strategies. This practice must be exercised from the first day of enlistment. As part of this practice, servicemembers would attend career transition counseling every six months to support their personal transition strategy and to better understand the MOS over the course of the military commitment. This approach would help the servicemember to better understand the importance of the “MOS,” and then the TAP workshops will represent a conclusion, not an introduction.

This research would be a natural and logical progression for collecting data that improves the effectiveness of the TAP. No relationship was found between “Whether or not “MOS” was transferable to the civilian labor force” and the respondent’s perceived effectiveness of the TAP in this study. However, additional research on EMS’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the TAP should be conducted, as MOS has been generalized in the literature as an important factor in servicemember career transition.

Conclusion

6. Those participants who were younger tended to have a more positive perception of the effectiveness of the TAP.

This conclusion is based on the finding that “Age” was the second of the three non-significant variables that entered the regression model which explained an additional 2.2% of the variance in perceptions of the effectiveness of Transition Assistance Program.

Implications

According to this study, younger exiting servicemembers had a better perception of the effectiveness of the TAP. Because a soldier’s “Age” could possibly impact perceptions of the effectiveness of the TAP workshops. One explanation could be that younger soldiers have entered the military as a last resort upon leaving high school and use their enlistment to build a career and gain VA benefits. Therefore, a more positive perception of the effectiveness of the TAP could be motivated by these goals.

Recommendations

The researcher recommends that further research be conducted on different age groups of EMSs and their perceptions of the effectiveness of TAP. This information could be useful in understanding the interests of exiting servicemembers as they transition to the civilian labor force. At the time of this study, no literature was available focusing on servicemembers’ “Age” and their perceptions of the effectiveness of the TAP. Future research should determine best practices for servicemember *career readiness* and transition models to better serve all ages of exiting military servicemembers.

Conclusion

7. No significant relationships were found between exiting military servicemembers' education level, length of service, pay grade, gender, or race and the perceived effectiveness of the TAP.

This conclusion is based on the finding that the computed correlation between "Education Level" and perception of TAP was $r = .07$, ($n = 53$, $p = .61$); therefore, no significant relationship was found between exiting military servicemembers' education level and their perceived effectiveness of the TAP.

The correlation between "Length of Service" and the perception of TAP was $r = .22$, ($n = 53$, $p = .11$). Therefore, no significant relationship was found between exiting military servicemembers' length of service and the perceived effectiveness of the TAP.

When the perceptions of the effectiveness of the TAP were compared using categories of the variable "Pay Grade" ("Enlisted" – $M = 2.94$, $SD = .683$ and "Officer" – $M = 3.11$, $SD = .644$), the test was not statistically significant ($t_{(51)} = .814$, $p = .423$). Therefore, no relationship was found between "Pay Grade" and the perceived effectiveness of the TAP.

When the perceptions of the effectiveness of the TAP were compared using categories of the "Gender" variable ("Female" – $M = 3.04$, $SD = .745$ or "Male" – $M = 3.02$, $SD = .641$), no significant difference was found ($t_{(51)} = .111$, $p = .913$). Therefore, no relationship was found between "Gender" and the perceived effectiveness of the TAP.

When the perceptions of the effectiveness of the TAP were compared using categories of the "Race/Ethnicity variable "White" or non-White ("White" – $M = 3.03$, $SD = .688$ and non-White – $M = 3.02$, $SD = .664$), no significant difference was found ($t_{(51)} = -.017$, $p = .986$). Additionally, when the perceptions were compared by Black or non-Black ("Black" – $M = 3.02$, $SD = .682$ and non-Black – $M = 3.03$, $SD = .664$), no significant difference was found ($t_{(51)} = -.090$, $p = .929$). Therefore, no relationship was found between either of the "Race/Ethnicity"

measurements (“White” or non-White and “Black” or non-Black) and the respondents’ perceived effectiveness of the TAP.

None of these variables, Pay Grade, Length of Service, Gender, or Race/Ethnicity, were generalized in the Government Accounting Office (GAO) reports as factors associated with the perceived effectiveness of the TAP.

Recommendations

More research is needed on selected personal and professional demographic characteristics towards the perception of the effectiveness of the Transition Assistance Program.

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APPENDIX A: ELICITATION STUDY LETTER OF INVITATION FROM THE RESEARCHER AT THE SCHOOL OF HUMAN RESOURCE EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT TO THE STUDY INSTALLATION

April 7, 2015

Timothy L. Rose
Doctoral Candidate
College of Agriculture
School of Human Resources Education and Workforce Development
298 Coates Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803

Dear Exiting Servicemember:

The Louisiana State University School of Human Resource Education and Workforce Development (SHREWD www.lsu.edu/shrewd) is conducting a study on the perceptions of exiting servicemembers on the Transition Assistance Program, (TAP) in the southern Louisiana area. We are interested in the characteristics of servicemembers experience as they prepare to leave the military as a result of military drawdowns. The answers to the questions will help the researchers at Louisiana State University (SHREWD) better understand the selected factors that influence their transition.

Because of your participation in TAP, you were chosen to participate in the electronic survey. In order for the results to accurately represent all the recent exiting servicemembers, please read each question thoroughly to provide the best answer allotted. It is very important to answer every question. The information is confidential and will be held in the strictest of confidentiality. The attached survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

For completing this survey, you will automatically be included in a complimentary gift certificate drawing at the conclusion of the study (valued at \$300 from Productivity Consultants & Career Support Services) to receive a professional development and image consultation that includes a business suit, interviewing skills consultation, and resume audit. If you have any questions about the study, please call me, 404-518-2441 or the university at 225-578-5748.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated!

Sincerely,
Timothy L. Rose,
Ph.D. Candidate
Louisiana State University

Cc: William B. Richardson, Ph.D.
Vice President
Louisiana State University
Dean, College of Agriculture

Cc: Michael Burnett, Ph.D.
Louisiana State University
Associate Dean, College of Agriculture

Attachments

APPENDIX B: ELICITATION STUDY LETTER OF INVITATION FROM THE RESEARCHER AT THE SCHOOL OF HUMAN RESOURCE EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT TO THE FIRST INSTALLATION

Date: April 14, 2015

Timothy L. Rose
Doctoral Candidate
College of Agriculture
School of Human Resources Education and Workforce Development
298 Coates Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803

Dear Exiting Servicemember:

The Louisiana State University School of Human Resource Education and Workforce Development (SHREWD www.lsu.edu/shrewd) is conducting a study on the perceptions of exiting servicemembers on the Transition Assistance Program, (TAP) in the southern Louisiana area. We are interested in the characteristics of servicemembers experience as they prepare to leave the military as a result of military drawdowns. The answers to the questions will help the researchers at Louisiana State University (SHREWD) better understand the selected factors that influence their transition.

Because of your participation in TAP, you were chosen to participate in the electronic survey. In order for the results to accurately represent all the recent exiting servicemembers, please read each question thoroughly to provide the best answer allotted. It is very important to answer every question. The information is confidential and will be held in the strictest of confidentiality. The attached survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

For completing this survey, you will automatically be included in a complimentary gift certificate drawing at the conclusion of the study (valued at \$300 from Productivity Consultants & Career Support Services) to receive a professional development and image consultation that includes a business suit, interviewing skills consultation, and resume audit. If you have any questions about the study, please call me, 404-518-2441 or the university at 225-578-5748.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated!

Sincerely,
Timothy L. Rose,
Ph.D. Candidate
Louisiana State University

Cc: William B. Richardson, Ph.D.
Vice President
Louisiana State University
Dean, College of Agriculture

Cc: Michael Burnett, Ph.D.
Louisiana State University
Associate Dean, College of Agriculture

Attachments

APPENDIX C: ELICITATION STUDY LETTER OF INVITATION FROM THE RESEARCHER AT THE SCHOOL OF HUMAN RESOURCE EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT TO THE SECOND INSTALLATION

Date: April 21, 2015

Timothy L. Rose
Doctoral Candidate
College of Agriculture
School of Human Resources Education and Workforce Development
298 Coates Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803

Dear Exiting Servicemember:

The Louisiana State University School of Human Resource Education and Workforce Development (SHREWD www.lsu.edu/shrewd) is conducting a study on the perceptions of exiting servicemembers on the Transition Assistance Program, (TAP) in the southern Louisiana area. We are interested in the characteristics of servicemembers experience as they prepare to leave the military as a result of military drawdowns. The answers to the questions will help the researchers at Louisiana State University (SHREWD) better understand the selected factors that influence their transition.

Because of your participation in TAP, you were chosen to participate in the electronic survey. In order for the results to accurately represent all the recent exiting servicemembers, please read each question thoroughly to provide the best answer allotted. It is very important to answer every question. The information is confidential and will be held in the strictest of confidentiality. The attached survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

For completing this survey, you will automatically be included in a complimentary gift certificate drawing at the conclusion of the study (valued at \$300 from Productivity Consultants & Career Support Services) to receive a professional development and image consultation that includes a business suit, interviewing skills consultation, and resume audit. If you have any questions about the study, please call me, 404-518-2441 or the university at 225-578-5748.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated!

Sincerely,
Timothy L. Rose,
Ph.D. Candidate
Louisiana State University

Cc: William B. Richardson, Ph.D.
Vice President
Louisiana State University
Dean, College of Agriculture

Cc: Michael Burnett, Ph.D.
Louisiana State University
Associate Dean, College of Agriculture

Attachments

APPENDIX D: ELICITATION STUDY LETTER OF INVITATION FROM THE RESEARCHER AT THE SCHOOL OF HUMAN RESOURCE EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT TO THE THIRD INSTALLATION

Date: April 28, 2015

Timothy L. Rose
Doctoral Candidate
College of Agriculture
School of Human Resources Education and Workforce Development
298 Coates Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803

Dear Exiting Servicemember:

The Louisiana State University School of Human Resource Education and Workforce Development (SHREWD www.lsu.edu/shrewd) is conducting a study on the perceptions of exiting servicemembers on the Transition Assistance Program, (TAP) in the southern Louisiana area. We are interested in the characteristics of servicemembers experience as they prepare to leave the military as a result of military drawdowns. The answers to the questions will help the researchers at Louisiana State University (SHREWD) better understand the selected factors that influence their transition.

Because of your participation in TAP, you were chosen to participate in the electronic survey. In order for the results to accurately represent all the recent exiting servicemembers, please read each question thoroughly to provide the best answer allotted. It is very important to answer every question. The information is confidential and will be held in the strictest of confidentiality. The attached survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

For completing this survey, you will automatically be included in a complimentary gift certificate drawing at the conclusion of the study (valued at \$300 from Productivity Consultants & Career Support Services) to receive a professional development and image consultation that includes a business suit, interviewing skills consultation, and resume audit. If you have any questions about the study, please call me, 404-518-2441 or the university at 225-578-5748.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated!

Sincerely,
Timothy L. Rose,
Ph.D. Candidate
Louisiana State University

Cc: William B. Richardson, Ph.D.
Vice President
Louisiana State University
Dean, College of Agriculture

Cc: Michael Burnett, Ph.D.
Louisiana State University
Associate Dean, College of Agriculture

Attachments

APPENDIX E: ELICITATION STUDY LETTER OF INVITATION FROM THE RESEARCHER AT THE SCHOOL OF HUMAN RESOURCE EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT TO THE FOURTH INSTALLATION

Date: May 5, 2015

Timothy L. Rose
Doctoral Candidate
College of Agriculture
School of Human Resources Education and Workforce Development
298 Coates Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803

Dear Exiting Servicemember:

The Louisiana State University School of Human Resource Education and Workforce Development (SHREWD www.lsu.edu/shrewd) is conducting a study on the perceptions of exiting servicemembers on the Transition Assistance Program, (TAP) in the southern Louisiana area. We are interested in the characteristics of servicemembers experience as they prepare to leave the military as a result of military drawdowns. The answers to the questions will help the researchers at Louisiana State University (SHREWD) better understand the selected factors that influence their transition.

Because of your participation in TAP, you were chosen to participate in the electronic survey. In order for the results to accurately represent all the recent exiting servicemembers, please read each question thoroughly to provide the best answer allotted. It is very important to answer every question. The information is confidential and will be held in the strictest of confidentiality. The attached survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

For completing this survey, you will automatically be included in a complimentary gift certificate drawing at the conclusion of the study (valued at \$300 from Productivity Consultants & Career Support Services) to receive a professional development and image consultation that includes a business suit, interviewing skills consultation, and resume audit. If you have any questions about the study, please call me, 404-518-2441 or the university at 225-578-5748.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated!

Sincerely,
Timothy L. Rose
Ph.D. Candidate
Louisiana State University

Cc: William B. Richardson, Ph.D.
Vice President
Louisiana State University
Dean, College of Agriculture

Cc: Michael Burnett, Ph.D.
Louisiana State University
Associate Dean, College of Agriculture

Attachments

APPENDIX F: ELICITATION STUDY LETTER OF INVITATION FROM THE RESEARCHER AT THE SCHOOL OF HUMAN RESOURCE EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT TO THE PROXY

Date: May 12, 2015

Timothy L. Rose
Doctoral Candidate
College of Agriculture
School of Human Resources Education and Workforce Development
298 Coates Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803

Dear Proxy:

The Louisiana State University School of Human Resource Education and Workforce Development (SHREWD www.lsu.edu/shrewd) is conducting a study on the perceptions of exiting servicemembers on the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) in the southern Louisiana area. We are interested in the characteristics of servicemembers experience as they prepare to leave the military as a result of military drawdowns. The answers to the questions will help the researchers at Louisiana State University (SHREWD) better understand the selected factors that influence their transition.

Because you will serve as the proxy and administer the inventory, all guidelines of the Institutional Board Review must be adhered. The information is confidential and will be held in the strictest of confidentiality. The attached survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

You will automatically be included in a complimentary gift certificate drawing at the conclusion of the study (valued at \$300 from Productivity Consultants & Career Support Services) to receive a professional development and image consultation that includes a business suit, interviewing skills consultation, and resume audit as a result of your administrative services. If you have any questions about the study, please call me, 404-518-2441 or the university at 225-578-5748.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated!

Sincerely,
Timothy L. Rose,
Ph.D. Candidate
Louisiana State University

Cc: William B. Richardson, Ph.D.
Vice President
Louisiana State University
Dean, College of Agriculture

Cc: Michael Burnett, Ph.D.
Louisiana State University
Associate Dean, College of Agriculture

Attachments

APPENDIX G: PCCSS TRANSITION INVENTORY

Informed Consent Form

Project Title: Productivity Consultants & Career Support Services (PCCSS) Transition Inventory

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to help the researchers at Louisiana State University advance the knowledge about the Transition Assistance Program (a federal employment career readiness program that serves exiting service members). The 26-item Likert-type scale attempts to estimate the level of perception of exiting servicemembers towards the Transition Assistance Program. Please rate how strongly you disagree or agree with each of the following statements by shading each question when necessary. Please be sure to answer each question. When you complete the survey, please closeout the screen and it will notify us of the completion. **NO PERSONAL INFORMATION WILL BE REVEALED AND NO ONE CAN DETERMINE WHO PROVIDED THE INFORMATION ONCE YOU COMPLETE THE SURVEY.**

Performance Site: The survey will be administered to service members from Louisiana.

Investigators: The following investigator is available for questions, M-F, 8:00a.m. - 4:30 p.m. (CST): Timothy Rose, LSU School of Human Resource Education and Workforce Development, 225-578-5748, trose4@lsu.edu.

Inclusion Criteria: Exiting participants in this survey must participate in the Transition Assistance Program (TAP).

Description of Study: Service members' perceptions on the TAP and what selected factors given basic demographic information to assess the career readiness towards the civilian labor force.

Study Procedures: Service members will complete an electronic version of the survey regarding their attitude, feelings, and perceptions of the TAP experience.

Benefits: There is limited information (if any) available on military drawdowns and the impact on exiting servicemember career readiness and transition. This study serves as a source to provide critical insight on the subject matter and advance the knowledge.

Risks: There are no known risks associated with the participation in this study.

Right to refuse: Exiting service members are given the right to refuse participation without any harm, persuasion, or loss of any kind to the respondent.

Privacy: Although service member participation is anonymous, the researcher reserves the right to publish the results of the study and provide insight to subject matter experts in the field.

Financial Information: The PCCSS Assessment is free with no ongoing obligation from the respondents.

Consent: By selecting “I agree to participate” below and answering the questions on the survey attached, I am providing and documenting my consent. If you have any questions about your rights or other concerns, you can contact Dennis Landin, Ph.D., Chairman, Institutional Review Board, Louisiana State University, 225-578-8692.

Exempted By: TBA

Chairman, Dennis Landin, Ph.D.
Coordinator: Jason Pasqua
Institutional Review Board
Louisiana State University
130 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 708

225-578-8692
www.lsu.edu/irb

[Cc: William B. Richardson](#)
[Louisiana State University](#)
[Vice President](#)
[Dean, College of Agriculture](#)

Cc: Michael Burnett, Ph.D.
Louisiana State University
Executive Associate Dean
College of Agriculture

- ☐ Yes, I agree to participate in the study described above
- ☐ No, I do not agree to participate in the study described above

If you answered no and wished not to participate, please give your survey to the desk attendant and thank you for your time.

I have read, understood, and printed a copy of, the above consent form and desire of my own free will to participate in this study.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

1. The goals of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) were clearly communicated to me.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

2. The goals of the TAP sessions I attended were accomplished.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

3. Participation in TAP has helped my career- readiness.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

4. I know the benefits of the TAP as a result of participating in the workshops.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

5. I have an understanding of where to get career assistance.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

6. I have an understanding of my veteran benefits.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

7. The TAP classes were held in an appropriate classroom environment.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

8. The technological resources used in the TAP classes were up-to-date.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

9. The time of the day for the TAP workshops was good for me.

Strongly Disagree

☐

Disagree

☐

Agree

☐

Strongly Agree

☐

10. The TAP instructors are very knowledgeable of the subject matter.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

11. The delivery of the content in the TAP classes was effective.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

12. The objectives of the TAP courses were appropriate.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

13. I was allowed time to attend the TAP classes by my unit commander.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

14. I am better prepared for making decisions about my career after participating in the TAP.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

15. I am better prepared for life after the military since I attended the TAP.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

16. I understand the *overall* mission of the TAP.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

17. What is your education level?

- ☐ High School graduate/GED

- ☐ Associate Degree
- ☐ Bachelor Degree
- ☐ Master's Degree
- ☐ Ph.D. Degree

18. Is your military occupational specialty transferable to the civilian labor force?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

19. Was your job search skills/counseling covered in the TAP?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

20. What is your length of service in the military?

- ☐ 0-3 years
- ☐ 3-5 years
- ☐ 6-10 years
- ☐ 11-15 years
- ☐ 16-20
- ☐ 21+ years

21. What is your income?

- | | | | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| \$18,000 -
\$29,999 | \$30,000 –
39,999 | \$40,000 –
\$49,999 | \$50,000 -
\$59,999 | \$60,000 + |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

22. What is your age?

- | | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 17-29 | 30-39 | 40-49 | 50-59 | 60+ |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

23. Were you on active duty when you went through TAP?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

24. What is your Pay grade?

- ☐ E1-E3
- ☐ E4-E6
- ☐ E7-E9
- ☐ W1-W5
- ☐ O1-O3
- ☐ O4-O6
- ☐ O7-O10

25. What is your gender?

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male

26. What is your race/ethnicity?

- ☐ White
- ☐ Black
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ Other

APPENDIX H: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Application for Exemption from Institutional Oversight

Unless qualified as meeting the specific criteria for exemption from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight, ALL LSU research/ projects using living humans as subjects, or samples, or data obtained from humans, directly or indirectly, with or without their consent, must be approved or exempted in advance by the LSU IRB. This form helps the PI determine if a project may be exempted, and is used to request an exemption.



Institutional Review Board
Dr. Dennis Landin, Chair
130 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
P: 225.578.8692
F: 225.578.5983
lrb@lsu.edu | lsu.edu/lrb

-- Applicant, Please fill out the application in its entirety and include the completed application as well as parts B-F, listed below, when submitting to the IRB. Once the application is completed, please submit the completed application to the IRB Office by e-mail (lrb@lsu.edu) for review. If you would like to have your application reviewed by a member of the Human Subjects Screening Committee before submitting it to the IRB office, you can find the list of committee members at <http://sites01.lsu.edu/wp/ored/human-subjects-screening-committee-members/>.

-- A Complete Application Includes All of the Following:

- (A) This completed form
- (B) A brief project description (adequate to evaluate risks to subjects and to explain your responses to Parts 1&2)
- (C) Copies of all instruments to be used.
*If this proposal is part of a grant proposal, include a copy of the proposal and all recruitment material.
- (D) The consent form that you will use in the study (see part 3 for more information.)
- (E) Certificate of Completion of Human Subjects Protection Training for all personnel involved in the project, including students who are involved with testing or handling data, unless already on file with the IRB. Training link: (<http://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php>)
- (F) Signed copy of the IRB Security of Data Agreement: (<https://sites01.lsu.edu/wp/ored/files/2013/07/Security-of-Data-Agreement.pdf>)

1) Principal Investigator: <u>Tim Rose</u>	Rank: <u>Student</u>
Dept: <u>School of HREWD</u>	Ph: <u>(404) 518-2441</u>
E-mail: <u>trose4@lsu.edu</u>	

2) Co Investigator(s): please include department, rank, phone and e-mail for each
*If student, please identify and name supervising professor in this space

William B. Richardson, Vice President of Agriculture and Dean of the College of Agriculture Professor, (225) 578-3979, BRichardson@agcenter.lsu.edu Michael F. Burnett, Executive Associate Dean of the College of Agriculture Professor, (225) 578-6702, vocbur@lsu.edu	
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3) Project Title: Military Drawdowns and the Perceptions of TAP among Exiting Service Members

4) Proposal? (yes or no) ☒ No If Yes, LSU Proposal Number n/a

Also, if YES, either
☐ This application completely matches the scope of work in the grant
 OR
☐ More IRB Applications will be filed later

5) Subject pool (e.g. Psychology students) Military Personnel Exiting from the Service

*Indicate any "vulnerable populations" to be used: (children < 18 the mentally impaired, pregnant women, the aged, other). Projects with incarcerated persons cannot be exempted.

6) PI Signature Date 4-24-15 (no per signatures)

** I certify my responses are accurate and complete. If the project scope or design is later changes, I will resubmit for review. I will obtain written approval from the Authorized Representative of all non-LSU institutions in which the study is conducted. I also understand that it is my responsibility to maintain copies of all consent forms at LSU for three years after completion of the study. If I leave LSU before that time the consent forms should be preserved in the Departmental Office.

Screening Committee Action: <input type="radio"/> Exempted <input type="radio"/> Not Exempted	Category/Paragraph
Signed Consent Waived?: <input type="radio"/> Yes or <input checked="" type="radio"/> No	
Reviewer 	Signature Date

Continue on the next page

APPENDIX I: DD FORM 2958

SERVICE MEMBER CAREER READINESS STANDARDS/INDIVIDUAL TRANSITION PLAN CHECKLIST				
PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT				
AUTHORITY: 10 U.S.C. 1142, Pre-separation Counseling; DoD Directive 1332.35, Transition Assistance for Military Personnel; DoD Instruction 1332.36, Pre-separation Counseling for Military Personnel; and E.O. 9397, as amended (SSN). PRINCIPAL PURPOSE(S): To document achievement of Career Readiness Standards commensurate with the Service member's desired employment, education, technical training, and/or entrepreneurial objectives. ROUTINE USE(S): The DoD "Blanket Routine Uses" found at http://dpcio.defense.gov/privacy/SORNs/blanket_routine_uses.html apply. DISCLOSURE: Voluntary; however, if the requested information is not provided, it may not be possible for a Commander or designee to verify that a Service member has met the Career Readiness Standards.				
SECTION I - SERVICE MEMBER INFORMATION				
1. NAME (Last, First, Middle Initial)	2. GRADE (Select one)	3. DoD ID NUMBER	4. TRANSITION DATE (YYYY/MM/DD)	
5. SERVICE (Select one from each category) 0	6. UNIT			
SECTION II - COMMON CAREER READINESS STANDARDS (X one) YES NO N/A				
7. Completed the DoD Standardized Individual Transition Plan				
8. Prepared the DoD Standardized 12-month post-separation budget reflecting personal/family goals				
9. Registered on eBenefits				
10. Completed a Continuum of Military Service Opportunity counseling (active component Service members only)				
11. Evaluated transferability of military skills to civilian workforce (MOC CROS\$WALK) and completed DoD standardized gap analysis				
12. Documented requirements and eligibility for licensure, certification, and apprenticeship				
13. Completed an assessment tool to identify personal interests and leanings regarding career selection				
14. Completed a job application package (resume, personal/professional references and, if required, application) or presented a job offer letter				
15. Received a DOL Gold Card and understands post 9/11 Veterans have priority for 6 months at DOL American Job Centers				
SECTION III - ACCESSING HIGHER EDUCATION/CAREER TECHNICAL TRAINING READINESS STANDARDS				
16.a. Completed an assessment tool to identify aptitudes, interests, strengths, or skills				
16.b. Completed a comparison of academic or training institution choices				
16.c. Completed a college, university or career technical training application or received an acceptance letter, respectively				
16.d. Confirmed one-on-one counseling with a higher education or career technical training institution advisor or counselor				
SECTION IV - OTHER				
17. Completed Preseparation Counseling (DD Form 2648/2648-1) - MANDATORY				
18. Completed VA Benefits Briefings I and II - MANDATORY				
19. Completed DOL Employment Workshop - MANDATORY UNLESS EXEMPT (See Item 20 for exemptions)				
20. REASON EXEMPTED FROM DEPARTMENT OF LABOR (DOL) EMPLOYMENT WORKSHOP (Select one) 0				
21. Completed Transition GPS Track(s) (Select all that apply)				
<input type="checkbox"/> Accessing Higher Education <input type="checkbox"/> Career Technical Training <input type="checkbox"/> Entrepreneurship				
22. Evaluated post-military transportation requirements and developed a plan to meet personal/family needs in ITP				
23. Evaluated post-military housing requirements and developed a plan to meet personal/family needs in ITP				
SECTION V - WARM HANDOVER TO SUPPORTING AGENCIES CONTACT INFORMATION				
24.a. VA REPRESENTATIVE (Last Name, First Name)	b. POST-TRANSITION LOCATION	c. TELEPHONE NUMBER	d. X IF HANDOVER CONFIRMED	
25.a. DOL REPRESENTATIVE (Last Name, First Name)	b. POST-TRANSITION LOCATION	c. TELEPHONE NUMBER	d. X IF HANDOVER CONFIRMED	
26.a. OTHER RESOURCES (Last Name, First Name)	b. POST-TRANSITION LOCATION	c. TELEPHONE NUMBER	d. X IF HANDOVER CONFIRMED	
SECTION VI - VERIFICATION				
27. I verify that all applicable Career Readiness Standards were were not met, as documented in the Individual Transition Plan.				
28.a. SERVICE MEMBER (Print Last Name, First Name)			b. DATE (YYYY/MM/DD)	
29.a. TRANSITION COUNSELOR (Print Last Name, First Name)		b. REMARKS		c. DATE (YYYY/MM/DD)
30.a. COMMANDER (OR DESIGNEE) (Print Last Name, First Name)		b. REMARKS		c. DATE (YYYY/MM/DD)

APPENDIX J: DD FORM 2958 CHECKLIST

INSTRUCTIONS

This checklist coincides with the Individual Transition Plan and certifies achievement of the Career Readiness Standards (CRS) commensurate with the Service member's desired employment, higher education, career technical training and/or entrepreneurial objectives. This checklist must be completed prior to the Service member's separation, certified by the Transition Counselor and Service member's Commander or Commander's designee.

Section I - Service Member Information.

1. **Name.** Self-explanatory.
2. **Grade.** Enter or select E1 - E9; W1 - W5; or O1 - O10 from the drop-down list.
3. **DoD Identification Number.** Self-explanatory.
4. **Transition Date.** Enter expected date of retirement, ETS, discharge, or release from active duty.
5. **Service.** Enter or select your specific Service Branch and Component from the drop-down lists.
6. **Unit.** Enter designation of current unit of assignment.

Section II - Common Career Readiness Standards and Section III - Accessing Higher Education/Career Technical Training Readiness Standards. A response is required for each entry. Mark the applicable box Yes, No, Not Applicable (N/A) in response to whether the Service member completed the corresponding Career Readiness Standards (CRS). Service members are required to meet the CRS and have a viable Individual Transition Plan (ITP).

Item 10 pertains only to Active Component Service members. Active Component Service members who are separating must receive counseling from a transition counselor on the value and importance of continuing Military Service in the Reserve Components.

Items 16.a. - d. pertain to Service members seeking higher education or career technical training when they depart from military service.

Section IV - Other.

20. Reason Exempted From Department of Labor (DOL) Employment Workshop. Select the item from the drop-down list corresponding to the reason the Service member may be exempted from attending the DOL Employment Workshop. Select "Not Exempt" if the Service member does not meet the following exemption criteria:

- a. Service members retiring after 20 years or more of Active Federal Service (AFS) in the Military Services.
- b. Service members, after serving their first 180 continuous days or more on active duty, pursuant to 10 U.S.C., if they meet at least one of the following criteria:
 - I. Provide documented confirmation of civilian employment.
 - II. Provide documented acceptance into an accredited career technical training, undergraduate or graduate degree program.
 - III. Have previously attended the DOL Employment Workshop.
- c. Service members with specialized skills who, due to unavoidable circumstances, are needed to support a unit on orders to be deployed within 60 days. The first commander in the Service member's chain of command with authority pursuant to chapter 47 of 10 U.S.C. (also known as the "Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ)" must certify on the ITP checklist any such request for exemption from the DOL Employment Workshop. A make-up plan must accompany the postponement certification.
- d. Recovering Service Members (RSMs) imminently transitioning from active duty, who are enrolled in the Education and Employment Initiative (E2I) or a similar transition program designed to secure employment, higher education, or career technical training post-separation.

Section V - Warm Handover. Enter the name and contact information of the Veterans Administration, Department of Labor, or other employment, education, or supporting resources available at the Service member's final post-transition destination to provide assistance to the Service member after leaving active military service. The warm handover consists of a confirmed person-to-person contact of the Service member with appropriate partner agencies, and assurance that the partner acknowledges post-military assistance is required and that its staff will follow through to assist the member. A warm handover is required for those who do not meet the CRS or need further assistance.

Section VI - Verification. Commanders or Commanders' designees are responsible for verifying that Service members meet the CRS and have a viable ITP at Capstone. If Service members do not meet the CRS, then Commanders or Commanders' designees will take action to connect members via a warm handover to the appropriate interagency partners, or appropriate local resources, for the necessary assistance. Commanders or Commanders' designees will document the warm handover in Section V.

Type in the names of the Service Member, Transition Counselor, Commander or Commander's designee in Items 28.a. - 30.a. in lieu of a "wet" signature.

VITA

Timothy L. Rose is the son of Allen James Rose and Mary Frances Morgan. He was born in Florida and he earned his Bachelor's degree in Communications from Clark Atlanta University (CAU) in Atlanta, GA. He also earned a Master's degree in Human Resource Management from CAU's Department of Public Administration and a Master of Science in Career & Technical Education from the School of Human Resource Education and Workforce Development (SHREWD) at Louisiana State University (LSU) in Baton Rouge, LA. His Doctor of Philosophy degree in Human Resource and Leadership Development from (SHREWD) will be conferred by Louisiana State University during the commencement ceremony. Timothy is a New Adult Learning/Image Consultant with Productivity Consultants & Career Support Services and hopes to pursue a distance learning opportunity in human resource management upon graduation. He is currently a member of National Career Development Association, National Association of Workforce Development Professionals and the Society for Human Resource Management. Timothy has two beautiful daughters.