

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Multiple
Branches

Military Veterans' Midlife Career Transition and Life Satisfaction

Robertson, H. C., & Brott, P. E. (2014). Military veterans' midlife career transition and life satisfaction. *The Professional Counselor*, 4(2), 139-149. doi:10.15241/hcr.4.2.139

SUMMARY: Ninety mentors (those who had transitioned to a new career and volunteered to help others) and 43 members of Troops to Teachers (a national program that helps Service members' transition to teaching careers) were surveyed about life satisfaction and career transition variables. Control (individual input and influence over the career transition process) and readiness (being prepared for the career transition) predicted aspects of life satisfaction.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Control contributed to life satisfaction for the mentors and members when analyzed together. Readiness contributed to life satisfaction for the combined samples, but had less of an influence than participants' reports of control.
- None of the other aspects of the career transitions inventory (confidence, support, decision independence) were predictive of life satisfaction.
- Confidence (belief in one's ability to manage the career transition process) and control were significantly related to life satisfaction.
- There were no significant differences on life satisfaction or the career transitions inventory between the mentors and members groups.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Offer classes to support military Service members' transition to civilian employment
- Provide education for military families about common challenges encountered as Service members' transition to the civilian workforce (e.g., loss of military culture and structure)
- Host workshops that teach military family members how to recognize risk factors that suggest Service members are having difficulty with transition to civilian employment

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Encourage the development and continuation of programs that can promote resilience in Service members, their partners and children
- Recommend partnerships among military-based and community-based programs to help military families access additional resources to help them during transitions
- Encourage collaboration among DoD programs and community-based organizations to support a smooth transition for departing Service members

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METHODS

- Members of Troops to Teachers were identified via the organization's database and were contacted via newsletters and other online communication. Mentors (former military and current teachers who volunteer to assist others with the teaching certification process) and members were both asked to respond.
- Response rate for mentors was approximately 50%. Response rate for current members was unable to be calculated due to the organization's lack of clarity about membership.
- Participants completed the Career Transitions Inventory (a measure of strengths and barriers that adults experience during career transition), Satisfaction with Life Scale, and demographic questions.

PARTICIPANTS

- Participants consisted of 90 mentors and 46 members (86% male).
- The sample was predominately White (79%), with an average age of 51 years (range = 21-69 years).
- Eighty-six percent of the sample were married and had an average of 20 years of military service. Among the participants, 32% were Air Force, 28% were Navy, 21% were Army, 13% were Marine Corps, and 48% were officers.
- Mean months between leaving military and beginning teaching career was 29.40 months, 80% were teaching at the time of the survey.

LIMITATIONS

- Many of the individuals surveyed had already completed the transition to a new career and may not be able to provide accurate, retrospective information about the process of transition.
- The sample was largely White, married, and male; these results may not generalize beyond these groups.
- The Career Transitions Inventory was designed for those currently experiencing transition and had not been validated in a sample that had largely already transitioned; therefore, results may have questionable validity.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Replicate these findings with a more diverse groups of Service members in a variety of occupations, as well as those in various stages of transition
- Conduct a longitudinal study that follows Service members from the end of the military career until they had completed a career transition to better understand the process as it unfolds over time
- Conduct interviews with Service members and their families to obtain qualitative information about career transitions after military service

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