

UNITED STATES FEMALE VETERANS' REINTEGRATION: PERCEIVED NEEDS OF
SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT

by

Lisa Marie Grazioso

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

The United States military service members dedicate a period of their lives, some their entire life, to protecting and upholding the United States Constitution. While the United States military service members go through many transitions throughout their military career, all but their transition to civilian life include mentors and have a step-by-step action plan or checklist to prepare them for their next position or move. Often, female Veterans and their needs during reintegration into civilian life are overlooked. The purpose of this research study aimed to examine the relationships between perceived stress, satisfaction with life, and reintegration into civilian life for United States female Veterans. The study utilized feminist theory through the critical theory lens and relational-cultural theory (RCT). Data was collected through an anonymous, online survey via SurveyMonkey. The sample consisted of 155 female Veterans. Feminist theory and RCT focus on connections and relationships that guided this study to find whether relationships between female Veterans' reintegration into civilian life were perceived with stress and their level of satisfaction with life. The results indicated that United States female Veterans struggle with reintegration into civilian life with increased perceived stress and reduced feelings of satisfaction with their lives. Based on the research results from this study, additional research is recommended. Future research would benefit from utilizing a mixed-method approach incorporating qualitative and quantitative methods to better understand female Veterans' unique needs.

Keywords: female Veterans, reintegration, feminist, relational-cultural theory, PSS14, SWLS, M2C-Q

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Dedication

This research study is dedicated to past, current, and future female Veterans. As a female Veteran, I understand the importance of creating a solid community of support and how often female Veterans are overlooked due to gender, often based on the misperception that females did not have critical military roles or that their service is not as valued as male's. All Veterans have vital roles in the military; regardless of gender, they are critical to military missions' successes.

I am thankful to God for His support and guidance and for providing me with a loving and understanding family. My family has been a source of encouragement and strength throughout this dissertation. My husband and five sons (Joseph, Christian, Ryeder, Chase, and Daniel) have all endured this journey with me. My sisters, Elizabeth and Saralee, have always been supportive and offered their ears when needed. I am most thankful for my father, Joseph Grazioso, and both sets of grandparents, for they taught me that I am a survivor and that anything is possible through perseverance, hard work, dedication, and the love of God.

This journey has been enlightening and humbling. I will forever be grateful to my children, sisters, and close friends who have always supported me. God has big plans for me, and this is just the start.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

American Veterans (AMVETS)

Department of Defense (DoD)

Department of Veterans Affairs/Veterans Affairs (VA)

Disabled American Veterans (DAV)

Military to Civilian Questionnaire (M2C-Q)

Perceived Stress Scale (PSS14)

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Relational-cultural Theory (RCT)

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

Team Red, White & Blue (Team RWB)

Transition Assistance Program (TAP)

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)

Veteran Affairs Healthcare (VAH)

Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Many studies have been conducted on the United States military, and some have covered the reintegration process from active-duty military service members to civilian life as Veterans (Ruben et al., 2013; Scott et al, 2017). Further investigation revealed deficient quantitative research concerning female Veterans' transition from active-duty military service to civilian life regarding their perceived challenges and stressors (Ritchie, 2019). Female Veterans are often negatively perceived by civilians (Hirudayaraj & Clay, 2019). Examining the female Veteran subculture is the best way to better understand their needs for reintegrating from active-duty military service to civilian life (Verkamp, 2021).

Background

The United States military is a lifestyle for active-duty military service members that is ingrained starting with the initial entry into military training (Scott et al., 2017). It has its own culture with traditions, customs, values, and expectations (Ruben et al., 2013). The military hierarchy is clearly defined by a rank structure along with standard expectations of all military service members defined by each United States military branch of service and the Uniform Code of Military Justice (Absher, 2022). The standard expectations include an appearance in and out of military uniforms, physical fitness, work performance, and military guidelines for customs and procedures. The United States military has been a volunteer military since 1973 (Selective Service System, n.d.) and is predominately male, with females making up approximately 16% of the population (Robinson & O'Hanlon, 2020). Since the military is predominately male, it is easy to understand how predominant masculine and feminine characteristics are less visible.

Both active members and Veterans in the United States military make up approximately 7% of the United States population (Vespa, 2020). Women active military service members and Veterans are approximately 16% of the United States military population with female Veterans (Robinson & O'Hanlon, 2020) comprising of only 7% of the total United States female Veteran population (Vespa, 2020). Female Veterans have been the fastest-growing population of Veterans since the 1990s, which accentuates the need for gender-specific care (Rubin et al., 2013). Most research is predominately focused on the bulk of the military population—men (Scott et al., 2017). Transitioning from active-duty United States military service into civilian life has many challenges for Veterans (Bowes et al., 2018).

Problem Statement

Quantitative research is deficient concerning female Veterans' reintegration from active-duty military service to civilian life. Bowes et al. (2018) explored various psychosocial factors that influence Veterans adjusting to civilian life and which factors predict a poor adjustment, but they did not identify the gender differences. Crowe (2018) examined the effects of reintegration back into civilian life post-deployment and found that it can be difficult for military Veterans, particularly those with physical and psychological injuries, but did not identify issues that non-injured female Veterans face. Goldzweig et al. (2006) highlighted a narrative synthesis of studies in four domains/topics: the stress of military life; health and performance of military/Veterans Affairs (VA) women; health services research/quality of care; and psychiatric conditions. However, they did not identify areas for improvement for transition to civilian life. Bowes et al. (2018), Goldzweig et al. (2006), and Hawkins and Crowe (2018a) all recommended further studies into the transition process from active-duty military to civilian life for female Veterans.

Research studies have found that female Veterans are twice as likely to become homeless compared to non-military females (Boros & Erolin, 2021; Crowe, 2018; Hawkins et al., 2015; Mankowski & Everett, 2016; McCormick et al., 2019; Ritchie, 2019; Rubin et al., 2013). It is perceived that this is due to a lack of employment opportunities and VA support, and civilian societies' poor understanding of female Veterans' needs. Rubin et al. (2013) argued that female Veterans need more assistance for reintegration, and almost a decade later, not much has changed, nor has research increased for female Veterans.

Most Veteran research studies either utilized the Schlossberg model of human transition or grounded theory to base their research on missing the uniqueness of female Veterans and their struggles (Parise, 2016; Robinson, 2016; Robinson, 2020). The feminist approach challenges existing patriarchal norms, attitudes, and hegemony that oppresses women. Feminism seeks to raise awareness about and challenge structural inequalities and scrutinize everyday language and practices of privileged insubordination by analyzing how power is broken and distributed. Feminism examines who benefits from established norms, cultures, and practices, who gets excluded because of these, and how traces of domination, such as race, gender or class, interact with an organizational setting to influence the experience of a marginalized group. The problem is that female Veterans makeup a small percentage of United States military and Veteran population to which their perceived psychology and social needs are overlooked for reintegration into civilian life.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to evaluate whether female Veterans have perceived psychology and social needs that are not met during reintegration into civilian. Most Veteran studies are cited as gender-neutral; however, the military and Veteran populations are dominated

by males, as shown throughout historical data. There are only a few research studies conducted on female Veterans to date (Heitzman & Somers, 2015; Parise, 2016; & Robinson, 2020). Studies focusing on female military service members and Veterans are orientated toward education, healthcare, and injuries (Hawkins & Crowe, 2018b; Bradwisch, 2019; & Vogt et al., 2021). Female Veterans have been noted to face unique struggles and challenges due to their gender and the civilian population's perception of female Veterans (Heitzman & Somers, 2015; Parise, 2016; Robinson, 2020), and recommendations have been repeatedly made to conduct research into female military service members and Veterans regarding their reintegration to civilian life.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study was to highlight female Veterans and bring awareness to their perceived reintegration challenges and struggles by determining whether there are relationships between reintegration, satisfaction with life, and perceived stress. This survey research study determined the relationships between stress, satisfaction with life, and gender of female Veterans reintegrating from active-duty military life to civilian life and the impact they had on the reintegration process between one- to five-years post-military service.

Research Questions

RQ1: Does a relationship exist between reintegration experiences and satisfaction with life in United States female Veterans?

RQ2: Does a relationship exist between reintegration experiences and perceived stress in United States female Veterans?

Definitions

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

1. *Active-duty military service member* - Active-duty military service member is full-time duty status in the active uniformed service of the United States, including members of the National Guard and Reserve on active-duty orders (10 USC Section 1209 and 1211).
2. *Civilian* - Civilian is a person who is not on active duty with the military (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).
3. *Culture* - Culture is the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterize an institution or organization (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).
4. *Feminist* - Feminists seek to raise awareness about and challenge structural inequalities, scrutinize everyday language and practices of the perpetrator privilege insubordination, and analyze how power is broken and distributed, intentionally and unintentionally (Eichler, 2017; & Boros & Erolin, 2021).
5. *Military* - Military is the armed forces of a country (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).
6. *Military discharge* - Military discharge is a service member's release from their obligation to continue service in the armed forces (Government Information, n.d.).
7. *Psychology* - Psychology is the mental or behavioral characteristics of an individual or group (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).
8. *Reintegration* - Reintegration is integrating again into an entity (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

9. *Social psychology* - Social psychology is the study of how an individual's thoughts, feelings, and actions are affected by the actual, imagined, or symbolically represented presence of other people (American Psychological Association [APA], n.d.).
10. *Social support* - Social support is providing assistance or comfort to others, typically to help them cope with biological, psychological, and social stressors (APA, n.d.).
11. *Stressors* - Stressors are any event, force, or condition that results in physical or emotional stress. These can be internal or external forces that require adjustment or coping strategies for the individual (APA, n.d.).
12. *Transition* - Transition is changing from one state or condition to another (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).
13. *Veterans* - Veterans are individuals who were previously on active-duty service in the Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard and were discharged for honorable reasons (United States Code, n.d.).
14. *Woman/female* - Woman/female is the sex that can produce eggs and give birth to young (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

Summary

United States military service has its own culture, language, traditions, customs, values, and expectations with a clear hierarchy structure. Active-duty military service members become accustomed to military life and its structure. When military service ends, members are focused on reintegrating into civilian life, which is a challenge for more than half of military Veterans.

While female Veterans only account for approximately 16% of the Veteran population, they are the fastest-growing population of Veterans (Robinson & O'Hanlon, 2020); however, they are the most under-researched, especially regarding reintegration challenges. Challenges

begin with access to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) entitled healthcare benefits for service-connected issues and civilian society's perception of female Veterans. There are perceived stressors that impact female Veterans' reintegration due to their gender.

The problem is that there is deficient research regarding female Veterans' reintegration from active-duty military service to civilian life and their perceived psychology and social struggles. Most research studies utilize Schlossberg model of human transition or grounded theory and missing capturing the uniqueness of female Veterans. The purpose of this study is help fill in the gap by conducting a quantitative research study focusing on United States female Veterans and their perceived psychology and social support needs during reintegration into civilian life.

This study aimed to add to the needed research on female Veterans. This research study examined the relationships between perceived stress, satisfaction with life, and gender regarding reintegration utilizing high internal validity survey tools. The following chapters will cover the background information, rationale for this study, literature review, methods, findings, and conclusions for this study exploring impacts of reintegration on female Veterans to civilian life between 1 to 5 years post-active-duty military service.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The literature review emphasizes the research and findings associated with the United States military Veterans focusing on reintegration. This chapter is organized into several sections to acclimate the reader to the history and current research supporting this study. Additionally, this chapter will cover the history of females in the United States military, the theoretical framework used to guide the research, a related literature section, and a summary, providing an in-depth analysis of current literature on military Veterans, while bringing awareness to the deficiency in female Veteran studies. Lastly, this literature review assisted in developing the research methods and questions for conducting this study regarding female Veterans and their perceived struggles transitioning from active-duty military to civilian life as a Veteran.

The literature review will explore transitioning/reintegration, support, health, and education or careers. The information examined in this chapter will lay the groundwork for understanding the military culture and female Veterans. It will also highlight the importance of future research regarding female Veterans' needs to assist with reintegration into civilian life.

Theoretical Framework

Many influential thinkers and experts in the field of study about military service members and Veterans exist (Resnik et al., 2012; Rubin et al., 2013; Scott et al., 2017). Most of the research in the past 2 decades have focused on post-traumatic stress, substance usage, combat injuries, deployments, and the impact of deployments on military families (Svan, 2021). Limited research studies have focused on female military members and Veterans, and most address female health issues, combat, and how the military is primarily masculine-focused (Strong et al., 2017; Bulmer & Erolin, 2021). There is no known research study regarding perceived female

Veterans' psychology and social support factors post-discharge for reintegration into civilian life as a Veteran.

Rubin et al. (2013) conducted extensive work with United States military members and their families. They have written several books collectively and strive to educate civilian societies about military personnel's and social work's uniqueness. Rubin et al. (2013) have also published several books and conducted dozens of published research studies relating to the United States military and Veterans with limited information about female Veterans, which they reported as a fast-growing population since the 1990s.

Scott et al. (2017) conducted extensive work with United States military members and their families. They have also written several books collectively, strive to educate communities about the uniqueness of social work for military personnel, and instruct college courses on military studies. While Scott et al. (2017) have published several books and conducted dozens of published research studies relating to the United States military, none have regarded only female Veterans.

Some research studies are guided primarily by ontological issues related to the nature of realities and their characteristics (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The current study utilized feminist theory through the critical theory lens and relational-cultural theory (RCT). Critical theory shaped this study by employing central themes to explore the transformations of interpreting social meanings and the historical problems of domination, alienation, and social struggles by critiquing society and envisioning new possibilities (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The RCT focuses on social connections (Seligman & Reichenberg, 2014). Both feminist theory and RCT focus on the connections and relationships that guided this study to find the correlations between the psychological and social support needs of female Veterans transitioning to civilian life.

The transition process from active-duty military to reintegration into civilian life as a Veteran is different for each gender (Hirudayaraj & Clay, 2019; Boros & Erolin, 2021). The military is a masculine society where a take charge and show no emotions persona is expected (Verkamp, 2020; Boros & Erolin, 2021). Military personnel are always expected to put the mission first and are on call 24/7, regardless of gender (Military One Source, n.d.). Even though the military and Veteran population is less than 17% female, military jobs are gender-neutral, and anyone can be an administrative clerk or sniper (Today's Military, n.d.; Military One Source, n.d.). From a civilian viewpoint, female military members hold nontraditional and male-dominated roles or positions while serving in the military (Myers, 2020).

Civilian life has a different view of females and their traditional roles in society and family (Hawkins & Crowe, 2018a & b; Bulmer & Eichler, 2017). Females are typically seen as the softer gender, care providers, administrative staff, and lower-level roles within the workforce (Boros & Erolin, 2021). Civilian workers often do not see the same value in female Veterans as they do in male Veterans because, in general, their military contributions are not highlighted the same way (Mankowski & Everett, 2015; McCormick et al., 2019). This creates struggles for female Veterans both psychologically and socially in civilian society (Verkamp, 2020). Female Veterans are less likely to identify themselves as Veterans due to society's stigma about the military, including killing someone in war, seeing combat, having post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and going into the military because they had no other choice (Laser & Stephens, 2011; Elnitsky et al., 2017; Bardwisch, 2019).

Female Veterans need ongoing psychological and social support to help them handle and overcome false societal views (Bulmer & Eichler, 2017; Boros & Erolin, 2021). The transition process does not end once the military service member receives their DD-214 (report of

separation), certificate of release, or discharge (Military One Source, n.d.). The transition for Veterans continues for years, and for some Veterans, it will last the rest of their lives (McCormick et al., 2021). There is no known research study about female Veterans' psychology and social support needs after they depart from active-duty military service (Gordon, 2018; Griffin, 2021).

Feminist theory and RCT guided this research study with established views on gender bias and cultural effects (McCauley, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2018). These views helped identify female Veterans' unique struggles that have come from masculine roles and society. Since the military is a male-dominated culture, it is critical to identify the differences and impacts of female Veterans' reintegration into civilian life (Bulmer & Eichler, 2017; Boros & Erolin, 2021).

Feminist theory aims to understand the nature of gender inequality and focuses on gender in politics, power relations, and sexuality (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Feminist theory explores how systems of power and oppression interact (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Feminist theory has been shown to draw attention to social problems, trends, and issues often overlooked or misidentified by a dominant male perspective (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The feminist theory guided how gender intersects with other factors that impact female Veterans.

The RCT is aligned with feminist theory. The RCT brings relationships to the forefront of psychology by exploring the relationship's complexities and social implications (McCauley, 2013). Moreover, the RCT focuses on the cultural aspect, the influence of large cultures, and power differentials on the quality and nature of their relationship and subsequent effect on a healthy coexistence (McCauley, 2013). The military is a culture tied to solid values (Dickstein, 2020). The civilian culture differs due to multiple cultures, traditions, and values colliding (Scott

et al., 2017). The RCT helped explore the relationships between military and civilian cultures by identifying the differences (McCauley, 2013).

Research has stated that female Veterans are perceived to experience psychological and social struggles for years after their discharge from active-duty military to civilian life in the United States (Bulmer & Eichler, 2017; DeSimone, 2022). There are currently no studies exploring and identifying whether female Veterans struggle with this transition due to perceived limited psychology and social support. The military is a community that thrives on the values of support, teamwork, routine, self-discipline, and patriotism (Military One Source, n.d.; Rubin et al., 2013; Scott et al., 2017). When military service members exit the military, they are forced into civilian communities without the same military values they lived with during their service time and have become part of who they are (Robinson & O'Hanlon, 2020).

Related Literature

The review of the literature revealed that data has established that transitioning from active-duty military to civilian life as a Veteran is perceived to have many difficulties and challenges for Veterans in several areas of life, including health, education, and support. Boros and Erolin (2021), McCormick et al. (2021), and Ritchie (2019) stated that quantitative research is deficient concerning female Veterans' transition from active-duty military service to civilian life regarding perceived stressors from a lack of psychological and social support. Resnik et al. (2012) asserted that reintegration into civilian life for Veterans is multifaceted, and there is no universal or set standard of elements that applies to all Veterans because each Veteran has a uniqueness to them, including gender. The author, as a Veteran, and researchers, like Boros and Erolin (2021), McCormick et al. (2021), and Ritchie (2019), know that Veterans face unique struggles when transitioning from active-duty military to civilian life that impacts their physical

and mental health. Similarly, Ainspan et al. (2018) and Blackburn (2017) discussed that Veterans face unique struggles reintegrating into civilian life from active-duty military service and that there are limited studies regarding female Veterans and the unique struggles they face during reintegration. Most studies regarding female Veterans focus on healthcare-related needs or education.

Female Veterans are perceived to have a more challenging time transitioning from active-duty military to civilian life due to unique challenges: lack of a community of fellow female Veterans; lack of childcare assistance; unequal healthcare at the VA; financial instability; and psychological well-being (Sherman et al., 2015). While these challenges affect all Veterans, some issues are compounded for females because of cultural stereotypes and the gender pay gap (Danan et al., 2017; Jones & Hanley, 2017). Female Veterans are perceived to struggle to transition from active-duty military to civilian life in comparison to their male counterparts in society's response (Eichler, 2017; Strong et al., 2017). Female Veterans are twice as likely to be homeless than female civilians without military experience (Boros & Erolin, 2021; Mankowski & Everett, 2016; McCormick et al., 2021; Ritchie, 2019).

History of Females in the United States Military

The United States military was formed in 1775 with the Army, and since then, five other branches of service have been created: Air Force, Coast Guard, Marines, Navy, and Space Force (United States Army, n.d.). During the Civil War, females disguised themselves as males because females were not formally allowed to be part of the military (Blanton, 1993; Boros & Erolin, 2021). However, since the beginning, females have been part of the military as nurses, sewists, and cooks for troops in camps in an unofficial capacity (Blanton, 1993). In 1948, United States President Harry Truman signed the Women's Armed Services Integration Act (WASIA),

which allowed females to serve as permanent members of all branches of the Armed Forces (DeSimone, 2022).

While WASIA legalized females entering the United States military and being acknowledged for their military service, the United States military has been consistently dominated by male service members since its inception (DeSimone, 2022). Currently, as of 2022, female military service members make up less than 17% of the active-duty military population (Myers, 2020). According to the VA (2022), female Veterans comprised only 10% of the Veteran population reported in 2021.

Although WASIA officially opened the military to females in a legal capacity, females were limited in the types of jobs they could hold in the military until 2016 (DeSimone, 2022). Female military service members were assigned to male combat units to work with local females during deployments due to the Middle East's cultural factors (Trobaugh, 2016). On December 3, 2015, Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter ordered that the military open male-dominated combat jobs to females with no exceptions (Kamarck, 2016; Trobaugh, 2016). These male-dominated jobs required females to meet the same standards for job training (Kamarck, 2016; Trobaugh, 2016). Since then, females began to be recognized and acknowledged for their ability to handle once male-dominated jobs and roles in the military (Trobaugh, 2016).

Active-Duty Military

Lara (2021) stated that active-duty military service is different from any other job or career because it requires its members to live by embracing the military culture, values, and traditions, which also unite them as a group. Military service members are technically on-duty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and must adhere to unexpected calls to action, also known as deployments (Military One Source, n.d.). While military service members typically do not work

24 hours a day, 7 days a week, they must always be available and ready (Today's Military, n.d.; Military One Source, n.d.). This means that holidays, weekends, and scheduled time off can be removed at any given time because duty and service must come first. Military service members must stay current with military and job training, regardless of the personal impact on their off-duty time (Today's Military, n.d.; Military One Source, n.d.).

Training and temporary duty travel are other aspects of military life, including deployments (Today's Military, n.d.; Military One Source, n.d.). There is standard military training for all military service members and specific training for units, deployments, and job types (Today's Military, n.d.; Military One Source, n.d.). Both types of training are mandatory and have priority over any time off (Military One Source, n.d.). Training sometimes requires early mornings, late evenings, weekends, and being away for weeks or months (Today's Military, n.d.; Military One Source, n.d.). Temporary duty station (TDY) widely ranges in duration and reasoning (Today's Military, n.d.). Military service members can go to TDY for training, schooling, and deployment (Today's Military, n.d.; Military One Source, n.d.). TDY is issued due to mission needs and military branches of service (Military One Source, n.d.). The bottom line is that active-duty military service members must put the military first (Today's Military, n.d.; Military One Source, n.d.).

While on active-duty military service, military service members must move and live either on or near their assigned duty installation (Military One Source, n.d.). Sometimes military service members can choose their active-duty assignment and installation, but they are often assigned or selected by the military branch based on the needs of the military service branch and units (Military One Source, n.d.). For most military service members, their schedules are relatively routine: physical fitness every morning, Monday through Friday, followed by personal

hygiene, and then their duty assignment or job for the rest of the day (Smith, 2019). There have been times when military service members have been appointed additional duties or guard duty in addition to their daily assigned job (Military One Source, n.d.).

Active-duty military service consumes the military service members' time and requires them to embrace the culture, tradition, and values of their branch of military service (Ritchie, 2019). McCormick et al. (2019) noted that military service members adhere to honor, duty, and country as part of the military culture. The military service members and their families become part of a more prominent military family through mutual trust, friendship, and camaraderie, regardless of ethnicity or race (McCormick et al.). Moreover, the military has its system of doing things (McCormick et al., 2019). Military service members must adhere to strict rules and guidelines that must be followed, or members can be charged with insubordination (Absher, 2022). If a military service member is guilty of insubordination, they could also lose rank and/or pay and be required to complete additional duty tasks as part of their corrective action plan (Absher, 2022). The military has genuine traditions and standards, including physical appearances in and out of uniform (Smith, 2019). Military service members must constantly meet physical standard guidelines of weight and physical fitness, which are evaluated at least once every 6 months (Smith, 2019).

Overall, active-duty military life is a way of life. The military is a community with standards and expectations (Scott et al., 2017). Conformity and often personal sacrifice are required (Rubin et al., 2013). Active-duty military service members have guidelines and requirements that must be adhered to, and they also do receive certain benefits for their service and time (Today's Military, n.d.). These benefits include issued uniforms and gear, job training, housing, or housing allowance if they have dependents (spouse or children), educational

assistance, dining facilities, healthcare, access to fitness and recreation facilities, and tax-free shopping on military installations (Rubin et al., 2013; Scott et al., 2017). These benefits are for all military service members, regardless of gender or military rank (Military One Source, n.d.). However, there are instances where military service members' gender obstructs their military role.

Gender Bias

Historically, the military has been male-dominated, with approximately 16% being females (Dickstein, 2020). Females in the military are the minority gender in all military branches of service and as Veterans. Females in the military face stereotypes about what they can perform duty-wise (Bulmer & Eichler, 2017; Myers, 2020). Military units and jobs used to be restricted by gender, and Special Forces operations have been unsuccessful in integrating females (Trobaugh, 2016) due to gender. The overall general perception of military service members is that females are the weaker gender (Silva, 2008; Trobaugh, 2016; Eichler, 2017). Since the military population is male-dominated, this can mean continued separation, and females not being fully integrated into all military jobs and units is considered biased (Robinson & O'Hanlon, 2020).

Since men established the military, the military gear, uniforms, and equipment were designed for male military service members (Svan, 2021). Males and females are issued the same clothing and gear except for undergarments, as females must provide their own while males are issued them, and their military dress uniforms. The daily physical fitness and work uniforms are listed as unisex but typically fit males better. The only work uniform exception is maternity clothing for females (Myers, 2020). Reports have found that female military service members pay a higher cost for uniforms than males, which are not covered fully by their military clothing

allowances issued each year after entry into the military (Svan, 2021). For example, military dress uniforms are more expensive for females. The Government Accountability Offices (2021) study found that female active-duty military service members pay significantly more out of pocket for uniforms than males. Furthermore, over the last 2 decades, military uniform changes impacted females only 6 out of 18 times (Svan, 2021).

Female military service members often go above and beyond the standards to prove themselves and are routinely overlooked for their work due to pervasive stereotypes that prevent females from performing their jobs effectively and accomplishing their mission (Eichler, 2017; Ritchie, 2019). The realization is that the lack of familiarization from training prevents female military service members from doing a better job and negatively affects their ability (Dickstein, 2020). The stereotype is that female military service members are weak and not as capable as male service members, which leads to the notion that females have a lesser standard of training than their male counterparts (McCormick et al., 2019; Dickstein, 2020; Desimone, 2022). McCormick et al. (2019) noted that female military service members were treated dissimilarly and sometimes experienced hostile work environments that lacked support. Some male military service members feel that female military service members will never be able to meet the set standards for males (McCormick et al., 2019; Dickstein, 2020). Therefore, the standards must be lowered for female military service members to pass; in return, female military service members are hypothesized to receive less training than their male counterparts (Dickstein, 2020).

In 2015, the Gender Integration Study by Arnhart et al. (2015) highlighted a significant gender divide in the military culture and noted several barriers to females in the military, resulting in two forms of sexism: hostility and benevolence. Hostile sexism is more noticeable as negative and benevolent sexism is disguised positively by portraying females as needy and

deserving of more care and protection (Silvs, 2008; Eichler, 2017). These forms of sexism are marked to perceive females as less competent than males, limiting their roles and duties. It is perceived that females are weaker due to their gender. The presence of females also seems to elicit the belief that males become foolish and that military readiness will suffer along with cohesion (Trobaugh, 2016).

Physically, females are composed differently than males; therefore, they cannot perform the same physically as males (Myers, 2020). The military takes physical fitness seriously and has established minimum standards for male and female military service members, regardless of their military job (Rubin et al., 2013). The Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT) has a grading scale for males and females (United States Army, n.d.). For example, in the United States Army (n.d.), female military service members between the ages of 17 and 21 years must do 19 push-ups and must complete a 2-mile run in 18 minutes and 54 seconds to pass. All male military service members in the same age group must do 42 push-ups and run the 2 miles in 15 minutes and 54 seconds (United States Army, n.d.). There is no difference in the sit-ups. The standards for females are insulting, but it also reinforces the perceived notion that females are not as capable as their male counterparts (Robinson & O'Hanlon, 2020). Some male military service members believe that females are incapable, even when they witness females meeting the standards and training (Myers, 2020). The stereotyping and the gender divide continue onto the civilian side for female Veterans (Trobaugh, 2016; DeSimone, 2022).

Reintegration into Civilian Life

Active-duty military service ends for various reasons, including honorable, general, other than honorable, bad conduct, dishonorable, entry-level, medical separation, and separation for convenience of the government (Veteran.com, n.d.). The ending of military service time is

referred to as discharge or separation, which results in the military service member receiving their DD-214 form, also known as a Report of Separation (Veteran.com, n.d.; Today's Military, n.d). The type of discharge listed will depend on the length of time the military service members served and the category of discharge, as listed previously. Before discharge from active-duty military service, each military branch is legally required to provide each military service member with a Transition Assistance Program (TAP) (Veteran.com, n.d.; Military.com, 2021).

For military service members preparing for retirement with 20 years or more of active-duty military service, more options and opportunities are ready and available to aid in their transition to civilian life as Veterans. Retirees and their dependents also benefit from continuing with TRICARE health coverage at a small cost and receiving a monthly pension (Military.com, 2021). Retirees can start utilizing transitioning services 2 years out from their estimated retirement date (Military One Source, n.d.). All other military service members who are not retiring are only allowed to start preparing for the transition to civilian life as Veterans no more than 1 year out and cannot access all the available resources for retirees (Military One Source, n.d.). Military service members with discharges other than honorable, bad conduct, dishonorable, and entry-level are limited in the transition services offered to them (Veterans.com, n.d.).

The TAP was signed into law in 2018 by President Donald Trump as the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act (United States Department of Labor, n.d.). The TAP focuses on opportunities, services, and training for military service members transitioning to civilian life as Veterans (Military.com, 2021). The TAP is required by all military service members that have completed a minimum of 180 continuous days or more on active-duty military status (United States Department of Labor, n.d.).

Resources

Reintegration into civilian life can be challenging to navigate (Strong et al., 2017; Boros & Erolin, 2021). There are mandates and optional programs geared toward helping military service members during this time (United States Department of Labor, n.d.). The military mandates that all military service members go through TAP and offers a few other optional classes to help guide military service members in their after-military service decisions (Military.com, 2021). Many nonprofit organizations available for Veterans can further guide them with the reintegration process to civilian life as Veterans (Team RWB, n.d.). Often, information regarding nonprofit organizations is delivered in a mass dump of information or not mentioned unless specifically asked about by the Veteran.

Transition Assistance Program

Military transition services are offered through each military branch of service on military installations and online. These services are referred to as TAP (United States Department of Labor, n.d.). This program is broken into five parts: initial counseling; pre-separation briefing; Department of Defense (DoD) transition day, VA briefing and Department of Labor help; specialized TAP career tracks; and TAP capstone (Military.com, 2021). These five parts are usually conducted in large groups and are scheduled to be completed in 5 days (Military.com, 2021). Transitioning can be a difficult task, and 5 days is a limited amount of time to take in this much information (United States Department of Labor, n.d.). TAP focuses on employment, education, and VA benefits. Part of the law is that transitioning military service members receive information regarding benefits, entitlements, and resources that they are eligible to receive (United States Department of Labor, n.d.). A DoD day in TAP covers curriculum modules on building resiliency, my transition, military occupational code crosswalk,

and financial planning for transition (Military.com, 2021). It does not cover or discuss the psychological or social support issues that military service members will face as Veterans transitioning to civilian life (Military.com, 2021).

Department of Veterans Affairs

The VA offers various services and resources to Veterans, from providing healthcare for service-connected disabilities to career and education resources (VA, n.d.). The VA comprises the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), and Veterans National Cemetery Administration. The types of benefits that military Veterans are entitled to are complex. For simplicity, Veterans must have 2 years of active-duty military service or have been seriously injured while on active duty with a high service-connected disability percentage to receive benefits from VHA (VA, n.d.). The VA offers housing assistance, rehabilitation, and job placement services depending on the type of military discharge and secondary education benefits (Ritchie, 2019). Female Veterans often face challenges accessing VA benefits due to a lack of childcare or perceived feelings of inadequacy about being a Veteran (Mankowski and Everett, 2016). Homeless female Veterans with children face many challenges due to traditional housing catering to single male Veterans (Ritchie, 2019).

Nonprofit Organizations

Hundreds, maybe even thousands, of nonprofit organizations provide service for military Veterans. Many of these organizations have specific criteria that military Veterans must meet to be considered eligible for programs or services (VFW, n.d.; DAV, n.d.; AMVETS, n.d.; American Legion, n.d.). Some of these organizations are more well-known than others. They all serve a common theme of helping Veterans.

Disabled American Veterans (DAV, n.d.) is a nonprofit organization that helps military

Veterans connect with healthcare, disability, employment, education, and financial benefits.

DAV (n.d.) provides information about resources for caregivers, estate planning, death benefits guide, assistance with filing disability claims and appeals with the VA, and several other resources. To be eligible for DAV, Veterans cannot have a dishonorable military discharge and must have sustained an injury or illness during their military service time. DAV (n.d.) has locations throughout the United States. Services are provided to Veterans that meet the above criteria free of charge (DAV, n.d.).

Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW, n.d.) is a nonprofit organization that helps military service members and Veterans by providing programs and services, including advocacy within the government to support Veterans, military service members, and their families. To be eligible to join the VFW, the military service member or Veteran must have either an honorable or general (under honorable conditions) discharge from the military and have served on active-duty military service in a war, campaign, or expedition on foreign soil or in hostile waters (VFW, n.d.). There are locations throughout the United States, and family members of military service members and Veterans are encouraged to join the VFW Auxiliary.

American Veterans (AMVETS, n.d.) is a congressionally chartered, nonprofit Veterans service organization. AMVETS (n.d.) works to improve and protect the entitlements of all American Veterans (n.d.) by improving the quality of life for Veterans, their families, and their communities through leadership, advocacy, and services. They help military service members and Veterans with honorable military discharges; however, military service members and Veterans must pay for a membership to receive their services. AMVETS (n.d.) has locations throughout the United States and is continuing to grow.

The American Legion (n.d.) is a nonprofit organization that helps military Veterans

through advocacy while providing many programs and services. To be eligible to join the American Legion, military service members and Veterans must have served at least 1 day of active military duty since December 7, 1941, and have received an honorable discharge or are still serving active military duty; however, they require annual membership dues, unless the Veteran requires advocacy support (American Legion, n.d.). The American Legion starts supporting military service memberships at basic training and throughout the rest of the Veteran's life. The American Legion offers family members memberships in subgroups based on their family position to the Veteran (spouse or child). The American Legion (n.d.) has locations and chapters throughout the United States.

Team Red, White & Blue (Team RWB, n.d.) is a nonprofit organization that helps military service members and Veterans with the struggles of reintegration into civilian life as Veterans. Team RWB (n.d.) focuses on helping fellow Veterans with reintegration challenges, including feelings of isolation, weight gain, lack of purpose, and other health issues, by creating a health and wellness community. Team RWB (n.d.) connects with local communities and members through physical and social activities. Team RWB (n.d.) brings camaraderie among members and builds strong community connections like the military with solid values and selfless service to help each other. There is no membership fee or dues, and membership is available to anyone that wants to join and support Veterans transitioning to civilian life (Team RWB, n.d.).

While some of these organizations are more known than others, most require a paid membership, and their focus is helping military service members and Veterans with their military service-connected disabilities and entitled benefits (DAV, n.d.; AMVETS, n.d.; American Legion, n.d.). Furthermore, Team RWB (n.d.) focuses on bringing part of the solid military

values and camaraderie to civilian life for Veterans.

Military service members and Veterans are taught and practice selfless service and feel an intense patriotism towards the United States. Veterans look for organizations that provide a sense of support, patriotism, fellowship, and community. Organizations like Team RWB, AMVETS, American Legion, VA, and many more, have been proven to help Veterans find and create their identity as civilian-military Veterans.

Reintegration Overview

Transitioning from active-duty military service to civilian life as a Veteran has unique challenges and struggles. Military service members have become accustomed to the military lifestyle with a strong sense of structure, values, traditions, and culture (McCormick et al., 2019). Military service members have lived this lifestyle for several years or decades (Mankowski & Everett, 2016). Military service is part of the Federal Government, with each military branch of service having its customs, traditions, and values, while civilian life follows State Government guidelines with various cultures, customs, and traditions that sometimes collide.

The civilian lifestyle supports many cultures, values, and ways of living (McCormick et al., 2019). Transitioning to civilian life as a Veteran brings unique challenges and obstacles for the individual and their family because they are or have exited their community of active-duty military, also known or referred to as their second family (Robinson, 2021). Civilian organizations do not hold people accountable or provide support as the military does for professionalism, health, and career advancement (Fraynt et al., 2018). In the military, service members must be physically fit and held to the standards, and so on (Rubin et al., 2013; Scott et al., 2017). Unlike the civilian sector, the military brings a strong sense of community and purpose and encourages growth (McCormick et al., 2019).

Exiting military service members must quickly make several major life decisions (Fraynt et al., 2018). The reintegration period for military Veterans ranges from months to years due to the military Veteran needing to redefine their identity and often perceived purpose in life (Scott et al., 2017). Reintegration can last a lifetime because once a person serves in the United States military, they never lose their military values and hold on to the traditions (Rubin et al., 2013).

Reintegration has many lasting effects on Veterans and their families in various aspects of life (Scott et al., 2017; Lara, 2021). It affects housing, employment, finances, relationships, communities, and other areas (Park et al., 2020). While the military provides transitioning services, it can be difficult for military service members and Veterans to know what the right next move is for their future. Many options and decisions need to be solidified: housing, employment, education, benefits, and access to benefits (Rubin et al., 2013). These decisions are critical because they impact all areas of Veterans' lives and their dependents.

Another factor is that there are many programs, services, and organizations to help Veterans with reintegration, but it can be very overwhelming for Veterans and their families to navigate through and find the ones to help them best, as there are many options and decisions that Veterans need to make for their transition. Programs have specific requirements and restrictions. Like combat exposure, combat related or connected injuries, length of military service, type of military discharge, marital status, duty station locations, current location, mobility restrictions, and other defining characteristics. Some programs impacted their military or VA benefits. This adds to the confusion and challenge reintegrating into civilian life.

Reintegration into civilian life has many challenges (Scott et al., 2017; McCormick et al., 2019; Boros & Erolin, 2021). There is no set transition success path, as each Veteran has different needs and goals for their civilian life and challenges, making it difficult for the military

to establish and cover all aspects of reintegration for Veterans (Blackburn, 2017). While there are many resources to aid in the reintegration process, it can be exhausting and paralyzing for Veterans to figure out what is best for them as they learn how to navigate the civilian sector (Gordon, 2018).

Veteran research studies have grown over the past 2 decades, due to the global war on terrorism in the Middle East–Afghanistan and Iraq (Verkamp, 2021). It is relatively easy to find studies on PTSD, substance abuse and addictions, suicide, disability, and other psychiatric disorders. Most of the military population is male, which is a natural cause for the bulk of research studies to be male-dominated and not capture the unique psychological and social support needs of female military service members and Veterans (Griffin, 2021). Many research studies have recommended female-only studies to better understand the unique challenges and needs of transitioning female Veterans (Boros & Erolin, 2021; Griffin, 2021; Robinson, 2020).

Previous research studies revealed four categories: transitioning, support, health, and education or careers. While most research studies include gender as a demographic, most participants are male due to females making up less than 17% of the military and Veteran populations. These are significant areas concerning the needs of female Veterans and provide a purpose for why research on female Veterans needs to be further explored (Scott et al., 2017; Hawkins & Crowe, 2018a; Griffin, 2021). Of the four categories, the most highly researched study area for Veterans is health.

Transitioning

As military service ends, all service members will transition to civilian life as Veterans and reintegrate into the civilian sector and communities (Ainspan et al., 2018). Several studies have investigated female Veterans' challenges and struggles during their reintegration into

civilian life (Blackburn, 2017; Gordon, 2018; Bulmer & Eichler, 2017; Crowe, 2018; Boros & Erolin, 2021; Griffin, 2021). Resnik et al. (2012) cited that over 49% of Veterans revealed that they faced problems and struggles to participate in community activities while reintegrating to civilian life as a Veteran and stated that there was a considerable gap in research relating to community reintegration for Veterans. Hawkins and Crowe (2018a & b) reported that Veterans experience reintegration differently due to their military experiences and gender-specific social role expectations. Strong et al. (2017) implied that female Veterans encounter biological, psychological, and social factors reintegrating into civilian life in their home and community environments differently than male Veterans.

Female military service members and Veterans have reported struggling with their identities as females and military service members. Silva (2008) focused on how female military cadets negotiate gender identities within the "masculine" military institution and the types of transformations their gender ideology and practices entailed. Silva indicated that femininity is rudimentary and incompatible with the nucleus functioning of the military and that there is an importance to the criticalness of femininity of self for female military service members in a male-dominated institution like the military. Silva (2008) depicted female military cadets as inherently replicating traditional femininity and male privilege in the military.

Since the military population is predominately male and viewed as a masculine society, Bulmer and Eichler (2017) conducted a research study regarding the feminist scholars' view on militarized masculinity and its effects on transitioning Veterans. Their study highlighted that military service members struggle to transition to civilian life and navigate military and civilian gender norms due to militarized masculinity. Bulmer and Eichler highlighted the impact of feminist fellowship on war, how militarization aligns with militarized masculinity, and the

effects and contradictory processes that shape Veterans' post-military lives due to the lived experience of military service. Militarized masculinities cannot be undone straightforwardly and illuminate how feminist scholars interpret militarized masculinity. Bulmer and Eichler (2017) found that the key outcome was to focus on how the military and civilian sectors with masculinities/femininities can coevolve to ease the transition for Veterans.

Females have habitually struggled for equality and equity in the United States military. Boros and Erolin (2021) utilized a feminist lens to examine the transition of female military service members to civilian life as Veterans. Their study immersed several critical themes that impacted female Veterans' transition: family support, conformity, identity, and gender bias. Boros and Erolin indicated that female Veterans transitioning to civilian life confronted challenging and negatively exerting influence on their mental and physical health and relationships. They believe this is due to the military culture behind the feminist movements from being a patriarchal society dominated by males who hold power (Boros & Erolin, 2021).

Hirudayaraj and Clay (2019) identified that the reality of being a female Veteran is problematic due to gender because gender is rarely noted as a critical factor, and there is little focus on the gender role in the Veterans' experience. Hirudayaraj and Clay reported that female Veterans feel disregarded, underutilized, and restricted from growing in their careers based on their gender, which impacts their reintegration into civilian life as Veterans because they are primarily unrecognized post-military. Hirudayaraj and Clay also revealed that female Veterans continue to struggle during reintegration and have unmet needs despite continuous ongoing attempts by the Federal Government and Veterans associations. Moreover, the researchers found that stigmas exist for Veterans, and female Veterans are often hesitant to reveal their military identification due to these civilian society stigmas and presumptions. Often, civilians negatively

perceive female Veterans as stern, harsh, rigid, pushy, demanding, abrasive, argumentative, aggressive, hostile, angry, disgruntled, and militant females, admonished for being direct, and often accused of constantly displaying an angry or disapproving facial expression by civilians, according to the study conducted by Hirudayaraj and Clay. Hirudayaraj and Clay (2019) delineated that the civilian preconceptions of female Veterans impact female Veterans' ability to gain services and resources in the civilian sector.

Mankowski and Everett (2016) drew attention to how the growing number of female Veterans is more complex than in previous eras due to being younger, being ethnic and racial minorities, and having children. Mankowski and Everett (2016) noted that female Veterans are often unnoticed in society and compelled to assume multiple civilian identities while facing conflicts from multitasking and juggling numerous responsibilities with their relationships and marriages. This places female Veterans at a greater risk for social isolation and adds to the need for future research into female Veterans' psychosocial and health issues (Mankowski and Everett, 2016).

Verkamp (2021) accentuated that transitioning from military service members is not a new experience. Service members transition multiple times throughout their military career; however, the last transition of reintegration into civilian life as a Veteran is a lived experience with challenges that impact Veterans' well-being. Verkamp noted that research annotates that roughly 54-75% of Veterans proclaim facing reintegration struggles and that nearly 1/3 do not know how to gain assistance. Verkamp reported that many Veterans stated that reintegration struggles are compounded due to the loss of the military's culture, community, identity, and purpose with their military service. Verkamp (2021) recommended research into female

Veterans' unique challenges to capture the needs and improvements to serve this population better.

The cultural gap between civilian society and the military has a perpetual relationship that causes misconceptions and misunderstanding (McCormick et al., 2019). McCormick et al. annotated that this gap plays a vital role in the struggles that transitioning military service members face when reintegrating into civilian society. McCormick et al. also cited that the United States military has unique norms, philosophies, customs, and traditions. The United States military provided its members with an authoritative structure with well-defined orders and responsibilities and a culture that promotes unity between military service members in society and the community. Additionally, the military homogenizes military service members with a lifestyle that isolates them from the civilian sector. McCormick et al. (2019) delineated that civilian society, especially healthcare professionals and other helping professionals, need to receive ongoing training and be culturally competent to understand and work with military Veterans to make reintegration less challenging.

Lara (2021) examined whether social problem-solving skills were a potentially protective factor against psychological illnesses and distressing in Veterans' first year of reintegration. Lara found that more extraordinary social problem-solving skills indicate that Veterans will face less perceived stress in the first year of reintegration into civilian life. Lara (2021) also reported that Veterans encounter difficulties reintegrating into civilian life both socially and culturally due to the lack of support and understanding of how to lessen challenging experiences transitioning from the active-duty military into civilian life as Veterans.

Hillpot et al. (2017) explored the findings of one female Veteran's reintegration into civilian life utilizing the life balance model satisfying patterns of daily activities. This study

found that military service had negatively impacted the female Veteran's social dynamics, overall well-being, and capability to manage stressors. It also implied that active-duty military service created adversities for the female Veteran to secure purposeful vocation in the civilian work environment (Hillpot et al., 2017).

Strong et al. (2017) cited that female Veterans' reintegration process has four primary factors: availability of gender-specific VA policies, services, and programs; access to education and employment opportunities; support of specific mental health concerns; and facing social stigmas for being female Veterans. Strong et al. suggested that another issue that female Veterans encounter is healthcare professionals, stating that social workers do not promote social justice or help empower the Veteran female population. Strong et al. (2017) revealed that the Veteran female population is often invisible because, after their military service, female Veterans tend to blend in with the civilian population due to falling into roles of spouse, parent, caretaker, and student while their Veteran identity is hindsight.

Support

Support for military service members and Veterans comes in many forms (Hinojosa & Hinojosa, 2011; Scott et al., 2017). Family, friends, comrades, community, religion, and organizations are available (Robinson, 2020). Support is perceived as a critical element for the reintegration of Veterans; however, female Veterans often do not identify themselves as Veterans due to stereotyping and stigmas from the civilian population that does not understand or fully comprehend military service experience or values (Boros & Erolin, 2021; McCormick et al., 2021; Ritchie, 2019).

Support is noted as a critical element of reintegration and includes family, community, and other Veterans. (Elnitsky et al., 2017; Gil-Rivas et al., 2017; Robinson, 2020). These are

essential aspects for transitioning Veterans because it links to social support, networking, employment opportunities, and community ties (Boros & Erolin, 2021; McCormick et al., 2021). An important part of reintegration for Veterans is the community aspect (Ritchie, 2019; Scott et al., 2017). Verkamp (2021) revealed that lack of support directly results from social withdrawal among Veterans because of disconnection from individuals who do not have military service experience. McCormick et al. (2019) emphasized that the continuity of the military culture is essential for Veterans after their military service. Resnik et al. (2012) emphasized that problems reintegrating with community activities hinder Veterans from reintegrating into civilian life and prevent development into specific interventions to enhance Veteran participation and needs, leaving Veterans without a sense of community support.

According to Hawkins and Crowe (2018a & b), more than half of United States military Veterans indicated that reintegration into civilian communities is difficult for military service members and is even more challenging with physical and psychological injuries sustained in the military. Hawkins et al. (2015) examined factors that impact community reintegration between military service members and Veterans with physical and possible psychological injuries. Hawkins et al. (2015) assessed that injured military service members with lower community reintegration scores also indicated lower self-efficacy and difficulty with environmental barriers, making their injuries more disabling. This shows how important support is for Veterans' reintegration into civilian life.

Robinson (2020) studied five female Veterans from Operations Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. The findings solidified that female Veterans experience complicated hardships reintegrating into civilian life as Veterans. Robinson hypothesized that positive social changes in treatment plans and support programs could improve female Veterans' reintegration

into civilian life. Robinson (2020) stated that continued studies into the types of unique challenges female Veterans face during reintegration are essential to provide overdue support for this fast-growing population of Veterans.

Beardslee et al. (2011) focused on developing a preventive intervention for military and Veteran families to learn how to overcome stress through a family-centered intervention that addresses the impact of military service. Beardslee et al. (2011) drew attention to the crucial unfulfilled needs of military service members, Veterans, and their families through support services. These needs include services to gather and coordinate specific community, individual, and family needs. They further highlight the importance of support (Beardslee et al., 2011).

Laser and Stephens (2011) identified some transitioning struggles that military service members, Veterans, and their families faced during reintegration and explored ways to help reduce their stressors during reintegration to civilian life. The researchers asserted that military service members, Veterans, and their families are exposed to substantial stress during military service. This stress is compounded when they reintegrate into civilian life, due to the perceived loss of military community support. Often, military service members withdraw from family and others during reintegration, and family members perceive this as rejection. Laser and Stephens (2011) suggested that therapy is critical for supporting military family members and Veterans during reintegration.

Hinojosa and Hinojosa (2011) focused on the impact of military friendships on the reintegration of military service members and the importance of this type of support for reintegration into civilian life. The researchers revealed that civilian family relationships are crucial during reintegration, as they help Veterans become more familiar with civilian society. Support in emotional and social forms is vital to successful reintegration for Veterans. They also

examined how emotional and social support from the Veterans' civilian families is perceived as a protective factor against mental health and treatment issues (Hinojosa & Hinojosa, 2011).

Elnitsky et al. (2017) focused on the challenges and facilitators for the reintegration of military service members and Veterans of the current war era based on the individual, interpersonal, community, and societal challenges related to reintegration. They cited that military service members and Veterans perceived social support as compromised, due to the need to protect family and friends from the strains imposed by their military service. Elnitsky et al. identified Veteran friendships as having a critical role in supporting successful reintegration and highlighted the equal importance that military and Veteran families receive support. This study also noted many civilian barriers to services, including receiving aid, finding lasting employment, comprehending Veterans, and having support barriers due to physical limitations (Elnitsky et al., 2017).

Gil-Rivas et al. (2017) focused on factors that influence reintegration and made recommendations for research and practice to promote the wellness of military service members and their families. The researchers highlighted the diverse challenges faced by military service members and their families grounded in the ecological framework by highlighting the need to assess proximal and distal factors related to families' reintegration experiences and the need to intervene at multiple levels across various contexts. Family and community were noted as critical social support elements for Veterans at any given time and are critical for transitioning to civilian life (Gil-Rivas et al., 2017).

Female Veterans are twice as likely to be homeless than civilian females without military experience (Boros & Erolin, 2021; McCormick et al., 2021; Ritchie, 2019). Mankowski and Everett (2016) revealed that homeless female Veterans significantly outnumber the homeless

male Veteran population. These studies delineated various reasons for homelessness: lack of employment, lack of healthcare, and lack of support or knowing where to obtain support (Ritchie, 2019). Another perceived reason for Veteran female homelessness is because VA homeless shelters and support services were created with the male Veteran in mind with single rooms and co-living quarters (Mankowski & Everett; Ritchie). Many homeless female Veterans are single parents, making them ineligible for housing support from the VA and other Veteran-focused organizations (Mankowski & Everett, 2016; Ritchie, 2019).

Another area of support is religion and spirituality. Research indicated that spirituality has been known to aid military service members and Veterans in coping with military stressors (Berry, 2012; Robinson, 2020; Wade, 2016). Religion and spirituality come in many forms, including prayer and meditation (Wade, 2016).

Berry (2012) cited that military service members, Veterans, and their families often undergo spiritual changes during military service and reintegration into civilian life. Berry emphasized the need for spiritual-based reintegration programs for military Veterans and their family members to ease and cope with emotional, mental, or physical pains. Berry reported that often, when spirituality becomes weak for various reasons, including deployments and extended time away from a loved one, military service members, Veterans, and their families are involved in arguments and question their faith. Berry (2012) suggested that military Veterans and their family members be guided through reconnection of spirituality and development when this happens.

Wade (2016) delineated that spirituality is a crucial element of an individual's identity and that spiritual wellness creates harmony and peace for them. Wade indicated that religion and spirituality have been shown to serve as powerful coping resources with meditation and prayer

for strengthening mental health. Religion and spirituality can be perceived as a form of support for military service members and Veterans' mental well-being (Wade, 2016).

Robinson (2020) contended that spirituality and religiosity are critical elements in how individuals cope with life struggles and establish resilience. Robinson found that female Veterans who utilize spirituality as a coping strategy note its usefulness for reintegration stressors. Robinson also noted that religion and spirituality aided female Veterans in coping with the struggles of integration into military life and reintegration into civilian life after military service. Robinson (2020) reported that she is a female Veteran, and she utilized her faith to cope with the struggles of reintegration after 20 years of active-duty military service in the Marine Corps.

Support for military service members and Veterans has many forms. Berry (2012) and Robinson (2020) found that female Veterans have perceived needs for support that are unmet during reintegration. Research studies and Veteran experts (Boros & Erolin, 2021; Bradswisch, 2019; Hawkins & Crowe, 2018a & b; Scott et al., 2017) have repeatedly noted that research needs to be conducted into the unique needs of female Veterans to find better means to support their reintegration into civilian life.

Health

The health of Veterans has been an ongoing topic for decades (Bowes et al 2018). There is an endless number of research studies covering Veterans' health and health issues (Goldzweig et al., 2016). Healthcare, both physical and mental, is a critical aspect for Veterans transitioning to civilian life (Williston et al., 2020). Many Veterans sustain injuries in the military that impact them both physically and mentally (Williamson et al, 2019). It can be challenging for Veterans to receive the care they need due to various types of barriers, including facility locations, the need

for specialty care, limited available appointments, and the stigma of receiving or requesting care (Brunner et al., 2018).

Brunner et al. (2018) reported that leaders of the VHA cited that gender-specific care for female Veterans is needed. It was noted that the Veteran female population has substantially grown over the last few decades and continues to grow. Brunner et al. found that female Veterans face unique barriers to receiving needed care in comparison to male Veterans, including reproductive health services, lack of childcare, limited resources, and little emphasis on female health. An example is informing Veterans who want to become pregnant about increasing their folic acid intake and whether certain medications should be reconsidered if the female Veteran wants to conceive a child. It was revealed that the VHA would better support female Veterans with separate primary care clinics and female health centers. Brunner et al. (2018) suggested that female healthcare be prioritized and consistent through the VHA and that some form of drop-off childcare is available to ease the ability of female Veterans to attend appointments. The VA has not yet established drop-off childcare facilities to help Veterans receive care at their facilities.

Williston et al. (2020) examined the relationships between mental health and the stigma of female Veterans seeking treatment and found that mental health services directly negatively impacted female Veterans utilizing these services. Williston et al. noted two stigmas related to mental health issues and seeking treatment. Both stigmas create barriers for female Veterans. Williston et al. (2020) revealed that female Veterans who better understand literacy of mental health issues and the treatment plans are more likely to seek services, which shows that information about mental health issues and available treatments is critical.

Bradwisch (2019) focused on female Veterans' struggles to locate quality gender-specific healthcare after leaving active-duty military service. Bradwisch found that female Veterans faced

barriers regarding their healthcare needs and that healthcare professionals working with female Veterans need further education on how to work with this population of Veterans effectively. Bradwisch (2019) stated that research revealed a crucial need for female-specific healthcare programs for transitioning female military service members before exiting military service and equally after transitioning out of the military to adequately provide healthcare services to the increasing population of female Veterans.

Goldzweig et al. (2006) explored studies that pertained explicitly to or included explicit information about female Veterans. They found four domains/topics: (1) the stress of military life; (2) health, and performance of military/VA females; (3) health services research/quality of care; and (4) psychiatric conditions. Goldzweig et al. reported that most VA studies on female healthcare were experimental and that locating studies on the quality of care for female Veterans was rare. Most of the female Veterans' studies were about PTSD, sexual harassment/assault, use and organization of care, and other mental conditions (Goldzweig et al., 2006).

Yaffe et al. (2018) examined the effects of diagnoses of traumatic brain injury (TBI), PTSD, and depression, alone or in combination, on increasing dementia risk among older female Veterans. Their study reported that female Veterans with military-related injuries of PTSD and TBI, along with depression symptoms, were 50% to 80% more likely to develop dementia. Yaffe et al. (2018) found a need for increased screening of TBI, PTSD, and depression in older female Veterans based on the outcomes of their study.

Bowes et al. (2018) explored various psychosocial factors influencing transitioning military service members. Bowes et al. stated that there are links between Veterans' mental health, how Veterans regulate their emotions, and how they adjust to civilian life. They imply that how Veterans react to their mental health problems, whether they are experientially avoiding

or reappraising, has a significant impact on how they will handle the challenges and pressures of transitioning from active-duty military to civilian life. Bowes et al. (2018) highly recommended that future studies further investigate the relationships between psychosocial factors and find more complex psychological interventions.

Hawkins and Crowe (2018a) assessed the effect of reintegration into civilian life post-deployment. Hawkins and Crowe found that military Veterans with physical and psychological injuries were perceived to have more struggles and challenges transitioning to civilian life after active-duty military service. Hawkins and Crowe suggested a need for female-specific programs within the VA and civilian-based organizations for reintegration, especially for female Veterans with physical and psychological injuries. Hawkins and Crowe revealed that self-efficacy, mastery, social support, and other environmental factors influence reintegration as a barrier or facilitator. Hawkins and Crowe (2018b) revealed that female Veterans encounter interpersonal constraints of limited community support and incorrect assumptions about females in the military, which impacts their reintegration into civilian life.

Williamson et al. (2019) focused on the impacts of military experience on the physical and psychological health problems associated with military service. Williamson et al. found that musculoskeletal or mental health-related problems were a leading factor for medical discharge from military service. Williamson et al. (2019) also revealed that gender was not considered in their study, as their focus was to explore whether military service impacted service members' physical and psychological health post-military service, which was indicated.

Derefinko et al. (2019) conducted research to identify the needs of military Veterans reintegrating into civilian life by assessing issues that prevent Veterans from engaging in the VA healthcare system and to attain suggestions from Veterans on improvements to separation

services and programs. Derefinko et al. reported that Veterans' transitioning services do not adequately support Veterans' mental health and are perceived to impact coping strategies that can cause severe and chronic substance abuse issues believed to derive from active-duty military service. Derefinko et al. (2019) posited that Veterans need better access to VA healthcare, including mental health and substance abuse services, and further assistance and programs to help prepare for adjustment and economic-financial issues faced during reintegration.

Fraynt et al. (2018) assessed whether mobile technologies could provide military service members and Veterans with knowledge and information regarding care benefits and services for reintegration into civilian life in an accessible manner and are also cost-effective. Fraynt et al. noted that even if reintegration is perceived as positive by the Veterans, it is still stressful and associated with an increased risk of adverse health consequences. Mobile technologies are geared to provide a supplement or alternative for Veterans versus in-person programs and services and are not meant to replace the option of in-person services but instead to enhance Veterans' opportunities to have a better reintegration. However, Fraynt et al. (2018) found that the technologies available were not standardized, and Veterans perceived them as useless or limited.

Park et al. (2021) postulated that the mental health effect of adjustment to civilian life from the active-duty military has long-term effects. Park et al. implied that Veterans remain distressed in their reintegration into civilian life after the first year of exiting the military. Park et al. (2021) noted that Veterans face challenges with self-esteem, loss of military identity, role changes, a lost sense of purpose, struggles to secure employment, relationship issues, and interpersonal social tie challenges while adjusting to the schedule of civilian life. Sometimes,

Veterans have legal difficulties that adversely impact their ability to reintegrate into civilian life, which ultimately increases mental health concerns and issues for the Veteran population.

Education and Careers

The last area of related literature studies focuses on education and careers for military Veterans. Education is an area that Veterans can utilize to enhance career opportunities or change career fields for reintegration (Eakman et al., 2016). Education and careers for Veterans have become an area of increasing interest among researchers as an avenue to help reintegration for military Veterans and employment-related issues, as it is challenging to transfer military jobs and skills over to the civilian sector (Warren, 2017). Most Veterans are eligible to receive education benefits through the Post-9/11 GI Bill or Vocational Rehab to aid in career advancement or change in the civilian sector (Heitzman & Somers, 2015).

Warren (2017) examined the combat Veteran students' experiences who had significant combat exposure and their ability to complete their bachelor's degree through a private online program. The researcher clarified the struggles of combat Veterans that completed their undergraduate degrees online were unrelated to their combat exposure. Warren (2017) noted that student Veterans found their secondary education journey either challenging or fulfilling based on their interactions with civilians (staff and other students), and the Veterans indicated that they had changed due to their combat exposure, which influenced pursuing their secondary education goals.

Eakman et al. (2016) explored whether psychosocial protective factors consisting of social support, occupation satisfaction, and academic confidence have an impact on health-related vulnerability conditions of PTSD, depression, and somatic symptoms. The researchers examined whether these factors contribute to resiliency in military service-related injuries from

post-9/11 Veterans working towards attaining post-secondary education compared to non-Veteran students. Eakman et al. found that post-911 Veterans were at a substantial disadvantage. Post-911 Veterans showed lower protective factors and elevated vulnerability factors that increased their risk of unprosperous campus integration and hindered academic achievement. Eakman et al. (2016) identified that social support is crucial in developing resilience and encouraging campus integration for military Veteran students.

Heitzman and Somers (2015) explored female Veterans' challenges while obtaining a 4-year degree at Miami Regional University. The researchers noted that Veterans struggle to relearn study skills and habits, connect with peers, and face financial issues when pursuing secondary education post-military. Female Veterans encountered complex struggles in various aspects while reintegrating into civilian life in post-secondary education settings. Heitzman and Somers also noted that a limited number of female Veterans pursue an undergraduate degree and have difficulty choosing their college. They found that female Veterans would benefit from mentorship opportunities with faculty staff and peers to improve relationships and gain a perceived sense of connection. Heitzman and Somers (2015) suggested that academic advisors receive training to understand female Veterans better to more fully aid the female Veteran in their academic majors, like their military roles and duties.

Parise (2016) explored the perception of female student Veterans' conflicting roles and coping skills and found that female student military Veterans are confronted with competing roles and stressors that impact their secondary education. The researcher posited that resiliency is a critical factor in whether these Veterans complete school. Parise noted that various levels of support (social, financial, community, and academia) are required for female student Veterans to reintegrate into civilian life by reducing stressors. Parise (2016) found that female Veterans who

could find a balance between conflicting roles (student, parent, Veteran, and career) successfully achieved their secondary education goals through resiliency.

Vogt et al. (2021) raised questions about why military service members struggle to adjust to post-military life careers. The researchers noted that early life work factors predict Veterans' well-being a year after post-military service. The researchers revealed that post-military education and careers are critical elements that aid in reintegration into civilian life for Veterans. Vogt et al. (2021) suggested that military service members be screened and receive interventions before reintegrating if they report or score high levels of depression, low social support, and low psychological resilience as part of their transitioning services to help increase Veterans' abilities to succeed in their pursuit of secondary education and post-military careers.

A wealth of research studies is available for review related to military service members and Veterans. Most research studies stated that they are gender-neutral, but there are more males in the studies than females, and the studies on female military members and Veterans explore areas other than the transition struggles and challenges that female military service members and Veterans face with psychological and social support. The few studies on female military service members and Veterans are qualitative studies focusing on one to eight female military service members and Veterans, providing a limited, narrow view of the Veteran female population and their struggles with reintegration.

Summary

The theoretical framework, related literature section, and summary provided an in-depth analysis of current literature on Veterans' health, education, support, and gender bias with a limited focus on female Veterans. Over the past 2 decades, researchers have increased the focus on the Veteran population with a strong emphasis on the effects of combat experiences and

combat-related issues. Research conducted to date around United States military Veterans primarily focuses on psychiatric issues and combat injuries. These studies utilized gender as part of their demographics, not factors for reviews or discovery of relationships. Since the majority of the military population is mainly male-dominated, this makes the military a masculine-dominated culture, which is not clearly stated in most research studies and is slightly biased.

Reintegration has been proven to be a struggle with many challenges for all Veterans (Park et al., 2021). The transition to civilian life impacts the individual military service member in multiple ways, including finding a place to live, looking for a job, creating ties with a new community, and creating new relationships outside the military. Research has shown that female and male military service members have different needs (Blackburn, 2017; Ritchie, 2019; Scott et al., 2017). Civilian society has specific social norms based on gender (Downing & Roush, 1985; Bargad & Hyde, 1991). Examples are that men should make more money than women, and females should be stay-at-home primary care providers for children (Gerstmann & Kramer, 1997). Gender-specific psychological and social support needs constantly change as society and communities change (Eichler, 2017; Boros & Erolin, 2021). With society norms and the military being predominately males, it only makes sense to assess whether female military service members have unique psychological and social support needs transitioning to civilian life as Veterans (Dodds & Kiernan, 2019). Currently, no studies examine the relationships between perceived stress, satisfaction with life, gender, and reintegration for the Veteran female population.

This research study provides quantitative insight into the relationships between perceived stress, satisfaction with life, feminism, and reintegration of the female Veteran population into civilian life. This study aimed to provide quantifiable data on the perceived psychological and

social support struggles that female Veterans encounter when transitioning to civilian life as Veterans. By identifying female Veterans' perceived psychological and social support needs, improvements can be made to TAP, the VA, and other organizations to help female Veterans through a smoother reintegration by identifying areas to address these needs further. Identifying these needs will help improve the overall well-being of female military service members and Veterans, as support and interventions are critical components that affect the well-being of female Veterans.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

This study was designed to identify female Veterans' perceived challenges and needs during their transition from active-duty military to civilian life as Veterans. This study examined relationships between perceived stress, satisfaction with life, and gender regarding reintegration, unique challenges, and needs of female Veterans transitioning from active-duty military life to civilian life. The goal of the study was to highlight potential areas of improvement for transitioning from active-duty military to civilian life as a Veteran. This study utilized survey research employing a questionnaire to determine eligibility and a survey for the actual study via email or online to collect data. The survey collected information on female Veterans' perceived psychological and social support struggles, resulting in an epidemiological study.

Design

The research design for this study was a quantitative survey. Quantitative aspects consisted of the numerical aspects of the research about females transitioning from active-duty military to civilian life as a Veteran utilizing a scale to determine perceived relationships and areas that need improvement. Quantitative research provided an overview with a sample of the military female Veteran population to determine which hypothesis was correct. This quantitative study aimed to identify whether there are perceived psychological and social struggles that female Veterans experience transitioning from active-duty military to civilian life in the United States. This study also aimed to identify whether female Veterans struggle to transition from active-duty military life to civilian life due to limited psychological and social support. The research design covered which hypothesis was correct by linking the connections and relationships to indicate any struggles female military Veterans face with psychological and

social support transitioning to civilian life with an epidemiological survey design. This study utilized survey research to collect data through a self-administered survey via email or an online website. The survey collected information on female Veterans' perceived psychological and social support struggles resulting in an epidemiological study.

Research Questions

Resnik et al. (2012) reported that reintegration into civilian life for Veterans is multifaceted with no set standard of elements. Meanwhile, reintegration into civilian life has been proven to be a struggle and has challenges for more than half of the Veteran population (Hawkins & Crowe, 2018a & b). Lara (2021) found that Veterans experience difficulties reintegrating into civilian life from a social and cultural aspect due to the lack of support and understanding from civilian society.

The reintegration of female Veterans postulates whether it impacts their satisfaction with life and stress more than 1 year post-active-duty military service. This research study sought to discover perceived relationships regarding female Veterans relating to reintegration into civilian life. This study explored reintegration's impact on satisfaction with life and female Veterans' stress. Two research questions guided this research:

RQ1: Does a relationship exist between reintegration experiences and satisfaction with life in United States female Veterans?

RQ2: Does a relationship exist between reintegration experiences and perceived stress in United States female Veterans?

These research questions were used to determine relationships between reintegration regarding satisfaction with life, stress, and gender.

Hypotheses

The hypotheses answered whether female Veterans have perceived psychological and social support transitioning from active-duty military to civilian life.

H1₀: Reintegration experiences and satisfaction with life will not have a relationship in female Veterans. It showed that reintegration into civilian life for United States female Veterans has not had a negative impact or caused struggles that impacted them negatively.

H1_a: Reintegration experiences and satisfaction with life will have a relationship in female Veterans. It showed that reintegration into civilian life for United States female Veterans has had a negative impact and caused struggles that impacted them negatively.

H2₀: Reintegration experiences and perceived stress will not have a relationship in female Veterans. It showed that reintegration into civilian life for United States female Veterans had not caused perceived stress.

H2_a: Reintegration experiences and perceived stress will have a relationship in female Veterans. It showed that reintegration into civilian life for United States female Veterans had caused perceived stress.

Participants and Setting

Participants needed to meet the study criteria and were asked permission to volunteer via email or messenger service. This was an online study delivered through a third-party company called SurveyMonkey. Participants completed the surveys and submitted them via email or a web-based service. This survey had 155 participants total, with the intended goal of 20% being from each branch of the United States military service (Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, and Navy).

Demographics

The participants' demographic information was collected via the demographic questionnaire (see Appendix A). This study recruited volunteer participants from various military affiliations, including Veteran organizations, other Veterans, and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), utilizing the snowball method. There were at least 20 participants from each branch of active-duty military service (Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marines, and Navy) with a total of 155 participants for this study. Participants for this study were female United States Veterans between 21 to 55 years of age who have been off active-duty military service for 1 to 5 years and have completed less than 16 years of active-duty military service.

Advertisement and Recruitment

Participants were recruited via social media and several Veteran organizations through a snowball method. Participants were emailed a link to the survey to complete in private. The survey was conducted through a third-party company (SurveyMonkey). With the group administrators' approval, the researcher posted the information about the study on Veteran groups' Facebook pages to gain potential participants' interest. The researcher also reached out to fellow Veterans via email and messenger services to potential participants and requested that information about this study be forwarded to other Veterans.

Inclusion

An initial assessment interview screened all potential participants for their eligibility and willingness to participate. Inclusion criteria required that participants self-reported as an adult over 21 years of age; were female United States Military Veterans with at least 4 years but not greater than 16 years of active-duty military service; had exited the United States Military in the last 1 to 5 years (2017-2021); and demonstrated the ability to understand and sign an informed

consent form. Completed informed consent forms had to be received before adding survey results for analysis.

Sampling Method & Size

This study utilized stratified random sampling to ensure that each military branch was equally represented through the snowball method. Each branch of military service was considered a mutually exclusive category. There are five branches of the United States military: Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marines, and Navy, and the goal was to equally have each branch represented with roughly 20% coming from each. The participants were selected randomly from the larger pool of participants from each group to ensure that each military branch was equally represented. This ensured that the Veteran female population was represented in the study equally from all five United States military service branches.

Compensation

Participants were compensated by knowing that their participation is helping research potential areas that impact female Veterans to be looked at for further evaluation and improvements. The Veteran population is patriotic and values the military sense of selfless service (Gordon, 2018). Typically, Veterans are willing to participate in studies to help others in the future and advance the notions for the growth of services to fellow Veterans. As such, this was a volunteer-based research study; no financial compensation was offered or given.

Setting

This study utilized survey research. The study was conducted online through email, instant messenger service, and the utilization of the SurveyMonkey platform. Participants completed self-administered structured surveys with closed-ended questions in the privacy of their homes or other locations at their discretion.

Instrumentation

The instrumentation included a pre-study questionnaire to determine eligibility for the study, including basic demographic information: age, ethnicity, branch of military service, type of military service (active-duty, reserve, National Guard, and active guard reserve), length of time in the military, military discharge type, education, marital status, and number of dependents (spouse/partner and children). The study participants completed surveys and questionnaires via SurveyMonkey. This study included the exact details of the pre-study and went into closed-ended questions about the participants' military service to include more specific details regarding the military, transition, and Veteran experiences.

Participants completed a Perceived Stress Scale (PSS14; Cohen et al., 1983), a Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985), and a Military to Civilian Questionnaire (M2C-Q; Sayer et al., 2011). These surveys determined the relationships between reintegration, perceived stress, life satisfaction, and gender. Surveys were conducted through SurveyMonkey for collection, and the results were analyzed with IBM SPSS software.

Participants were recruited via social media and at several Veteran organizations. Participants accessed the survey link via email, QR codes, or from a social media to complete in private. The goal had been to have a minimum of 100 participants and roughly 20% representation for each of the five United States military service branches (Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marine Corp, and Navy). Once this goal had been met, each participant was randomly assigned a number participant number by SurveyMonkey (Heppner et al., 2016). Participant screening (see Appendix B), consent forms (see Appendix C), and measures evolved around research study ethical considerations based on Krysik and Finn's (2013) recommendations.

Participant Screening

To begin the screening process, study applicants completed an initial questionnaire about whether they met the study criteria. Potential participants received an individual questionnaire via email regarding details of their active-duty military information. This included their branch of military service, military job type, deployment information, time served, discharge category, any service-connected disabilities, education, number of dependents (spouse/partner and children), marital status at the time of discharge, and current marital status. The researcher followed up either once the participant emailed the questionnaire back or after 1 week to confirm that they received it (see Appendix D).

Consent for Participation

All participants were screened to ensure that they met the inclusion criteria. Once a participant had been determined eligible for the study, they completed a pre-study packet that included an informed consent to participate form that detailed the risks and benefits of participation, the limits of confidentiality, participation compensation, and a demographic information form. Permission from all participants was in writing to include them in the study. The participants must have understood that their participation was voluntary and that they could remove themselves at any point (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researchers utilized pseudonyms for all participants by assigning a random computer-generated number to protect identifiable names and privacy.

Measures

This study was conducted online with the questionnaires through SurveyMonkey to collect the information and keep participants' information confidential. The questionnaires and

surveys covered the PSS14, SWLS, and M2C-Q. These measures provided insight into how female Veterans handle their transition to civilian life.

Participants were recruited through Veteran organizations and groups: the American Legion, Team RWB, Veteran to Veteran, Veterans 4 Veterans, women vets, Disabled Veterans National Foundation, DAV, Warrior Wellness, and other Veteran organizations. Female Veterans completed a participant interest questionnaire to verify whether they met the study criteria. Participants who met the research study criteria were emailed information on the study and a participant packet that included the consent form. After the signed consent form had been returned, the participants received an email with a link to the self-administrated questionnaires and surveys or a link to them. One week later, emails were sent out to participants who had not completed the questionnaires and surveys to ask any questions or concerns they may have had (see Appendix D). Reminder emails were sent out weekly for 3 weeks, if needed, after which the participant was removed from the participant list.

As the completed questionnaires and surveys were returned, they were assigned a random computer-generated number. After receiving approximately 155 completed questionnaires and surveys, they were sorted by military branch of service, and stratified random sampling occurred. The goal had been to achieve 20% representation from each United States military branch of service (Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, and Navy).

Perceived Stress Scale

The PSS14 (Cohen et al., 1983) is a simple self-report consisting of 14 questions with a scale that identifies how reintegration affects feelings and our perceived stress. The PSS14 is the most predominantly utilized psychological instrument for measuring the perception of stress from a significant life event (Higgins, 2018). The PSS14 was created to use in community

samples and has non-specific content for any subpopulation group to remain neutral (Cohen et al., 1983). Each question had a response selection of 0 (*never*) to 4 (*very often*). Participant scores ranged from 0 to 40 (Cohen et al., 1983). The higher the scores represented, the higher the perceived stress level of the participant (Cohen et al., 1983). The low-stress level range was 0-13, moderate from 14-26, and high from 27-40 (Cohen et al., 1983). The questions were simple to comprehend. For this study, the PSS14 will focus on the female Veteran participants' thoughts and feelings over the last 30 days. The PSS14 will identify whether female Veterans have perceived stress regarding reintegration into civilian life as Veterans for this study. The psychometric assessment of this scale indicated that it possessed high internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .75$) and mean and standard deviation scores of 19.62 ($SD = 7.49$) and 13.02 ($SD = 6.35$), which are acceptable. The PSS14 did not require permission to be used, as it was created to be an economical tool for research purposes (Cohen et al., 1983). See Appendices E and F for the PSS14 and permission information.

Satisfaction with Life Scale

The SWLS (Diener et al., 1985) is a self-report that consists of five items to measure global life satisfaction. The SWLS indicated how much each participant agrees with each statement, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Participants' scores ranged from 5 to 35. The survey ranged from extremely dissatisfied (score of 5-9), dissatisfied (score of 10-14), slightly dissatisfied (score of 15-19), neutral (score of 20), slightly satisfied (score of 21-25), satisfied (score of 26-30), and extremely satisfied (score of 31-35). Lower scores equated to greater dissatisfaction. The SWLS had been proven to display favorable psychometric properties, including high internal consistency and high temporal reliability (Diener et al.). The SWLS identified overall satisfaction with social relationships (family, friends, coworkers, work, and

community). Diener et al. noted that individuals need to feel a connection to others. The SWLS identified whether female Veterans had a perceived feeling of connection within the civilian community. The psychometric assessment of this scale indicated that Cronbach's alpha for SWLS ranged from .79 to .89, indicating that the scale had high internal consistency. The SWLS did not require permission to be used (Diener et al., 1985). See Appendices G and H for the SWLS and permission information.

Military to Civilian Questionnaire

The M2C-Q (Sayer et al., 2011) is a 16-item instrument assessing Veterans' reintegration difficulty. The M2C-Q assessed the difficulty in post-deployment community reintegration: interpersonal relationships with family, friends, and peers; productivity at work, education, or home; community participation; self-care; and leisure and perceived meaning of life. M2C-Q items were rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 0 (*no difficulty*) to 4 (*extreme difficulty*), and participants could have indicated "does not apply" for four items assessing the relationship with spouse/partner, relationship with children, work, and educational functioning. Participants' scores ranged from 0 to 64 and were divided by the number of questions answered to determine the level of difficulty. The higher scores equated to greater difficulties reintegrating into civilian life post-active-duty military service. The M2C-Q identified whether female Veterans indicated difficulty reintegrating with the civilian community after post-active-duty military service and the difficulty level. Psychometric assessment of this scale indicated an internal consistency of the study should show high internal reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .95$). See Appendices I and J for the M2C-Q and permission.

Procedures

The researcher requested Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval through Liberty University before beginning the research study (see Appendix K). Once IRB approval had been obtained, the researcher began to advertise and gain permission to conduct the study through various media forms, including Veteran organizations, social media Veteran groups, and word-of-mouth (see Appendices L-N). Permission was conducted via email correspondence from the researcher to potential participants.

Potential participants completed a short questionnaire to determine eligibility for participation in the research study. Participants who met the research study eligibility requirements of being a United States female military Veteran with at least 1 year post-active-duty military service and no more than 5 years (2017-2021) received a recruitment letter requesting their assistance with this study (see Appendix O). Participants also received an informational letter outlining the study's importance and what the researcher hoped the study would accomplish. It also included a link to the online survey. By clicking the "I agree" option, the female Veteran agreed to participate in the study, and the survey progressed to the subsequent section of the survey. 155 female Veterans agreed to participate and complete the survey.

The demographic questionnaire (see Appendix A) and survey were administered online through SurveyMonkey. The informational letter and survey indicated that the findings of this study would be published and that participants' personal information was excluded, as pseudonyms were utilized. The first section of the survey required participants to acknowledge their consent form by selecting the "I agree" box that indicated that they consented to the study. This was followed by collecting demographic data and PSS14, SWLS, and M2C-Q survey

questions. The questions were presented with a percentage response ranging from 0 to 100, with survey questions being revealed in increments of 10 and multiple-choice answers based on the survey scale (see measure section for more details).

The questionnaire remained active until saturation of at least 100 participants had been met. During the time that the questionnaire survey was open, the researcher distributed reminders to potential participants, social media postings, and word-of-mouth through various Veteran organizations every week or 7 days during the period that the questionnaire survey was open. Upon the closure of the questionnaire, the researcher had received 155 completed surveys, which ensured that the total number of received surveys met the minimum of 100 participants, with approximately 20% from each United States military branch of service (Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, and Navy).

At the end of the survey, the participant received a notice thanking them for participating in the study. The online survey platform did not collect email addresses or require self-identification to protect the participants from ensuring that responses were anonymous and the data collected could not be traced back to any individual. Once the online survey platform collected the information, the researcher exported the data collected from the surveys into SPSS for analysis.

A critical element of data collection is ensuring that all participant data is securely maintained (Rovai et al., 2013). All information processed in SPSS was protected using a domain-administered and password-secured laptop. As means to increase security, all data downloaded to the laptop was stored in a password-protected folder and stored on an external hard drive that was encrypted with password protection to secure data and increase the researcher's accessibility to the data.

Data Analysis

After the surveys had been completed, the data collected was analyzed. The data collected through the questionnaires and surveys provided the quantitative data for this study. The questionnaires and surveys assessed female Veterans' transition experiences of psychological support along with PSS 14, SWLS, and M2C-Q. Descriptive statistics, including the mean, median, mode, and standard deviation, were used to describe central tendency measures (Krysiak & Finn, 2013). Descriptive statistics consolidated the data into a descriptive set by communicating the data one variable at a time (Krysiak & Finn, 2013) to indicate the female Veterans' transition experiences. The findings were visually represented in tables and graphs that displayed the collected data, including a frequency distribution table, data plots, histograms, sample frequency tables, and various tables to display the data as necessary.

This was a descriptive field study because the investigations did not have experimental controls. The variables in this study were studied as they naturally occurred and were not manipulated (Heppner et al., 2016). The external validity was high because the sample of participants was taken from the population of interest, and the internal validity of this study was low.

Analyses procedures were conducted utilizing the IBM SPSS v28. Multiple regression was utilized to explore the relationships between military rank, age, education, military branch of service, and length of time served in the military with the surveys of PSS 14, SWLS, and M2C-Q. Participants with 20% or more missing data on any questionnaire or survey were excluded from data analysis. Participants were also excluded from the analysis if they responded "not applicable" for every item on any questionnaire or survey.

Variables

Criterion Variable

The dependent variables for this study were female Veterans that were post-active-duty military for at least 1 year and no more than 5 years (2017-2021).

Predictor Variables

The independent variables for this study were the PSS14, SWLS, and M2C-Q.

Statistically Significant

Statistical significance determined if a genuine relationship existed between the independent and dependent variables through a *t*-test. If a Type I or Type II error appeared, the researcher checked the data to ensure errors were not made. Multiple regression tests were conducted to verify and identify relationships and to explore the associations between the outcome and variables. These tests concluded whether relationships existed and which hypotheses were correct.

Internal Validity

The internal validity of this study was low because the participants were studied in their natural environment, and the variables were not manipulated. The questionnaire and surveys were self-reports conducted in privacy with no face-to-face contact.

External Validity

The external validity was high because the sample of participants was taken from the population of interest. Participants were screened to ensure that they met the research study criteria. Each United States military branch of service had at least 20 participants, or made up approximately 20% of the participants, to ensure a large enough sample size of the population in the study.

Threats to Statistical Validity

There were no known threats to the statistical validity of this study currently. A power analysis determined the adequate sample size for this study to ensure that all five United States military service branches were included. The scales utilized in this study had been established for use with the military population to avoid unreliable measures. The survey research design ensured the heterogeneity of units. Survey research is one of the oldest and most widely utilized research methods (Heppner et al., 2016). The researcher examined the data for outliers and their impact on the study.

Limitations

The findings in this study should be considered in the context of methodological limitations. The study was cross-sectional, and conclusions regarding causation cannot be made. For example, it is difficult to determine if the transition struggles are due to mental health problems or if they are due to transition struggles. Longitudinal study designs that measure relevant factors before an individual starts military training could help address this question and explore if alternative models or unobserved variables can determine a possible relationship. Some participants in the study exited the military 5 years ago, possibly indicating other factors unrelated to the variables in this study that influenced their transition to civilian life and their perceived psychological and social support. Another limitation is the reliance on subjective, self-report measures, which may have affected the reliability of associations between variables, despite the measures being deemed valid and reliable for this population and Cronbach's alphas calculated. This study should consider the generalizability of the findings. It could be said that only motivated female Veterans completed the questionnaires; participants were recruited from a wide range of settings, including specific Veteran organizations and groups where some

participants were suffering from mental health problems and were more likely to have transition struggles. The study was shared across various Veteran organizations and Veteran social media sites and groups.

Implications

This study's findings helped improve our understanding of whether United States female Veterans struggle with their transition to civilian life due to a lack of perceived psychological and social support from society, which affects them individually and socially. This evidence can help inform and improve female Veterans' transition support regarding their psychological and social support needs. The study's findings also have potential implications for Veterans' increased engagement with services when transitioning into civilian life.

There is deficient research concerning United States female Veterans' transition from active-duty military service to civilian life through psychological and social support. Veterans face unique struggles when transitioning from active-duty military to civilian life, impacting their physical and mental health (Ainspan et al., 2018; Blackburn, 2017). Further research is needed to understand the female Veterans' transition to civilian life, including providing additional resources to reduce their struggles.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are a set of principles that guide researchers and are a vital part of research (Heppner et al., 2016). In preparation, the researcher completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative Program (CITI) in Social and Behavioral Research under record number 40433433 on January 20, 2021 (see Appendix P) and received IRB approval (see Appendix K) to conduct this study. The Belmont principles of ethical principles for voluntary participation, respect for individuals, beneficence, and justice (United States Department of

Health & Human Services, 1979) were followed. Participants in the study were autonomous and free to select their choices as stated in the recruitment letter, informational letter, and description in the survey. The following documents were submitted to Liberty University's IRB: completed IRB application, informational letter, recruitment letter, demographics questionnaire, PSS14, SWLS, M2C-Q, and CITI in Social and Behavioral Research certificate.

Before collecting data, participants received a recruitment letter (see Appendix O) that outlined the importance of the study, what the researcher hoped that the study would accomplish while indicating that the findings of this study would be published and that participants' personal information would be excluded, as pseudonyms were utilized to reduce the risk of harm further. The recruitment letter indicated that participation in the study was voluntary, they would not be placed at undue risk or suffer adverse consequences for opting out of the study, and they had the option to opt-out at any point in the study. Before starting the survey, participants confirmed their consent to participate in the study by clicking "I agree" in the consent box in the online survey. The online survey platform, SurveyMonkey, did not collect email addresses or require self-identification to protect the participants from ensuring that responses were anonymous and the data collected could not be traced back to any individual. The security of data collection was a vital element. All data and information collected was processed in SPSS and protected using a domain-administered and password-secured laptop. As an increased security measure, all data downloaded to the laptop was stored in a password-protected folder and stored on an external hard drive that was encrypted with password protection to secure data and increase the researcher's accessibility to the data. Analyzed data was published and did not contain identifying participant information.

Summary

This quantitative survey research design provided insight into the perceived notations of needed psychological and social support of female Veterans' reintegration from active-duty military to civilian life and beyond as a Veteran between 1 to 5 years post-active-duty military service. The research study examined possible relationships between variables. There was little to no data available on female Veterans' reintegration from 1 to 5 years of post-active-duty military service.

The study was conducted through an online web-based platform from SurveyMonkey. Participants were pre-screened and provided a random identification code to protect their privacy, and all collected data was secured with password protection measures. IBM SPSS analyzed the data received from the PSS14, SWLS, and M2C-Q surveys. Procedures included a *t*-test and multiple regression tests to determine the variable relationships.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

This research study was geared to help identify whether female Veterans faced perceived challenges during reintegration into civilian life in the forms of support and psychological needs. The survey design utilized Perceived Stress Scale-14 (PSS14; Cohen et al., 1983), the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985), and the Military to Civilian Questionnaire (M2C-Q; Sayer et al., 2011). The United States female Veterans were utilized to evaluate this study's research questions and hypotheses. This chapter will discuss the results, descriptive statistics, and the hypotheses associated with the study. This research study was conducted online via SurveyMonkey, with qualification verification conducted before accessing the survey. Participants were anonymous. Each participant completed the survey in private in a place of their choice. Participants were able to opt-out of the survey at any time before completing the survey and clicking submit.

Research Questions

The study investigated the following research questions:

RQ1: Does a relationship exist between reintegration experiences and satisfaction with life in United States female Veterans?

RQ2: Does a relationship exist between reintegration experiences and perceived stress in United States female Veterans?

Hypotheses

The study expectations of the research survey results were as follows:

H1₀: Reintegration experiences and satisfaction with life will not have a relationship in female Veterans. It showed that reintegration into civilian life for United States female Veterans had not had a negative impact or caused struggles that impacted them negatively.

H1_a: Reintegration experiences and satisfaction with life will have a relationship in female Veterans. It showed that reintegration into civilian life for United States female Veterans had a negative impact and caused struggles that impacted them negatively.

H2₀: Reintegration experiences and perceived stress will not have a relationship in female Veterans. It showed that reintegration into civilian life for United States female Veterans had not caused perceived stress.

H2_a: Reintegration experiences and perceived stress will have a relationship in female Veterans. It showed that reintegration into civilian life for United States female Veterans had caused perceived stress.

Descriptive Statistics

The following section provides an overview of the descriptive statistics from the research survey results. The study consisted of 155 United States female Veterans ($n = 155$). No participants were removed because individuals who did not meet the prescreening survey criteria were not granted access to the survey questions, and those who did not complete the survey were excluded from the data. Both were set up as defaults in SurveyMonkey. Participants were recruited through social media platforms, organizations, and word-of-mouth (snowball method).

The participant demographic questions revealed numerous characteristics of the surveyed United States female Veteran population. The participants ranged from 21–55 years old, with the majority being 35 years old and below ($n = 90, 58\%$). The United States military branch of service displayed a representation of 18% or greater for each of the five military service

branches, with the Army having the most significant number of participants ($n = 38$, 24.5%). The length of United States female Veterans' military service ranged from 4–16 years, with the largest group being 10–12 years ($n = 46$, 29.7%). This length of service time is considered mid-career, as normal retirement starts at 20 years of service or more. The most significant group size for United States female Veterans rank was E5-9 ($n = 86$, 55.5%), and the smallest group was WO4-5 ($n = 4$, 2.6%). The United States military occupations displayed no patterns, and the most prominent groups were Logistics Officer ($n = 7$, 5.4%), Intelligence Specialist ($n = 5$, 3.2%), and Human Resources ($n = 5$, 3.2%). The prominent type of United States military discharge was medical retirement ($n = 61$, 39.4%), followed by the end of service contracts ($n = 56$, 36.1%). Most participants responded to having military service-connected disabilities ($n = 138$, 89%). There was little difference between marital status while on active-duty United States military service versus post-active-duty military service. Both had the highest number of married participants during active-duty military service marital status ($n = 64$, 41.3%) and post-active-duty marital status ($n = 65$, 41.9%). Most participants identified as multiracial (two or more groups; $n = 28$, 18.1%), followed by White or Caucasian ($n = 26$, 16.8%) and Hispanic or Latino ($n = 25$, 16.1%). Regarding education levels, most participants indicated having more than a High School diploma or GED ($n = 19$, 12.3%), with the majority having a bachelor's degree or higher ($n = 85$, 54.8%). The geographic locations of the participants were diverse. The largest populations of United States female Veterans surveyed were from Florida ($n = 14$, 9%) and Virginia ($n = 9$, 5.8%). Lastly, the most prominent family size was two dependents while on active-duty United States military service ($n = 62$, 40%) and post-active-duty family size ($n = 70$, 42.5%). Table 1 provides descriptive statistics for the demographic characteristics of the participants in this study.

Table 1*Frequency Table for United States Female Veterans Demographic Characteristics*

	<i>n</i>	%
Age (in years)		
21–25	18	11.6
26–30	31	20.0
31–35	41	26.5
36–40	22	14.2
41–45	23	14.8
46–50	17	11.0
51–55	3	1.9
United States Military Branch		
Air Force	28	18.1
Army	38	24.5
Coast Guard	29	18.7
Marine Corp	28	18.1
Navy	32	20.6
Length of United States Military Service		
10–12 years	46	29.7
13–16 years	33	21.3
4–6 years	37	23.9
7–9 years	39	25.2
United States Military rank		
E1-4	19	12.3
E5-9	86	55.5
O1-3	14	9.0
O4-6	18	11.6
WO1-3	14	9.0
WO4-5	4	2.6
Military Occupational Specialty (MOS)		
Adjutant	1	0.6
Aerographer mate	1	0.6
Air Traffic Controller	3	1.9
Aircrewman	1	0.6
Armor	1	0.6
Armory NCO	1	0.6

Aviation Officer	1	0.6
Aviation Administration	2	1.3
Aviation electrician	1	0.6
Aviation engineering	1	0.6
Aviation Maintenance Technician	1	0.6
Aviation officer	2	1.2
Aviation pilot	1	0.6
Aviation tech	2	1.2
Basic intelligence marine	1	0.6
Civil Affairs Officer	2	1.2
Cook	4	2.6
Correction NC	1	0.6
Cryptologic Tech	1	0.6
Cyber Security	1	0.6
Cyber Systems Operations Apprentice	1	0.6
Cyber warfare tech	1	0.6
Damage controlman	1	0.6
Data clerk	3	1.9
Data network specialist	1	0.6
Data tech	1	0.6
Deck mate	3	1.9
Diver	2	1.3
Dockmaster	1	0.6
Dock Mate	1	0.6
Electrical Engineering	1	0.6
Engineer Aide	1	0.6
EODO	1	0.6
Field tech	1	0.6
Finance Officer	1	0.6
Firefighter	1	0.6
Flight tech	2	1.2
Food Service Specialist	1	0.6
Ground transportation Specialist	1	0.6
Hospital administration	1	0.6
Hospital corpsman	1	0.6
HR Clerk	5	3.2
HR Officer	1	0.6
HR Specialist	1	0.6
HR WO	1	0.6
Human Resources	3	1.9
Human Resources NCO	1	0.6

Information protection technician	1	0.6
Intelligence	1	0.6
Intelligence NCO	1	0.6
Intelligence Specialist	5	3.2
Journalist	1	0.6
Legal Admin	2	1.2
Linguistic	1	0.6
Logistic WO	1	0.6
Logistics Officer	7	5.4
LVS Captain	1	0.6
Marine deck officer	1	0.6
Marine engineering officer	1	0.6
Master at arms	1	0.6
Mechanical Engineer	1	0.6
Mechanical technician	1	0.6
Med tech	2	1.3
Medic	4	2.6
Medical Aide	1	0.6
Medical Officer	2	1.3
Medical Tech	1	0.6
Military intelligence	2	1.3
Military Police	4	2.6
Mobility Officer	3	1.9
Mobility WO	4	2.6
Motor pool NCO	2	1.3
Network system tech	1	0.6
Nurse	2	1.3
Operations Intelligence	1	0.6
OR tech	2	1.2
Personnel administration	1	0.6
Personnel Clerk	1	0.6
Personnel Officer	1	0.6
Pilot	1	0.6
Port safety and security	1	0.6
Quartermaster	4	2.6
Radar tech	1	0.6
Range tech	1	0.6
Recruiting Commander	1	0.6
RN	2	1.3
Rotary wing aviator	1	0.6
Signal Specialist	1	0.6

Special Agent criminal investigator	1	0.6
Supply NCO	3	1.8
Transportation MGMT Coordinator	3	1.9
Transportation Officer	3	1.9
Unit supply specialist	1	0.6
Vehicle Mechanic	1	0.6
Vet tech	1	0.6
Warfare engineer	1	0.6
Military discharge type		
End of service contract	56	36.1
Involuntary (force reduction)	1	0.6
Involuntary (misconduct)	6	3.9
Medical	29	18.7
Medical Retirement	61	39.4
Voluntary Other not listed	2	1.3
Military service-connected Disabilities		
No	15	9.7
Prefer not to answer	2	1.3
Yes	138	89.0
Marital status while in the military		
Divorced	40	25.8
Married	64	41.3
Separated	24	15.5
Single	27	17.4
Current marital status		
Cohabiting, living with a partner in an intimate relationship	14	9.0
Divorced	39	25.2
Married	65	41.9
Separated	20	12.9
Single	17	11.0
Race or ethnicity		
American Indian or Alaska Native	17	11.0
Asian or Asian American	22	14.2
Black or African American	22	14.2
Hispanic or Latino	25	16.1
Multiracial (two or more groups)	28	18.1
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	15	9.7

White or Caucasian	26	16.8
Education level		
Associate degree	23	14.8
Bachelor's degree	43	27.7
Doctoral degree	4	2.6
High school/GED	19	12.3
Master's degree	38	24.5
Some College/Technical School/Certificate Program	28	18.1
Geographic location		
Alabama	5	3.2
Alaska	4	2.6
Arizona	3	1.9
Arkansas	2	1.3
California	8	5.1
Colorado	2	1.3
Connecticut	2	1.3
DC	4	2.6
Delaware	4	2.5
Florida	14	9.0
Georgia	5	3.2
Hawaii	7	4.5
Idaho	3	1.9
Illinois	1	0.6
Indiana	1	0.6
Iowa	1	0.6
Kansas	2	1.3
Key West	1	0.6
Louisiana	1	0.6
Maine	3	1.9
Maryland	3	1.9
Michigan	1	0.6
Minnesota	1	0.6
Montana	3	1.9
Nebraska	1	0.6
New Hampshire	3	1.9
New Jersey	4	2.5
New Mexico	4	2.6
New York	4	2.6
North Carolina	4	2.6

North Dakota	1	0.6
Ohio	3	1.9
Oklahoma	3	1.9
Oregon	3	1.9
Pennsylvania	2	1.3
Rhode Island	4	2.6
Seattle	1	0.6
South Carolina	4	2.6
South Dakota	1	0.6
Southeast US	1	0.6
Tennessee	1	0.6
Texas	7	4.5
Utah	4	2.6
Vermont	2	1.3
Virginia	9	5.8
Washington	3	1.9
West Virginia	3	1.9
Wyoming	2	1.3

Number of dependents while on active military duty (spouse/partner and children)

0	36	23.2
1	14	9.0
2	62	40.0
3	36	23.2
4	3	1.9
5	4	2.6

Current number of dependents

0	22	14.2
1	21	13.5
2	70	45.2
3	32	20.6
4	5	3.2
5	5	3.2

Note. N = sample size out of 155 participants. % = percentage of sample size out of 155

participants.

The following information is representative of the descriptive statistics of responses from the participants who completed the surveys for the independent variables (PSS14, SWLS, and

M2C-Q). The dependent variable is the United States female Veterans that are post-active-duty military for at least 1 year and no more than 5 years (2017-2021). Results of the analyses were as follows: PSS14 (N = 155, M = 31.14, SD = 3.323); SWLS (N = 155, M = 15.15, SD = 4.954); and M2C-Q (N = 155, M = 2.67, SD = 2.5676). The descriptive statistics are found in Table 2.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for United States Female Veterans

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
PSS14	155	31.14	3.323	23	40
SWLS	155	15.15	4.954	5	25
M2C-Q	155	2.679	0.5676	1.4	3.9

Data Cleaning and Evaluation of Statistical Assumptions

Before starting regression analysis, the data was reviewed for statistical assumptions and data cleaning. The data has consolidated a few minor duplications in the MOS category. Since this was an open text field, this type of duplication was expected and easy to correct.

SurveyMonkey did report that the survey was accessed 167 times. Since the survey was conducted through SurveyMonkey, only participants who met the research survey criteria gained access to the survey, and only completed surveys were collected for analysis—resulting in 155 participants.

The skewness and kurtosis were analyzed to verify that the data followed an expected normal distribution. This evaluation displayed natural log transformation. All variables (PSS14, SWLS, and M2C-Q) had skewness and kurtosis acceptable values within the range of -1 and 1. Table 3 displays the skewness and kurtosis findings for this study.

Table 3

Descriptive Reflecting Skewness and Kurtosis

	PSS14	SWLS	M2C-Q
Skewness	0.561	-0.077	-0.215
Std. Error of Skewness	0.195	0.195	0.195
Kurtosis	0.393	-0.706	-0.640
Std. Error of Kurtosis	0.387	0.387	0.387

Note. Skewness and kurtosis are in the acceptable range of -1 and 1.

Next, the data was accessed for additional evaluations of linearity. The relationships between variables had some non-normal distributions, but the distributions were not extreme, as displayed in Figures 1 (PSS14), 2 (SWLS), and 3 (M2C-Q), in which normal linearity was assumed.

Figure 1

Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual for PSS14

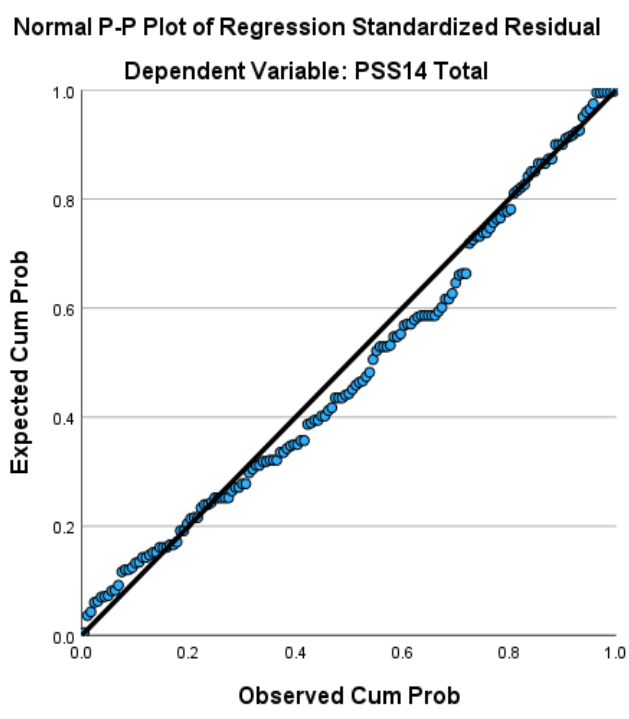


Figure 2

Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual for SWLS

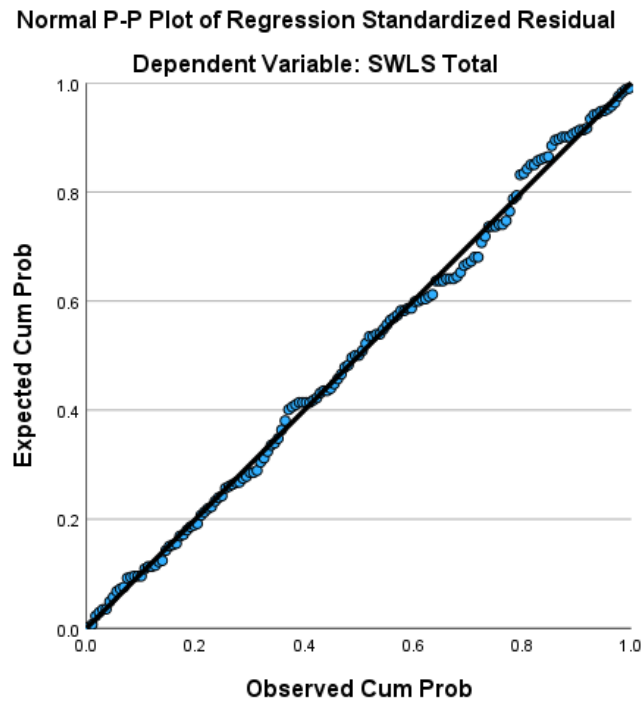
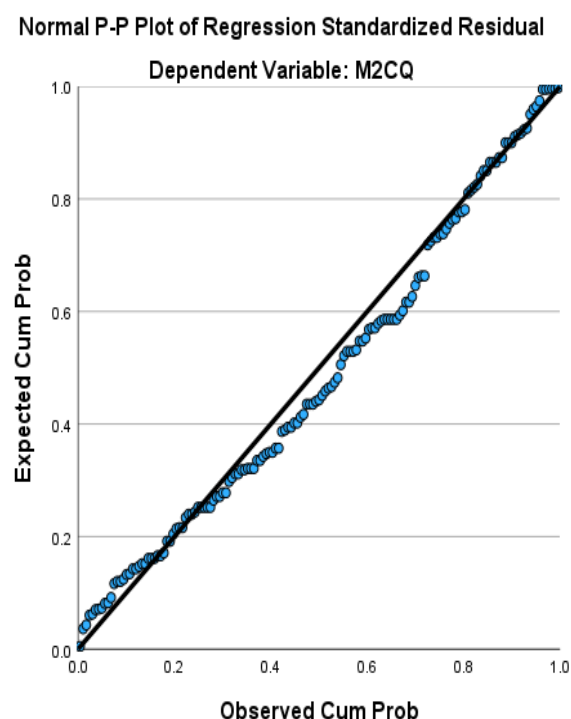


Figure 3

Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual for M2C-Q



Multicollinearity was analyzed and displayed no issues of collinearity. Collinearity was verified by testing the predictors for being highly correlated. It can be problematic and a cause for concern if the correlation is more than 0.8. Collinearity is not an issue for this study, as the highest correlation was PSS14 to M2C-Q at $r = 0.111$. Table 4 displays the correlation findings for PSS14, SWLS, and M2C-Q.

Table 4

Correlations Analysis for PSS14, SWLS, and M2C-Q

		PSS14	SWLS	M2C-Q
Pearson Correlation	PSS14	1	0.002	0.111
	SWLS	0.002	1	-.517
	M2C-Q	0.111	-.517	1

Note. Correlation analysis checking for collinearity above $r = 0.8$.

The Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) were analyzed to verify whether the coefficients were highly correlated. These analyses displayed that collinearity assumptions have been met. Marcoulides and Raykov (2019) reported that the VIF and tolerance are two relevant statistics utilized in diagnosing collinearity and that tolerance is the reciprocal of VIF.

Marcoulides and Raykov also reported that VIF and tolerance are essential estimates that display the degree of the interrelationship of variables in regression studies. Marcoulides and Raykov (2019) stated that VIF greater than 5 and tolerance below 0.2 are considered multicollinearity. The analysis of collinearity displays that VIF scores are under 5 and that tolerance scores are greater than 0.2. Table 5 shows that the analysis of the collinearity assumption for this study has been met with all variables at 1.

Table 5

Coefficients Analysis of PSS14, SWLS, and M2C-Q Scores

	Collinearity Statistics	
	Tolerance	VIF
PSS14	1.000	1.000
SWLS	1.000	1.000
M2C-Q	1.000	1.000

Note. Coefficient analysis checking for collinearity of tolerance below 0.2 and VIF above 5.

The residual values were analyzed using the Durbin-Watson statistic. These values ranged from 0 to 4, with the ideal being close to 2. The Durbin-Watson statistic displayed that this assumption had been met. The M2C-Q and PSS14 reported were 1.158, and the M2C-Q and SWLS reported was 1.629 (see Table 6).

Table 6

Residual Values for PSS14, SWLS, and M2C-Q Scores

Model	Durbin-Watson
M2C-Q, PSS14	1.158
M2C-Q, SWLS	1.629

Note. Analyzed residual value range of 0 to 4, with closest to 2 being ideal.

Lastly, the assumption of homoscedasticity analysis of the variance residuals was conducted. Scatterplots should display a random array of points that resemble a shotgun blast. In this study, the scatterplots did not display obvious signs of funneling, which suggested that the assumption of homoscedasticity is normal (shotgun blast pattern). Figures 4 and 5 display the residual scatterplots for homoscedasticity.

Figure 4

Residuals Scatterplot for Homoscedasticity for M2C-Q and PSS14

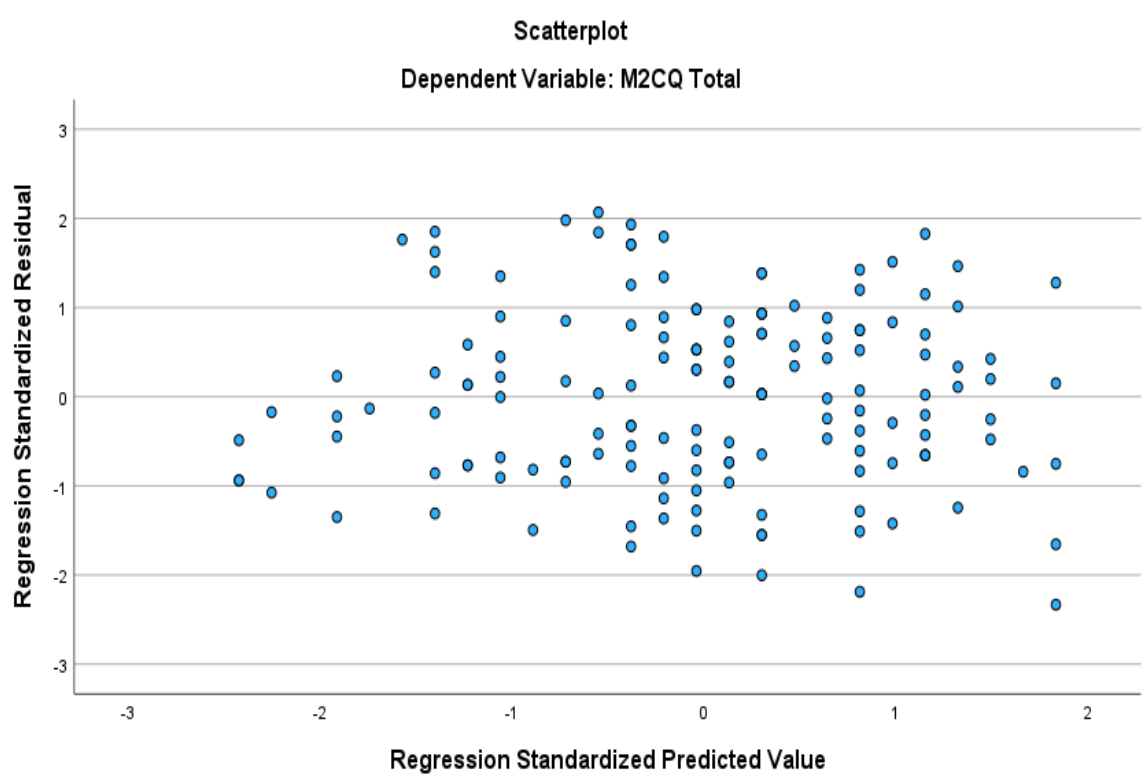
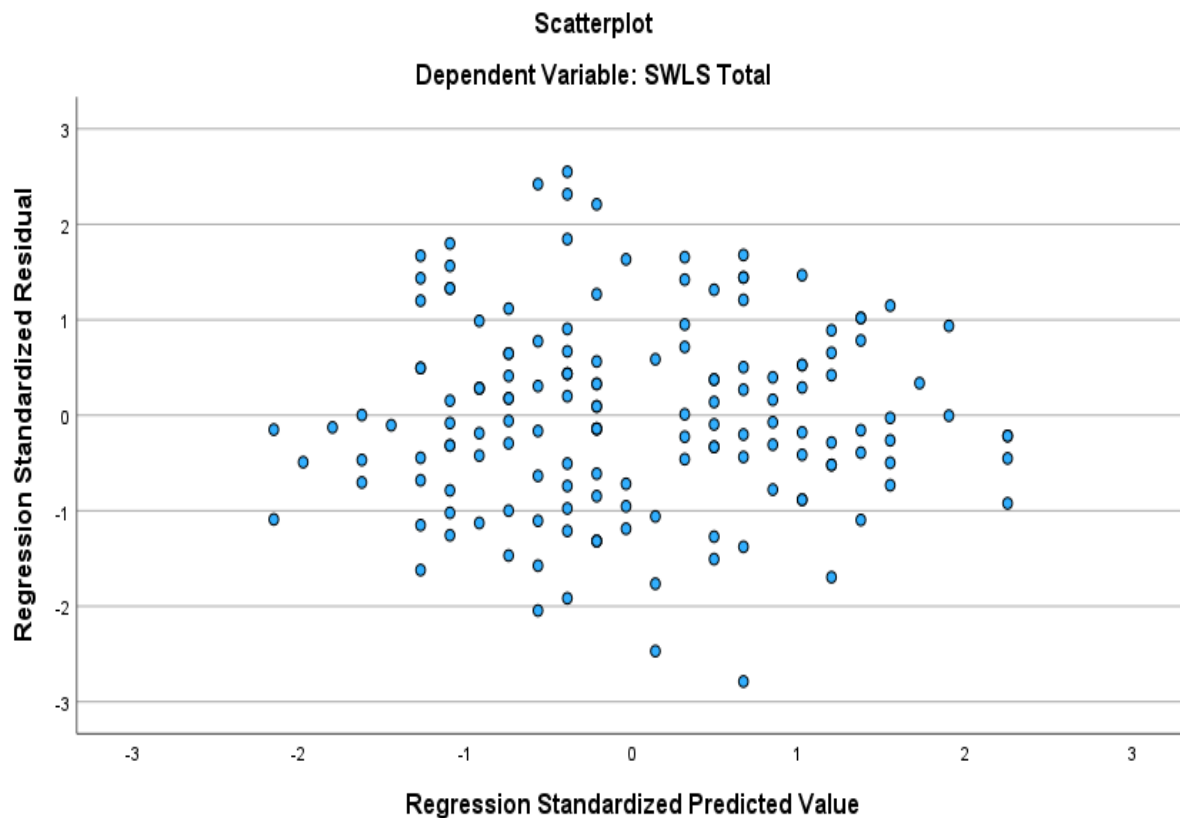


Figure 5

Residuals Scatterplot for Homoscedasticity for M2C-Q and SWLS



Internal Consistency

Cronbach's alpha was utilized to measure internal consistency for the three scales included in this study. Using Cronbach's alpha allowed the researcher to measure a multiple-item scale's internal consistency and reliability. By measuring the scale, the researcher could determine to which degree the items on the scale measure the same thing (Warner, 2013). Scores over .70 are considered to have good reliability (Warner, 2013). In this study, Cronbach's alpha for PSS14 was .83, SWLS was .87, and M2C-Q was .90.

Results

This study aimed to answer two foundational research questions: 1) Does a relationship exist between reintegration experiences and satisfaction with life in United States female Veterans? and 2) Does a relationship exist between reintegration experiences and perceived stress in United States female Veterans? To address this study's research questions, multiple regression analyses were utilized through the standard entry methods. The predictor variables were the PSS14, SWLS, and M2C-Q scores, whereas the criterion variable is United States female Veterans. Two multiple regression analyses were conducted comparing M2C-Q to PSS14 and SWLS.

Hypothesis 1

H₁₀: Reintegration experiences and satisfaction with life will not have a relationship in female Veterans. It showed that reintegration into civilian life for United States female Veterans has not had a negative impact or caused struggles that impacted them negatively.

H_{1a}: Reintegration experiences and satisfaction with life will have a relationship in female Veterans. It showed that reintegration into civilian life for United States female Veterans has had a negative impact and caused struggles that impacted them negatively.

Linear regression was utilized to evaluate whether there is a relationship between M2C-Q scores and SWLS scores. The analysis displayed a positive association between increased SWLS and M2C-Q scores of $F(1, 153) = 99.8, p < .001, R^2 = .40$. This indicated that the model provided a statistically significant contribution to 40% of the variant for M2C-Q scores. The M2C-Q scores was a significant predictor in SWLS scores, $B = -.63, p < .001$. This indicated that SWLS scores decreased when M2C-Q scores increased. Based on this outcome, for every 1-unit increase in M2C-Q score, there was a .63-unit decrease in SWLS scores. Military to Civilian

scores and SWLS scores were significant predictors, resulting in the null hypothesis being rejected.

Hypothesis 2

H2₀: Reintegration experiences and perceived stress will not have a relationship in female Veterans. It showed that reintegration into civilian life for United States female Veterans had not caused perceived stress.

H2_a: Reintegration experiences and perceived stress will have a relationship in female Veterans. It showed that reintegration into civilian life for United States female Veterans had caused perceived stress.

Linear regression was utilized to evaluate whether there is a relationship between PSS14 scores (PSS14) and M2C-Q scores $F(1, 153) = 1.92, p < .001, R^2 = .01$. This indicated that the model provided a statistically significant contribution to 1% of the variant for M2C-Q scores. The M2C-Q score was a significant predictor in PSS14 score, $B = .1, p < .001$. This indicated that PSS14 score increased when M2C-Q score increased. Based on this outcome, for every 1-unit increase in M2C-Q score, there was a .1 unit increase in PSS14 scores. Military to Civilian scores and PSS14 scores were significant predictors, resulting in the null hypothesis being rejected.

Summary

Results from the statistical analyses indicated that relationships existed between M2C-Q, SWLS, and PSS14 scores. During the analysis, linear regression was utilized to identify whether and to what extent reintegration into civilian life for United States female Veterans (M2C-Q) had caused PSS14 scores and negatively impacted SWLS scores. Linear regression was utilized to determine whether statistically significant relationships existed between the predictors and

criterion variables. The results indicated that when PSS14 scores displayed high-stress levels, M2C-Q scores also increased, displaying greater difficulty with reintegration into civilian life. Results also indicated that M2C-Q scores increased, and SWLS scores decreased, displaying level lows of satisfaction. This resulted in rejecting the null hypotheses for the two research questions in this study. Furthermore, this survey's findings displayed statistically significant relationships between satisfaction with life (SWLS), perceived stress (PSS14), and reintegration into civilian life for United States female Veterans (M2C-Q). Chapter Five will disclose the discussion of the results, implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research studies.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

Female Veterans have been the fastest-growing population of Veterans for the past 2 decades; however, there are few studies on female Veterans, and none that aid in finding out whether they have perceived support and psychological needs during their reintegration into civilian life. Society often considers females as childcare providers and homemakers, as the military is a male-dominated community. Covered in this chapter will be the discussion of results, implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research. The discussion section will review the hypotheses and the results of the study which indicate that United States female Veterans have perceived psychological and social support needs not being met in reintegration into civilian. The study's implications will show this research's impact on future research. The limitations and conclusion section will discuss ways to improve and extend current research on United States female Veterans.

Discussion

The purpose of this research study aimed to examine the relationship(s) between perceived stress, satisfaction with life, and reintegration into civilian life of United States female Veterans. Boros and Erolin (2021), McCormick et al. (2021), and Ritchie (2019) reported that there is a deficiency in research studies regarding female Veterans' reintegration into civilian life regarding perceived stressors from a lack of psychological and social support and that reintegration is multifaceted with no set standard of elements. This study used linear regression to determine the statistical significance of the relationships between PSS14, SWLS, and M2C-Q survey results. The results indicated statistically significant relationships between PSS14 and M2C-Q and between SWLS and M2C-Q.

This study recruited participants through social media, organizations, and word-of-mouth (snowball method). Each participant was invited to complete the online survey through SurveyMonkey, which consisted of eligibility questions, informed consent, a demographic questionnaire, and PSS14, SWLS, and M2C-Q scales. The research study participants provided no personal identifying information in order to protect their identity and for the participants to remain anonymous. The online survey was open for access from July 26, 2022, until September 16, 2022, as stated in recruitment letters. Only fully completed survey results were utilized in the data analysis. As a safety measure, SurveyMonkey defaulted only to report completed surveys.

The analysis of data presented in this study showed that there are statistically significant relationships between reintegration into civilian life (M2C-Q) concerning perceived stress levels (PSS14) and satisfaction with life (SWLS). It is believed that the study could have yielded more significant results if the sample size had been more extensive and utilized a mixed-method approach with qualitative and quantitative analysis. This study was successful in providing validation of the research statements. Despite the results identified from this study, there is still an increased need for additional research on United States female Veterans and their needs. The study showed that satisfaction with life and perceived stress negatively impact United States female Veterans' reintegration.

Hypothesis 1 suggested relationships between SWLS scores and M2C-Q scores. Diener et al. (1985) reported Cronbach's alpha for SWLS ranges from .79 to .89, indicating that the scale has high internal consistency. This study displayed an SWLS Cronbach's alpha of .87, reinforcing and supporting how closely related the variables are as a group. Sayer et al. (2011) reported Cronbach's alpha for M2C-Q as .95, indicating that the scale has high internal consistency. This study displayed an M2C-Q Cronbach's alpha of .90, indicating high internal

consistency. This research study's results indicated that reintegration experiences (M2C-Q) and satisfaction with life (SWLS) have a statistically significant relationship for United States female Veterans. This showed that reintegration into civilian life for United States female Veterans has had a negative impact and caused struggles that impacted their satisfaction with life negatively.

Hypothesis 1 with SWLS and M2C-Q outcomes correlate with feminist theory through the critical theory lens and relational-cultural theory (RCT). Critical theory employed the central theme of reintegration into civilian life for United States female Veterans. It explored the transformations of interpreting social meanings from their perspective regarding satisfaction with life post-military and highlights the historical problems of alienation and social struggles of perceived needs for social and psychological support. The RCT highlights the need for social connections, which is displayed through the study results by the negative SWLS with M2C-Q. United States female Veterans were found to have low SWLS and M2C-Q, displaying the need for social and psychological support for reintegration. Feminist theory and RCT both focus on connections and relationships. This study displayed clear correlations between the psychological and social support needs of United States female Veterans transitioning into civilian life.

Hypothesis 2 suggested relationships between PSS14 scores and M2C-Q scores. Cohen et al. (1983) reported Cronbach's alpha for PSS14 as .75 for possessing high internal consistency. This study displayed a high internal consistency of PSS14 Cronbach's alpha of .87. Sayer et al. (2011) reported Cronbach's alpha for M2C-Q as .95, indicating that the scale has high internal consistency. This study displayed an M2C-Q Cronbach's alpha of .90, indicating high internal consistency. The results of this study indicated that United States female Veterans' reintegration experiences had a statistically significant impact on their reintegration into civilian life and had caused perceived stress.

Hypothesis 2 with PSS14 and M2C-Q outcomes correlated with feminist theory through the critical theory lens and RCT. Critical theory employed the central theme of reintegration into civilian life for United States female Veterans, explored the transformations of interpreting social meanings from their perspective regarding perceived stress post-military, and highlighted the historical problems of alienation and social struggles for female Veterans' perceived needs for social and psychological support. The RCT highlights the focus on the need for social connections, which is displayed through the study results. United States female Veterans were found to have high PSS14 scores and low M2C-Q scores, indicating a need for psychological and social support for their reintegration. Feminist theory and RCT both focus on connections and relationships. This study displayed clear correlations between the psychological and social support needs of United States female Veterans transitioning into civilian life.

Both research questions in this study provided further insight into United States female Veterans' needs regarding their perceived stress and satisfaction with life post-active-duty military service. McCormick et al. (2019) noted that female military service members were treated dissimilarly, and some reported having experienced hostile work environments which lacked support. The results of this research study support the notion that United States female Veterans experience psychological and social support struggles reintegrating into civilian life. Hawkins and Crowe (2018b) reported that reintegration into civilian life is impacted based on Veterans' military experiences and gender-specific social role expectations encompassing the RCT and feminist theory. Boros and Erolin (2021) reported that female Veterans reintegrating into civilian life are often confronted with challenges that negatively influence their mental health, impacting their stress and satisfaction with life.

The demographics in this research study appeared to represent the United States female Veteran population by branch of military service. The United States military branch that had the greatest number of participants in the study was the United States Army at 24.5% ($n = 38$) which coincides with the largest United States military branch. The Defense Manpower Data Center, reported on November 2022, the United States military service branches ranked by population from largest to smallest was the (1) Army, (2) Navy, (3) Air Force, (4) Marine Corp, and (5) Coast Guards. This research study followed the similar ranking with the Army having the most significant number of participants ($n = 38$, 24.5%), Navy ($n = 32$, 20.6%), Coast Guard ($n = 29$, 18.7%), Air force ($n = 28$, 18.1%), and Marine Corp ($n = 28$, 18.1%). The remaining demographics in this research study are difficult to determine how they compare to the United States female Veteran population as a whole that exited active-duty military service between 2017 and 2022 as the published reports do not breakdown the demographics based on dates that Veterans exit active-duty military.

Based on current research and this study, it is clear that further research is needed regarding female Veterans' reintegration, perceived stress, satisfaction with life, and types of support needed to aid in their reintegration into civilian life. Feminist theory and RCT helped focus on the connection and relationships between the variables in this study. Since United States female Veterans only make up an estimated 16% of the Veteran population, their reintegration psychological and social support struggles appear to be overlooked. This study displayed that relationships exist between reintegration, perceived stress, and satisfaction with life. This study found that when PSS14 indicated high-stress levels, M2C-Q also increased, reporting greater difficulty with reintegration into civilian life for United States female Veterans. The other research question examined in this study also indicated that increased M2C-Q levels and

decreased SWLS reported lower levels of satisfaction, which indicated greater struggles with reintegrating into civilian life. Overall, this study found relationships between high-stress levels (PSS14), high M2C-Q levels, and lower level of SWLS, indicating that United States female Veterans lack the psychological and social support for reintegration into civilian life.

The results of this study bring awareness to the needs of United States female Veterans for psychological and social support. As stated by Heitzman and Somers (2015), Parise (2016), and Robinson (2020), female Veterans face unique struggles and challenges due to gender and their civilian perspective of them. This study highlighted that PSS14, SWLS, and M2C-Q negatively impact reintegration into civilian life. This study did not capture the cause(s) of stress and negative SWLS based on M2C-Q, which leads to the need for future research into the whys behind the PSS14, SWLS, and M2C-Q that are negatively impacting United States female Veterans.

Implications

The implication of this research study indicated statistically significant relationships between satisfaction with life, perceived stress, and reintegration into civilian life. The results from this study support feminist theory through the critical theory lens and RCT. Dickstein (2020) reported that military members are male-dominated, with females only comprising approximately 16% of the military population, which supports the feminist theory, critical theory lens, and RCT.

Both research questions sought to identify connections and relationships that impact United States female Veterans. This research study displayed statistically significant relationships between United States female Veterans' reintegration into civilian life, satisfaction with life, and perceived stress, which negatively impacts this vastly growing population of

Veterans. McCauley (2013) reported that the RCT helps identify relationship complexities and social implications. This study reported that the RCT from the United States female Veterans' reintegration into civilian life, satisfaction with life, and perceived stress are complex relationships that are perceived to impact United States female Veterans reintegration into civilian life negatively.

This research study provided further insight regarding reintegration issues and perceived stress, which aligns with Ainspan et al.'s (2018) and Blackburn's (2017) statements about Veterans' struggles in reintegrating into civilian society. Fraynt et al. (2018) reported that military members exiting active-duty service face several important life decisions that must be made quickly and that reintegration is a lifelong undertaking for Veterans. The results from this study displayed that United States female Veterans struggle with reintegration into civilian life and are in need of psychological and social support. It is essential for all professionals that work directly or indirectly with female Veterans to be cognizant of all available resources to aid them with reintegration into civilian life.

The study results indicate that United States female Veterans need social and psychological support to reintegrate into civilian life. This study can help implicate policy changes to enhance reintegration support for United States female Veterans through career counselors, therapists, workforce strategies, social engagements, and the civilian perceptions of female Veterans. All professionals working with United States female Veterans should be aware that female Veterans reported low SLWS based on M2C-Q, and high PSS14 with M2C-Q. These study results can provide an initiative to open conversations regarding female Veterans' psychological and social needs and refer to this study or other related studies to destigmatize seeking assistance. Veterans will have similar and specific needs. Advocation is critical for

United States female Veterans, who can lead to policy changes, program enhancements, and increased reintegration success.

Female Veterans need increased support and services to help increase their satisfaction with life and reduce their perceived stress from reintegration into civilian life. Based on the results of this research study, current services and support offered and provided to female Veterans do not appear adequate or known to female Veterans. Support and services should include employment services, community services, counseling, marriage and family life, and religious elements, as these areas impact PSS14, SWLS, and M2C-Q. This research study is a baseline for future research studies to be conducted by the researcher/author of this study, as advocating for Veterans and their families is a passion.

Christian Worldview

Communities are a significant source of support for military members, Veterans, and their families. Often, Veterans feel a sense of loss of community reintegrating into civilian life. Religion is a source of support and provides various services that can benefit Veterans. Churches provide a strong community with services and support to help while providing spiritual guidance. Faith has been reported to help build resiliency, which reduces stress. Often, Veterans have difficulty connecting to their new local community and churches.

McCormick et al. (2019), Resnik et al. (2012), and Verkamp (2021) reported that reintegration issues often hinder Veterans from being able to connect with the local community. Berry (2012), Robinson (2020), and Wade (2016) reported that spirituality has been known to Veterans in coping with stressors associated with reintegration into civilian life. Berry (2012) stated that Veterans could benefit from being guided through reconnecting with their spirituality during reintegration into civilian life. At the same time, Wade (2016) proclaimed that spirituality

is a vital element of an individual's identity, which can create harmony. Robinson (2020) reported that female Veterans that use spirituality as a coping strategy noted its usefulness for reintegration stressors.

Religion and spirituality are vital elements of life. People are drawn to communities and churches for the religious and spiritual connections they form with God and others. Veterans thrive on connections of community and selfless service as these are part of their ingrained solid military values. Linking Veterans and their families with religious and/or spiritual entities will help provide a sense of community that they had during their military service.

Limitations

Limitations are an inevitable part of research. The goal is to reduce and annotate the limitations while best representing the studied population. There are several limitations of this research study.

First, one limitation was recruitment. The study was conducted online through social media platforms, a few Veteran organizations, and snowball methods. The online survey made the data collection anonymous, quick, and efficient; however, there were limitations due to the survey format. The researcher could not determine if participants completed the survey multiple times since the survey was conducted online and was anonymous.

Second, this study only analyzed female Veterans who exited the United States military active duty between 2017 and 2021. This 5-year period covers a small percentage of the overall female Veteran population. The Veteran female population is approximately 16% of the United States Veteran population (Dickstein, 2020). Reintegration into civilian life can be a lifelong process, and some Veterans cannot fully reintegrate. Opening this research study to all United

Stated female Veterans could have disclosed details regarding how relationships with reintegration impact perceived stress and satisfaction with life past 5 years.

Third, the data collection method made verifying the accuracy of the self-reported surveys difficult. The researcher had no control over accurate reporting from the participants, as there was no way to follow up with the participants. The surveys in this study were self-report scales that asked participants to focus on the last 30 days. Participants only self-reported the surveys once, and their responses could vary based on the day throughout the month.

Forth, this study was based only on United States female Veterans. It did not consider United States male Veterans or female Veterans from other countries. Opening the survey to either all female Veterans worldwide or United States male Veterans could have displayed different results.

Lastly, there are no known published data reports found to compare many of the demographics utilized in this research study based on exiting date of military service. These demographic areas are: race or ethnicity, to determine the age groups, length of active-duty military service, military rank, marital status, military discharge type, military service-connected disabilities, education level, number of dependents, or geographic location of the United States female Veterans population that exited active-duty military service between 2017 and 2021. The reports available provide no consensus regarding the demographics for this population since there are based on the total Veteran population. Lack of this published information makes it difficult to ensure that the United States female Veteran population that exited active-duty military service between 2017 and 2021 are fully represented.

While there will always be limitations to research studies, these limitations were outside the parameters of this study or the researcher's control. These limitations listed provide

opportunities for future research. The United States female Veteran population has a deficiency in studies related to their social and psychological needs in reintegrating into civilian life.

Recommendations for Future Research

While this research study annotated statistically significant relationships between the variables, there are many opportunities for future research on the United States female Veteran population. This area has been understudied and deserves more attention to further aid in improving psychological and physical health. Many subcategories can be captured within the Veteran female population to study. Current and prior research focused on either the general United States military population, listing females as part of their demographics, or focusing on issues revolving around healthcare access for female Veterans.

This study has shown that more research is needed on United States female Veterans and their reintegration into civilian life. This study implies that potential issues may impact United States female Veterans' ability to receive Veteran services and support. Demographics may impact reintegration for female Veterans. Marital status, family size, disability, discharge type, military branch of service, MOS, employment status, and other demographics listed in the study could affect PSS14 and SWLS regarding M2C-Q. Potential areas would be to research what factors contribute to a satisfactory reintegration for United States female Veterans. For example, does the military branch of service, rank, age, or other demographics in this research study determine the reintegration into civilian life?

Based on the finding of this research study, United States female Veterans need psychological and social support, which is not currently available to them, or they are unaware of how to obtain the support they need. Either way, this issue can be addressed in several ways on federal, state, and local community levels. The fastest way to provide information is through

technology. This can be via email, text, postings, or calls. All Veterans can seek care at the VA centers upon exiting military service and provide contact information, which can then be utilized to send information weekly or monthly, based on the Veterans' preferences, regarding available services and support. This should include federal, state, local, and nonprofit organization outreach programs that are designed to provide reintegration support and services. Next, talk with Veterans, find out their specific needs, and create support and services for those needs. If one Veteran has a specific need, chances are that others will have the same or similar needs. This will help fill the gaps in Veterans' support and service needs.

This study has shown that United States female Veterans need psychological and social support. Based on the study results, the researcher will reach out to local chapter organizations with the findings to help enhance current programs offered through DAV, VFW, AMVETS, American Legion, Team RWB, and Warrior Wellness. Program enhancements include female Veteran groups, retreats, and gatherings that focus on connecting female Veterans with each other and linking them with support and services to aid their reintegration. This could also provide a base for future studies on the effectiveness of programs if the organizations would allow the study and their members are willing to participate in research to help future Veterans.

Future research would benefit from utilizing a mixed-method approach incorporating qualitative and quantitative methods to better understand female Veterans' unique needs. This research method would allow researchers to utilize open-ended interview questions to provide further insight into United States female Veterans and their needs transitioning to civilian life. The outcomes would be able to enhance current services and support being offered.

Additionally, conducting a mixed-method research study regarding the perceived psychological and social support needs of United States Veterans with both male and female

participants would provide a broad view of the impact that faces Veterans reintegrating into civilian life. This would display whether there are differences between genders or trends in which they share the same or similar needs. The study could also display whether the military service branch impacts the Veterans' reintegration.

There are many opportunities for future research among the United States Veteran population. This is an understudied population that is most-deserving of support and services to help with their reintegration into civilian life, as many Veterans became adults while serving their nation selflessly. Reintegration has many unique challenges and is life-changing for Veterans and their families.

Summary

This research study was conducted to fill the gap in the literature concerning United States female Veterans' reintegration into civilian life. This research study aimed to determine whether a relationship exists between perceived stress (PSS14) and satisfaction with life (SWLS) in United States female Veterans' reintegration into civilian life (M2C-Q). This research study found statistically significant relationships between perceived stress, satisfaction with life, and reintegration into civilian life for United States female Veterans. This research study aimed to increase awareness about the perceived stress and satisfaction of United States female Veterans reintegrating into civilian life with goals to help create improved reintegration services and support for female Veterans. More research is still needed regarding how to improve and the types of additional services and support that can improve reintegration for female Veterans and possibly male Veterans.

Overall, United States female Veterans are the fastest-growing population of Veterans and have been for the last 2 decades. There is a deficiency in research on United States female

Veterans, which impacts the available services and support they can receive. This population deserves better reintegration into civilian life services and support for their selfless service and sacrifices made to help ensure the rights and freedom of the United States of America.

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Appendix A

Demographics Questionnaire

1. Age:

- a. __21-25
- b. __26-30
- c. __31-35
- d. __36-40
- e. __41-45
- f. __46-50
- g. __51-55
- h. __56-60

2. United States military branch:

- a. __Air Force
- b. __Army
- c. __Coast Guard
- d. __Marine Corp
- e. __Navy

3. United States military component:

- a. __Active-duty
- b. __Reserves
- c. __National Guard

4. Length of service:

- a. __0-3
- b. __4-6
- c. __7-9
- d. __10-12
- e. __13-16
- f. __17-20

5. Rank:

- a. __E1-4
- b. __E5-9
- c. __WO1-3
- d. __WO4-5
- e. __O1-3
- f. __O4-6
- g. __O7-10

6. Military Occupational Specialty (MOS): _____

7. Type of military discharge:

- a. End of service contract
- b. Retirement (20+ years)
- c. Medical
- d. Involuntary (misconduct)
- e. Involuntary (Force reduction)
- f. Medical retirement
- g. Voluntary/Other not listed

8. Do you have any military service-connected disabilities?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Prefer not to answer

9. Marital status while in the military:

- a. Single
- b. Married
- c. Divorced
- d. Separated
- e. Cohabiting, living with a partner in an intimate relationship

10. Current marital status:

- a. Single
- b. Married
- c. Divorced
- d. Separated
- e. Cohabiting, living with a partner in an intimate relationship

11. Race or ethnicity:

- a. White
- b. Black or African American
- c. Hispanic or Latino
- d. Asian or Asian American
- e. American Indian or Alaska Native
- f. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- g. Multiracial (two or more groups)
- h. Other Ethnicity not listed

12. Education:

- a. High School/GED
- b. Some College/Technical School/Certificate Program
- c. Associate Degree
- d. Bachelor's Degree
- e. Master's Degree
- f. Doctoral Degree
- g. Prefer not to answer

13. Geographic Location: _____

14. Number of dependents while on active military duty (spouse/partner and children):

- a. __0
- b. __1
- c. __2
- d. __3
- e. __4
- f. __5
- g. __Greater than 5

15. Number of dependents post-military service:

- a. __0
- b. __1
- c. __2
- d. __3
- e. __4
- f. __5
- g. __Greater than 5

Appendix B

Screening Questions

Participant eligibility is to be verified with the following eligibility questions:

- (1) Are you 21 years old or older?
- (2) Are you a biological female?
- (3) Have you served in the United States military?
- (4) Did you serve at least four years of active-duty United States military service?
- (5) Did you serve in the United States military for fewer than 17 years?
- (6) Did you exit the United States military within the last five years (2017-2021)?

Appendix C

Consent

Title of the Project: United States Female Veterans' Reintegration: Perceived Needs of Social and Psychological Support

Principal Investigator: Lisa Grazioso Diaz, MSW, Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be 21 years of age or older, a female United States military Veteran with at least four years of active-duty military service, and exited active-duty military within the last five years (2017-2021). Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to highlight female Veterans and bring awareness to their perceived reintegration challenges and struggles by determining whether there are relationships between reintegration, satisfaction with life, and perceived stress. This research survey will determine whether there are relationships between stress and satisfaction with life of female Veterans reintegrating from active-duty military life to civilian life and the impact they have or do not have on the reintegration process between the first one and five years post-military service.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Complete an anonymous survey that will take approximately 15 minutes.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include highlighting female Veterans and bringing awareness to their perceived reintegration challenges and struggles by determining whether there are relationships between reintegration, satisfaction with life, and perceived stress.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

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

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be anonymous.
- 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.

Is study participation voluntary?

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.

What should you do if you decide 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.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Lisa Grazioso Diaz. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at lgrazioso@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Joseph A. Torres, PhD, MSc., at jtorres125@liberty.edu.

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

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.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand what the study is about. You can print a copy of the document for your records. If you have any questions about the study later, you can contact the researcher using the information provided above.

Appendix D

Recruitment (Follow Up)

August 8, 2022

Dear Fellow Female Veterans:

As a graduate student in the Community Care and Counseling department at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education degree. Last week, an email was sent to you inviting you to participate in a research study. This follow-up email is being sent to remind you to complete the survey if you would like to participate and have not already done so. The deadline for participation is September 15, 2022.

Participants, if willing, will be asked to complete an anonymous online survey through SurveyMonkey. It should take approximately 15 minutes to complete the survey. Participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected.

To participate, please click here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Q93HJPK>
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Q93HJPK> and complete the survey.

A consent document is provided as the second page of the survey. The consent document contains additional information about my research. Because participation is anonymous, you do not need to sign and return the consent document unless you would prefer to do so. After you have read the consent form, please click on the link to complete the survey. Doing so will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the study.

Sincerely,

Lisa Grazioso Diaz
MSW, Doctoral Candidate

Appendix E

Perceived Stress Scale (PSS14)

The questions in this scale ask you about your feelings and thoughts during the last month. In each case, you will be asked to indicate by circling how often you felt or thought a certain way.

0 = Never 1 = Almost Never 2 = Sometimes 3 = Fairly Often 4 = Very Often

1. In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?
2. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control important things in your life?
3. In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and "stressed"?
4. In the last month, how often have you dealt successfully with irritating life hassles?
5. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were effectively coping with important changes that were occurring in your life?
6. In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?
7. In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?
8. In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?
9. In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?
10. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?
11. In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that happened that were outside of your control?

12. In the last month, how often have you found yourself thinking about things that you have to accomplish?

13. In the last month, how often have you been able to control the way you spend your time?

14. In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?

Appendix F

Permission to Use – Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-14)

(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

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

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

Below are five statements that you may agree or disagree with. Using the 1 - 7 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by placing the appropriate number on the line preceding that item. Please be open and honest in your responding.

- 7 - Strongly agree
- 6 - Agree
- 5 - Slightly agree
- 4 - Neither agree nor disagree
- 3 - Slightly disagree
- 2 - Disagree
- 1 - Strongly disagree

____ In most ways my life is close to my ideal.

____ The conditions of my life are excellent.

____ I am satisfied with my life.

____ So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.

____ If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.

- 31 - 35 Extremely satisfied
- 26 - 30 Satisfied
- 21 - 25 Slightly satisfied
- 20 Neutral
- 15 - 19 Slightly dissatisfied
- 10 - 14 Dissatisfied
- 5 - 9 Extremely dissatisfied

Appendix H

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 I

Military To Civilian Questionnaire (M2C-Q)

These questions ask about how you have been doing since returning home. Please read each question and then rate the amount of difficulty you have been having over the past 30 days. Over the past 30 days, have you had difficulty with...

1-No Difficulty, 2-A little Difficulty, 3-Some Difficulty, 4-A lot of Difficulty, 5-Extreme Difficulty

1. Dealing with people you do not know well (such as acquaintances or strangers)?
2. Making new friends?
3. Keeping up friendships with people who have **no** military experience?
4. Keeping up friendships with people who **have** military experience (including friends who are active duty or veterans)?
5. Getting along with relatives (such as siblings, parents, grandparents, in-laws and children not living at home)?
6. Getting along with your spouse or partner (such as communicating, doing things together, enjoying his or her company)?
7. Getting along with your child or children (such as communicating, doing things together, enjoying his or her company)?
8. Finding or keeping a job (paid or non-paid or self-employment)?
9. Doing what you need to do for work or school?
10. Taking care of your chores at home (such as housework, yard work, cooking, cleaning, shopping, errands)?
11. Taking care of your health (such as exercising, sleeping, bathing, eating well, taking medications as needed)?
12. Enjoying or making good use of free time?
13. Taking part in community events or celebrations (for example, festivals, PTA meetings, religious or other activities)?
14. Feeling like you belong in "civilian" society?
15. Confiding or sharing personal thoughts and feelings?

16. Finding meaning or purpose in life?

Appendix J**Military To Civilian Questionnaire (M2C-Q)**

(Sayer et al., 2011)

Permission required for the scale is not available on open domain or available to the general public.

Appendix K

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Application

Date: 7-26-2022

IRB #: IRB-FY21-22-1134

Title: United States Female Veterans Reintegration: Perceived Needs of Social and Psychological Support

Creation Date: 5-26-2022

End Date:

Status: **Approved**

Principal Investigator: Lisa Grazioso

Review Board: Research Ethics Office

Sponsor:

Study History

Submission Type	Initial	Review Type	Exempt	Decision	Exempt
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Key Study Contacts

Member	Joseph Torres	Role	Co-Principal Investigator	Contact	[REDACTED]
Member	Lisa Grazioso	Role	Principal Investigator	Contact	[REDACTED]
Member	Lisa Grazioso	Role	Primary Contact	Contact	[REDACTED]

Appendix L

Recruitment (Verbal)

Hello Fellow Female Veterans,

As a graduate student in the Community Care and Counseling department at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education degree. The purpose of my research is to determine whether there are relationships between reintegration, satisfaction with life, and perceived stress for female Veterans within the first five years of reintegration to civilian life, and if you meet my participant criteria and are interested, I would like to invite you to join my study.

Participants must be 21 years of age or older, female, United States military Veterans with at least four years of active-duty military service, and exited active-duty military service a minimum of one year ago to a maximum of five years ago (2017-2021). Participants, if willing, will be asked to complete an anonymous online survey through SurveyMonkey. It should take approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete the survey. Participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected.

Would you like to participate? If so, could I get your email address so I can send you the link to the survey? If not, I understand. Thank you for your time.

A consent document is provided as the second page of the survey. The consent document contains additional information about my research. Because participation is anonymous, you do not need to sign and return the consent document unless you would prefer to do so. After you have read the consent form, please click on the link to complete the survey. Doing so will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the study.

Thank you for your time. Do you have any questions?

Appendix M

Recruitment Flyer

Research Participants Needed

United States Female Veterans' Reintegration: Perceived Needs of Social and Psychological Support

- Are you 21 years of age or older?
- Are you a female, United States military Veteran with at least four years of active-duty military service?
- Did you serve in the United States military for fewer than 17 years?
- Did you exit active-duty military service a minimum of one year ago to a maximum of five years ago (2017-2021)?

If you answered **yes** to the questions listed above, you may be eligible to participate in a research study.

The purpose of this research study is to highlight female Veterans and bring awareness to their perceived reintegration challenges and struggles by determining whether there are relationships between reintegration, satisfaction with life, and perceived stress reintegrating from active-duty military life to civilian between one and five years post-military service.

Participants will be asked to complete an anonymous online survey through SurveyMonkey, which will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.



If you would like to participate, please click here and complete the survey.

A consent document is provided as the second page of the survey.

Lisa Grazioso Diaz, a doctoral candidate in the Community Care and Counseling department in the School of Behavioral Sciences at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Please contact Lisa Grazioso Diaz at [REDACTED] for more information.

Appendix N

Recruitment: Social Media

ATTENTION FEMALE VETERANS: I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education degree at Liberty University. The purpose of my research is to determine whether there are relationships between reintegration, satisfaction with life, and perceived stress for female Veterans within the first five years of reintegration into civilian life. To participate, you must be 21 years of age or older, a female United States military Veteran with at least four years of active-duty military service, and exited active-duty military service a minimum of one year ago to a maximum of five years ago (2017-2021). Participants will be asked to complete an anonymous online survey through SurveyMonkey which should take about 15 minutes. If you would like to participate and meet the study criteria, please click here:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Q93HJPK>

A consent document is provided as the second page of the survey. Please review this page, and if you agree to participate, click the “proceed to survey” button at the end.

To take the survey, click here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Q93HJPK>

Appendix O

Recruitment Request Letter

July 26, 2022

Dear Fellow Female Veterans,

As a graduate student in the Community Care and Counseling department at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education degree. The title of my research project is United States Female Veterans' Reintegration: Perceived Needs of Social and Psychological Support, and the purpose of my research is to highlight female Veterans and bring awareness to their perceived reintegration challenges and struggles by determining whether there are relationships between reintegration, satisfaction with life, and perceived stress.

I am writing to request your permission to utilize your membership list/for you to post my study information and survey link on your social media site to recruit participants for my research. Participants will be asked to complete an online survey through SurveyMonkey anonymously. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time prior to clicking submit on the online survey.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, respond by email to



████████████████████.

Sincerely,

Lisa Grazioso Diaz
MSW, Doctoral Candidate

Appendix P

CITI Program-Social & Behavioral Research

		Completion Date 20-Jan-2021 Expiration Date 20-Jan-2024 Record ID 40433433
This is to certify that:		
Lisa Grazioso		
Has completed the following CITI Program course:		Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.
Social & Behavioral Research - Basic/Refresher (Curriculum Group)		
Social & Behavioral Researchers (Course Learner Group)		
1 - Basic Course (Stage)		
Under requirements set by:		
Liberty University		Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative
Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?we138429a-32eb-4e81-b4c1-e9175bdf60e1-40433433		