

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Multiple
Branches

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

Robertson, H. C., & Brott, P. E. (2013). Male veterans' perceptions of midlife career transition and life satisfaction: A study of military men transitioning to the teaching profession. *Adultspan Journal*, 12(2), 66-79.
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SUMMARY: One hundred twenty male Veterans who participated in the Troops to Teachers program were surveyed using qualitative methods to examine their career transitions to the teaching profession and life satisfaction. Veterans often reported the importance of preparation and sacrifice; they reported negative ratings of formal transition programs.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Most Veterans reported the importance of preparation for the transition to the teaching profession; some emphasized the importance of starting preparations early in one's military career and planning on investing significant time, effort, and money.
- Many participants reported a high degree of satisfaction and reward they received from teaching.
- Comments regarding formal transition programs were generally not favorable; however, they said that their military experiences prepared them well to succeed in civilian careers.
- Veterans reported a strong desire to help others and that this desire was important in their decisions to be in the military and to be teachers.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Develop workshops for Service members in career transition who may benefit from support as they plan for discharge from the military
- Disseminate information regarding midlife career transition, including an emphasis on Service members leveraging their strengths as they move to a civilian workforce
- Host support groups for Service members and their spouses to help them manage the stress and uncertainty that accompanies transitions from military service

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Promote the development of career transition programs for Service members and their families
- Encourage collaboration among DoD programs and community-based organizations to support a smooth transition for departing Service members
- Recommend professional education including information on military culture and Service members' transition from military service for professionals who work with Service members and their families

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METHODS

- Direct individual emails were sent to mentors (those who have completed the process and volunteered to help others) as well as active members of the Troops to Teachers program. Methods for recruiting members were not specified.
- Participants responded via an online survey to the following two questions: 1. What insights have you gained from your career transition that might benefit others who pursue a midlife career transition? 2. Given your stage of transition, what additional thoughts come to mind about the relationship you see between your midlife career transition and your life satisfaction?
- Responses were coded and analyzed to determine themes.

PARTICIPANTS

- One hundred-two Troops to Teacher members participated in the study. The sample was predominately male (86%), White (84%), the average age was 52 years, and 94% were married.
- Among the sample, the average years in military were 21 years (range = 4-36 years) and there was an average of 31 months in between leaving the military and beginning a new teaching career.
- Of the participants, 33% were in the Air Force, 31% were in the Navy, 22% were in the Army, and 13% were in the Marines.

LIMITATIONS

- The sample was small and homogenous, limiting generalizability.
- Recruitment was focused on those who were volunteering for the program and methods of recruitment for the members was not specified; results may be biased.
- The qualitative analytic approach was not detailed.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Conduct longitudinal research that captures all the transition stages among departing Service members
- Replicate the current study to include more demographically and occupationally diverse populations
- Expand on the current findings by gathering quantitative data about departing Service members' experiences and satisfaction with career transition programs

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