

EXAMINING THE EFFECTS OF STRESS, EGO IDENTITY, AND LIFE SATISFACTION
ON THE RESILIENCE OF SINGLE-PARENT SUBGROUPS

by

Tara Marie Whitfield

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

School of Behavioral Sciences

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ABSTRACT

Single-parent homes have been identified as a family structure that is disadvantageous to the well-being of children. Being a single parent can also be extremely stressful, thereby putting the mental health of parents at risk. This study examined how the varied life paths of civilians and military veterans can alter an individual's identity, stress levels, life satisfaction, and resilience when faced with the same adversities. The self-concept of the two populations was examined through the use of the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale, Ego Identity Scale, Perceived Stress Scale, and the Satisfaction with Life Scale. The study was guided by three research questions: Is the relationship between resilience and one's acceptance of self moderated by civilian single parents and single parents who are military veterans? Are civilian single parents more resilient than those single parents who are military veterans? Is the relationship between the independent factors of perceived stress, life satisfaction and the dependent variable of resilience moderated by civilian single parents and military veterans who are single parents? Data were collected through an anonymous, online survey from a convenience sample of single parents. This quantitative study followed a correlational design. The sample consisted of 28 civilian single parents and 39 military veterans who were single parents. The results of this study demonstrated that ego identity, satisfaction with life, and perceived stress statistically predicted resilience. The results of this study also showed that being a civilian single parent or a military veteran is not statistically significant in determining resilience.

Keywords: active duty, civilians, military, quality of life, resilience, single parents, and veterans

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Delores Mitchell (10/2/1956 – 11/7/2017), who passed away shortly after encouraging me to follow my heart and start my doctoral journey. Thank you for pushing me to be the best version of me; you are truly missed.

This dissertation is also dedicated to all of the active duty single parents, single parents who have separated from the military while silently struggling, and civilian single parents who have successfully provided for their children with minimal support.

To my daughter Brianna, I love you to the moon and back. Thank you for being so understanding of all the work that was required of me. You amaze me every day, and I know God has a plan for your life. Continue to be a blessing in all that you do, and God will never leave you nor forsake you.

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Table of Contents

ABSTRACT.....	2
Dedication.....	3
Acknowledgments.....	4
List of Tables	10
List of Figures	11
List of Abbreviations	12
Overview.....	13
Background.....	13
Young Adulthood.....	14
Military Demographics	16
Military Benefits	16
Problem Statement	17
Purpose Statement.....	18
Significance of the Study	19
Research Questions	19
Definitions.....	20
Summary	20
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	22
Overview.....	22
Theoretical Framework.....	23
Related Literature.....	25
Resilience.....	26

Single-Parent Family Structures	29
Challenges to the Single-Parent Household.....	31
Mental Health of Civilian Single Parents	33
Family Functioning.....	34
Community Support.....	37
The Uniqueness of the Military	38
Loss of Military Identity	40
Homeless Veterans.....	43
Unemployment.....	44
Mental Health in Military Veterans	45
Redefining the Military Veteran Identity.....	46
The Well-being of the Military Veteran’s Child.....	47
Resources Provided to Single Parents.....	48
Instrument Considerations	51
Perceived Stress Scale.....	53
Ego Identity Scale	54
Satisfaction with Life Scale	55
Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale.....	55
Summary.....	57
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS	59
Overview.....	59
Research Design.....	59
Research Questions.....	60

Hypotheses	61
Participants and Setting.....	62
Advertisement and Recruitment	62
Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria.....	64
Instrumentation	64
Consent for Treatment	65
Demographic Questionnaire	65
Ego Identity Scale	65
Perceived Stress Scale.....	66
Satisfaction with Life Scale	67
Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale.....	67
Procedures.....	68
Data Analysis	70
Variables and Research Models.....	70
Hypotheses and Research Questions	73
Analysis Procedures.....	74
Internal and External Validity Aspects	76
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS	77
Overview.....	77
Research Questions.....	77
Null Hypotheses.....	77
Descriptive Statistics.....	78
Internal Consistency.....	80

Results.....	80
Hypothesis 1.....	81
Hypothesis 2.....	82
Hypothesis 3.....	83
Summary	86
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS	87
Overview.....	87
Discussion.....	87
Implications.....	89
Christian Worldview.....	91
Limitations	93
Recommendations for Future Research	95
REFERENCES	98
APPENDICES	110
Appendix A: Demographics Questionnaire – Online Survey.....	110
Appendix B: Ego Identity Scale	112
Appendix C: Perceived Stress Scale	113
Appendix D: Satisfaction with Life Scale	114
Appendix E: Connor Davidson Resilience Scale.....	115
Appendix F: Permission to Use – Satisfaction with Life Scale	116
Appendix G: Permission to Use – Perceived Stress Scale.....	117
Appendix H: Permission to Use CD-RISC Email	118
Appendix I: Permission to Use Beulahland Bible Church Email.....	119

Appendix J: Recruitment Letter	120
Appendix K: Social Media Post.....	121
Appendix L: Social Media Intermediate Follow-Up Post	122
Appendix M: Social Media Follow-Up Post	123
Appendix N: Informed Consent Letter	124

List of Tables

Table 1. Children Living in a Single-Parent Family by Race from 2013 to 2016.....	31
Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Demographic Characteristics	79
Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for Single Parent Subgroups	80
Table 4. Process Model for Model 1 with Single Parent Subgroups as Moderator.....	82
Table 5. Mean Ranks of Resilience Scores.....	83
Table 6. Test Statistics for Mann-Whitney U and Wilcoxon W.....	83
Table 7. Process Model for Model 1 with Perceived Stress as Predictor and Single-Parent Subgroups as Moderator	85
Table 8. Process Model for Model 1 with Life Satisfaction as Predictor and Single-Parent Subgroups as Moderator	85

List of Figures

Figure 1. Hayes PROCESS Model 1: Overview	71
Figure 2. Hayes PROCESS Model 1: Ego Identity	71
Figure 3. Hayes PROCESS Model 1: Perceived Stress	72
Figure 4. Hayes PROCESS Model 1: Life Satisfaction.....	73
Figure 5. Hypothesized Statistical Model.....	82
Figure 6. Graph of Interaction Between Perceived Stress and Resilience.....	85

List of Abbreviations

Active Duty (AD)

Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC)

Department of Defense (DOD)

Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

Ego Identity Scale (EIS)

Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF)

Perceived Stress Scale (PSS)

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

Transition Assistance Program (TAP)

Veteran Affairs (VA)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Many studies have been conducted on single parents who are active duty (AD) military members and single parents who are part of the civilian sector, examining how single parenting can be beneficial or detrimental to the well-being of the parent and the child (Skomorovsky, Norris, Bullock, & Smith Evans, 2016; Woessmann, 2015). Further investigation of single-parent subgroups has revealed that research is limited or lacking when it comes to single parents who are military veterans residing in the civilian sector and no longer receiving military benefits. The effects of being a single parent who is a military veteran could have an impact on one's level of resilience and quality of life. Examining this sub-population can lead to a better understanding of the resources and needs that may be beneficial in helping military veterans integrate back into the civilian sector as single parents who did not transition through life in the same manner as their civilian peers.

Background

The following section will provide information about the changing dynamics during young adulthood, Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, and single parent life cycles, as well as the benefits that AD military members may receive to make their quality of life satisfactory and sustainable before separating from the military. The benefits and resources that are afforded to AD military members allow them to decrease the challenges and struggles that they may have had to endure if they had never served in the military. Revocation of benefits and resources could ultimately decrease the resilience and quality of life of a single parent upon separation from the military, whereas civilian single parents have rarely been afforded the benefits equivalent to those who served in the military.

Young Adulthood

Young adulthood is a developmental period in one's life when this population tries to figure out who they are. During this timeframe, young adults can be accomplished when they have the necessary resources and a stable family (Jekielek, Brown, & Trends, 2005). Additionally, this period can be marked by trial and error as well as challenges that result in setbacks, which could potentially require young adults to be dependent on public assistance or their parents. Historically, this period is marked by the parents being the foundation of a young adult's identity (McGoldrick, Preto, & Carter, 2016). When young adults choose the path of life that they wish to take, it can have life-altering effects that result in their parents not being the foundation of their identity. Erik Erickson developed the psychosocial theory of development, which included his recognition of how culture can influence an individual's identity and how an individual who does not establish an identity early in life may be faced with an identity crisis later in life.

A young adult may choose to enter the workforce, go to college, or join the military. However, there are some young adults who do not choose any of those options; they decide to continue living with their parents as a non-contributing member of the household. Despite the path that one may choose, this is a period that is marked by beginning to establish one's identity. This developmental period and life path are foundational to future resilience and quality of life. In 2000, there were approximately 27.1 million young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 living in the United States with 40% in the workforce and 24% attending school (Jekielek et al., 2005). Young adulthood is also considered a period where young men and women may choose to join the military. Nearly half of AD military members are under the age of 25 (U.S. Department of Defense [DOD], 2017). Out of the 27.1 million young adults in 2000, roughly

2% joined the military (Jekielek et al., 2005). Between 2010 and 2017, the number of AD members who were under the age of 25 had slightly increased from 44.2% in 2010 to 45.0% in 2017 (DOD, 2017).

When young adults choose their path in life during adolescence, they begin to form their identities. In the theory of psychosocial development, Erikson identified the formation of identity as the primary task of adolescence (Sokol, 2009). When joining the military, an individual may choose one of two paths in regard to identity formation: occupation oriented or institution oriented (Redmond et al., 2015). It has been noted in research that the members who are occupationally oriented tend to be guardsmen, reservists, and officers while those who are institution oriented prioritize the military over their personal lives (Redmond et al., 2015). Contrary to the belief that this stage of human development is for the formation of identity is the onset of a warrior ethos mindset. When individuals join the military, the warrior ethos mindset is instilled in each as a means to stop the military member from behaving and thinking as an individual. The warrior ethos is the mindset that is instilled into the U.S. Armed Forces, which emphasizes that the mission of the unit comes first and foremost (Redmond et al., 2015). Military members are taught that there is no such thing as defeat, quitting is not an option, and they must never leave behind another American (Redmond et al., 2015). Military culture is known as the symbolic toolkit of rituals, ceremonies, assumptions, and beliefs which guide the military force (Hall, 2016). Warrior ethos has been embedded in military culture, which is built upon facets that are instilled during basic training and strengthened through the cultural framework of the military (Lunasco, Goodwin, Ozanian, & Loflin, 2010). Furthermore, as a female veteran, military culture begins in basic training with the passage from the civilian

identity to the military identity and the stripping of cultural norms and decreased femaleness (Demers, 2013).

Military Demographics

The number of individuals who serve in the military has declined in recent years; however, it is a revolving organization where one individual will transition out and another individual will transition into the military way of life. The unique environment and culture of the military separates civilians from military members (Redmond et al., 2015). According to the 2017 demographics report, there were a total of 1,294,520 DOD AD members (DOD, 2017). In 2008 there were approximately 146,000 single military parents that were AD (DOD, 2010). At some point in the lives of the 146,000 single military parents, they will transition to the civilian sector. During this transition, the military member may marry, or he or she will remain a single parent. Transitioning from AD status to veteran status may result in a loss of all or some military benefits unless the individual has a disability or has retired.

Military Benefits

While serving in the military, there are additional benefits to those who have a family, whether married or not. Individuals who choose to join the military enjoy generous benefits, such as job security, pensions after serving 20 years, childcare, health benefits, housing, and support which decreases the challenges of raising a family (Kelty, Kleykamp, & Segal, 2010). The benefits that are available to military members result in this population being economically stable. When compared to their civilian counterparts, military members with children are given more benefits and higher pay. Benefits that are given to AD military members include housing allowances, subsidized childcare, tuition assistance, health care, and deployment-related pay (Hosek & Wadsworth, 2013). The benefits received are considered incentives for military

members to reenlist. The members that are most likely to reenlist are those that would not receive the same benefits if they were a part of the civilian sector. Military pay is not dependent on one's race or gender. Military pay is based on one's rank, time in service, and whether the service member has a spouse or children, which will increase entitlements (Hosek & Wadsworth, 2013).

Problem Statement

Although there is a vast amount of research regarding single parents who are AD military or single parents who have never served in the military (Anderson, 2014; Burgund, Pantelic, & Milanovic, 2013; Hall, 2016; Woessmann, 2015), there is a lack of information on the resilience and quality of life of single parents who have separated from the military. Single parent families often require the support of family, friends, and community to help them adjust and thrive in society (McGoldrick et al., 2016). The military veteran who is a single parent is a population that has been seemingly overlooked at times. Military veterans who are single parents may receive benefits throughout their lives; however, upon separation from the military, unless they are retired, they immediately lose those benefits that helped to alleviate financial stress. In conjunction with the loss of benefits, the military veteran is then thrust into a new way of living with decreased social and emotional support. Military members who constantly put the military culture and institution first often have difficulties adapting to civilian culture, which hinders social and emotional support (Redmond et al., 2015). Additional research is needed as this population transitions back into the civilian sector while not always having the social and emotional support of their family, friends, and community, and trying to live with the warrior ethos mindset.

Human development theories address physical, cognitive, social, intellectual, perceptual, personality, and emotional changes across the human lifespan. The various theories that address human development identify the stages that one may go through from infancy to adulthood. This study works to increase knowledge of human development when individuals experience intentional molding that is outside of the normalcy associated with current human development theories and the task of reintegration with an altered life cycle and mindset. The unexamined population of military veterans who are single parents in comparison to civilian single parents and AD single parents will identify the need for further research. The problem is that current literature focuses on the civilian single parent or the AD single parent with a lack of focus on the military veteran who is a single parent with minimal benefits, a warrior ethos mindset, and the task of reintegrating into the civilian sector.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to determine whether there was a need for increased resources, knowledge, and practical transition classes for military veterans who are single parents by examining the differences in resilience, stress, ego identity, and satisfaction with life in comparison to civilian single parents. Research has shown that many studies have been conducted by the military in order to examine resilience levels of AD single parents (Hall, 2016). This study explored explicitly the resilience levels of military veterans who are single parents. The lack of research that has been conducted to help military veterans who are single parents identified a need for additional research that could potentially increase resilience and decrease negative connotations while helping military veterans integrate effectively back into the civilian sector. Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory of human development shows that when individuals are not able to successfully pass each stage, it can create a crisis and stifle future attempts at

resolving crises. It is believed that understanding the impact that resilience and military culture have on military veterans who are single parents can positively affect their quality of life, identity formation, and reintegration back into the civilian sector.

Significance of the Study

The single parent family structure has become increasingly common throughout the world. Numerous studies have been conducted on the life satisfaction and resilience of single-parent family structures (Richter & Lemola, 2017). Despite the research that has been conducted on single parents (Burgund et al., 2013), there is a lack of research on military veterans who are single parents and the challenges that they may endure when separating from the military. Conducting this study can provide invaluable information to military organizations, professional counselors, family members, and community resources as to how they can be beneficial to the transitioning military veteran who is a single parent. Examining satisfaction with life, perceived stress levels, ego identity, and resilience will add further knowledge to studies that have been conducted regarding single parents who are AD and transitioning into the civilian sector while showing the difference between the civilian single parent and the military veteran who is a single parent. Additionally, this study will help counselors to understand how identities in adolescence can be instilled in individuals who join the military, resulting in underdeveloped identities later in life.

Research Questions

The following research questions are a result of the literature gathered in conjunction with the gaps in the literature, indicating that more research needs to be done regarding resilience and military veterans who are single parents.

RQ1: Is the relationship between resilience and one's acceptance of self moderated by civilian single parents and single parents who are military veterans?

RQ2: Are civilian single parents more resilient than those single parents who are military veterans?

RQ3: Is the relationship between the independent factors of perceived stress, life satisfaction, and the dependent variable of resilience moderated by civilian single parents and military veterans who are single parents?

Definitions

The following terms associated with the literature and research throughout the dissertation are defined:

Foreclosures – persons who are committed to occupational and ideological positions, but these have been parentally chosen rather than self-chosen (Marcia, 1980).

Moratoriums – individuals who are currently struggling with occupational or ideological issues (Marcia, 1980).

Resilience – the ability to bounce back or recover from stress, to adapt to stressful circumstances, and to function above the norm (Smith et al., 2008).

Warrior ethos – the mindset that the mission of the unit comes first. There is no such thing as defeat, quitting is not an option, and one never leaves behind another American (Redmond et al., 2015).

Summary

Chapter One introduced the study on how perceived stress and satisfaction with life can impact the resilience levels of single parents who chose different life paths while focusing on the civilian and military veteran subpopulations. While evaluating the different variables that may

impact resilience, the study identified how individuals who joined the military might have challenges associated with identity formation in comparison to their civilian counterparts. An overview of the study, purpose statement, and significance of the study statement was presented, which outlined the need for the study as well as potential outcomes. Potential outcomes included an increase in knowledge and an awareness of the challenges for the military veteran who identifies as a single parent. The outcomes of this study may help to facilitate beneficial transition classes and enable professional counselors to work effectively with military veteran single parents. Research questions were presented that aided in the development of the hypotheses for this study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

There has been no literature found to date regarding military veterans who are single parents and the challenges they may face upon transitioning out of the military that could potentially affect their resilience. Past and current research has focused on the resilience of single parents within specific subgroups, such as low income, minorities, mothers, and fathers (Greeff & Ritman, 2005; Murry, Bynum, Brody, Willert, & Stephens, 2001; Taylor & Conger, 2014, 2017). The research recommended for study after completing this literature review will aid in determining whether or not there is a substantial gap between the perceived resilience, satisfaction with life, and stress in nonmilitary single-parent households and in the households of single parents who are military veterans.

The review of literature will initially explore economic hardships, family functioning, parental support, the perspective of the child, uniqueness of the military, mental health concerns, and the well-being of the military veteran child; it will conclude with the resources that are provided to single parents. Finally, the review will include pertinent information on how the two populations endure similar challenges, yet they are held to different standards within the community. In order to understand the challenges and stigmas that are attached to single parents and military veterans, one must first evaluate the individual differences between these two groups. Evaluating the differences through past research will reveal the thought process and mindset that an individual may have. Insight into the challenges that military veterans who are single parents may face has been gained through direct communication with the affected community, which has led the researcher through reviewing the literature. Additionally, the review of the literature will show how military culture can potentially hinder the resilience and

optimism of single-parent households. The information that is examined in this chapter will lay the groundwork for understanding the influence and stigma of the military on resilience in single-parent households in comparison to their civilian counterparts. Due to the limited research that is conducted on military veterans who are single parents, there was no need for inclusion or exclusion criteria during the literature review.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study has been derived from Erik Erickson's psychosocial theory. According to this theory, there are eight successive psychosocial stages that one must go through in his or her lifetime (Sokol, 2009). The eight stages of the psychosocial theory of human development are basic trust versus mistrust, autonomy versus shame and doubt, initiative versus guilt, industry versus inferiority, identity versus role confusion, intimacy versus isolation, generativity versus stagnation, and ego integrity versus despair (Munley, 1975). Each stage proposed by Erikson has been associated with an inherent conflict or crisis that one must navigate and resolve successfully so that he or she may proceed with development. The successful completion of each stage results in the acquisition of basic virtues and a healthy personality (McLeod, 2008). The basic virtues of hope, will, purpose, competence, fidelity, love, and care are characteristic strengths gained during each successful completion of a stage that can be used to help resolve subsequent crises (McLeod, 2008). When individuals do not complete a stage successfully, it can reduce their ability to complete further stages (McLeod, 2008).

Focusing on the fifth stage of Erik Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, it is noted that when children transition to adulthood, it is a period of identity formation. This stage is characterized by identity versus role confusion, and this critical point in one's life can lead to

identity achievement, foreclosure, or moratorium (Marcia, 1980). At this stage, the individual will work towards identifying who he or she is and the individual's place in society (McLeod, 2008). When adolescents choose their occupation and are confident in who they are, they have reached identity achievement as opposed to being in foreclosure or moratorium (Marcia, 1980). Erik Erikson's theory provides insight into understanding the identity problems of individuals within the military and transitioning out of the military (St. Denis, 1986).

As a volunteer force, some individuals choose the military due to family structure, economic hardships, following in family footsteps, or the desire to take advantages of the benefits offered by the military. Adolescents who choose to follow in the career path of their family members may encounter identity foreclosure (St. Denis, 1986). Regardless of the reason that one may choose to enter the military, the feeling of having an identity may not be long-term or realistic. Choosing to follow the path of another can result in an individual not being true to his or her authentic self-realized identity in order to join an institution. Joining the military institution requires an individual to put the organization before himself, which could lead to conflicts with personal morals and standards in order to be affiliated with the military institution.

The formation of a group identity takes place when an individual is affiliated with various groups and organizations (St. Denis, 1986). Unlike civilian single parents who can form their own identity, group identity is formed when individuals joins the military, and they no longer have to form their own identity because military culture requires institution before self (Redmond et al., 2015). When individuals transition out of the military, it is then that they must form their identity, identify their role in society, and provide for their family; this often creates role confusion and the need to overcome the crisis while struggling internally due to the warrior ethos mindset (Demers, 2013; Kelty et al., 2010).

Erikson's theory has informed this study by recognizing the identity crisis that military members may experience as they move through their life cycle, resulting in unresolved identity formation, which in turn affects the family unit. It has been noted in research that military service is characterized as a moratorium because it is a time when adult responsibilities can be deferred; however, it is also a time in which an individual's transition into adulthood is affected (Kelty et al., 2010). The individuals who joined the military immediately following high school or before their early 20s had children and transitioned out of the military may be considered a population who are held in high esteem due to their service yet considered marginalized due to their family structure. Throughout the years, single-parent family structures have become more common; however, there is still a gap in how the challenges of this family structure relate to the military veteran single-parent family structure. The inclusion in two different populations coupled with role confusion and minimal social support could potentially lead to decreased resilience, decreased satisfaction with life, and high stress that affects the children in the family.

Related Literature

This study was conducted to determine if the resilience of military veterans who are single parents is decreased or increased in comparison to their counterparts who have never served. A careful review of the challenges that single parents endure will be highlighted with an emphasis on understanding what resilience consists of, economic hardships, the mental health of the civilian single parent, family functioning, community support, and mental health. Following the challenges that are faced with civilian single parents, the literature will expand upon challenges associated with military members who are single parents transitioning out of the military without long-term benefits. The uniqueness of the military will be explored to show a correlation and contrast in the challenges faced by the two single-parent subgroups. The

uniqueness of the military will be followed by loss of military identity, homeless veterans, unemployment, mental health in military veterans, and redefining the military veteran identity. In the final section of the review, the various resources and social support that are pertinent to these two populations will be examined to zero in on how resilience and life paths can influence the single parent household. The purpose of the review and study will be to demonstrate the need for increased resources, knowledge, and practical transition classes for military veterans who are single parents in an attempt to minimize the stigmas that prevent individuals from seeking help. The single parent family structure is one that has been researched extensively; however, the information that pertains to the military veteran single parent is limited in research. Although there are both men and women military veterans who are single parents, the female population is growing, resulting in a further need for knowledge and insight for this population.

Resilience

Resilience has been defined as the adaptive ability to recover from negative experiences or the ability to bounce back from stress (Cheeseman, Ferguson, & Cohen, 2011; Smith et al., 2008). Research shows that resilience requires two criteria: occurrence of an adverse life event associated with maladjustment and positive adaptation that results in successful outcomes (Cheeseman et al., 2011, p. 34). When facing adversity, certain aspects of one's life may affect the level of resilience that a person demonstrates. Resilience can be influenced by personal, biological, and environmental factors which can increase resilience relative to adversity (Herrman et al., 2011). The risk factors are influences that affect systemic level which threaten positive adaptational outcomes (Waller, 2001). Protective factors are thought to facilitate positive outcomes between the individual and risk factors (Waller, 2001). Factors that can influence resilience are considered protective as a means to decrease stress. Researchers have

routinely focused on hardiness, adjustment, and coping strategies as a means to measure resilience while identifying factors that can increase or decrease resilience. Intellectual functioning, self-regulation, active coping styles, optimism, and secure attachment are personal factors that are indicative of high levels of resilience (Greeff & Ritman, 2005; Wu et al., 2013). Educational attainment, family cohesion, academic involvement, and socioeconomic advantages are considered family protective factors that can facilitate positive outcomes and increase resilience. Community factors include good schools, free lunches, sense of community, employment opportunities, supportive friends, opportunities to belong, and adequate resources while racial/ethnic socialization, strong, positive ethnic identity, and identification with traditional beliefs and values are cultural factors that can aid in facilitating positive outcomes between the individual and risk factors (Waller, 2001). Resilience can be considered multidimensional, where one may be resilient and competent in one area of life, but have difficulties in other areas (Cheeseman et al., 2011). The multidimensional characteristics vary with time, age, gender, cultural origins, and life circumstances (Connor & Davidson, 2003).

Examining the personal, biological, and environmental factors in one's life may be evidence of increased or decreased resilience. The information that has been provided regarding having different levels of resilience could be applied to single-parent families from various cultures and backgrounds. Examining the subgroups of single parents could provide additional information on how separate life paths can increase or decrease resiliency in these family structures dependent on past, present, and future personal, biological, and environmental factors.

Resilience and Single Parent Families. Through careful examination of the literature, it has been noted that the single parent family can provide independence and coping mechanisms that strengthen the family unit (Greeff & Ritman, 2005; Herrman et al., 2011; Taylor & Conger,

2014). Resilience is a construct that provides empowerment and gives single parents the ability to have more control over the adversity in their lives (Cheeseman et al., 2011). When there is disruption of the psychospiritual homeostasis, one of four outcomes may occur: disruption is an opportunity for growth and increased resilience leading to new, higher levels of homeostasis; return to baseline homeostasis to get past the disruption; recovery with loss establishing a lower level of homeostasis; or a dysfunctional state in which maladaptive strategies are used to cope with stressors (Connor & Davidson, 2003, p. 77). Positive coping strategies can moderate the impact of the adverse effects of challenges associated with single-parent family structures. Having an increased understanding of an individual's intellectual functioning, hardiness, optimism, resourcefulness, and adaptability can provide insight into the level of resilience one may have (Herrman et al., 2011). Family resilience can be influenced by commitment, communication, adaptability, cohesion, connectedness, and efficiency (Greeff & Fillis, 2009). The increased understanding of an individual's level of resilience is imperative in understanding family resilience (Greeff & Ritman, 2005) as their resilience can determine the ability of the family unit to overcome adversity.

Research has shown that personality characteristics are essential contributors to individuals' resilience. The top three personality characteristics that contribute to resilience include optimism, perseverance, and faith (Greeff & Ritman, 2005). It has been noted that faith is not considered a personality trait; however, there is a proven correlation between faith and increased resilience (Greeff & Ritman, 2005). Individuals who believe in a higher power as a positive coping mechanism are shown to have increased resilience. When measuring resilience, optimism is the positive attitude towards one's life and future, faith is the belief in a higher power, and perseverance is the continued effort to succeed in the face of adversity (Greeff &

Ritman, 2005). Optimism is known to be the most salient characteristic that contributes to resilience in the single parent family structure (Greeff & Ritman, 2005).

Single-Parent Family Structures

It has been noted in research that becoming a parent is one of the most definitive transitions in life. Despite the importance of this phase in one's life, the timing of this life cycle has changed throughout the generations. Historically, starting a family was a milestone in life that was determined by parents and elders. Family members would reside together in order to provide economic stability (Garland, 2012). Families included parents, married children, unmarried children, widowed siblings, and older generations all living together in one household (Garland, 2012). Colonial America and Frontier America proved to be a time when married children began to leave in order to start their own household with a spouse and children (Garland, 2012). Family structures are now based on freedom of choice, which has created variations in family structures. More individuals are choosing to start families later in life as well as have families that are not considered traditional. Research shows that one half of all children will live in a female-headed household with economic conditions affecting this family structure and creating increased stressors (McGoldrick et al., 2016). The increase in individuals who are choosing to put their careers ahead of starting a family has resulted in the traditional family structure becoming less common throughout the world. Finding an ideal occupation allows individuals to establish their identity and gain a sense of who they are before starting a family.

Single-parent families are those who are headed by one parent, whether it be the mother or the father. They are further defined as a parent who lives alone with a child having independent custody (Burgund et al., 2013). The parent may become a single parent as a result

of being divorced, widowed, or separated (Shah, Haider, & Halipoto, 2017). Throughout the years the number of children living in single-parent families has steadily increased. In 1970, 16% of children lived in single-parent families (Anderson, 2014). Within the United States, there are approximately one in three children being raised in single-parent households (Daryanani, Hamilton, Abramson, & Alloy, 2016; Richter & Lemola, 2017). As the years progressed, single-parent family structures became more accepted. In 2017, 34% of children in the United States resided in single-parent families (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2018).

Single-parent families are not restricted to any specific gender, race, age group, or sexual orientation, as seen in Table 1. Single-parent family structures span across various groups with in-depth research on differing job stability, income levels, education, social support, and access to resources. Despite the statistics that are provided on single-parent family structures, there is a lack of knowledge on how many of these families are headed by a single military veteran and the issues that they may endure in comparison to the civilian single parent and active duty single parent. The majority of the existing literature focuses on the African American single mother, who is considered low income and living in poverty (Elliott, Powell, & Brenton, 2015). In 2009, 50% of African American children lived in single-mother homes (Anderson, 2014). A rapid rise in the African American single mother household required government action as a means to deal with the endemic that was plaguing the African American family and causing a growing social problem. With the focus on women and minorities, there is little room to acknowledge and investigate the needs of men and other populations such as the military veteran who may be experiencing the same struggle.

Table 1

Children Living in a Single-Parent Family by Race from 2013 to 2016

Race	2013		2014		2015		2016	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
American Indian	329,000	52%	341,000	52%	333,000	52%	339,000	52%
Asian/Pacific Islander	557,000	16%	578,000	17%	568,000	16%	572,000	16%
Black or Afr. American	6,427,000	67%	6,382,000	66%	6,333,000	66%	6,281,000	66%
Hispanic or Latino	7,044,000	42%	7,190,000	42%	7,180,000	42%	7,230,000	42%
Non-Hispanic White	9,289,000	25%	9,181,000	25%	8,998,000	25%	8,766,000	24%
Two or more races	1,758,000	43%	1,797,000	42%	1,804,000	41%	1,900,000	42%

Note. Source data from <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/>

Challenges to the Single-Parent Household

Single-parent households face challenges that are rarely seen in dual parent households. The challenges that occur in single-parent family structures are those that increase stress and burden the family unit, disrupting development. Historically, the male in the household is considered the “breadwinner” and often the main disciplinarian (McGoldrick et al., 2016). Men are seen as being essential in the household, especially when relieving economic hardships, providing parental support, helping in the development of the child, and decreasing the overall stress while increasing mental health (Richter & Lemola, 2017). Having an absent father in the household can decrease life satisfaction due to the increased stress on the mother having to provide 100% of the care and support (Richter & Lemola, 2017). The focus of these challenges is from the viewpoint of single-parent households that have never had the parent serve in the military and may have had to rely on the government for assistance to help them support their

family. The challenges that are faced in this family structure represent civilian single parents, yet they can also be found in the veteran military household. While the challenges may be the same for nonmilitary and military, the degree of resilience, optimism, stress, and life satisfaction could affect the outcome for this family structure.

Economic hardships. The absence of one adult from the household can result in a decrease in finances for the household. Economic hardships are prevalent in homes that consist of one parent, and the ability to outsource finances are severely limited, which decreases resilience (Cutter, Boruff, & Shirley, 2003). Researchers have consistently shown that those who reside in the single-parent family structure live in poverty; however, they have chosen to focus on specific populations. Statistics have shown that race and gender are strongly associated with poverty and employment rates (Damaske, Bratter, & Frech, 2017). With the focus on single mothers as opposed to single fathers or military veterans, it is known that this population endures greater risk. Single mothers are at a higher risk of being susceptible to the vulnerabilities that are associated with economic hardships (Taylor & Conger, 2014). As researchers gather further information about single mother headed homes, the disparity between races is highlighted. Women of color are vulnerable to poverty, and although they may work, they are still poor (Damaske et al., 2017). African Americans, Hispanics, and Native American mothers are at the highest risk of living in poverty (Damaske et al., 2017).

While serving in the military, individuals tend to make more than their civilian counterparts. Financially, minority veterans fare better than their civilian counterparts for the first few years after separating from the military (Kelty et al., 2010). Once these individuals leave the armed forces, the benefits that they received have the potential to decrease drastically depending on whether they are retired, have a rated disability, or chose to leave the armed forces.

Military veterans who do not complete 20 years and rate disability face a drastic pay cut when leaving the military, which sometimes results in homelessness (Hosek & Wadsworth, 2013). Military members who have service-connected disabilities are given medical evaluations and assigned a disability rating based on their limitations in order to receive military disability compensation (Buddin & Kapur, 2005). After service members leave the military, they then have the responsibility of relocating and finding employment in order to provide for their family. The strain that is placed on the family unit after separating from the military can change family dynamics and create long-term issues for the military veteran. Military separations and transitions are a time where many military members become divorced as a result of economic hardships resulting in the number of increased single-family structures and decreased family functioning.

Mental Health of Civilian Single Parents

Mental health issues that are detrimental to the health and the well-being of the children and parents in the family. Mental health issues can occur in any population; however, there is significant research on how the single-parent population can have increased risk. Single mothers are prone to mental health issues such as depression, substance abuse, social isolation, and decreased emotional support (Daryanani et al., 2016). Studies have revealed that single mothers are associated with poor health and smoking in conjunction with depression (Atkins, 2010). Mental illnesses lead to significant distress, which decreases the quality of life in individuals. The mental health of a parent plays a factor in the mental health of children later in life. Examining mental health and well-being helps to provide an outlook on how the children in these homes will fair in later years as well as what changes could help these parents to provide beneficial parenting (Jane-Llopis et al., 2011). Civilian single parents are often faced with the

stigma of seeking mental health treatments or are unable to receive treatment due to barriers. The stigma of seeking treatment falls into two sets of barriers which include personal level barriers or provider and system-level barriers (Corrigan, Druss, & Perlick, 2014). Personal-level barriers stop individuals from seeking treatment because of attitudes and behaviors, while provider-level barriers exist due to a lack of insurance or finances to pay for care (Corrigan et al., 2014).

Depression. Depression is characterized by mood and thought disturbances that can cause impairment in social functioning (Atkins, 2010). Single mothers are more prone to depression, chronic conditions, and long-term disability (Umberson, Pudrovska, & Reczek, 2010). Studies have indicated that single mothers show significant depression in comparison to single fathers (Atkins, 2010). Characteristics that have been associated with depression include female gender, stressful life events, limited social support, poverty, lower maternal education, low self-esteem, and having recently given birth (Atkins, 2010). The characteristics that have been presented are indicative of single mothers who represent a vulnerable population. Single mothers report low levels of social support, higher levels of poverty, social stressors, financial stressors, health stressors, and low self-esteem (Atkins, 2010). Single fathers are more adept to using coping strategies to combat the stress of being a single parent (Umberson et al., 2010).

Family Functioning

The function of a family can be hindered by the structure of the family, financial issues, parental stress, geographic location, and social support. Single mothers who do not have social support have lower levels of functioning (Taylor & Conger, 2014). The inability to socialize with another adult or the pressure of having to be mother and father can cause the family functioning to be lowered. Single-parent families are vulnerable to social and contextual risk,

which results in high levels of stress and emotional distress (Taylor & Conger, 2014). Naturally, a family should be able to provide strong support to one another. Decreased mental well-being can cause the parents to feel isolated and alone, negative emotions, financial strain, sleep disturbances, and strained partner relationships (Nelson, Kushlev, & Lyubomirsky, 2014). Increased stress and tensions in the home can cause family functioning to be decreased or to cease altogether.

Parental support. Many single-parent families are influenced by economic hardships, poor psychological functioning, emotional distress, and decreased mental well-being, which can lead to poor parenting practices (Taylor & Conger, 2014). Mothers are not able to provide adequate emotional support when they are stressed or their well-being is decreased (Anderson, 2014). The decreased mental well-being of a parent can lead a parent to experience decreased satisfaction and increased stress internally and externally (Nelson et al., 2014). The increased stress on the parents leads to negativity in their daily lives when parenting. Stress in parents can cause harsh, irritable, and inconsistent parenting practices (Taylor & Conger, 2014). Single mothers may have negative behaviors, reject their children, or be psychologically controlling (Daryanani et al., 2016). In some cultures, there is such a high demand to raise their children in a safe environment that it causes parents to be more controlling and parent aggressively (Elliott et al., 2015). When parents are affected by these issues, the stress that they encounter begins to manifest itself in the children. When stress begins to overwhelm the adults, it can result in poor parenting practices. The manifestation in children can be seen through behavior, emotional, academic, and mental issues.

Child development. Living in a single-parent household can negatively affect the development of a child and the parent (Woessmann, 2015). The stress of a parent causes

disrupted parenting and poor child outcomes (Skomorovsky et al., 2016). Family structures and the influence of the parents impact the development of a child. Children who reside in homes with single parents are at increased risk of decreased well-being (Anderson, 2014). Children living in single-parent homes are exposed to increased stress (Nixon, Greene, & Hogan, 2015), which could potentially be the result of decreased parental involvement, increased responsibilities, and limitations of available resources (Nixon et al., 2015). Children who are raised in single-parent homes do not receive as much parental support and may be prone to decreased well-being that extends into their adult lives (Richter & Lemola, 2017). Children in single-parent homes who are influenced by their parents' decreased well-being may be prone to depression, anxiety, aggression, and antisocial behaviors (Taylor & Conger, 2014). These internalizing and externalizing behaviors that are displayed in the home may carry over into a child's schooling. The risk of psychological distress and poor outcomes extending into adulthood is increased, which can affect employment, income, and marital status in the later years of life (Woessmann, 2015).

Academic achievement. Research suggests that single-parent family structures negatively affect a child's academic performance (Amato, Patterson, & Beattie, 2015). Children who are raised in single-parent homes are at risk of having poor educational attainment (Woessmann, 2015). There have been significant differences highlighted academically for children who are raised in single-parent households. Children in single-parent households have higher dropout rates, lower grades on standardized achievement tests, lower grade point averages, and decreased college attendance (Hampden-Thompson, 2009). Based on the statistics of single-parent households it has been said that living in low-income neighborhoods and being

exposed to poverty can cause children to lack the required resources needed for school readiness (Kingston, Huang, Calzada, Dawson-McClure, & Brotman, 2013).

Community Support

Parents who are trying to raise children in a single-parent family structure could benefit from the support of their community members. It has been noted that children who reside with single parents, specifically mothers, are often subjected to living in poverty (Brand, Howcroft, & Hoelson, 2017). Living in poverty has been correlated with decreased academic achievement, increased criminal activity, and behavioral issues during adolescence. The inability to have more funds that can be outsourced requires the parent to have extended work hours to provide for the family. There is the potential for parents to work more than one job or rely on government assistance. Extended work hours result in parents not being able to spend adequate time with their children to provide the emotional support that they may need. It is imperative to strengthen a child's network by minimizing the loss that they may feel from being separated from family members, friends, or parents by increasing the involvement that they may experience through community support (McGoldrick et al., 2016).

Despite the negativity that encompasses living in a single-parent family structure, the community can help these individuals to progress in life. With the aid of the community, single parents can find programs and individuals who are willing to provide social support as they raise their children. Community support serves as an asset for single parents as they are frequently away from their children. The support of the community can be instrumental in increasing resilience, optimism, and overall satisfaction with life outcomes for single-parent family structures.

The Uniqueness of the Military

Individuals who serve in the military are often faced with challenges that their civilian peers will never have to endure while they are serving on AD. While serving on AD, several benefits are given to military members, and there are policies in place that are meant to help alleviate distress. These benefits and policies are put into place to offset the cost of raising families, ensure deployment readiness, and ensure mission accomplishment. As a single parent, the military requires that the mission comes ahead of the family, which causes separation of parent and child. The separation from a child during AD is known to be one factor for single parents leaving the military. Being away from a child for long periods can cause strain and conflict in the parent-child relationship. Once military members separate from the military as single parents, they endure the same challenges that their civilian counterparts are subjected to throughout their lives with minimal assistance and no required policies that must be adhered to. Researchers believe that the military provides unique challenges to military families that prepare them for hardships (Skomorovsky et al., 2016). In reality, the hardships that military members experience is often overshadowed by the structure and discipline of the military. As a veteran, the structure that was once part of everyday life is removed, exposing these veterans to the harsh reality of dealing with decreased benefits, a lack of support, financial burdens, and possible mental health issues.

Military culture. The culture of the military is one that needs to be understood if one genuinely wants to understand the mentality of a military veteran. The challenges and lack of support in the civilian sector can be a result of the military culture mindset. Military culture teaches the needs of the unit over the need of the individual, emotional restraint, mission accomplishment, and devotion to duty (Weiss & Coll, 2011). Each branch of the military has

core values that influence its decisions and mentality. The Army's core values are loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage; the Air Force's core values are integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all they do; the Navy and Marine Corps' values are honor, courage, and commitment; and the Coast Guard's values are honor, respect, and devotion to duty (Redmond et al., 2015). As soon as individuals decide they want to join the military, these core values are deeply ingrained into their minds. Military culture can at times be characterized as authoritarian, having periods of isolation from the civilian community, and total commitment to the military and one's unit (Hall, 2016). The characteristics of military culture can make it difficult for military members to accept the work ethics of civilians or be able to integrate into the democratic American society (Hall, 2016). In conjunction with core values, military culture also encompasses warrior ethos. The culture of the military and the warrior ethos mindset is one where speaking of feelings or emotions is seen as being weak (Hall, 2016). Understanding the role that military culture plays in one's life enables individuals to have increased knowledge of the potential challenges and decreased resilience that could be endured after separation from the military. When military members transition out of the military, they are thrust into the civilian sector where they must go through a separation phase of passing from military identity to civilian identity (Demers, 2013). The separation phase that a military member goes through is similar to when the veteran separated from the civilian culture in order to enter the military culture (Demers, 2013).

Transition to veteran status benefits. Service members who separate from the military are provided with classes and resources that are meant to aid them in their transition to the civilian sector. Military members may complete a curriculum known as the Transition Assistance Program (TAP), which is designed to help them reintegrate back into society. Each

branch of service has its program; however, the core components of the programs are similar. Military members complete courses such as pre-separation counseling, resilient transitions, military occupational code crosswalk, financial planning for transition, Veteran Affairs (VA) benefits briefings, Department of Labor employment workshops, and individual training tracks (Military OneSource, 2019). During the week or two that the service member completes these courses, they are given an overview of what benefits they may continue to have and the timeframe that those benefits may be available. Additionally, if the service member needs further support, they may use the Military OneSource services in most cases for up to a year following discharge or retirement (Military OneSource, 2019).

Loss of Military Identity

Joining the military allows individuals to become a part of an institution where they form a bond with seemingly like-minded individuals. From the beginning, military members are taught how they should think and behave. This group identity causes identity crises in later life as well as the stigma about seeking help for mental health and connecting with civilians. When a service member transitions out of the military culture and works to reintegrate into the civilian culture, there is the task of trying to fit back into society while not feeling normal (Demers, 2013). In an attempt to feel normal, the female veteran may allow social stigmas associated with mental health and female veterans to cause them to downplay their injuries or mental health concerns (Strong, Crowe, & Lawson, 2018). When it is time to transition out of the military, single parents lose their group identity and must work to find their own identity while providing for their children and trying to reintegrate back into a society that may no longer understand them or provide the subsidies to which they were once accustomed. Additionally, when military

members are not able to provide for their family, they may have to rely on government assistance, which may conflict with the military mindset of being a strong, resilient warrior.

The military can be beneficial to individuals while they are an AD; however, once an individual decides to separate, many lose the life they were once accustomed to while serving. While in the military, there is a steady paycheck, health care, subsidized childcare, food allowances, and housing allowances. These benefits could be considered detrimental because they allow military members to live comfortably without struggle, yet the military does not provide these allowances for a lifetime. Individuals who are married while in the military and receive military benefits are protected from the instabilities that civilians face (Clever & Segal, 2013). Military personnel can use the Military Family Resource Center in order to receive guidance about being single parents while serving on AD (Skomorovsky, 2016). Decisions are made by senior leaders in the military, which takes the responsibility away from the young men and women. The military culture, core values, structure, and discipline are said to be beneficial to military members, but whether it is beneficial outside of the military requires further research (Kelty et al., 2010).

Transition to veteran status challenges. When military members depart from AD, there is the potential to lose the stability that they once had. Health care, steady paychecks, food allowance, housing allowance, and subsidized childcare become a part of the past. Once these individuals leave the military and have to face the challenges that nonmilitary families face, there is the potential to become divorced, resulting in single-parent family structures (Clever & Segal, 2013). During a military demographics report conducted in 2005, it was noted that women in the military experience divorce at a greater rate than men, are more likely to remain divorced, and

have a higher rate of single parenting (Hall, 2016). The new family structure may increase stress; however, military culture deters individuals from seeking assistance.

The transition into the civilian sector begins a spiral of losses that one must compensate for with new benefits, social support, or the resilience to overcome the challenges that arise. When transitioning into the civilian sector, military veterans must seek healthcare through private insurance companies and may struggle to find employment (Clever & Segal, 2013). The unemployment rate of veterans has been increasing, with 12.1% of veterans being unemployed in 2011 (Hazle, Wilcox, & Hassan, 2012; Weiss & Coll, 2011). The increased stress with a lack of social support has the potential to result in complex mental health issues or suicidal ideations for military veterans.

Loss of adequate healthcare services. Veterans who have transitioned out of the military feel as if the healthcare system that once cared about their health is subpar. While serving in the military, service members were required to be ready to deploy on short notice. The readiness was indicated by whether the service members were up to date with their medical and dental health. For those members who were not ready, they were given priority appointments in order to become deployment ready. Healthcare needs were handled daily and military members received care promptly. Upon military separation, veterans who were not medically retired or eligible for Tricare services had to find private healthcare or enroll in healthcare through the VA.

As a veteran who is not medically retired, healthcare lies in the hands of the VA, which is different from military health care or civilian healthcare. VA is a federally-funded, integrated system of care that serves veterans who have complex healthcare needs, which may be service connected (Kazis et al., 1998). The priority that these individuals once received while AD no

longer exists. Previous research on the populations that use the VA shows that many veterans are uninsured and disadvantaged. Military veterans who have to depend on the VA complained of not being able to be seen promptly if at all for mental health concerns (Derefinko et al., 2019). A lack of trust and confidence in the VA results in military veterans not seeking the help that they need or waiting for extended amounts of time to receive care.

Homeless Veterans

The number of homeless veterans has increased throughout the years resulting in a need for additional studies being completed. Being homeless in the United States has been associated with medical problems, mental health and substance abuse problems, premature mortality, hospitalizations, and incarcerations (Tsai & Rosenheck, 2015). There are approximately 9,444 homeless veterans with young children; 37% were parents with minor children, and 11% of children resided in transitional housing (Tsai, Rosenheck, Kaspro, & Kane, 2015, p. 1083). In 2017 the Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress, it was noted that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) estimated approximately 40,000 veterans who were homeless (Absher, 2018). The number of homeless female veterans increased by 7% while males increased by 1%, with this number expected to continue to rise within the next five to six years (Absher, 2018). Homeless female veterans often have children according to the research that was conducted by HUD (Absher, 2018). Female veterans who transition out of the military and become homeless often have a hard time asking for help. The barrier to asking for help is due to the veteran female feeling betrayed by the institution in the past. Resentment towards the military by female veterans could be due to the female being sexually traumatized and not receiving adequate help from the military or the VA (Absher, 2018). During a study that was conducted in 2013 it was noted that female veterans who are

victims of sexual trauma differ from civilians who are victims of sexual trauma (Hall, 2016). Female veterans who are victims of sexual assault are assaulted where they live and work, and they often have to continue to work with the perpetrator without speaking of the assault due to possibly breaking unit cohesion (Hall, 2016). The feeling of betrayal causes female veterans to maintain their distance from organizations that are meant to help them upon transitioning out of the military.

Unemployment

When veterans transition from AD, the job that they may have held during their service may not always transfer to a job in the civilian sector. One of the most significant transitions that an AD military member may go through is the transition to the civilian sector. When transitioning to the civilian sector, military members are given classes that help them; however, the most significant issue that veterans face is being underprepared for transitioning to civilian employment (Robertson & Brott, 2014). The loss of job security and the need to be retrained causes periods of unemployment where the veteran may face financial crises.

In an attempt to be retrained in the civilian sector many veterans will attend college as a means of finding their identity, being trained for a suitable job, and securing a career that will enable them to provide for their families. This timeframe is marked by high periods of unemployment and depression (Hamilton, Williams, & Washington, 2015). Unemployment rates for women veterans are increasing daily. The unemployment rate for women veterans is reported to be higher than that of male veterans and civilian women (Hamilton et al., 2015). When transitioning into the civilian sector, the unique culture of the military can result in a lifestyle loss, culture shock, and a loss of confidence (Robertson & Brott, 2014). It is becoming common for military veterans to experience new career fields later in life, making them feel

inadequate in comparison to their peers who have never entered the military. The inadequacy that a veteran may experience not only affects the veteran, but it affects the children in the situation as the parent tries to balance work and home life.

Mental Health in Military Veterans

The number of women who are entering the military has been steadily increasing during the Iraq/Afghanistan wars, resulting in more parents having psychiatric conditions (Tsai et al., 2015). Veterans who deployed before separating from the military were found to have increased rates of depression that could have long-term consequences (Vaughn-Coaxum, Smith, Iverson, & Vogt, 2015). Veterans between the ages of 22 and 49 were found to have substantially higher rates of depression and alcohol-related disorders (Kazis et al., 1998). The high rates of mental health and substance use issues in veterans show a need for increased interventions (Derefinko et al., 2019). Providing interventions or increased knowledge can assist the veteran in healthy coping methods that will aid in positive parenting and help decrease suicidal ideation. Military veterans do not always report mental health issues due to the stigma and their mentality of military culture that is associated with seeking mental health treatment (Hazle et al., 2012).

Substance use. Military members may begin to use nicotine or alcohol while in the military. The use of these substances often follows the military member back to the civilian sector as it becomes an addiction. Despite knowing the risks, military members who have been to war may often feel like tomorrow is not promised, so they live for the moment (Weiss & Coll, 2011). Living in the moment could result in risky decisions. One of the main concerns with military members and veterans is the amount of alcohol that is consumed. In conjunction with the increase in alcohol use when veterans transition to the civilian sector, there is an increase in other substances. Substance use has been increasing in veterans as a means of self-medicating

(Hazle et al., 2012). In a study that was conducted by the VA inpatient program, it was found that veterans who had been homeless and had comorbid substance abuse issues were usually women who were married with children and had a previous history of sexual and physical abuse (Benda, 2005).

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). PTSD has been noted as one of the most common conditions in which veterans seek assistance from the VA (Carlson, Stromwall, & Lietz, 2013). Diagnosis of PTSD has grown since the war in Afghanistan and Iraq, which has led to an increase in awareness and studies being conducted. There are approximately 8% of nonmilitary men and 36% of male veterans who experience PTSD (Olenick, Flowers, & Diaz, 2015). In a recent study, Nunnink et al. (2010) found that women represent a rapidly growing population of individuals who are at high risk for PTSD due to the Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) conflicts. Studies such as the National Comorbidity Survey reveal how women are more likely than men to develop PTSD and the veteran female population is one that is not highly studied; however, there are more studies taking place in order to address the need of female veterans (Nunnink et al., 2010). PTSD is one of the most common mental health disorders associated with veterans, and statistics show that PTSD shows considerable comorbidity with substance use disorders and anxiety disorders (Smith, Goldstein, & Grant, 2016). As veterans struggle to cope with PTSD, the effects can be detrimental to the family unit.

Redefining the Military Veteran Identity

Military veterans must now face the same challenges that the nonmilitary single parent experiences in addition to figuring out how they can contribute to society while raising children. While in the military, AD military members did not have to think about how they would

contribute to society because the identity that is formed while being a part of the military institution overshadows individuality. It may seem as if these two populations are equal and can overcome or cope with the challenges in the same manner. However, the transition from AD military to the military veteran is a period in one's life that denotes a developmental milestone that many civilians reached in their earlier years of life. As a civilian single parent, this developmental milestone may have come during adolescence and is continually being redefined and groomed throughout the lifespan of the civilian single parent. As a military veteran who is transitioning out of the military, there is now the need to depart from the group identity of belonging to a military institution and identify with one's authentic self. To the military veteran, it may seem as if the transition out of the military denotes a loss of identity, isolation, and a loss of camaraderie (Blackburn, 2017). With further research and a closer look, it may seem as if the resilience that is taught in the military is not sufficient for the difficulties a military veteran who is a single parent may face in the civilian sector due to military culture and decreased benefits. Military veterans may not want to receive outside help because of the feeling of being defeated and not living up to the military standard of being healthy and independent. For those military veterans who identify the need for outside help, some resources are provided to single parents which may be helpful.

The Well-being of the Military Veteran's Child

Single parents who are AD are faced with the requirement of shipping their children off to family members while they are deployed, which disrupts the parent-child bond. Additionally, when a child may feel somewhat settled, there is the possibility the AD parent will have to move due to receiving orders. The stress that is associated with relocations, absences, and deployments can affect the military family causing undue stress (Skomorovsky, 2016). The

stress that is associated with these events may play a role in AD parents deciding to leave the military so they can provide a sense of stability for the child. The challenges that AD parents face concerning their children are thought to have decreased upon separation. Departure from the military could be construed as positive for the child of a military veteran. The challenges that the military veteran faces could be shielded from the child, which would result in no adverse effect on the child during or after transition.

Children of single parents who are military veterans may be the ones who understand the impact from transitioning out of the military firsthand and may suffer the most. If the military veteran is unable to shield the child from his or her struggles, the child may be negatively affected as well. It was noted in a study that was conducted that children of homeless veterans had higher rates of mental illness, poor general medical health, academic delays, and developmental delays (Tsai et al., 2015). In a second study that was conducted, research showed that children of single-parent military families were at higher risk for psychiatric hospitalization (Skomorovsky et al., 2016). Depending on how well military veterans can navigate their transition will ultimately determine the well-being of their children.

Resources Provided to Single Parents

Within the United States, various resources are provided to single-parent households if they are eligible financially. There may be single-parent households that are not eligible for specific resources due to the parent working and making over the maximum allowed income. Resources that are available include a supplemental nutrition assistance program, national school lunch program, temporary assistance for needy families, and low income or free head start programs. Families may apply for these programs online, or they can apply in person and be assigned a caseworker who will help them through the process and inform them about other

programs for which they may be eligible. These resources are provided in an attempt to help remove and decrease the stress that parents may have because of financial hardships. In addition to resources that help financially, there are social support interventions that help both civilian and military families.

For veterans, there are resources that are provided in addition to potentially qualifying for government assistance. In the last five years, there has been an increase in knowledge and awareness of the needs that are required by women veterans. Additionally, there is an increase in the number of social media groups that are aimed at helping female veterans, single mothers who are veterans, disabled veterans, and veterans in general, keeping them in contact with other veterans in an attempt to decrease depression and mental health disorders. In conjunction with social media, some programs are part of the VA, which offer immediate assistance if needed via mobile applications and hotlines. PTSD Coach is a mobile application which is provided by the VA that includes resources about PTSD and a self-assessment that can be taken to measure PTSD (LifeSping Health Systems, 2019). Lifeline for Vets is a vet-to-vet assistance program that can be accessed online or through a crisis line (LifeSping Health Systems, 2019). Coaching into Care is a VA program that provides mentoring and guidance for family members who are inquiring about benefits or seeking services (LifeSping Health Systems, 2019). Families can contact Coaching into Care free of charge via telephone between the hours of 8 am and 8 pm eastern standard time (LifeSping Health Systems, 2019).

Most recently, there is a program located in Massachusetts that aims to help women veterans who have children. The program is called the Women and Children's program, and Veterans Inc. operates it (Veterans Inc, 2019). This program offers transitional housing for female veterans with or without dependent children, assistance accessing permanent housing,

counseling, case management, benefits counseling and advocacy, transportation, temporary financial assistance, health and wellness, and specialized employment services (Veterans Inc, 2019). A second program that has been implemented in the last few years and is gaining popularity with the female population is the Mothers Program run by U.S. Vets and located mostly on the west coast (U.S. Vets, 2018). U.S. Vets is a nonprofit organization that provides services to homeless and at-risk veterans (U.S. Vets, 2018). The Mothers Program, which is located in California, provides services that are tailored to veterans who are mothers, including job assistance, child-specialized case management, access to schools, and weekend activities for children (U.S. Vets, 2018).

Researchers have taken an interest in the ways in which single parents can help themselves daily. Child development has been an area of interest within the single-parent family structure. In a study that was conducted on the effectiveness of behavior training for single parents, it was discovered that these individuals have limited training on positive reinforcement and the token economy system (Briggs, Miller, Orellana, Briggs, & Cox, 2013). The study concluded that behavioral parent training can be beneficial in reducing negative behaviors in children (Briggs et al., 2013). Additional training and cognitive reframing have shown positive results in decreasing stress for those who are willing to seek guidance. The use of cognitive reframing promotes positive well-being and coping skills that have the potential to alleviate uncontrollable stress (Wadsworth, 2015). When single mothers have a positive mindset, there is the possibility that they can do more and be prepared for adversity (Taylor & Conger, 2017).

Social support. One of the biggest challenges of transitioning out of the military is the ability to socialize. Social support interventions can improve self-esteem, decrease perceptions of stress, increase mentorship, and give single parents the ability to form social networks (Taylor

& Conger, 2017). Increased social support can help single-parent households reach high levels of family functioning (Taylor & Conger, 2017). As part of social support interventions, single-parent families are taught basic life lessons in an attempt to decrease the stress in their households. Teaching lifelong coping skills and life lessons can help to alleviate long-term consequences.

Members of the military who have transitioned into the civilian sector find that social support is imperative for their well-being; however, it can be hard to find. A lack of social support can cause long-term issues for military veterans who suffer from mental health conditions and substance abuse. Veterans have been identified as having a hard time connecting with others due to their military culture and mindset (Weiss & Coll, 2011). Military veterans who attempt to connect with civilians often find that there is a barrier which results in the veteran bottling up anger, stress, and anxiety (Derefinko et al., 2019). This inability to connect causes isolation, depression, avoidance, withdrawal, and a myriad of physical ailments. When military members transition out of the military, many still have the warrior ethos mindset that stops them from seeking help personally, financially, emotionally, spiritually, and physically. The lack of social support in the lives of military veterans can be detrimental to children, and it can result in decreased resilience when transitioning from the military to the civilian sector.

Instrument Considerations

The ability to provide an overview of how stress, ego identity, life satisfaction, and a sense of social support can affect the resilience levels of civilian single parents, active duty single parents, and military veterans who are single parents requires the use of instruments that can appropriately measure the aforementioned variables. This study used the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), Ego Identity Scale (EIS), Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), and the Connor-

Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC). These scales have routinely been used with the general population, university students, and individuals who may suffer from mental health conditions such as PTSD and anxiety, and in some cases the scales have been used together in studies (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983; Connor & Davidson, 2003; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985; Dolbier & Steinhardt, 2000; Tan, Kendis, Fine, & Porac, 1977). When these scales have been tested with the general population, they have shown sound psychometric properties, good internal consistency, and test-retest reliability.

The CD-RISC has been used with the PSS due to its ability to assess positive effects of treatment for stress, anxiety, and depression as well as its ability to represent challenge, commitment, control, goal setting, patience, and tolerance of negative affect (Steinhardt & Dolbier, 2008). The study that combined the PSS and CD-RISC was conducted on college students in order to assess the impact of a 4-week intervention on changing participants' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral ways of responding during the most stressful time of a semester (Steinhardt & Dolbier, 2008). The study included 64 college students who were split into experimental and wait-list control groups (Steinhardt & Dolbier, 2008). The CD-RISC showed a strong negative correlation to the PSS which is indicative of high levels of resiliency being associated with lower levels of perceived stress (Kjellstrand & Harper, 2012). The results indicated that the resilience intervention was effective in decreasing the amount of stress experienced by college students; however, the small number of participants was a limitation for the study. Additionally, it was noted that future studies should include larger sample sizes (Steinhardt & Dolbier, 2008). In a second study that was conducted with 66 University of Texas employees, the Sense of Social Support scale (SSS) was combined with the PSS in order to determine the appropriate measure of social support to be used and to progress in understanding

various relationships (Dolbier & Steinhardt, 2000). It was noted at the conclusion of the study that the divergent validity of the SSS was supported by the significant inverse relationship to perceived stress (Dolbier & Steinhardt, 2000). The use of two or more scales in a study allows researchers to show validity, reliability, and positive correlations that produce enhanced knowledge during data analysis.

Perceived Stress Scale

The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS; Cohen et al., 1983) is a popular tool developed in 1983 that is used to measure psychological stress and the degree to which an individual perceives the stress in their life as unpredictable, uncontrollable, and overloaded within the last month (Lee, 2012). The PSS is designed for community samples with a minimum of a junior high education (Cohen et al., 1983). The PSS-10 has been used throughout research with diverse populations. In 2006 the PSS-10 was used in Spain on a sample size of 440 adults who were parents of chronically ill children, substance abusers, healthy undergraduate students, and HIV positive patients (Lee, 2012). The PSS has been used primarily with college students and includes sample sizes that ranged from 60 to 2,387 (Lee, 2012).

The PSS-10 was used in a study of 285 undergraduate college students with a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of .89 (Roberti, Harrington, & Storch, 2006). The purpose of the study was to provide further psychometric support for the PSS-10 in a sample of U.S. college students (Roberti et al., 2006). The study indicated that the PSS-10 is reliable and valid for a nonclinical sample of U.S. college students (Roberti et al., 2006). The study was found to have statistical significance with minor limitations. The main limitation for the study was found to be under the type of respondents that participated in the survey. Most respondents of the survey were Caucasian which could limit generalizability (Roberti et al., 2006).

Ego Identity Scale

The Ego Identity Scale (EIS; Tan et al., 1977) was developed with Erik Erikson's characterization of ego identity in mind. The authors of the scale defined ego identity as the acceptance of self and a sense of direction (Corcoran & Fischer, 2013). The EIS was designed to reduce social desirability by ensuring that both statements appeared to be similar in their desirability levels (Tan et al., 1977). During the original administration of the scale 95 students were used and follow-up studies used university students to measure ego identity (Tan et al., 1977). In addition to the study being used with university students, it has been used in a study of 615 homeless military veterans (Benda, 2005). The use of the EIS on the general population university students and homeless veterans shows that the scale can be used for diverse populations.

A study of 315 male and 310 female homeless military veterans was conducted to examine gender differences in predictors of suicidal thoughts and attempts (Benda, 2005). The study was centered around the attachment theory with a focus on how personal attributes such as resiliency, self-efficacy, and ego identity can serve as strengths in overcoming adverse outcomes (Benda, 2005). In this study the EIS was used to assist in measuring personal attributes. The study indicated that ego identity in men showed a stronger positive association with suicidal measures than it did for women (Benda, 2005). When considering all of the factors involved in the study such as PTSD, self-esteem, ego identity, resilience, and social support, the study concluded that women are more likely than men to turn adverse feelings inward (Benda, 2005). The study was limited to those who contemplated suicide, attempted suicide, and one VA hospital which is not representative of all military veterans who may contemplate or attempt

suicide in different regions. Additionally, the study shed light on gender differences in male and female veterans and how services should be reflective of the differences (Benda, 2005).

Satisfaction with Life Scale

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985) was developed in 1985 as a brief assessment of an individual's perceived satisfaction with life (Pavot & Diener, 2008). The SWLS has been used with student samples, adult samples, military veterans, doctoral students, military wives, elderly caregivers, and male prison inmates (Pavot & Diener, 1993). The studies have had sample sizes ranging from 16 to 472 (Pavot & Diener, 1993). The SWLS has been used in military populations with a focus on career transition.

A study using the SWLS was conducted with 136 military members who were transitioning to the field of teaching with a reported .87 reliability for life satisfaction (Robertson & Brott, 2014). The 136 participants included former military who were seeking or had secured a career in teaching (Robertson & Brott, 2014). The study aimed to answer to what extent life satisfaction of military members who were transitioning or had transitioned to teaching was explained by the five career transition factors or readiness, confidence, control, perceived support, and decision independence (Robertson & Brott, 2014). The study found statistical significance with minor limitations. The main limitation for the study related to the type of respondents who participated in the survey. Most respondents of the survey included a large number of White males, married and post-transition, which prevents the findings of the study from being generalized across other populations and areas (Robertson & Brott, 2014).

Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale

The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC; Connor & Davidson, 2003) measures resilience as a measure of successful stress coping ability (Ahern, Kiehl, Lou Sole, & Byers,

2006). The CD-RISC has been used in studies with the general population, primary care, psychiatric outpatients, generalized anxiety disorder patients, and PTSD patients with sample sizes that ranged from 24 to 577 (Connor & Davidson, 2003). The CD-RISC has been used mostly in quantitative studies of mental health clinical sites, assessment of PTSD, and treatment of anxiety (Ahern et al., 2006).

The CD-RISC was administered to 128 single mothers ranging in age from 18 to 67 who had at least one child in the home between the ages of 0 and 18 years (Kjellstrand & Harper, 2012). The study was conducted through the snowballing sampling method with the use of Survey Monkey so that single mothers could complete the study at their convenience due to their lifestyle (Kjellstrand & Harper, 2012). The study aimed to answer if income, education, and marital status were significantly related to resiliency amongst middle- and upper-income single parents and which items on the CD-RISC were rated most strongly in middle and upper class single parents (Kjellstrand & Harper, 2012). It was noted during the study that middle- and upper-income single mothers make up 73% of the single mother population and this population is generally resilient due to having sufficient social support (Kjellstrand & Harper, 2012). The results of the study indicated that single mothers are resilient, identified as strong and able to reach their goals, reported that they tried their best, and that they were proud of their achievements and believed past successes gave them the ability to be successful in the future (Kjellstrand & Harper, 2012). The major limitations of the research were the low sample sizes from widowed single mothers, those who have low education levels, and groups with high income ranges (Kjellstrand & Harper, 2012).

Summary

The research on single parents demonstrates that the challenges that exist between nonmilitary single parents and single parents who are military veterans are not equitable. Each household has similar challenges, yet the attention that is given to the nonmilitary single-parent household far exceeds the military veteran single-parent household, resulting in a lack of knowledge in what this population needs to be successful. Research on military veterans who are single parents has just recently begun to expand due to the increase in females that are AD and serving in combat zones (Absher, 2018). This research is not inclusive of all military veterans who are single parents, and the few programs that have been implemented are not nationwide, which limits accessibility. The mental health concerns are similar for both households, yet due to military culture, it has been demonstrated that military members do not always seek help or feel like the help they receive is satisfactory. Military culture has also been seen as a reason for individuals to try to carry the burden of overcoming adversity without outside resources. Some resources have been put in place for those individuals who are single parents, yet the same resources are not always available for military veterans, depending on whether they have retired or not. Despite the strides that have been taken regarding the single-parent household and how it has become increasingly more acceptable, shortcomings remain when speaking of the military veteran single-parent homes and the effects on children and identity. Although single parents are considered a marginalized population, the connotation takes on a different meaning to society when it is realized that the single parent is a military veteran. Society has placed a perceived standard on many military veterans, expecting them to be healthy and able to handle whatever obstacles may occur in their lives (Hall, 2016).

Single parents who have never joined the military may be classified as an outgroup; however, they can build the resilience that is needed in order to provide for their families. Although military members identify as an in-group when they separate from the military and become veterans, they then identify with the out-group, a small number of individuals who have served their country. Military veterans that identify as the out-group may be further marginalized due to the possibility of avoidance and withdrawal. Military veterans who are taught structure and values could potentially face increased stress when trying to provide for their families without an adequate support group, structure, and a reliable support system.

The different standards placed on these two populations identified a need for further research in order to increase resilience and decrease the stigmas so that there can be equality for this family structure regardless of race, gender, socioeconomic status, or military status. With a growing population of female veterans, it is a necessity to conduct studies that will help these females reintegrate into society effectively as well as gain increased knowledge of single fathers who are military veterans. In all of the literature that was surveyed, no answer addressed the difference in resilience between these two seemingly similar populations. However, research indicated that two individuals who have similar issues might have different levels of resilience based on their identity formations, life paths, and optimism.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this quantitative research design was to explore the effects of serving in the military on resilience in single-parent family structures. Research has indicated that single-parent family structures are one of the most disadvantageous family structures for parents and children (Hampden-Thompson, 2009; Wade, Veldhuizen & Cairney, 2011). What researchers do not know, however, is the challenges and resiliency levels of military veterans who are single parents. More specifically, nonexperimental research was used in this study to gather data from a sample group of military veterans and civilian single parents. This chapter outlines the quantitative research method used in understanding the experiences of single parents who are civilians and military veterans.

Research Design

Survey research designs have been noted as one of the most extensive and oldest research designs used (Heppner, Wampold, Owen, Thompson, & Wang, 2016). Surveys allow the researcher to study the needs and challenges of a specific population by using self-report instruments. In this study, ego identity, satisfaction with life, and perceived stress were variables of focus when evaluating if there was a relationship between these variables and the resilience of single parents.

Quantitative analysis was appropriate because it enabled participants to remain anonymous while decreasing any risk of harm. This method allowed participants to self-report on being single parents from different backgrounds and how resilience could be affected because of their backgrounds. The use of a simple survey provided the researcher with the ability to evaluate similarities and differences with the single-parent subgroups. This method was

appropriate because it allowed the researcher to gather factual information without bringing harm to the participants. Nonexperimental research documents the nature or frequency of a particular variable within a defined population (Heppner et al., 2016). In this case, the researcher assessed the level of resilience in the single-parent population and subgroups of single parents. The comparison between civilian single parents and military veterans who are single parents was made using survey research. One of the most important contributions of this study is addressing perceptions that may be held about a specified population and within that population (Heppner et al., 2016, p. 289).

This study aimed to accurately detail the correlations between choosing one life path or another while describing challenges and perceived levels of resilience. This correlation study used descriptive statistics drawn from samples of the single-parent subgroups. Moderation effects provide the researcher with information on whether the relationship between two or more variables is contingent upon the value of a third variable (Aguinis & Gottfredson, 2010). The use of more than two variables resulted in the researcher using PROCESS (Hayes, 2018). PROCESS is a macro for SPSS that is used for testing of conditional process models. A moderation analysis (Model 1; Hayes, 2018) was conducted to analyze the data for this study.

Research Questions

The research questions that were used in the study provided a better understanding of the perceptions and characteristics associated with civilian and military veterans who identify as single parents. These two populations will help researchers to understand what the experiences mean to them (Heppner et al., 2016). The study investigated the following research questions:

RQ1: Is the relationship between resilience and one's acceptance of self moderated by civilian single parents and single parents who are military veterans?

RQ2: Are civilian single parents more resilient than those single parents who are military veterans?

RQ3: Is the relationship between the independent factors of perceived stress, life satisfaction and the dependent variable of resilience moderated by civilian single parents and military veterans who are single parents?

Hypotheses

The preliminary research for this study sought to find if there was a moderating effect on the relationship between the dependent variable of resilience and the independent variables of ego identity, perceived stress, and satisfaction with life. With the use of survey research, the expectations for the study were as follows:

H₀1: The relationship between resilience and one's acceptance of self will not be moderated by civilian single parents and single parents who are military veterans.

H_a1: The relationship between resilience and one's acceptance of self will be moderated by civilian single parents and single parents who are military veterans.

H₀2: Participants' response to whether they are civilian or a military veteran (Demographics Questionnaire) and resilience (CD-RISC) will not be a predictor for which subgroup appears to have the highest levels of resiliency.

H_a2: Participants' response to whether they are civilian or a military veteran (Demographics Questionnaire) and resilience (CD-RISC) will predict which subgroup appears to have the highest levels of resiliency.

H₀3: The relationship between the independent factors of perceived stress, life satisfaction and the dependent variable of resilience will not be moderated by civilian single parents and military veterans who are single parents.

H_{a3}: The relationship between the independent factors of perceived stress, life satisfaction and the dependent variable of resilience will be moderated by civilian single parents and military veterans who are single parents.

Participants and Setting

In this study, the participants were either a civilian single parent or a military veteran who is a single parent, who has custody of his or her children, and is living independently of his or her extended family. Participants were required to answer questions about their experiences as a single parent, ego identity, quality of life, resilience, and perceived stress levels. When selecting participants for research, it was necessary for the participants to have the background that the researcher was looking for and be able to give an honest assessment of their experience (Heppner et al., 2016). Participants were required to be at least 18 years of age, a civilian single parent or, if they have served in the military, they must have served a minimum of four years. When individuals serve in the military, they are able to enlist for a total of two, three, four, or five years depending on the branch of service and occupational specialty. For this study the researcher required a minimum of four years active duty in order to examine those who may have had an increased adaptation to military culture.

Advertisement and Recruitment

The first resource for locating potential participants was through the use of social media. An anonymous reusable survey link was generated through Qualtrics. Within Qualtrics there was a group member (researcher) who could create, edit, collaborate, distribute, and view results of surveys. Once the survey was created, the Division Administrator was the individual responsible for approving and activating the surveys for the student. Upon survey approval from the Division Administrator, the Group Member had access to an anonymous survey link and

reports which were used to collect data from individuals. Qualtrics then generated an anonymous reusable survey link so that no personal identifiable information was collected. A public notice was sent out through Facebook on a weekly basis asking for volunteers to participate in the research. Request for participation was sent out to four military-friendly closed groups who had 13,290 members, two Liberty University groups who had 4,638 members, two survey exchange groups who had 37,800 members, and three doctoral groups who had 9,626 members on Facebook.

The second resource for locating possible sample group participants were individuals that are personally known. Through the use of personal contacts from the military and civilian sector, it was anticipated that a sample group large enough to be representative of each population would be found (Heppner et al., 2016). In order to address the limitations that may be inherent with using the various scales, the researcher attempted to have a diverse population so that generalization of the findings would not be limited. In the case that there were not enough individuals within the personal contacts, then networking and snowballing would occur. The personal contacts suggested others who would be willing to participate in the study, which is known as networking, nomination, or snowballing (Jeanfreau & Jack, 2010).

In addition to Facebook, the researcher recruited participants through the Armed Forces Ministry at Beulahland Bible Church in Warner Robins, Georgia, where the majority of the members have a military affiliation. Recruitment through the Armed Forces Ministry was completed through the use of the recruitment letter (see Appendix J). Recruitment letters were passed out to each member and were available for the congregation in the foyer of the church. Interested parties were directed to the next step required for participation, including the opportunity to sign up immediately by providing their name, email address, and phone number,

which was used by the researcher to provide them with a link to complete the survey. The email address and phone number of the researcher was provided to all participants. Participation was on a volunteer basis. Individuals who chose to complete the survey were given the option to enter their email address into a separate survey for compensation purposes, which enabled them to keep their responses anonymous. The separate survey entered the participant into a raffle to win one of three \$50 gift cards to Walmart.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Participants were initially screened for willingness to participate in the study. Inclusion criteria required the participant to be at least 18 years of age and a civilian or military veteran who is a single parent, living independently of extended family members, with children residing in the home; they also had to demonstrate the ability to understand and sign an informed consent form. In order to establish inclusion, the participant was asked demographics questions that established inclusion or exclusion. Exclusion criteria consisted of (a) under the age of 18, (b) residing with family member or friend, and (c) reserve military member.

Instrumentation

Potential participants completed an assessment questionnaire to determine if inclusion criteria were met and the exclusion criteria were not. The initial assessment interview form was completed through the use of Qualtrics and consisted of four questions. Potential participants were asked the following questions: Are you a single parent? Have you previously served in the military for at least four years? Are you currently serving in the military? How many children, by age, currently live in your household? If the prospective participant met the inclusion criteria listed in the initial assessment, they were directed to move on with the survey and complete the consent question.

Consent for Treatment

Applicants that met the inclusion criteria completed an assessment packet which was provided through the use of an online survey; it included an informed consent form which detailed the risks and benefits of participation, the limits of confidentiality, participation incentives, and a demographic information form. If participants met the inclusion criteria, they still had the option to decline participation by closing and exiting the survey.

Demographic Questionnaire

The completion of a demographic questionnaire allowed the researcher to identify age groups, race, and military status, which assisted in identifying participants for each population to be examined. Question selection was based on the information that could assist the researcher in evaluating the various variables in the single-parents' subgroups. The collection of demographic information assisted the researcher in conducting comparison data collections.

Questions from the demographic questionnaire were created using prepopulated content from Qualtrics. General information was obtained, which determined if the participant was eligible to participate as well as whether the participant was a civilian or military veteran single parent. There was no identifying information collected from the participants. Excluding personal identifying information from the survey enabled the researcher to maintain confidentiality and privacy for the participants.

Ego Identity Scale

The Ego Identity Scale (EIS; Tan et al., 1977) was developed with Erik Erikson's characterization of ego identity in mind. The authors of the scale defined ego identity as the acceptance of self and a sense of direction (Corcoran & Fischer, 2013). The EIS is a 12-item scale that measures Erikson's concept of ego identity using forced-choice items that minimize

social desirability (Corcoran & Fischer, 2013; Tan et al., 1977). A sample forced choice item from the EIS is “Because of my philosophy of life, I have faith in myself, and in society in general” or “Because of the uncertain nature of the individual and society, it is natural for me not to have a basic trust in society, in others, or even in myself” (Tan et al., 1977, p. 281). When scoring the EIS, a score of 1 is assigned to each statement that reflects ego identity which are 1a, 2b, 3b, 4a, 5b, 6b, 7b, 8a, 9b, 10b, 11a, 12a (Corcoran & Fischer, 2013). The EIS was noted as having fair internal consistency, with a split-half coefficient of 0.68 (Corcoran & Fischer, 2013). The use of the EIS is imperative in the study as it is foundational to the theoretical framework in determining if the various subgroups are accepting of their identities or if there is identity diffusion. The EIS was the first instrument used in the survey questionnaire to evaluate ego identity as an independent variable as it relates to the single-parent subgroups.

Perceived Stress Scale

The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS; Cohen et al., 1983) is a popular tool developed in 1983 that is used to measure psychological stress and the degree to which an individual perceives the stress in their life as unpredictable, uncontrollable, and overloaded within the last month (Lee, 2012). The PSS consists of 10 self-report items and uses a 5-point scale that ranges from 0 (*never*) to 4 (*very often*) to measure stress-related thoughts and feelings (Cohen et al., 1983). A sample item from the PSS is “In the last month, how often have you felt you were unable to control the important things in your life?” (Cohen et al., 1983, p. 394). When scoring the PSS scores for questions 4, 5, 7, and 8 should be reversed (0 = 4, 1 = 3, 2 = 2, 3 = 1, 4 = 0) then all scores should be added up giving the participant a possible score of 0 to 40 with 0–13 indicating low stress, 14–26 indicating moderate stress, and 27–40 indicating high perceived stress (Cohen et al., 1983). Cronbach’s alpha of 0.84 – 0.86 in three samples is indicative of right internal

consistency (Cohen et al., 1983). The use of the PSS is imperative because it evaluates individuals who may have the same event and experience in their lives but have different perceptions which could result in a low stress, moderate stress, or high perceived stress. The PSS was the second instrument used in the survey questionnaire to evaluate perceived stress as an independent variable as it relates to the single-parent subgroups.

Satisfaction with Life Scale

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985) was developed in 1985 as a brief assessment of an individual's perceived satisfaction with their life (Pavot & Diener, 2008). The SWLS is a 5-item self-report questionnaire with a 7-point scale that ranges from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) to measure global life satisfaction (Diener et al., 1985). A sample item from the SWLS is "In most ways my life is close to ideal" (Diener et al., 1985, p. 72).

When scoring the SWLS the possible range of scores is between 5–35 with a score of 20 being the neutral point, scores between 5–9 being extremely dissatisfied, scores between 15–19 being slightly dissatisfied, scores between 21–25 being slightly satisfied, and scores between 31–35 representing extreme satisfaction with life (Pavot & Diener, 2008). The SWLS has a high internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.79 to 0.89 (Pavot & Diener, 2008).

The SWLS was the fourth instrument in the survey questionnaire used to measure the independent variable of life satisfaction as it relates to the single-parent subgroups.

Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale

The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC; Connor & Davidson, 2003) consists of a 25-item self-report questionnaire with a 5-point scale that ranges from 0 (*rarely true*) to 4 (*actual nearly all of the time*) to measure stress coping abilities (Connor & Davidson, 2003). When scoring the CD-RISC 25-item scale, the scores range from 0–100 with a higher score

reflecting higher resilience levels (Gucciardi, Jackson, Coulter, & Mallett, 2011). The CD-RISC has a high internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.89 (Green et al., 2014). The CD-RISC proves advantageous for measuring resiliency due to excellent internal consistency and test-retest reliability and validity (Ahern et al., 2006). The CD-RISC was the fifth instrument in the survey questionnaire for this study. The CD-RISC was used to evaluate the outcome variable (Y) resilience.

Procedures

Upon review of the literature, research questions and hypotheses were developed based on the gap in the literature. The instruments matched to the areas of focus for this study included a demographics questionnaire from Qualtrics, Ego Identity Scale (EIS), Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS), and the Connor Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC). An online survey was created using Qualtrics. A survey was created that combined a Demographics Questionnaire (see Appendix A) that focused on eligibility and background information with the remaining instruments of the study. The EIS (Tan et al., 1977), PSS (Cohen et al., 1983), and SWLS (Diener et al., 1985) were found on open domains with questions from all instruments being added to the survey in their entirety. When obtaining a copy of the CD-RISC, a one-time fee was required in order to review the scale in its entirety and a second fee was required to use the scale.

Prior to conducting this study, approval was given from Liberty University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Data collection began once IRB approval was received. Upon survey approval from the Division Administrator, a social media post (Appendix K) was sent out to potential participants and recruitment letters were distributed to members of the Armed Forces Ministry at Beulahland Bible Church (Appendix J). In an attempt to garner further responses, a

social media intermediate post (Appendix L) was posted weekly within the social media groups and on the researcher's private social media page. Two weeks prior to data collection closing, the researcher posted a social media follow-up post (Appendix M) to all social media groups and the researcher's private social media page. All social media posts were public so that it could be shared by family, friends, and individuals within the social media groups who knew single parents. The use of snowballing sample techniques allowed the researcher to access additional contributors through social media.

The individuals who chose to participate in the survey clicked the link in the social media post, which took them to the first screen of the survey which was the informed consent form (Appendix N). The respondents then clicked "Yes, take survey" on the informed consent screen to proceed with the survey. Participants were then taken to the first question of the survey, which served as a screening question to ensure the participant was eligible to proceed. Individuals who were ineligible were sent to the end of the survey thanking them for their time.

The survey was sent out to approximately 65,354 potential participants on social media. The use of G*Power allows an individual to calculate an ideal sample size with a desired level of precision (margin of error), desired confidence level, and estimated proportion of the attribute which is present in the target population (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007). The power analysis for this study was run using an estimated effect size of .35, a power level of .80 and margin of error that would be tolerated was set to .05. This analysis resulted in a required sample size of at least 40 participants. The study aimed to use convenience samples which consisted of readily available participants (Warner, 2013). The use of convenience samples to conduct the study deterred the researcher from generalizing; however, the data are still able to highlight potential concerns (Warner, 2013). Responses to the survey were accessed through

Qualtrics. Data were then downloaded to SPSS 25.0 for further evaluation. Participants taking the survey were given the option to enter a drawing to win one of three \$50 Walmart gift cards. If participants did not meet the screening requirement of being a single parent, the responses were removed from the data prior to being analyzed.

Data Analysis

This section will provide information on the methodology that was used for analyzing the data in this study. The study was conducted using a non-experimental research design, which utilized a survey or an epidemiological approach. All participants answered the same set of questions that were presented in an online survey format. Following data collection, all completed surveys were downloaded from Qualtrics into a spreadsheet. Incomplete surveys were removed from the data and no identifying information was collected from any respondent. The remaining responses were then coded and imported into SPSS 25.0 for further analysis.

Variables and Research Models

This study evaluated the following areas: identity, stress, life satisfaction, and resilience concerning civilian or military veteran single parents (Figure 1). Each variable was evaluated through the use of moderation analysis. Moderation is when the effect of the X (independent variable) on some variable Y (dependent variable) is moderated by W (moderator) if its size, sign, or strength depends on or can be predicted by W (Hayes, 2018, p. 220). A moderator variable affects the strength or direction of a relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable (Baron & Kenny, 1986). A detailed data analysis will be given in Chapter Four of the dissertation.

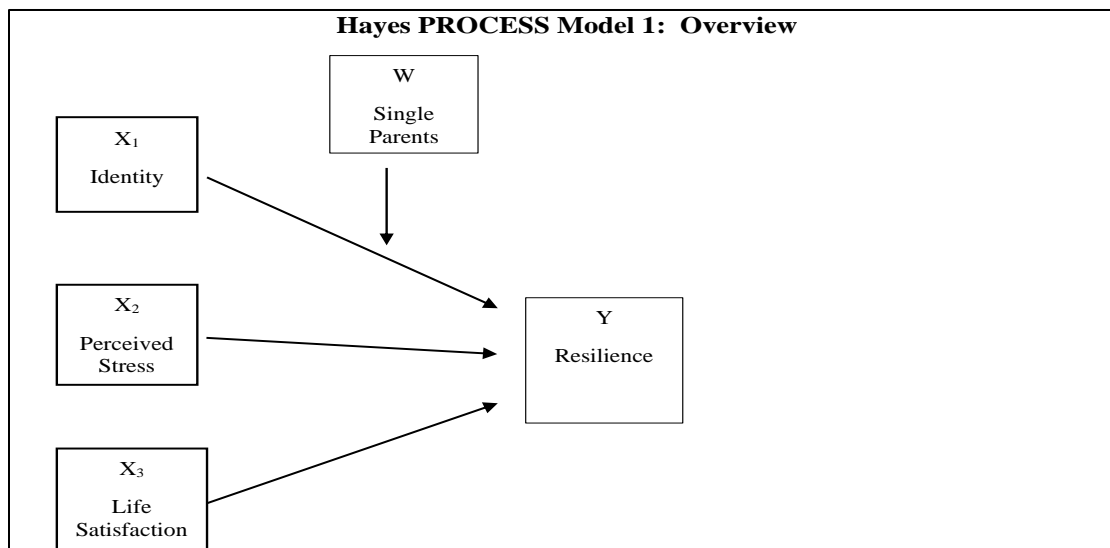


Figure 1. Hayes PROCESS Model 1: Overview.

Resilience and identity. A moderation analysis was performed on the independent variable of ego identity and the dependent variable of resilience (Figure 2). The relationship between ego identity and resilience was evaluated dependent on the single-parent subgroup moderating variable. Data were then analyzed to determine if being a civilian or military veteran single parent would have a moderating effect on the identity and resilience relationship. Responses were evaluated to determine if the independent variable was a predictor for the dependent variable (resilience) and if the effect of identity on resilience depended on the single-parent subgroup moderator.

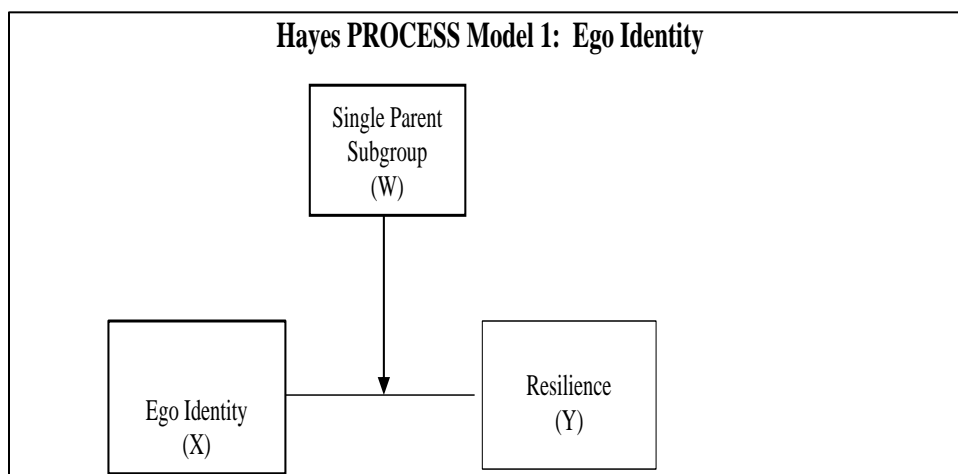


Figure 2. Hayes PROCESS Model 1: Ego Identity.

Resilience and stress. Moderation analysis was performed on the independent variable of stress and the dependent variable of resilience (Figure 3). Data were analyzed to determine if being a civilian or military veteran single parent would have a moderating effect on the independent variable of stress and the dependent variable of resilience. Responses were evaluated to determine if the independent variable was a predictor for the dependent variable (resilience) and if the effect of stress on resilience depended on the single-parent subgroup moderator.

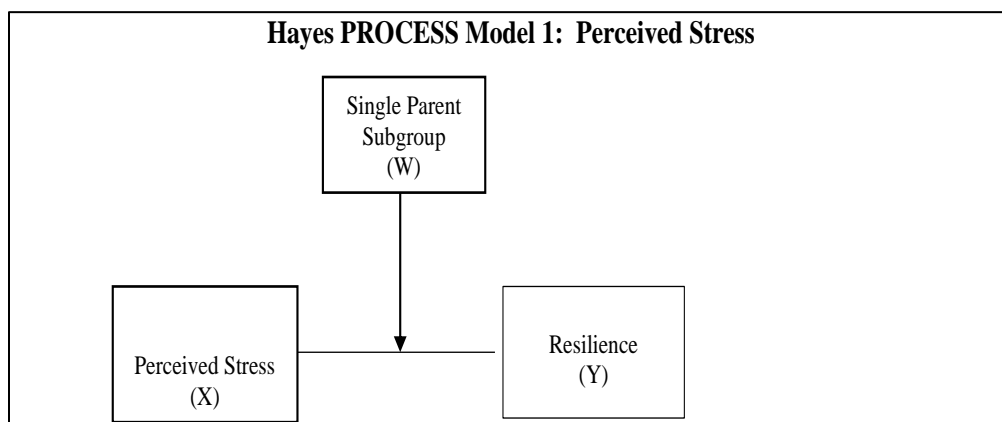


Figure 3. Hayes PROCESS Model 1: Perceived Stress.

Resilience and life satisfaction. A moderation analysis was performed on the independent variable of life satisfaction and the dependent variable of resilience (Figure 4). Data were analyzed to determine if being a civilian or military veteran single parent would have a moderating effect on the independent variable of life satisfaction and the dependent variable of resilience. Responses were evaluated to determine if the independent variable was a predictor for the dependent variable (resilience) and if the effect of life satisfaction on resilience depended on the single-parent subgroup moderator.

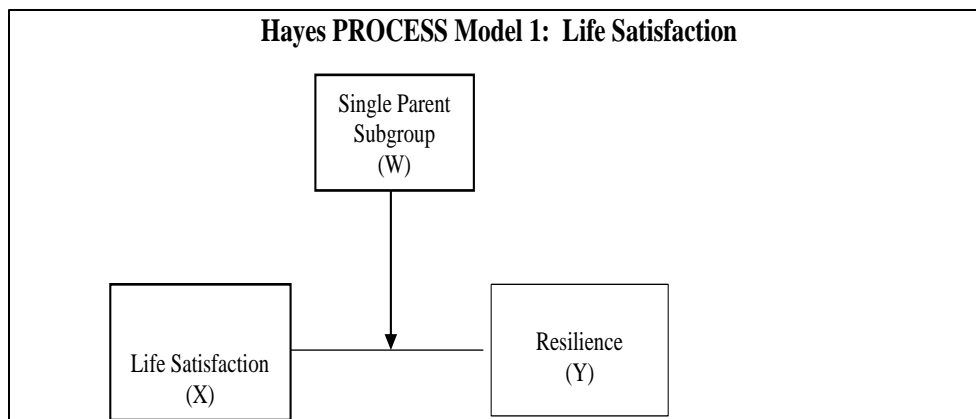


Figure 4. Hayes PROCESS Model 1: Life Satisfaction.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

One of the most commonly used research designs is non-experimental research and survey or epidemiological research designs (Heppner et al., 2016). Survey research can be used to provide a means of exploring additional needs within a population (Heppner et al., 2016). The variables that were explored were evaluated using moderation analysis.

Research Question 1: Is the relationship between resilience and one's acceptance of self moderated by civilian single parents and single parents who are military veterans?

Null Hypothesis 1: The relationship between resilience and one's acceptance of self will not be moderated by civilian single parents and single parents who are military veterans.

Alternative Hypothesis 1: The relationship between resilience and one's acceptance of self will be moderated by civilian single parents and single parents who are military veterans.

Research Question 2: Are civilian single parents more resilient than those single parents who are military veterans?

Null Hypothesis 2: Participants' response to whether they are civilian or a military veteran (Demographics Questionnaire) and resilience (CD-RISC) will not be a predictor for which subgroup appears to have the highest levels of resiliency.

Alternative Hypothesis 2: Participants' response to whether they are civilian or a military veteran (Demographics Questionnaire) and resilience (CD-RISC) will predict which subgroup appears to have the highest levels of resiliency.

Research Question 3: Is the relationship between the independent factors of perceived stress, life satisfaction and the dependent variable of resilience moderated by civilian single parents and military veterans who are single parents?

Null Hypothesis 3: The relationship between the independent factors of perceived stress, life satisfaction and the dependent variable of resilience will not be moderated by civilian single parents and military veterans who are single parents.

Alternative Hypothesis 3: The relationship between the independent factors of perceived stress, life satisfaction and the dependent variable of resilience will be moderated by civilian single parents and military veterans who are single parents.

Analysis Procedures

This study was designed to gain knowledge and insight into how military veterans who are single parents may have decreased resilience. Additionally, the factors of stress, life satisfaction, and ego identity were evaluated for their relation to resilience within the single-parent subgroups of civilians and military veterans. The study represents a small sample of civilian single parents and military veteran single parents. Insight can provide awareness on how these two populations can experience similar adversities yet have different outcomes as a result of their identities and their life paths, leading to increased resources. The following are overviews of analyses that were used within the study as a means of analyzing the results.

Frequency distribution. Frequency is a list of all possible scores on a variable along with the number of individuals who received each possible score. In this study, the participants

were asked to answer whether they identified as a civilian single parent or a military veteran who is a single parent. When utilizing the frequency tool within SPSS 25.0, a frequency table was created. Frequency distribution was then used to answer research questions and hypotheses.

Moderation analysis. Moderation models use PROCESS which is a macro add-on for SPSS that allows testing of conditional process models (Hayes, 2018). Moderation is illustrated when the effect that the independent variable (X ; identity, perceived stress, and life satisfaction) has on the dependent variable (Y ; resilience) is moderated by a moderator (W ; single-parent subgroups) if its size, sign, or strength depends on or can be predicted by W (Hayes, 2018, p. 220).

Mann-Whitney U test. The Mann-Whitney U test is a rank-based nonparametric test that is used to determine if there are differences between two groups on a continuous dependent variable (Laerd Statistics, 2015). In statistical analyses, the Mann-Whitney U test is often performed as an alternative to the independent samples t -test when data fail the assumptions needed to conduct the independent samples t -test (Laerd Statistics, 2015). In order to run a Mann-Whitney U test, there are four assumptions that must be met (Laerd Statistics, 2015). In this study, the Mann-Whitney U test was used in SPSS 25.0 to evaluate whether civilian single parents or military veterans who are single parents displayed higher levels of resilience.

Mann-Whitney U test assumptions. There are four assumptions that must be met in order to conduct the Mann-Whitney U test. The first assumption is that there is one dependent variable that is measured at the continuous or ordinal level (Laerd Statistics, 2015). Second, there is one independent variable that consists of two categorical, independent groups (Laerd Statistics, 2015). Third, there should be independence of observations (Laerd Statistics, 2015). The last assumption is that a determination on whether the distribution of scores for both groups

of the independent variable has the same shape or a different shape which will assist in interpreting the results of the statistical analysis (Laerd Statistics, 2015).

Cronbach's alpha. Cronbach's alpha is one of the most commonly used reliability assessment tools to measure internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha assesses the degree to which responses are consistent across a set of multiple measures, which are usually self-report items (Warner, 2013). Cronbach's alpha was used to measure the reliability and consistency of the responses from the participants regarding the instruments used in the study (PSS, SWLS, and CD-RISC).

Internal and External Validity Aspects

While recruiting participants, it was vital to acknowledge the potential for personal and perceived bias. The researcher must be aware of her values and beliefs while conducting the research. All responses were collected anonymously, and there was no observation of behaviors or events in order to evaluate external validity (Warner, 2013). The researcher anticipated that the study would find a difference in the resilience levels of civilian single parents and military veterans who are single parents. The information that was gained from this study could lead to increased knowledge of how to help the military veteran who is a single parent and decrease any barriers that are related to military veterans and their willingness to seek help or decrease the stress in their lives.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this study was to examine how the factors of stress, ego identity, and life satisfaction impact the resilience of civilian single parents and military veterans who are single parents. A survey design utilized the Ego Identity Scale (EIS; Tan et al., 1977), Perceived Stress Scale (PSS; Cohen et al., 1983), Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985), and the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC; Connor & Davidson, 2003). The responses from civilian single parents and military veterans who are single parents were used to evaluate the research questions and hypotheses for this study. This chapter will discuss the results, descriptive statistics and the hypotheses that are associated with the study.

Research Questions

The study investigated the following research questions:

RQ1: Is the relationship between resilience and one's acceptance of self moderated by civilian single parents and single parents who are military veterans?

RQ2: Are civilian single parents more resilient than those single parents who are military veterans?

RQ3: Is the relationship between the independent factors of perceived stress, life satisfaction and the dependent variable of resilience moderated by civilian single parents and military veterans who are single parents?

Null Hypotheses

With the use of survey research, the expectations for the study were as follows:

H₀1: The relationship between resilience and one's acceptance of self will not be moderated by civilian single parents and single parents who are military veterans.

H₀2: Participants' response to whether they are civilian or a military veteran (Demographics Questionnaire) and resilience (CD-RISC) will not be a predictor for which subgroup appears to have the highest levels of resiliency.

H₀3: The relationship between the independent factors of perceived stress, life satisfaction and the dependent variable of resilience will not be moderated by civilian single parents and military veterans who are single parents.

Descriptive Statistics

The following section will provide an overview of the descriptive statistics for demographic characteristics of this study. The study consisted of 72 participants. Five participants were removed because they reported being active duty single parents which was not a sufficient sample size to analyze. The final dataset consisted of response data for 67 participants. Participants were recruited through social media and the Armed Forces Ministry at Beulahland Bible Church. The study yielded civilian single parents ($n = 28$; 41.8%) and military veterans who are single parents ($n = 39$; 58.2%). Over half of the participants indicated they were female ($n = 56$; 83.6%). Many of the participants were White ($n = 37$; 58.2%), between the ages of 30 and 39 ($n = 39$; 58.2%), employed full time ($n = 52$; 77.6%), and had some college ($n = 23$; 34.3%). Table 2 provides descriptive statistics for the demographic characteristics of this study.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Demographic Characteristics

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Single-Parent Subgroup		
Civilian single parent	28	41.8
Military veteran single parent	39	58.2
Gender		
Female	56	83.6
Male	11	16.4
Race		
White	39	58.2
Black or African American	26	38.8
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	1	1.5
Some other race	1	1.5
Age		
21–29 years old	11	16.4
30–39 years old	39	58.2
40–49 years old	15	22.4
50–59 years old	2	3.0
Highest Level of Education		
Less than a high school degree	1	1.5
High school diploma or equivalent	6	9.0
Some college	23	34.3
Associate degree	8	11.9
Bachelor’s degree	16	23.9
Graduate degree	13	19.4
Employment Status		
Employed, working full time	52	77.6
Employed, working part-time	3	4.5
Not employed, looking for work	6	9.0
Not employed, not looking for work	1	1.5
Retired	4	6.0
Disabled, not able to work	1	1.5

The following information is representative of the descriptive statistics of responses from the participants who completed the surveys for the independent variables (SWLS, PSS, and EIS), the dependent variable (CD-RISC), and the moderating variable (civilians single parents and military veteran single parents). Results of the analyses were as follows: SWLS ($N = 67$, $M = 11.33$, $SD = 3.29$); PSS ($N = 67$, $M = 16.66$, $SD = 5.09$); EIS ($N = 67$, $M = 6.07$, $SD = 1.97$), and CD-RISC ($N = 67$, $M = 68.63$, $SD = 15.81$). The descriptive statistics can be found in Table 3.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Single-Parent Subgroups

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
Resilience	68.63	15.81	67
Life Satisfaction	11.33	3.29	67
Stress	16.66	5.09	67
Identity	6.07	1.96	67
Moderator	2.42	0.50	67

Internal Consistency

Cronbach's alpha was used to measure internal consistency for all of the scales that were included in this study. The use of Cronbach's alpha allows the researcher to measure the internal consistency and reliability of a multiple item scale. By measuring the scale, the researcher is able to determine to which degree the items on the scale measure the same thing (Warner, 2013). A score over .70 is considered to have good reliability (Warner, 2013). In this study the Cronbach's alpha for PSS was .77; SWLS was .80, and CD-RISC scale was .74, respectively.

Results

The study aimed to answer three foundational research questions: Is the relationship between resilience and one's acceptance of self moderated by civilian single parents and single

parents who are military veterans? Are civilian single parents more resilient than those single parents who are military veterans? Is the relationship between the independent factors of perceived stress, life satisfaction and the dependent variable of resilience moderated by civilian single parents and military veterans who are single parents? A moderation analysis was conducted using Hayes PROCESS Model 1 in order to determine if the independent variables were a significant predictor of resilience or if the moderator of single parent subgroups was a statistically significant moderator on resilience.

Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis evaluated whether the relationship between resilience and one's acceptance of self would be moderated by civilian single parent and military veterans who are single parents. It was hypothesized that the relationship between resilience and one's acceptance of self would be moderated by civilian single parents and military veterans who are single parents. Hayes (2018) PROCESS Model 1 was used to test for moderation as seen in Figure 2 and interaction as depicted in Figure 5. The results of the analysis presented in Table 4 show a positive association between resilience and ego identity: $F(3,63) = 12.77, p < .001, R^2 = .38$. This indicates that the model accounts for 38% of variance in the data. The results for the predictor ego identity, $b = 10.33, t(63) = -2.55, p < .01$, indicated that for every 1 unit increase in ego identity there is approximately a 10.33 increase in resilience. Adding the moderator to the model indicated that the moderator did not add statistical significance: $b = 13.22, t(63) = 1.29, p = .20$. Although the overall model was statistically significant, the interaction between ego identity and single-parent subgroups was not statistically significant: $b = -2.246, t(63) = -1.389, p = .17$.

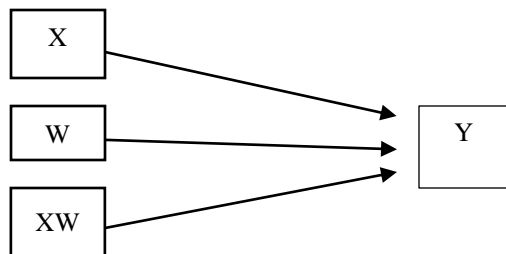


Figure 5. Hypothesized Statistical Model.

Table 4

Process Model with Ego Identity as a Predictor and Single-Parent Subgroups as a Moderator

Source	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>
Constant	6.604	26.003	.254	-45.359	58.567
EgoID	10.333	4.056	2.548**	2.228	18.439
Mod1	13.222	10.234	1.292	-7.230	33.674
EgoID x Mod1	-2.246	1.618	-1.389	-5.478	.986

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Hypothesis 2

It was hypothesized that the participants' responses to whether they are a civilian single parent or a military veteran who is a single parent would be a predictor of resilience. Prior to conducting the Mann-Whitney U the researcher checked for violations of assumptions. The study met the assumptions for continuous or ordinal data, the independent variable was categorical with two groups, there was independence of observations, and the distribution of scores was determined by creating a histogram. The distribution of scores had a different shape which resulted in the researcher using the Mann-Whitney U test to compare mean ranks. A Mann-Whitney U test was run to determine if there were differences in resilience scores between civilian single parents and military veterans who are single parents. Distribution of the resilience scores for military veterans who are single parents and civilian single parents were not similar, as assessed by visual inspection. Differences between resilience scores for military veterans who

are single parents (mean rank =34.72) and civilian single parents (mean rank = 33.00) were not statistically significant, $U = 518$, $z = -.356$, $p = .722$, as shown in Tables 5 and Table 6.

Table 5

Mean Ranks of Resilience Scores (N = 67)

Subgroup	<i>n</i>	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Military	39	34.72	1354.00
Civilian	28	33.00	924.00

Table 6

Test Statistics for Mann-Whitney U and Wilcoxon W

Test	Differences in Resilience Between Subgroups
Mann-Whitney U	518.000
Wilcoxon W	924.000
Z	-.356
Asymptotic Sig. (2-tailed)	.722

Hypothesis 3

Moderation analysis using Hayes PROCESS was used to probe whether or not the independent factors of perceived stress and life satisfaction were predictors of resilience for civilian single parents and military veterans who are single parents. In order to analyze the perceived stress predictor, Hayes (2018) PROCESS Model 1 was used to test for moderation as seen in Figure 3 and interaction as depicted in Figure 5. The results of the analysis presented in Table 7 show a positive association between resilience and stress: $F(3,63) = 15.54$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .43$. The results for the predictor stress, $b = -5.89$, $t(63) = -3.88$, $p < .001$, indicated that for every 1 unit increase in stress there is approximately a 5.89 decrease in resilience. Adding the

moderator to the model indicated that the moderator was statistically significant: $b = -27.71$, $t(63) = -2.48$, $p = .02$. In addition to the overall model and the moderator being statistically significant, the interaction between stress and single-parent subgroups was statistically significant: $b = 1.69$, $t(63) = 2.70$, $p = .01$. The interaction is displayed in Figure 6. The pick-a-point approach was used to probe for interaction. The interaction shows the effects of perceived stress on resilience at 16th percentile (low) and the 84th percentile (high) of the moderator. Percentiles are used when there is no way of selecting values of the moderator and it is noted that the use of these percentiles of the distribution of the moderator will always be within the range of observed data (Hayes, 2018). When stress is low, the graph shows that resilience is high for both civilian single parents and military veterans who are single parents. As stress begins to increase, resilience decreases for civilian single parents and military veterans who are single parents; however, the graph indicates that stress is a strong predictor of resilience for military veterans who are single parents.

In order to analyze the life satisfaction predictor, Hayes (2018) PROCESS Model 1 was used to test for moderation as seen in Figure 4 and interaction as depicted in Figure 5. The results of the analysis presented in Table 8 show a positive association between life satisfaction and stress: $F(3,63) = 18.52$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .47$. The results for the predictor life satisfaction, $b = 4.55$, $t(63) = 2.06$, $p < .05$, indicated that for every 1 unit increase in life satisfaction there is approximately a 4.55 increase in resilience. Adding the moderator to the model indicated that the moderator was not statistically significant: $b = 3.56$, $t(63) = .33$, $p = .74$. In addition to the moderator not being statistically significant, the interaction between life satisfaction and single-parent subgroups was not statistically significant: $b = -.55$, $t(63) = -.60$, $p = .55$.

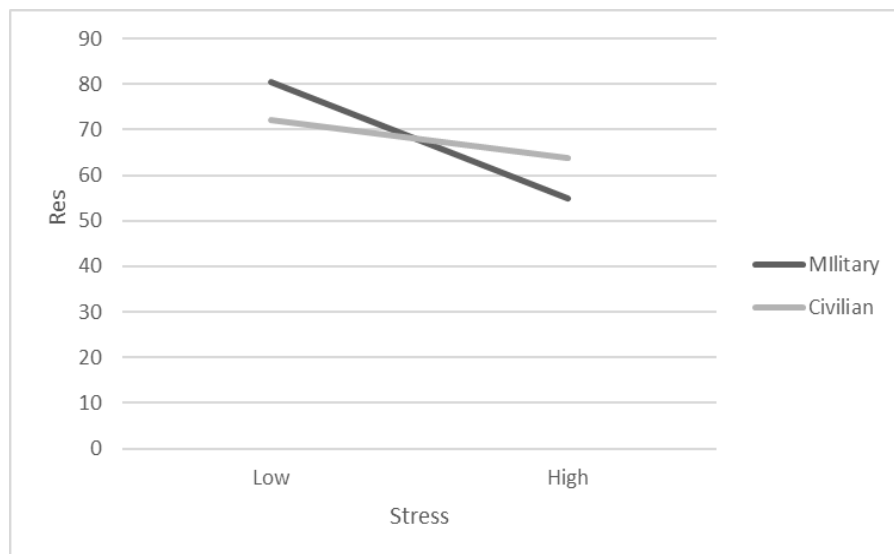


Figure 6. Graph of interaction between perceived stress and resilience.

Table 7

Process Model with Perceived Stress as Predictor and Single-Parent Subgroups as Moderator

Source	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>
Constant	164.78	26.44	6.23***	111.94	217.62
Stress	-5.89	1.52	-3.88***	-8.92	-2.86
Mod1	-27.71	11.16	-2.48*	-50.01	-5.41
Stress x Mod1	1.69	.63	2.70**	.44	2.95

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 8

Process Model with Life Satisfaction as Predictor and Single-Parent Subgroups as Moderator

Source	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>
Constant	23.41	26.08	.90	-28.71	75.53
LifeSat	4.55	2.21	2.06*	.13	8.98
Mod1	3.56	10.76	.33	-17.95	25.07
LifeSat x Mod1	-.55	.91	.60	-2.37	1.28

* $p < .05$.

Summary

Results from the statistical analyses indicated that there was no statistical significance in resilience between civilian single parents and military veterans who are single parents; however, the variables of ego identity, satisfaction with life, and perceived stress were statistically significant predictors of resilience, $F(3, 63) = 33.564, p < .05, R^2 = .615$. Additionally, when including a moderator variable and an interaction term in the model it was determined for this study that an interaction between perceived stress and single-parent subgroups was statistically significant. The findings of this survey indicated that the independent variables (ego identity, perceived stress, and life satisfaction) acted as predictors for the dependent variable (resilience); however, there was no statistically significant moderating effect or interaction between ego identity and life satisfaction on the model. Furthermore, the findings of this survey failed to support the prediction that there would be a statistically significant difference in resilience levels between civilian single parents and military veterans who are single parents.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

This study explored how the effects of stress, ego identity, and life satisfaction impact the resilience of civilian single parents and military veterans who are single parents. Discussion, implications, limitations, and the recommendations for future research will be presented in this section. The discussion section will review the hypotheses and the results of the study. The implications of the study will show the impact that this research could potentially have on future research. The limitations and conclusion section will discuss ways to improve and extend the research that has been conducted.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine how the effects of stress, ego identity, and life satisfaction impact the resilience of civilian single parents and military veterans who are single parents. Single parents have been known to endure adversity throughout their lives as a result of having to solely provide for their children (Taylor & Conger, 2017). Military veterans who are single parents have to endure the same adversities as civilian single parents; however, when military veterans are active duty they are given benefits to help alleviate their challenges. When leaving active duty, the benefits and comfort that the veteran once knew is removed and these individuals must transition into the civilian sector which can be a daunting task for those whose identity revolved around the warrior ethos mindset. This increased adversity can be a result of life satisfaction, perceived stress, and/or ego identity. Current research shows that individuals who have higher levels of perceived support are known to face decreased adversity while exhibiting higher levels of resilience during stressful situations (Taylor & Conger, 2017). In order to determine the differences in resilience between civilian single parents and military

veterans who are single parents there were assessments completed on stress, ego identity, and life satisfaction.

Participants were recruited through the use of social media, personal contacts, and the Armed Forces Ministry at Beulahland Bible Church. Each participant completed an online survey which consisted of a Demographics Questionnaire, EIS, SWLS, PSS, and CD-RISC scale. The analysis of data that was presented for this study showed that being a civilian single parent or a military veteran who was a single parent acted as a moderator between perceived stress and resilience. When probing whether ego identity or life satisfaction acted as a moderator, the results indicated that these variables were not significant. It is believed that the study could have yielded more significant results if the sample size had been larger and the subgroups had been more representative of the population. Despite the results that were identified from this study, there is still an increased need for additional research on military veterans who are single parents. The study did show that ego identity, perceived stress, and satisfaction with life were predictors of resilience.

Hypothesis 1 suggested that the relationship between resilience and one's acceptance of self would be moderated by civilian single parent and military veterans who are single parents. There was a positive association between resilience and one's acceptance of self. When adding the moderator variable of single parent subgroups there was no significance. When incorporating the interaction term, there was no significance detected and the interaction term of ego identity and single-parent subgroups only accounted for .02% of variation in resilience. It is concluded that regardless of what subgroup a single parent belongs to, if the single parent is aware of his or her identity, there can be an increase in resilience.

Hypothesis 2 proposed that the participants' response to whether they were civilian single parents or military veterans who are single parents would be a predictor for which subgroup had the highest level of resiliency as determined by comparing means. The study concluded that there was no statistically significant difference in resilience between the civilian single parents and military veterans who are single parents. It has been concluded for this study that the proposed moderator of single parent subgroups does not have an overall effect on resilience.

In Hypothesis 3 it was proposed that the relationship between the dependent variable of resilience and the independent variables of perceived stress and life satisfaction would be moderated by civilian single parents and military veterans who are single parents. When including the moderator variable from the study the independent variable of perceived stress was found to be statistically significant; however, the independent variable of life satisfaction was not moderated by the single parent subgroup.

Implications

The results from this research did not indicate a statistically significant relationship between the effects of ego identity and life satisfaction on the resilience of single-parent subgroups. However, this study did show a statistically significant relationship between perceived stress and resilience on single-parent subgroups. Additionally, the study indicated that incorporating the interaction term (perceived stress x single-parent subgroups) accounted for additional variation in resilience. The main implication from the current investigation is that stress, ego identity, and life satisfaction are predictors of resilience. Although the study did not show a statistically significant difference in resilience between civilian single parents and military veterans who are single parents, it is believed that counselors, family, and friends could

benefit from having a better understanding of what can increase or decrease resilience. This knowledge and understanding could greatly enhance familial relationships.

The results of this study show how ego identity can lead to increased resilience in single parents as a whole. This highlights the importance of finding one's true identity and purpose in life as a means to provide increased resilience. When military veterans lose their military identity, they are then given the task of trying to fit back into society while not feeling normal (Demers, 2013). Transitioning out of the military and losing their military identity are challenging for many military veteran and their families. Unlike their civilian counterparts, military veterans are reprogrammed while serving on active duty in the military to have a warrior ethos mindset; when they separate from the military and have to form a new identity outside of the military, it can be detrimental to the wellbeing of military veterans and their families. When single parents are able to properly form their identity, they will gain the basic virtues of hope, will, purpose, competence, fidelity, love, and care, which can be used to resolve future adversities and increase resilience (McLeod, 2008). Counselors who work with single parents can help these individuals to find their purpose in life so that they may work toward increased resilience while learning positive coping techniques. Additionally, counselors will be able to effectively work with military veterans in a manner that is consistent with their civilian counterparts, which can decrease stigmatism that are connected to military veterans. Decreasing stigmatism can potentially greatly enhance how counselors integrate counseling techniques into the lives of military veterans while helping them to identify ways in which they can increase their satisfaction with life while finding an identity outside of the military.

Friends and family members of military veterans who are single parents can benefit from understanding what aspects of this study will help them to work with the military veteran,

potentially resulting in enhanced familial relationships. Losing the military identity can result in a decrease of resilience for the military veteran, which can cause additional challenges in his or her household. These challenges can then be transferred to the children in the household, resulting in negative behaviors, decreased academic performance, and/or decreased wellbeing of the military child. Family and friends who are aware of the challenges caused by a loss of identity can assist military veterans by checking on their wellbeing and being attentive to changes in behavior. The help that is provided by family and friends can provide a sense of social support which, as noted earlier, can lead to decreased perceived stress and increased resilience.

Ultimately, the study was not generalizable nor did it show a difference in the resilience between civilian single parents and military veterans who are single parents; however, the information that has been presented shows an increased need for further knowledge about the differences that may exist within this population. The implications for counselors, family, friends, and transitioning military members may be beneficial in facilitating a change that results in an overall increase in the wellbeing of the military veteran and children in the home.

Christian Worldview

Faith can be the key for many single parents in overcoming adversities as well as increasing resiliency in their families. The Bible references how single parents arise from various circumstances. Single parenthood can be a result of divorce, death of a spouse, or sexual immorality. God's intention for children was for them to be raised by mother, father, and the local community; however, it is noted that God loves all children the same (Genesis 1:27–28; Psalms 127:3).

The first reference to a single parent in the Bible was identified in the book of Genesis as an Egyptian slave by the name of Hagar. God came to Hagar when she cried out to him, and He let her know that He was with her in her time of distress (Genesis 16:1–4, 31). Hagar was sent out to the desert with her son because the child that she had been forced to bear was not wanted by the father's wife Sarah. Hagar was given a bottle of water and some food by the father and sent away (Genesis 21:14). Hagar wandered through the desert with her son, and when she was ready to give up, she sat down in the middle of the desert and began to cry (Genesis 17:15). God heard the cries from Hagar's son and called out to Hagar. In the midst of pain God demonstrates that He is still there and will provide a way out of hardship.

God highlighted Lot who became a single father after Sodom and Gomorrah was destroyed (Genesis 19:24–26). Lot's wife was killed because she disobeyed the Lord. Lot escaped with his two daughters; however, they were raised with the values of the world which caused additional issues within the home. Although being a single parent can be hard, it is essential that single parents learn how to raise their children in the instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). Raising children in the instruction of the Lord can be of great value in assisting single parents to cope with adversity and build a foundation for their families that is grounded in faith.

In the book of Kings, God spoke to Elijah and told him to go to the widow at Zarephath (1 Kings 17:9). God told Elijah that the widow of Zarephath would provide for him; however, the widow could barely provide for herself and her son. When Elijah encountered the widow, she made it known to him that she did not have anything and she was gathering what little she could so she and her son may eat and die (1 Kings 17:12). Despite going through her own struggle, she still provided a room for Elijah and shared what little bit she had because Elijah told

her that God would provide for her and her son. The widow at Zarephath shows that God provides, and He has a way of turning things around.

Having a Christian worldview that is founded on faith and the belief that God will provide for all his children big and small is imperative in ensuring single parents are given adequate and equal support. The Bible tells us that with God, all things are possible (Matthew 19:26). Single parents who are grounded in their religion and faith may turn to Christianity as one of their resources. The Bible states, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28 New King James Version). Single parents may suffer from hardships; however, trusting God in all details of one’s life will result in His working out every detail of their lives for good. Despite what the family structure may look like, God created all children, and He promises to be a father to the fatherless (Psalm 68:5). This form of resource may alleviate the children’s psychological health, personal psychological security, as well as provide healthy parenting skills (Petts, 2012).

Limitations

After assessing the responses that were presented, it was important to annotate the limitations that were found as a result of the study. The limitations that have been presented have the potential to influence the study. Limitations that were noted following the study include diversity, sample size, and the accuracy of self-reporting.

The first limitation was the lack of diversity that was presented from the respondents. The survey lacked a significant number of male respondents which led to a nonrepresentation of the single-parent population. The majority of the individuals who accessed and completed the survey were either Caucasian, which does not portray an overall picture of all ethnicities that may be representative of single parents. Unfortunately, the data used for this study were not

generalizable to all single-parent families due to lack of diversity within the demographics of the respondents.

Statistically, the small sample size that was attained during the study was a limitation of this research. The survey was distributed to approximately 65,354 potential participants. There was only a total of 72 individuals who responded to the survey; however, only 67 participants could be included in the study. The low response of potential participants decreased the statistical power for the study. Statistical power is the probability that the study will indicate that there is a statistical difference which exists between interventions (Sullivan & Feinn, 2012). It was noted in research that one of the main challenges facing researchers is the issue of statistical power due to obtaining smaller sample sizes (Whisman & McClelland, 2005). In order to increase the statistical power of a study, it is necessary to increase the sample size. Additionally, the small sample size was indicative of non-response bias which affects the external validity of the survey (Sedgwick, 2014). Non-response bias is a consequence of non-response error which arises because non-respondents are different from respondents (Manfreda & Vehovar, 2008). The small number of participants in the study resulted in the sample population being non-representative of all single parents.

The online survey made the data collection anonymous, quick, and efficient; however, there were limitations due to the format of the survey. The researcher was unable to determine if participants completed the survey multiple times or if they met the screening requirements. The majority of participants were recruited through social media, which limited the researcher from determining whether participants completed the survey more than one time. Additionally, the researcher did not have any control over valid reporting from the participants.

Recommendations for Future Research

The results that were gleaned from the current study could offer insights into future research despite the limitations that were noted. Due to the limited amount of research that was present prior to this study, it would be of value to conduct a secondary study that focused on military veterans who are single parents. Current and prior research focused on single parents who were currently serving in the armed forces as well as those who never served. Expanding the single-parent population to include military veterans could potentially increase resiliency for this family structure and provide positive resources for the children and parents of this population, which could increase resiliency in the future.

Future research would benefit from utilizing a qualitative or mixed method of data collection. Qualitative methods have been known to be discovery and process oriented which enables the study to be expanded as additional information emerges (Steckler, McLeroy, Goodman, Bird, & McCormick, 1992). In a mixed method model, qualitative methods could be used to explain quantitative findings (Steckler et al., 1992). The use of either mixed methods or qualitative methods would provide in-depth information on the similarities and differences within the single-parent subgroups. These methods of research would allow the researcher to use interview questions that are open-ended in an attempt to provide a greater insight into the resiliency levels of single-parent subgroups. Qualitative data that are focused on interviewing respondents could provide insight into additional gaps in research that may exist. This form of data collection would also be beneficial in accounting for non-response errors that occur in survey data.

The study garnered a small sample size during the time that the survey was open for responses. Future research would benefit drastically from a larger sample size that would be

considered generalizable to the single-parent population and the subgroups of this population. As more knowledge begins to emerge on military veterans, future researchers could potentially work with a military organization that is aimed at helping military veterans. Partnering with an organization could increase the number of individuals who complete the survey, resulting in a larger sample size that has the ability to be generalized to the single-parent population.

Based on the results of the study, it would be beneficial to conduct a qualitative study on male military veterans who are single parents in comparison to female military veterans who are single parents. This study could expand the knowledge that is known about how men and women differ when they leave the military, differences in the warrior ethos mindset, resiliency, and how they raise their children. Additionally, a secondary study could garner increased information about the resources and coping skills that are portrayed amongst these populations as well as whether or not gender is a factor in resiliency. Examining the different subgroups to include active duty single parents could be beneficial in showing that a difference in resilience may exist. The lack of having an adequate sample size for active duty single parents potentially influenced the results of the study by not showing a true comparison. Having an additional subgroup in the study could highlight the need for additional studies being conducted in the future.

The use of a qualitative study that included children who are able to vocalize their opinions and knowledge on living with a single parent would be beneficial to future research. The perspective of the child could give additional insight that the parent may overlook which could increase life satisfaction for the family unit as a whole, decrease perceived stress on behalf of the child, and highlight challenges that the child may be facing due to family hardships. Including the child in the study could give researchers an idea of family functioning as a whole.

Lastly, including a scale that measures social support could increase knowledge that would assist in assessing the differences between subgroups and resilience levels. The Sense of Social Support scale was developed in 2000 and used to assess perceptions of available social support rather than actual support that may be received quantitatively and qualitatively (Dolbier & Steinhardt, 2000). This scale has previously been used in research with the CD-RISC and the PSS that was used during this present study. The addition of social support to a quantitative or qualitative study could result in increased knowledge for future practitioners who are examining the differences between civilians and military veterans.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Demographics Questionnaire – Online Survey

1. If you choose to continue with this survey, you are aware you are giving your consent to participate in this research study?
 - Yes, I consent to participate in the research study and answer the following survey questions.
 - No, I do not wish to participate in the study and will close my browser to exit the survey.

2. Are you a single parent?
 - Yes
 - No

3. Are you currently serving in the United States military, or not?
 - Yes, I am
 - No, I am not

4. Have you ever served in any branch of the United States military, or not?
 - Yes, I have
 - No, I have not

5. In which branch (or branches) of the United States military have you served? (Check all that apply)
 - Army
 - Marine Corps
 - Navy
 - Air Force
 - Coast Guard

6. What is your gender?
 - Male
 - Female

7. Are you White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, or some other race?
 - White
 - Black or African American
 - American Indian or Alaskan Native
 - Asian
 - Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
 - Some other race (please specify)

8. What is your age?
- 17 or younger
 - 18 – 20
 - 21 – 29
 - 30 – 39
 - 40 – 49
 - 50 – 59
 - 60 or older
9. What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?
- Less than a high school degree
 - High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)
 - Some college but no degree
 - Associate degree
 - Bachelor's degree
 - Graduate degree
10. Which of the following categories best describes your employment status?
- Employed, working full-time
 - Employed, working part-time
 - Not employed, looking for work
 - Not employed, NOT looking for work
 - Retired
 - Disabled, not able to work
11. How many children, by age, currently live in your household?
- 0-1 year old
 - 2-5 years old
 - 6-12 years old
 - 13-18 years old

Appendix B: Ego Identity Scale (EIS; Tan et al., 1977)

[Removed for Copyright]

Appendix C: Perceived Stress Scale (PSS; Cohen et al., 1983)

[Removed for Copyright]

Appendix D: Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985)

[Removed for Copyright]

Appendix E: Connor Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC; Connor & Davidson, 2003)

Permissions require scale is not available on open domain or available to the general public

Appendix F: Permission to Use – Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

(Retrieved from <https://eddiener.com/scales/7>)

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

Permissions

The scale is copyrighted but you are free to use it without permission or charge by all professionals (researchers and practitioners) as long as you give credit to the authors of the scale: Ed Diener, Robert A. Emmons, Randy J. Larsen and Sharon Griffin as noted in the 1985 article in the *Journal of Personality Assessment*.

Appendix G: Permission to Use – Perceived Stress Scale (PSS)

(Retrieved from <http://www.psy.cmu.edu/~scohen/>)

For reprints, please contact:

Sheldon Cohen, Ph.D.
Department of Psychology
Carnegie Mellon University
5000 Forbes Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

[Psychology Department Faculty Page](#)

Note that many articles, chapters, and scales are available online in the "Vita" section of this website.

Permissions

Permission for use of scales is not necessary when use is for academic research or educational purposes.

If you need written permission, please write the letter with a line for a signature, along with a self-addressed envelope.

Appendix H: Permission to Use CD-RISC Email

Search

Reply Delete Archive Junk Sweep Move to Categorize

Re: Use of CD-RISC

JM Jonathan Davidson, M.D. <jonathan.davidson@duke.edu>
Thu 8/15/2019 2:26 PM
Tara Whitfield

aRISC Manual 06-01-19_F.pdf 4 MB
aCD-RISC-25 01-01-19 F_CR.... 616 KB

2 attachments (4 MB) Download all Save all to OneDrive

Hello Tara:

Thank you for your payment. I have pleasure to enclose the scale and manual.

Wishing you success in your research,

Jonathan Davidson

Appendix I: Permission to Use Beulahland Bible Church Email

Sent: Tuesday, December 10, 2019 2:08 PM

Subject: Re: Doctoral Study

Yes, permission is granted

Pastor Antoine Scruggs

Executive Pastor

Beulahland Bible Church

----- Original message -----

Date: 12/9/19 5:01 PM (GMT-05:00)

Subject: Doctoral Study

Warmest Greetings!

I would like to ask your permission to allow me to conduct a survey among the members of the Armed Forces Ministry of Beulahland Bible Church. This is in view of my dissertation, entitled, "Examining the Effects of Stress, Ego Identity, Social Support, and Life Satisfaction on the Resilience of Single Parent Subgroups". I am conducting the survey among civilian single parents, active duty single parents, and military veterans who are single parents nationwide via an online survey.

This survey would last about 10 to 15 minutes and would be available online for approximately one month and can be taken at a time convenient to the participant. Participation in the survey is entirely voluntarily and there are no known or anticipated risk to participate in this study. All information provided will be kept in utmost confidentiality and would be used only for academic purposes. The names of respondents will not appear in any dissertation or publications.

If you agree, please send acknowledgement of your consent and permission for me to conduct this study/survey at Beulahland Bible Church with some members of the congregation. Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. Thank you in advance for your interest and assistance with this research.

Sincerely,

Tara Marie Whitfield

Appendix J: Recruitment Letter

September 25, 2019

Civilian Single Parents
Active Duty Single Parents
Military Veteran Single Parents

Dear Single Parents,

As a graduate student in the Department of Community Care and Counseling/School of Behavioral Sciences at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to examine the differences in resilience, stress, ego identity, sense of social support, and satisfaction with life within the civilian, active duty, and military veteran single parent subgroups, and I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

If you are at least 18 years old, a civilian single parent, active duty single parent, or military veteran single parent with children living in your home, you reside independently of extended family, and are willing to participate in the study, you will be asked to complete a survey. The survey should take approximately 30 minutes.

To participate in my study, go to the following link:
https://liberty.co.1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5Apy4nEDmgWpaIJ

A consent document is provided as the first page you will see after you click on the survey link and contains additional information about my research. Please click on the survey link at the end of the consent information to indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the survey.

If you choose to participate, you will be given the opportunity to enter a raffle to receive a \$50.00 Walmart gift card. If you choose to enter into the raffle, you will be directed to a separate survey, which will ask for your email address. The separate survey will prevent me, the researcher, from linking your survey responses to your identity.

Sincerely,

Tara Marie Whitfield
Doctoral Candidate

Appendix K: Social Media Post

Greetings!

My name is Tara Whitfield, and I am seeking participants for a study on civilian, active duty, and military veterans who are single parents. Below is the link to the survey. If you are interested in participating or know someone who might be, please complete the survey or share it!

Survey Link – https://liberty.co.1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5Apy4nEDmgWpaIJ

All questions can be directed to Tara Whitfield, the researcher, at tmwhitfield@liberty.edu

Appendix L: Social Media Intermediate Follow-Up Post

Greetings!

My name is Tara Whitfield, and I am seeking participants for a study on civilian, active duty, and military veterans who are single parents. If you have recently completed the survey, I thank you for your time. If you are interested in completing the survey but have not done so, there is one month remaining for you to participate in this study. Thank you in advance for your time and participation.

Below is the link to the survey. If you are interested in participating or know someone who might be, please complete the survey or share it!

Survey Link – https://liberty.co.1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5Apy4nEDmgWpaIJ

All questions can be directed to Tara Whitfield, the researcher, at tmwhitfield@liberty.edu.

Appendix M: Social Media Follow-Up Post

Greetings!

My name is Tara Whitfield, and I am seeking participants for a study on civilian, active duty, and military veterans who are single parents. If you have recently completed the survey, I thank you for your time. If you are interested in completing the survey, there are two short weeks remaining for you to do so. Thank you in advance for your time and participation.

Below is the link to the survey. If you are interested in participating or know someone who might be, please complete or share it!

Survey Link – https://liberty.co.1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5Apy4nEDmgWpaIJ

All questions can be directed to Tara Whitfield, the researcher, at tmwhitfield@liberty.edu.

Appendix N: Informed Consent Letter

The Liberty University Institutional
Review Board has approved
this document for use from
12/9/2019 to –
Protocol # 4034.120919

CONSENT FORM

Examining the Effects of Stress, Ego Identity, Social Support, and
Life Satisfaction on the Resilience of Single Parent Subgroups

Tara M. Whitfield
Liberty University

Department of Community Care and Counseling/School of Behavioral Sciences

You are invited to be in a research study examining the effects of stress, ego identity, and life satisfaction on the resilience of single parent subgroups. You were selected as a possible participant because you are 18 years old or older, living independently of extended family members, and a civilian, active duty, or military veteran who is a single parent. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Tara Whitfield, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Community Care Counseling and Care/School of Behavioral Sciences at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to determine whether there is a need for increased resources, knowledge, and practical transition classes for military veterans who are single parents by examining the differences in resilience, stress, ego identity, and satisfaction with life in comparison to active duty and civilian single parents.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things: Please complete the following survey, which includes questions about demographic information, resilience, stress, ego identity, and satisfaction with life. This survey will take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

Risks: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

Benefits: This study does not provide direct benefits to the participant. However, data gleaned from this study might benefit researchers studying the relationship between resilience, stress, ego identity, and satisfaction with life within the military veteran, civilian, and active duty single parent subgroups.

Compensation: Participants may be compensated for participating in this study. A raffle will be held among participants completing the survey for one of three \$50.00 Walmart gift cards. Email addresses will be requested for compensation purposes; however, they will be collected separately from the survey responses to maintain participant anonymity.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. I may share the data I collect from you for use in future research studies or with other researchers; if I share the data that I collect about you, I will remove any information that could identify you, if applicable, before I share the data. Participants' email address will be requested for compensation purposes but will be collected separately from survey response to maintain anonymity. Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time prior to submitting the survey without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please exit the survey and close your internet browser. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study. **Contacts and Questions:** The researcher conducting this study is Tara Whitfield. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her at tmwhitfield@liberty.edu. The dissertation chair for this research is Dr. Daphne Washington. She can be reached at dWASHINGTON4@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

- Yes, take the survey.
- No, thank you.