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Differences Between Nontraditional and Traditional College Students' Perceptions of Transition Preparedness

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Walden University
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Abstract

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MSA, University of Phoenix, 2012

BBA, Davenport University, 2009

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Industrial and Organizational Psychology

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Abstract

While scholars have used Schlossberg's transition theory for more than 35 years to study college-to-work transition, researchers have yet to establish if there are meaningful differences in the perceptions of traditional and nontraditional college students regarding transition preparedness from college-to-work. Following the career transition model, this quantitative study was conducted to compare traditional and nontraditional college students' perceptions of transition preparedness, specifically the concepts of readiness, confidence, control, perceived support, and decision independence. The nontraditional students in this study were military veterans. The dependent variables were measured by the Career Transition Inventory (CTI) survey. Participants were selected via a web-based method until 100 traditional and 100 nontraditional students were surveyed. The data were examined with multivariate analysis of variance and multivariate analysis of covariance. There were significant differences found in perceived transition preparedness. The CTI measure decision independence was significantly lower among nontraditional veteran students. Whereas, the CTI measure confidence was significantly higher among nontraditional nonveteran students. Based on the results of this study, three recommendations were made. If these recommendations are followed, this study can make a positive social change and might increase the probability of improving the career and academic transition services from college-to-work for non-traditional undergraduate veteran students.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband. This is for all the hard work and patience you provided to me during this process. When I was frustrated and throwing my books you were there to catch them. You guided me, supported me, and gave unconditional love to me. This doctorate degree is just as much yours as it is mine (us). You have been in my life for more than half my life and you have truly helped to mold me into the woman I am today. When the word dedication is defined it refers to "the quality of being dedicated or committed to a purpose". Your commitment to us has given my life purpose. You truly are the rock that I cling to in a storm and I love you for that.

This dissertation is also, dedicated to my grandfather Sergeant Noble E. Smith Jr., World War II (WWII) Army Veteran. This is for all the long talks we had and the guidance you provided to me growing up. I learned to be a woman of my word, remain determined, and resilient through your guidance. Your guidance taught me how to choose a life partner that would help me through life changes and challenges (whom happens to be my husband). Because of your guidance I am where I am today. Although, you are no longer with us I made sure to keep my promise to you by being the first grandchild who brought home a doctorate degree. I made this promise to you 26 years ago while we sat on your porch having one of our talks. Over those 26 years, I have had obstacles that delayed the process. Nevertheless, I made every effort to remain a woman of my word. You were my only grandparent I had growing up and I truly appreciated and love you dearly. I love you and miss you grandpa.

Acknowledgments

Mom (Amalia Rebeca Smith), you dedicated your life to our father during the Vietnam War. You sacrificed your time and emotional freedom to support all three of your children during our military careers. I don't care what anyone else thinks or says. You served too! Mucho gracias mommy.

Dad (Vietnam War, Purple Heart Recipient) Army Veteran-Noble E. Smith III. I became an Aero-Vac., medic in the Air Force because of you. If not for your experiences during the Vietnam War I would not have been born. I thank (JS) for helping you during that experience and thank you for serving our country.

Alyssa and Josh, there were many times we were separated while I served our country. I have made every effort to lead by example. My hope is that this dissertation exemplifies the true meaning of leading by example. It appears I blinked, and you kids were grown. You both have supported me through my years of serving our country, years of separation, and years of schooling. Remember to always be your best and if you fall get back up and try again. Follow your dreams respectfully, dignified, and without regret. Thank you for being patient with me. I love you both to the moon and back.

To my fellow veterans, and siblings (Noble E. Smith IV-Army Veteran and Keely A. Smith-Army Veteran), thank you for serving our country. Remember to always thank your fellow serviceman or servicewoman.

To my committee chair Dr. Richard Thompson, thank you for your guidance through my dissertation process.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Researchers have studied college-to-work transition among undergraduate nontraditional veteran students using constructs and variables such as organizational structures that conformed to veteran students, peer connections and support from veteran services, and resources for coping with significant changes during transition experiences (Daly & Garrity, 2013; Jones, 2013; Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008). Research has shown that these topics have been factors that contributed to successful transition among undergraduate nontraditional veteran students (Burnett & Segoria, 2009; DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchell, 2008; Gaiter, 2015; Polach, 2004; Sagen, Dallam, & Laverty, 2000). In contrast, studies had shown that undergraduate traditional students transition preparedness had been the key to a successful transition from college-to-work (Gray, 2000; LaFountaine, Neisen, & Parsons, 2006; Turner et al., 2007). However, this topic had yet to be adequately studied in the veteran population (Zinger & Cohen, 2010). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2013), undergraduate traditional students were 24% more likely than nontraditional students to gain employment after graduating from college. Whereas, undergraduate nontraditional veteran students were more likely to experience a longer transition period causing extended enrollment, thereby impacting their college performance (National Center for Veteran Analysis and Statistics, 2015).

Background

Researchers have found that key factors contributing to veteran student success are colleges' and universities' assimilation of *organizational structures* with a stand-alone veteran resource center that addressed the specific needs of veteran students (Daly & Garrity, 2013), peer connections and support from veteran services (Jones, 2013), and resources for coping with significant changes during transition experiences (Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008). In a study to determine if variation existed in the structure of organizations designed to service the needs of veterans, Daly and Garrity (2013) found that American colleges and universities varied in terms of how they assisted veteran student populations. The researchers developed three categorical variables (department, level, and specialization) and reviewed previous literature to develop their recommendations. Daly and Garrity concluded that assimilation of organizational structures that conformed to the needs of veteran students strengthened the success of veteran transition. Jones (2013) studied student veterans during transition from active military service to higher education and identified veterans' development of self that incorporated their experiences as service members. Jones' study was set at a university that had a high veteran population, and it consisted of in-depth interviews that illustrated how veterans achieved similar experiences they once had as service members, which assisted in adaption to becoming a civilian student. Jones found that peer connections and support from veteran services helped the transition of the student. Wendlandt and Rochlen (2008) found differences and challenges associated with college–to-work transition among traditional and nontraditional students. Wendlandt and Rochlen

proposed a model that outlined three stages of development (anticipation, adjustment, and achievement) during the transition process and found that nontraditional undergraduate veteran students needed more preparation during the adjustment stage of workplace entry.

Problem Statement

Researchers examining transition preparedness have found that ease of adaption to a transition depended on how prepared the individual was for the transition (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2011; Gaiter, 2015; Robertson, 2013; Wilson & Smith, 2012). More specifically, Wendlandt and Rochlen (2008) compared transition preparedness from college-to-work between nontraditional undergraduate veteran students and traditional undergraduate nonveteran students and found that nontraditional undergraduate veteran students needed more preparation during the adjustment stage of workplace entry. To address this need, colleges have often employed academic career counselors, and research has shown that these positions provide social support that strengthens networking skills for nontraditional undergraduate veteran students (Bushnell, 2012; Kraus, 2012; Murphy et al., 2010; Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008).

One limitation of the extant research is that studies conducted on nontraditional undergraduate veteran students' transition have not included data on their perceptions toward transition preparedness. Furthermore, past studies had not considered if age, gender, or family size affected the transition process from college-to-work versus those of traditional undergraduate nonveteran students. Although research has shown that individuals have an ability to adapt to change when it occurs, what has remained unknown are the differences in the perceptions of nontraditional and traditional

undergraduate college students regarding transition preparedness generally, and specifically the concepts of readiness, confidence, control, perceived support, and decision independence. The research also has not shown if age, gender, or family size affected the transition process from college-to-work when the nontraditional undergraduate college students were military veterans. I thus determined that further research was needed to understand students' perceptions of transition preparedness (Schiavone & Gentry, 2014) to provide nontraditional undergraduate veteran students and traditional undergraduate nonveteran students with accurate information regarding employment during anticipated transitions.

Purpose

The purpose of this quantitative study was to compare students' perceptions of transition preparedness in terms of the readiness, confidence, control, perceived support, and decision independence based on veteran status (veteran vs. nonveteran) and student type (nontraditional vs. traditional) undergraduate college students while statistically controlling for age, gender, and family size. My goal was to provide students with accurate information regarding employment during anticipated transitions.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

RQ1: Are there differences in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between nontraditional and traditional undergraduate college students?

$H_0$1: There is no difference in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between nontraditional and traditional undergraduate college students.

H_A1: There is a difference in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between nontraditional and traditional undergraduate college students.

RQ2: Are there differences in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between military veterans and nonveterans?

H_02: There is no difference in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between military veterans and nonveterans.

H_A2: There is a difference in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between military veterans and nonveterans.

RQ3: Are there differences in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between nontraditional and traditional undergraduate college students who are military veterans and those who are not?

H_03: There is no difference in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between nontraditional and traditional undergraduate college students who are military veterans and those who are not.

H_A3: There is a difference in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between nontraditional and traditional undergraduate college students who are military veterans and those who are not.

RQ4: Are there differences in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between nontraditional and traditional undergraduate college students, when controlling for age, gender, and family size?

$H_0$4: There is no difference in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between nontraditional and traditional undergraduate college students, when controlling for age, gender, and family size.

H_A4: There is a difference in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between nontraditional and traditional undergraduate college students, when controlling for age, gender, and family size.

RQ5: Are there differences in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between veteran and nonveteran undergraduate college students, when controlling for age, gender, and family size?

$H_0$5: There is no difference in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between veteran and nonveteran undergraduate college students, when controlling for age, gender, and family size.

H_A5: There is a difference in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between veteran and nonveteran undergraduate college students, when controlling for age, gender, and family size.

RQ6: Are there differences in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between nontraditional and traditional undergraduate college students who are military veterans and those who are not, when controlling for age, gender, and family size?

$H_0$6: There is no difference in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between nontraditional and traditional undergraduate college students

who are military veterans those who are not, when controlling for age, gender, and family size.

H_A6: There is a difference in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between nontraditional and traditional undergraduate college students who are military veterans those who are not, when controlling for age, gender, and family size.

I measured the dependent variables using the Career Transition Inventory (CTI; Heppner, Multon, & Johnston, 1994) a six-point Likert scale survey. This survey specifically measures transition readiness, confidence, control, perceived support, and the decision of independence. The scales were analyzed via multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) and multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) where age, gender, and family size were treated as covariates, and student type (traditional vs. nontraditional) and veteran status (veteran vs. nonveteran) treated as independent variables.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

I based this study on Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory, which describes the process that adults experience when adapting to changes in their circumstances. The theory includes three types of transitions: normative role transition, normative career events, and persistent occupational problems (Schlossberg, 1981, 2011). Normative role transition is an anticipated transition, such as a planned retirement. Normative career events are unanticipated transitions, such as a layoff. Persistent occupational problems are nonevent transitions, such as anticipation of a transition that had not happened or may not occur. In this study, I focused on the normative role of an anticipated transition. I

examined traditional and nontraditional undergraduate college students' perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work and determined if age, gender, and family size affected their transition process from college-to-work. I hoped this study would build on the transition theory to provide students with accurate information regarding employment during anticipated transitions.

Nature of the Study

This was a quantitative study. Quantitative research was suitable for this study to examine the perceptions of transition preparedness from college-to-work among nontraditional undergraduate veteran students for an anticipated transition to civilian life. The independent variables (IVs) were veteran status (veteran vs. nonveteran) and student type (nontraditional vs. traditional). The dependent variables (DVs) were nontraditional undergraduate students' perceptions of an effective transition (readiness, confidence, control, perceived support, and decision independence) from college-to-work. The covariates (CVs) were age, gender, and family. The targeted populations for this study were undergraduate students, both traditional and nontraditional as well as veterans and nonveterans.

Operational Definitions

I used the following operational definitions for this study:

College-to-work transition: College-to-work transition was defined as students within their last year of college preparing to enter into the career field studied (Gaiter, 2015).

Nontraditional undergraduate student: Nontraditional undergraduate students transitioning from college-to-work met one or more of the following characteristics: was independent for financial aid purposes, had one or more dependents, was a single caregiver, lacked a traditional high school diploma, delayed postsecondary enrollment, attended school part-time, or had part-time employment (NCES, 2015).

Nontraditional undergraduate veteran students: Nontraditional undergraduate veteran students transitioning from college-to-work met one or more of the following characteristics: were independent for financial aid purposes, had one or more dependents, were a single caregiver, lacked a traditional high school diploma, delayed postsecondary enrollment, attended school part-time, had part-time employment, and were service members or veterans of the U.S. armed forces (NCES, 2015; Veteran Administration, 2015).

Traditional undergraduate nonveteran students: Traditional undergraduate nonveteran students transitioning from college-to-work met one or more of the following characteristics: were enrolled in college immediately after graduation from high school, attended college on a full-time basis, pursued a bachelor's degree, were financially dependent on others, had no children, and were employed part-time during the academic year (NCES, 2015).

Traditional undergraduate veteran students: Traditional undergraduate veteran students transitioning from college-to-work met one or more of the following characteristics: attended college full-time, pursued a bachelor's degree, were financially dependent on others, had no children, were employed part-time during the academic year,

and served as members or veterans of the U.S. armed forces (NCES, 2015; Veteran Administration, 2015).

Readiness: Readiness was defined as the individual's motivations for making the move from college-to-work (Rowland, 2008).

Confidence: Confidence was defined as the individual's perception toward completing tasks necessary to make a successful transition from college-to-work (Lee, 2011).

Control: Control was defined as the individual's perception of being in control of the transition from college-to-work (Gaiter, 2015; Heppner, Multon, & Johnson, 1994).

Perceived support: Perceived support was defined as a form of social support such as the transition process, amount of stress during the process, and progress toward completing the transition process (Ash, 1999).

Decision independence: Decision independence was defined as the individual's perception of the transition process as an independent decision with consideration for the needs and desires of significant others (Heppner, 1994).

Family: Family met one or more of the following characteristics: spouse, children, or any member related to the student who was solely dependent on the student for financial support (Matus-Grossman & Gooden, 2002).

Gender: Gender was defined as gender identity which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned to a person at birth and may or may not be made visible to others. Gender identity also included criteria based on sexual orientation which referred to an individual's physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction to people of the same and/or

different gender. An example of sexual orientation included straight (heterosexual), lesbian, gay, and bisexual (Department of Labor, 2017).

Assumptions

Given the context of this study, I assumed that the results of the study would prove or disprove the following: (a) traditional students tend to have less stress during the transition from college-to-work process and therefore transition successfully from college-to-work; (b) men would have fewer associated challenges during transition from college-to-work when compared to women; and (c) traditional students relied heavily on social support and nontraditional students relied heavily on family support. The analysis plan for this study was to conduct a comparison review and regression statistical data report. The regression analysis would eliminate outliers that might exist based on misinterpreting how to complete the questionnaire. Whereas, I would use the comparison to answer the six research questions and accept or fail to accept each hypothesis. The correlation and regression analysis were best used for this study based on the use of nominal variables, and ordinal scale.

Scope and Delimitations

In this study, I sought to compare students' perceptions toward transition preparedness in terms of the readiness, confidence, control, perceived support, and decision independence based on veteran's status (veterans vs. nonveterans) and student type (nontraditional vs. traditional) of undergraduate college students, statistically controlling for age, gender, and family size. Since this study built on Schlossberg's transition theory (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006) of the normative role of an

anticipated transition, I delimited this study to (a) not explicitly considering strengths, needs or challenges of interest; (b) nontraditional undergraduate students attending an online university; (c) traditional students attending a university within the United States recruited through the use of SurveyMonkey; and (d) there would be no restrictions to age, gender, or family size.

Limitations

Limitations are possible influences or conditions that cannot be controlled or are the results of the restrictions imposed by the investigator (Gaiter, 2015; Thomas, Nelson, & Silverman, 2005). This study had the following limitation: I did not know whether the undergraduate students who would participate in the study were the same on all relevant criteria as those undergraduate students who declined to participate (i.e., undergraduate traditional students who were not attending an online degree program through Walden University).

Significance

Based on the projected populations of veterans transitioning to the civilian labor force, this study might increase the probability of improving the transition services for nontraditional undergraduate veteran students (see Turner, 2014). Long-term consequences of poor transition preparedness could continue to increase the unemployment rate of nontraditional undergraduate veteran students. Therefore, higher learning institutions might understand the need to transform current cultural and social interactions. This would be particularly important to bring to the attention of educational institutions that had not practiced equal distribution of job placement services. I hope

these findings will promote positive social change for nontraditional undergraduate veteran students when transitioning from college-to-work. This study could also contribute to the well-being of the nontraditional undergraduate veteran student population by providing specific recommendations for nontraditional undergraduate veteran students actively seeking transition assistance, and possibly restructuring policies before nontraditional undergraduate veteran students leave college.

Summary

This chapter included sections on the background of the study, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, the research questions, the theoretical framework, the nature of the study, operational definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and the significance of the study. This chapter also provided an overview of the population of nontraditional undergraduate veteran students, the sample frame, how the data were collected, the specific instrument I used to measure the constructs of this study, the benefits, and potential challenges to this study. In Chapter 2, I offer an in-depth analysis of the literature on the theoretical foundation and key variables related to the topic.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Researchers have conducted a multitude of studies on college-to-work transition among military veterans (Burnett & Segoria 2009; DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchell, 2008; Gaiter, 2015; Polach, 2004; Sagen, Dallam, & Laverty, 2000). As I mentioned in Chapter 1, standalone veteran resource centers focused on veteran students, veteran support groups, and transition preparedness, are key factors that contribute to veteran students' successful transition of from college-to-work (Daly & Garrity, 2013; Jones, 2013; Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008). However, one area that had been shown to be important for traditional students, preparedness for college-to-work transitions (Hooley, Marriott, & Sampson, 2011), had not been adequately studied in the veteran population (Zinger & Cohen, 2010). Preparedness is important because traditional students are 24% more likely to gain employment upon graduating from college compared to the least prepared nontraditional veteran student (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013; National Center for Veteran Analysis and Statistics, 2015). A longer transition period upon graduating from college-to-work among nontraditional veteran students could cause an increased chance of prolonged enrollment and impact the nontraditional veteran student's college performance. This study addressed perceptions of college-to-work preparedness among nontraditional veteran students (Turner, 2014).

In 2014, more than 1.2 million veterans were considered nontraditional undergraduate students (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2014). According to the National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics (NCVAS, 2015), the percentage

rate of nontraditional undergraduate veteran students was 32.8%, compared to 27.6% of traditional undergraduate nonveteran students. In 2018, the nontraditional undergraduate veteran student population increased by 4.3% nationwide (NCVAS, 2018) as compared to the traditional undergraduate nonveteran student population increase of 0.6% (NCES, 2018). More importantly, military forces began a reduction in 2017, which was brought on by constraints in the federal budget (Veterans Administration, 2015). Consequently, it could be expected that more military veterans would leverage their Veterans Administration benefits to access higher education (Naphan & Elliott, 2015). By fall 2019, the estimated projected nontraditional undergraduate veteran student population is expected to increase by 17% nationwide as compared to the projected traditional undergraduate nonveteran student population increase of 13% (NCES, 2018). The influx of veterans into college and eventually into civilian employment, along with the lack of understanding of the preparedness of this population, could have negative consequences. The increase in the projected population would cause a decrease in overall labor force participation rates, which would lead to a slow recovery of the same competing civilian labor force growth by fiscal year 2020 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). Therefore, understanding veterans' perceptions during transition from college-to-work is important if colleges and universities are to provide students with proper guidance according to degree plan, military education and training, and military work experience to achieve their career success. The purpose of this quantitative study was to compare undergraduate students' perceptions of transition preparedness from college-to-work using measures of readiness, confidence, control, perceived support, and decision

independence based on veteran status (veteran vs. nonveteran) and student type (nontraditional vs. traditional) while statistically controlling for age, gender, and family size.

Literature Search Strategy

I gathered literature for this review using search terms such as *college transition, adult transition, career services, veteran service, veterans, transition assistance, life changes, veteran transition,* and *policies.* I reviewed The Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, The White House, National Center for Education Statistics, and Census databases for college graduate trends and veteran education trends. Various websites were reviewed for veteran policies. I also searched databases and websites including ProQuest, PsychINFO, Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Census Bureau, Veteran Administration, and the NCVAS. Studies related to veteran status (veteran vs. nonveteran) and student type (nontraditional vs. traditional) were searched in each database. I also used the Google Scholar search engine. The key words searched in each database resulted in 20,000 articles. When looking for theoretical materials, I limited searches to texts published between 1908 and 2015. However, I limited searches for peer-reviewed articles to those published between 2010 and 2015.

Veteran status and student type were separated into two subgroups (adult transition and college transition) with at least four articles per subgroup. The term *adult transition* was identified across populations. The term *college transition* helped to narrow this search. The terms *career services* and *veteran services* were used to identify resources that help veterans to seek educational benefits. The term *veteran transition*

assistance was used to research trends in educational benefits used by veterans. The term *policies* were used to search for gaps in veteran benefit reforms and changes in laws in the Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, and NCVAS databases. Finally, I searched previous dissertations through ProQuest to find studies similarly situated to this study to avoid potential repetition. The years searched for trends and policies were 2010 to the present so that I could include the most recent literature.

Theoretical Framework

Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory has been a focus of scholars for more than 35 years. Researchers have used it to study college-to-work transition and have found that ease of adaption to a transition depends on how prepared the individual is for the transition (Schlossberg, 1981, 2011). This study was based on Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory, which describes the process that adults experience when adapting to changes in their circumstances (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2011). The theory includes three types of transitions: normative role transition, normative career events, and persistent occupational problems (Schlossberg, 2011). Normative role transition is an anticipated transition, such as a planned retirement. Normative career events are unanticipated transitions, such as a layoff. Persistent occupational problems are nonevent transitions, such as anticipation of a transition that has not happened or may not occur. An example of a persistent occupational problem is the anticipation of moving from an apartment to a home (Anderson et al., 2011). Each type of transition has a four-part process based on the situation, self, support, and strategies; the process is referred to as the 4S system (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006; see Figure 1).

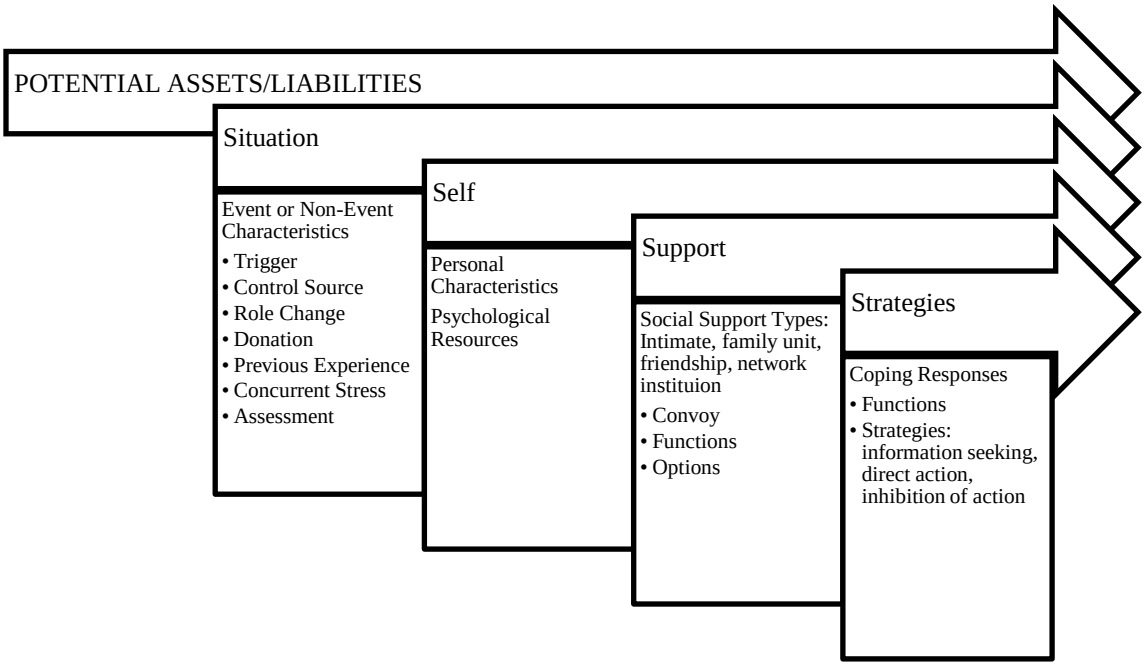

Figure 1. The 4S system. Adapted from (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006, p. 56).

The 4S System

Situation refers to circumstances of the transition. Characteristics of situational transition circumstances are triggers that precipitated the transition; timing of the transition; control during the transition; role change and how it is viewed as a gain or loss; length of transition such as permanent, temporary, or uncertain; concurrent stressors; and assessment of how the individual's behavior is affected by the transition. *Self* refers to personal qualities and characteristics of the person who is transitioning. Self has two categories of personal characteristics and psychological resources: (a) personal characteristics that could affect how the individual perceives the transition, such as socioeconomic status, gender, age, stage of life; and (b) ethnicity. Psychological

resources include commitment, values, and outlook of transition. *Support* refers to external resources to help through the difficult process of the transition. Social support types include intimate, family unit, friendship, or network institution. *Strategies* relate to designing a plan to cope with the transition. Examples of coping responses include modifying the situation, controlled the meaning of the problem, and managing the stress after it has occurred.

Although the transition theory has several elements, the normative role of an anticipated transition was my focus in this study. I used normative role of an anticipated transition to examine the perceptions of transition preparedness from college-to-work and to determine whether age, gender, and family size affect perceptions of transition readiness from college-to-work among traditional and nontraditional undergraduate college students. Knowing whether there are differences in students' perceptions of preparedness would allow those who support students in this transition to focus resources, and perhaps modify their approach, in dealing with these different student populations.

Transition Theory

Students who lack preparedness for transitioning into college face associated challenges such as lack of academic preparation and financial resources (Bushnell, 2012; Elam, Stratton, & Gibson, 2007; Kraus, 2012). According to Tovar and Simon (2006), the associated challenges may have an effect on a student's career development process while in college. Tovar and Simon studied students' academic motivations, general coping, and receptivity to support service by using Schlossberg's transition theory's 4S

system as the theoretical framework. Tovar and Simon developed and instituted a student re-orientation program to understand how background characteristics and perceptions of college environment impacted academic standing. They found that students expressed a desire for institutional assistance during the transition process. Tovar and Simon also suggested that institutional staff should consider academic preparation, employment services, and motivation levels when developing support services and academic programs. The researchers recommended strategies designed to facilitate students' success and avoid undue stress from academic commitments, financial pressures, and lack of time management skills, which can affect academic performance.

According to Rayle and Chung (2008), academic stress is more prevalent in first-year traditional students as compared to nontraditional students because of undeveloped stress coping mechanisms. Rayle and Chung conducted a study to explore the relationship among social support from friends and family, academic stress, and relevance to the first-year college students. Schlossberg's theory of college students' "mattering experience" was used where *mattering* referred to the experience of others depending on them and being concerned with their fate. Rayle and Chung found that first-year traditional students had a high level of social support from family yet continued to have fewer resources for managing the stress and anxiety resulting from school work.

Similar to traditional students, nontraditional veteran students are typically unaware of available services and accommodations offered (Rubin, 2012; Rumann & Hamrick, 2010; Schiavone & Gentry, 2014; Wheeler, 2012). In particular, veteran students face additional challenges such as transitioning into a postsecondary

environment that can at times be unsupportive (Kirchner, 2015). Kirchner (2015) wrote about student veterans and the currently offered support programs, support strategies adult educators can use in the classroom, and future research opportunities in the student veteran community. Kirchner provided background information about student veterans and argued that adult educators need to be aware of available services and accommodations offered to veteran students. According to Kirchner (2015), explanation of veteran resource centers' impact on student veterans may provide insight into this population's needs. Kirchner recommended providing adult educators with an overview of student veterans and their transition into college. Making veteran students feel comfortable and connected to campus will likely ensure their attendance. Connecting veteran students to appropriate supports and services that facilitate their personal and academic success is important. According to Ryan, Carlstrom, Hughey, and Harris (2011), academic advisors must understand how veterans' transition to college is different than that of the general student population. Ryan et al. used Schlossberg's transition model to address the strengths, needs, and challenges of veterans as they transition from the military to higher education. The researchers found that veteran students who negatively perceive their surroundings while attending higher education were in greater need of support services than those who planned and looked forward to attending higher education. Personal academic goals can be met when academic advisors, faculty members, and staff understand how to meet the needs of veteran students.

As mentioned, transition theory has been applied to student type and veteran status. Strengths, needs, and challenges of veterans transitioning from college-to-work

have been studied using the Schlossberg's transition model (Rumann & Hamrick, 2010). In the literature review, I found that veteran students are a population with needs that differ from the general student population and that has trouble transitioning from college-to-work due to stereotypes associated with being a veteran (Kirchner, 2015; Ryan et al., 2011). The literature reviewed showed how there has been a focus on understanding initial transition to college and adaption to campus life of traditional undergraduate nonveteran students (Kraus, 2012). However, nontraditional undergraduate veteran students with diverse identities have been neglected (Wheeler, 2010). As a result, there is a need for further research to understand the perceptions of college-to-work transition preparedness to help develop support services and academic programs that can assist nontraditional undergraduate veteran students.

College-to-Work Transition

A successful transition from college-to-work differs among traditional and nontraditional undergraduate students (Ruh, Spicer, & Vaughn, 2009; Vance & Miller, 2007). A need to maximize transition readiness for nontraditional undergraduate students is further exacerbated when the student is a nontraditional undergraduate veteran. Therefore, by comparing the perceptions of transition preparedness from each group (traditional vs. nontraditional) and (veteran vs. nonveteran) will assist with collaborative efforts between institutional structures, social workers, and support from peer connections (Hoffman-Johnson, 2007) to effectively increase transition readiness among nontraditional undergraduate veteran students.

Traditional students have different educational goals when compared to nontraditional students (Bye, Pushkar, & Conway, 2007; Donohue & Wong, 1997) due in part to differences in life priorities which are essential to transition readiness. Nontraditional students frequently lack academic preparation and financial resources, which can be challenges for transition preparedness (Tovar & Simon, 2006). Such challenges can cause an unsuccessful transition from college by decreasing the nontraditional students' ability to complete a degree and transition from college-to-work (Benshoff, 1993). Nontraditional veteran students compared to nontraditional students look to replace the structure from their military experience by seeking out similarities within the college/university (Summerlot, Green, & Parker, 2009). Nontraditional veteran students' focus is on learning new skills not acquired through the military and transitioning into civilian life. Therefore, collaborative efforts from the educational institution and veteran organizations have great potential for increasing effectiveness and efficiency (Hoffman-Johnson, 2007) to maximize the veteran readiness.

Institutional structures can affect transition readiness (Barefoot, 2004), as an example, the lack of veteran organizations incorporated into a college or university to assist veterans with transitioning from college-to-work. Methods such as a first-year course used to decrease dropout rates among nontraditional veteran students from these organizations can also be implemented to transition the veteran from college-to-work. Such efforts to assimilate organizational structures to address veteran students' needs can help the nontraditional veteran student react realistically when the transition occurs (Ebberwein, Krieshok, Ulven, & Prosser, 2004) and increase the rate of success.

Furthermore, transition support from veteran service, such as help from social workers can add to the difference in students' social integration and ability to cope with significant changes during transition (Metheny & McWhirter, 2013; Robertson, 2014; Soria, 2013).

Traditional Students College-to-Work Transition

Research on traditional undergraduate students has indicated that self-perception of social support, control of time management, and goal confidence are essential to college readiness (Gray, 2000; LaFountaine, Neisen, & Parsons, 2006; Turner et al., 2007). According to DeAndrea, Ellison, LaRose, Steinfield, and Fiore (2012), self-perceptions of social support are a part of determining traditional student successful adjustment to college. DeAndrea et al., argued that traditional students lack the ability to express feelings and concerns when making an adjustment to college. However, if students connect with one another through social media prior to arriving on campus, this will contribute to a successful transition to college. DeAndrea et al., found that the connection prior to arrival on campus eases the transition and provides an expansive support network that can help with future transitions. Skahill (2002) argued that challenges intensify for students when they leave their primary social support network at home and relocate to a different geographic area. Skahill conducted a study to understand how social networks and social support contributed to academic success. Skahill found that students who are considered residential to a college or university tend to work through problems and develop an effective social support network compared to students who commute to a college or university. Skahill suggested that effective transitions to college will lead to more personal success. In contrast, Murphy et al. (2010) argued that

the importance of social support, unfulfilled expectations, and overall dissatisfaction has been emphasized in previous research when the focus should be on the role of the college/university counselors to prepare students for transition to college and from college-to-work. Murphy et al. argued that if counselors prepare students for potential challenges encountered during transition such as the working world, then adaptability and resilience will result in a productive trajectory into adulthood. The authors found that if career counselors provide seminars for transitioning then students will transition from college-to-work with less challenges when transitioning into the working world. In addition to social support, control of time management has been essential to the success of traditional students' transition. Forbus, Newbold, and Mehta (2011) explored the stress factors and methods used during traditional student's university experience. Forbus et al., suggested that active coping methods used to address stress directly is through time management, planning, and developing solutions. The authors found that differing levels of stress existed for traditional students and the method for coping was related to time management issues. In contrast Hanson, Drumheller, McKee and Schlegel (2010) suggested that the traditional student's teacher relationships play a minor role of undergraduate life and academic life is not the focus for these students. Therefore, students need to be educated on how to use their time effectively to value their education rather than choosing leisure time (Hanson et al., 2010). The authors concluded that despite the students' use of planners along with good intentions, trying to find ways to manage their time for studying and class preparation was challenging.

Another method suggested for traditional students transition success was goal confidence. Eppler and Harju (1997) examined the relationship between goal orientations and academic performance and suggested that college professors can encourage students to meet their goals by structuring class time for active involvement in the learning process. The authors found that traditional students with a learning goal had the most favorable grades. In comparison to Eppler & Harju (1997) Byrd and MacDonald (2005) established that students' life experiences contributed to the development of skills perceived as critical to success in college. It was found that time management, goal confidence, and self-advocacy skills prepared them for the demands of college. Whereas, Clayton, Blumberg, and Auld (2010) studied students' achievement goals, self-efficacy, and learning strategies and found that the learners' motivation (goal confidence) is consistently linked to successful learning. Therefore, goals are concerned with the reasons or purposes for engaging in academic-related tasks. The authors found that a traditional learning environment had more of a mastery goal with greater interest in expending effort in a class environment.

Nontraditional Students College-to-Work Transition

Literature reviewed on nontraditional undergraduate students suggests significant differences when compared to traditional undergraduate students during transition from college-to-work. Nontraditional undergraduate students experience difficulty with accessibility to jobs (Deli-Amen, 2011; Goldrick-Rab, 2010; Lumina Foundation for Education, 2017; Sortheix et al., 2013). Therefore, transitioning from college-to-work becomes complicated to navigate when considering high skill level, high experience, and

minimum of a baccalaureate degree required for entry level jobs. Research indicates that nontraditional students require more attention from educational services that work at transitioning students from college-to-work as compared to traditional students (Pelletier, 2010). According to Cantwell, Archer, and Bourke (2001), the demographic profile of universities has changed, in part due to an increase in the acceptance of nontraditional students. Also, required qualifications have decreased to allow entry of nontraditional students into undergraduate programs. Cantwell et al., conducted a study to investigate the performance of students and the effectiveness of an institution's program that makes it possible for nontraditional students to attend. Cantwell et al., suggested that although institutions have programs to assist nontraditional students entering higher learning at a lower academic level, nontraditional students' performance remains slightly below those entering through traditional means. To overcome the below average academic performance higher education will need to understand nontraditional students learning processes to address the needs for success. To provide effective classroom instruction and appropriate learning assessment, it is important to understand the motivations, learning styles, and strategies of adult students (Justice& Dorman, 2001). Justice and Dorman conducted a study to distinguish between learning processes of nontraditional students in higher education from those of traditional students. The authors found that nontraditional students were more aware of their own thought processes and had better study strategies than traditional students.

Typically, nontraditional students need specialized student services upon graduation. In particular job placement services are needed. Many institutions sponsor

orientation programs to assist graduating students with academic and social transitions yet fall short on programs to transition students into a productive job search upon graduation (Polson, 2003). The author suggested students are more aware of how to pursue their careers and the realities of the job market. Polson argued that to be more effective higher education will need to respond to nontraditional students with services similar to those offered to a traditional student. Therefore, institutions will need to develop comprehensive support systems to meet the needs of nontraditional students. Polson concluded that the challenges of meeting the needs of the nontraditional undergraduate population require a sensitive, flexible, and creative response. By understanding how nontraditional students differ from traditional students, institutions can provide tools to help the nontraditional student transition from college-to-work. According to Kenner and Weinerman (2011), nontraditional students are categorized into three groups: (a) workers who have lost jobs; (b) veterans who delayed education; and (c) adults who have just completed a general education degree (GED). The authors wrote about nontraditional students who bring different learning styles along with life experiences. It was found each difference could be critical to succeeding or hindering the students learning and affecting their future job placement. Kenner and Weinerman suggested that the longer nontraditional students are away from an academic environment the more difficult it will be to develop strategies for success. Therefore, educators need to present strategies that will correlate with the variety of experiences typical nontraditional students have while completing their education.

Nontraditional students continue to attempt to integrate into a traditional study environment as they seek to progress in their existing careers or advance current qualifications to advance to a better job. According to Osborne, Marks, and Turner (2004), nontraditional students seeking to progress in their existing careers typically attended school part-time due to their existing commitments to work. Whereas, students gaining a degree to advance their current qualifications did so to seek better pay and a more satisfying job. Based on the authors study it was evident that more academic guidance should be made available at the earlier stages of a nontraditional student's entrance process for degree planning. Osborne et al., suggested that nontraditional students faced job responsibilities, which were considered the number one barrier to participation in higher learning and completion of a degree. Osborne et al., also suggested that institutions provide flexible course offerings in order to assist nontraditional students completing their degree. Osborne et al., concluded that the same effort used to meet enrollment targets should be used to meet the needs of nontraditional students.

Since nontraditional students are concerned about remaining competitive in the labor market it is important to understand factors that motivate adults to enroll into higher learning. According to Howard (2006), an inability to identify barriers or faulty beliefs could discourage a career transition such as continuing higher education. Therefore, there is a need to address and ensure continued enrollment, retention, and graduation of this growing population of nontraditional students. Howard's study attempted to understand what motivational factors were related to nontraditional students continuing higher education. The study was based on the use of Schlossberg's transition model measured

with the CTI instrument. Howard found that the participants did not evaluate continuing high education as a career transition. Howard concluded with three recommendations addressing what motivates nontraditional students to attend higher education. The recommendations included: (a) pre-assessments to determine nontraditional student motivations; (b) offer a range of services specifically designed for nontraditional students; and (c) identify and clarify goals for seeking continuing education.

When comparing traditional students to nontraditional students, research suggested that students need to be supported by their learning institute to finish courses, apply what they have learned to job search skills, and avoid potential mismatch between the needs of employers (McCorkle, Alexander, Reardon, & Kling, 2003; Park & Choi, 2009; Pitcher & Purcell, 1998; Taniguichi & Kaufman, 2005). As a result, institutions will need to focus more attention on the transition from college-to-work to aid in the success of transition readiness.

College-to-Work Transition Veteran Student Readiness

Research has indicated that educational institutes that successfully manage their veteran resource centers can maximize the student's potential at completing a degree. (Brown & Gross, 2011; Elliott, Gonzalez, & Larsen, 2011; Hassan, Jackson, Lindsay, McCabe, & Sanders, 2010). Most veteran students enter college as way to seek promotions in a current job, learn a new skill, or transition into civilian life. According to Wilson and Smith (2012), the more education becomes a life mission of a veteran student, the more likely a connection between the role of veteran and student is evident. Wilson and Smith wrote on the difference between addressing only the immediate needs

of enrollment and program completion compared to planning long-term career and personal aspirations. Wilson and Smith concluded that advisors must focus on professional development to help understand how the veteran culture affects the veteran identity student role. Multiple characteristics complicate a veteran student's integration and enrollment into higher education. First-generation students are over-represented among veteran students which suggest that much of the description of first-generation students prior to college enrollment will apply to veteran students (Wurster, Rinaldi, Woods, & Liu, 2013). First-generation students typically have weaker academic preparation, lower educational aspirations, and less knowledge about navigating the college environment. Wurster et al. wrote on the comparison of first-generation college students and veteran students. Wurster et al. used a revised social class worldview model which offered case examples that illustrated how counselors could best work with veteran students. Wurster et al. concluded that veteran student's transition from home to the military and from the military to the social class of traditional college students. Wurster et al., found the most difficult transition for veteran students is the transition from the military to college because there are few explicit norms and rules. Completing a degree is one step toward veteran students' transition from college-to-work. According to O'Herrin (2011), the veteran student population is diverse with a wide range of experiences making it impossible to take a one-size-fits-all approach to serving them. O'Herrin wrote on elements that institutions have implemented to help ensure veterans are successful in higher education. The implementations included: (a) establish campus point of contact; (b) create department veteran work groups; (c) collaborate with community

organizations; (d) veteran orientation programs; and (e) educate faculty/staff on veteran specific resources. O'Herrin suggested that veterans may have more complex needs compared to traditional undergraduate students. Therefore, many institutions will need to developed specific programs and services designed to enhance veteran success in higher education. Higher education institutions can supplement existing campus programs and services with veteran-specific resources. According to Ghosh and Fouad (2015), more research is needed to investigate the transition's influence on student veterans' vocational development specifically the adjustment to civilian work. Ghosh and Fouad conducted a study that examined veterans transitioning to college to understand their development prior to transitioning again into civilian work. The study examined what factors of career transitions (e.g., confidence, independence, support, control, and readiness) were predicted by career adaptability (e.g., control, concern, confidence, and curiosity) and occupational engagement within a developmental framework. Ghosh and Fouad found that occupational engagement did not predict the confidence and support aspects of career transitions. However, occupational engagement did predict readiness. Based on the findings Ghosh and Fouad suggested further research be conducted in two primary areas. The first suggested area was to examine the specific aspects of transition from military to college, focusing on military culture and the cultural difference between military and college life. The second suggested area was to examine the perceptions of the veterans transitioning to college. Researchers can gain an understanding of how to conceptualize the veteran student population and develop interventions to promote academic success and adjustment to campus and college life (Ghosh & Fouad, 2015).

For veterans transitioning into the civilian world of work, securing a job or career can be a top priority. Veterans without prior transitional knowledge or previous civilian work experience often have misconceptions of how the civilian world of work operates (Clemens & Milsom, 2008). Clemens and Milsom wrote an article on the developmental challenges that veterans encounter when transitioning from the military into the civilian world. Clemens and Milsom suggested there are a need for career counselors to develop an awareness of the needs and the strengths of the veteran population. Clemens and Milsom found that veteran career counselors do not need to be experts in the veteran population but need to be aware of the resources available to this population. However, by becoming aware of available resources the career counselors can assist the veteran on how to consolidate what they already know to make career decisions in the civilian world. Clemens and Milsom concluded that career counselors can effectively help clients further develop their self and occupational knowledge.

Increasing Veteran Transition Readiness

Research has indicated that nontraditional veteran students with a high level of readiness during transition are likely to have a successful transition from college-to-work (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006; Griffin & Gilbert, 2015; Savitsky, Illingworth, & DuLaney, 2009). Although, some universities have created the "one-stop" center for veterans to ease the strain when enrolling into college, transition from college-to-work remains an issue for nontraditional veteran students. Therefore, institutional structures which implement policies that avoid transitional challenges such as addressing (readiness, confidence, control, perceived support, and decision independence) could

successfully transition a nontraditional veteran student from college-to-work. Additionally, institutions that provide career services using social workers as a means to assist veterans can prepare nontraditional veteran students in transitioning from college-to-work. Social workers who provide services to military service members, veterans, and their families can assist in addressing any effects on (age, gender, or family size) of a nontraditional veteran student. One main goal for civilian social workers and institutions would be to acknowledge their responsibility to competently serve military and veteran members.

Institutional Structures Effects on Transition Readiness

The level of readiness a student has regarding seeking employment upon graduation often correlates with the lack of a structured transition policy from the learning institute (Hermon & Davis, 2004; Powers, 2010; Ray & Heaslip, 2011). Some scholars tend to draw attention to the difficulties associated with the student veteran population rather than focus on the positive qualities to discredit the veteran population stereotypes. According to Vacchi (2012), student veterans are a diverse sub-population on campus in which universal policies are not applicable. Vacchi wrote on the stereotypes associated with the veteran students based on the institutions own labels used when referring to a veteran student. For example, no common title exists among institutions such as: military-affiliated students are referred to as reservist members; military students are recognized as active duty members; veteran students; and military undergraduate. This lack of consistent language can increase the level of stereotyping a veteran student. For example, a veteran student may no longer consider themselves as affiliated with the

military. The result of using various labels on campus can create confusion when referring to the veteran student. Therefore, on campus, it is not unreasonable for the institution to make efforts to change policies that increase the possibility that veteran students will succeed. Intentional efforts made by campuses to identify barriers can assist in a smooth transition of veteran students. According to Moon and Schma (2011), 28% of adult learners comprise the student population. Moon and Schma wrote about how universities can gain a further understanding on the veteran student population. They suggested seeking guidance from educational seminars given by Veterans Administration counselors, as well as, presentations by the military advocate and student veterans themselves, to provide insight into this unique population. Moon and Schma concluded that although implementing programs and policies may seem challenging in the beginning, the payoff is welcoming.

Social Workers Effects on Transition Support

Social workers could acknowledge their responsibilities to competently serve veteran students. By providing further guidance regarding effects on age, gender, and family size of the veteran student. Social workers service would be a support mechanism for the veteran student to succeed during transition from college-to-work (Frain, Bishop, & Bethel, 2010; Kelty, Kleykamp, & Segal, 2010; Johnston, Fletcher, Ginn, & Stein, 2010). Social support on the academic recruitment of military veterans is linked to a positive relationship between veteran students and higher education. According to Livingston, Havice, Cawthon, and Fleming (2011), the ability to track veteran students allows necessary services to be coordinated. Livingston et al., conducted a study to

understand veteran students who were likely to seek academic support and who were more inclined to pursue social support. Livingston et al., found that veteran students often hid their veteran status from the campus community members. Livingston et al. concluded that institutions must take care to ensure support services are neither intrusive nor too difficult to be effectively utilized. Further research on types of support veterans need is vast and can range from self-care to interpersonal.

Research Synthesis

Veterans who exit the military often leave lacking formal education, making them less competitive in the job market. These exits occur for a variety of reasons including a poor fit with the military, inability to re-enlist, or due to high tenure without promotions. Upon completing their education, these nontraditional veteran students will compete with traditional nonveteran students in the job market. However, the nontraditional veteran students may differ from traditional nonveteran students in their readiness to make the transition from college-to-work in the civilian labor force, in part due to their prior military experience. The literature on transition readiness, however, has largely ignored this specific group of nontraditional veteran students in understanding their specific perceptions of readiness for a transition. In the literature, there were limited studies that explored the preparedness of undergraduate veteran students during transition from college-to-work. There were also limited studies found that compared the perceptions of undergraduate veteran students during the transition from college-to-work. Most studies I found focused on the transition of veterans leaving the military returning to college or

transition of veterans leaving the military returning to civilian life (Wilson & Smith, 2012; Woods & Liu, 2013).

Factors that could influence the perceptions of transition preparedness of undergraduate veteran students were the institutional structures and lack of support from veteran social workers within educational intuitions' (Livingston, Havice, Cawthon, & Fleming, 2011; Vacchi, 2012). Age, gender, and family size could also be factors that influence transition preparedness of undergraduate veteran students there were several studies found in the literature that compared men and women veterans only; age; and effects of having a family.

Based on the literature review, no study was found that compared the perceptions of transition preparedness from college-to-work using measures of readiness, confidence, control, perceived support, and decision independence based on veteran status (veteran vs. nonveteran) and student type (nontraditional vs. traditional) undergraduate college students while statistically controlling for age, gender, and family size. This study will examine these perceptions, comparing traditional and nontraditional students, along with veteran and nonveteran students. The perceptions of transition preparedness regarding readiness, confidence, control, perceived support, and decision independence will be compared from students in these two groups, and control variables of age, gender, and family size will be taken into account. The results of the study will provide insights into whether or not nontraditional veteran students differ in their transition readiness perceptions compared to traditional and nonveteran students. Should differences be

found, the results will provide direction to colleges and universities to better support nontraditional veteran students in making the transition from student to employee.

Summary

In this chapter, college-to-work transition was defined in terms of student type and specific to veteran status. Theories previously applied to college-to-work transition specifically to student type were identified and Schlossberg's transition theory applied to veteran status. The use of Schlossberg's transition theory and the application of the 4S system model for this study were explained. Other areas discussed were factors that could influence the perceptions toward college-to-work transition such as institutional structures, social workers, and the effects of age, gender, and family size.

A specific research gap was found in the literature review. A gap was identified in the transition preparedness of nontraditional undergraduate veteran students. Which, no study was found that compared the perceptions of transition preparedness from college-to-work using measures of readiness, confidence, control, perceived support, and decision independence based on veteran status (veteran vs. nonveteran) and student type (nontraditional vs. traditional) undergraduate college students while statistically controlling for age, gender, and family size.

Chapter 3 will include the research design with rationale, methodology, population and sample size, sampling method, data collection, instrument use, and type of data analysis.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative study was to compare undergraduate students' perceptions of transition preparedness in terms of readiness, confidence, control, perceived support, and decision independence based on veteran status (veteran vs. nonveteran) and student type (nontraditional vs. traditional) while statistically controlling for age, gender, and family size. In this study, I sought to demonstrate whether there are differences in perceptions regarding preparedness among the student types noted. If so, the study may help to improve the transition process for these student groups.

In this chapter, I detail the study's research design. Specifically, I discuss the study's research design and rationale, methodology, data analysis plan, threats to validity, and ethical procedures. The methodology comprised the following elements: the population; sampling and sampling procedures; participant recruitment; data collection; validity and reliability; and instrumentation with operationalization of constructs.

Research Design and Rationale

In this quantitative study I examined: (a) the differences in perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between nontraditional and traditional undergraduate college students; (b) differences between military veterans and nonveterans; (c) differences between military veterans and those who are not; (d) the differences in perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between nontraditional and traditional undergraduate college students after controlling for age, gender, and family size; (e) differences between military veterans and nonveterans after

controlling for age, gender, and family size; and (f) differences between military veterans and those who are not after controlling for age, gender, and family size. Such information may be useful for the (a) continued success of colleges' and universities' assimilation of organizational structures that address the needs of veteran students (Daly & Garrity, 2013), (b) strengthening of peer connections and support of veteran services (Jones, 2013), and (c) continuation of added resources for coping with significant changes during transition experiences (Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008). This study may also build awareness toward the importance of transition preparedness among nontraditional veteran students.

Quantitative researchers often use questionnaires or structured interviews for data collection (Creswell, 2009, 2014; Fowler, 2013). Whereas, a qualitative approach could be limited to biased opinions and subjective responds of a smaller group of undergraduate college students, possibly causing the findings to be misinterpreted. A quantitative approach was suitable for this study to examine trends and differences in perceptions or attitudes (Creswell, 2009, 2014; Williams, 2007) and to identify any differences that may exist between veteran status (veterans vs. nonveteran) and student type (nontraditional vs. traditional). Participants were not randomly assigned, and the groups were categorical in nature. I used a non-experimental design for contrasted groups. Participants from each group were measured with each dependent variable. Therefore, the non-experimental design for this study was cross-sectional with a convenience sample, which meant that the data were collected at one point in time and participants were chosen based on their availability (see Creswell, 2009, 2014; Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). The

non-experimental design did not require random assignment, which can be considered an advantage. However, the disadvantage to this design method is that the causation must be theoretically inferred, meaning that the independent variables could not be manipulated to illustrate causation.

Methodology

Population

The targeted population for this study was undergraduate college students, both traditional and nontraditional as well as veterans and nonveterans. A current, exact number of individuals in the targeted population is difficult to determine. However, currently, 37.1% of the veteran population is considered nontraditional undergraduate students (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018). According to the NCVAS (2015), the population percentage rate of nontraditional undergraduate veteran students was 37.1% compared to 28.2% of traditional undergraduate nonveteran students. Potential participants met one of the following criteria

1. Nontraditional undergraduate students transitioning from college-to-work.
2. Nontraditional undergraduate veteran students transitioning from college-to-work.
3. Traditional undergraduate nonveteran students transitioning from college-to-work.
4. Traditional undergraduate veteran students transitioning from college-to-work.

I obtained the sample using the convenience method in which each participant was identified once they responded to the qualifying questions. The qualifying questions were "Will you be graduating from a 4-year degree program within the next year?" and "Have you served in the U.S. Armed Forces?" Each participant who replied "yes" to the first qualifying question moved onto the demographic questions. I used the second qualifying question for identifying purposes only. I asked additional demographic questions about the respondent's age, gender, and family size.

Sampling and Sampling Procedures

I drew a convenience sample from the population of traditional and nontraditional students. The minimum sample size was determined through the use of the G*Power 3.1 program (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009). I used the Barker (2017) and Stockman (2008) studies for effect size estimates. Based on the analyses below, effect sizes were estimated based on a linear multiple regression fixed model R^2. In the Barker (2017) study, a power of .80, Cohen's medium effect size of .15, and a level of significance of .05 were used as parameters for the sample size computation. The resulting sample size was 68. In comparison, the Stockman (2008) study used a statistical power of .90 for a small effect with two independent variables and two predictors with an alpha level of .05. The resulting sample size was 107. With the above parameters, the computed sample size using the power analysis of .80 and an alpha of .05 with an estimated medium effect size computed minimum sample size $N = 65$. I made a second computation using a combination of both techniques. The sample size using the power analysis of .80 for a medium effect with two independent variables and four predictors

with an alpha level of .05 computed a minimum sample size $N = 244$. Therefore, with a power analysis of .80 with a medium effect size the minimum number of participants would be $N = 196$. To strengthen my study, I ensured that the final number of participants would be between 196 and 244.

Participant Recruitment

I selected the sample of nontraditional undergraduate students from Walden University and the sample of traditional undergraduate students selected via SurveyMonkey. Participants were asked demographic questions such as age, gender, family status, family size, and educational level. If participants did not meet any of the demographic questions, the participants did not proceed with the survey. I requested that SurveyMonkey give participants the ability to accept or decline to take the survey. Each participant had the ability to donate $0.50 to their preferred charity. According to SurveyMonkey (2017), this would encourage honest participation.

Data Collection

The survey questions were uploaded to the Walden University Participant pool and to SurveyMonkey. The survey uses a six-point Likert-scale with responses (a) strongly agree; (b) moderately agree; (c) slightly agree; (d) slightly disagree; (e) moderately disagree; and (f) strongly disagree. The survey is a six-point scale to avoid neutral response similar to odd numbered scales. The six-points allow for variability in each response. The response options were credited as 1, 2,3,4,5, or 6 from favorable to unfavorable to the end of the survey.

Participants were given informed consent which was on the first page of the survey. Participants were given an outline of data transfer practices, privacy practices, and other pertinent policies. I added a skip logic question to disqualify respondents who selected "no" to consent. A "no" response did not allow the participant to continue to the survey. However, if a participant selected "yes", consenting to take the test, SurveyMonkey recorded the participants' time stamp and the participant proceeded to the survey. Although informed consent was collected from each participant, an option to withdraw from the survey remained at the end of the survey if a participant changed his or her desire to participate in the survey.

The survey was equally distributed. The targeted population of this study was best suited for a random selection process. However, SurveyMonkey does not offer random selection of participants using their service. Although random selection procedures ensure all participants have equal probability of being included in the sample (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008), random selection was not used. Therefore, once the surveys were completed, the results were obtained from SurveyMonkey and placed in an excel database. Once in the excel database, I added a random number generator which selected the results used from the completed survey list. This method of random selection left approximately 100 nontraditional undergraduate students and 100 traditional undergraduate students.

Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs

The independent variables in this study consisted of (a) nontraditional undergraduate students transitioning from college-to-work met one or more of the

following characteristics: was independent for financial aid purposes, had one or more dependents, was a single caregiver, lacked a traditional high school diploma, delayed postsecondary enrollment, attend school part-time, or had part-time employment (NCES, 2015), (b) nontraditional undergraduate veteran students transitioning from college-to-work met one or more of the following characteristics: were independent for financial aid purposes, had one or more dependents, were a single caregiver, lacked a traditional high school diploma, delayed to postsecondary enrollment, attended school part-time, had part-time employment, and were a service members or veterans of the U.S. armed forces, (c) traditional undergraduate nonveteran students transitioning from college-to-work met one or more of the following characteristics: were enrolled in college immediately after graduation from high school, attended college on a full-time, pursued a bachelor's degree, were financially dependent on others, had no children, and were employed part-time during the academic year (NCES, 2015), and (d) traditional undergraduate veteran students transitioning from college-to-work met one or more of the following characteristics: attended college full-time, pursued a bachelor's degree, were financially dependent on others, had no children, were employed part-time during the academic year, and served as a members or veterans of the U.S. armed forces (NCES, 2015; Veteran Administration, 2015).

The dependent measures were from the CTI survey developed solely for the purpose of measuring perceptions of psychological resources operating when adults career transition (Heppner et al., 1994). Therefore, this survey was most suitable to measure the perceptions toward college-to-work transition of undergraduate college

students. Heppner, Multon, and Johnston (1994) developed the survey to measure the perceptions of readiness, confidence, control, perceived support, and decision independence. Readiness reflects how an individual appraises their motivation for making a career transition. Confidence reflects how much efficacy an individual's concept toward completing tasks necessary to make a successful transition. Control reflects how strongly individuals' view their career transition as being in their control. Perceived support reflects the consequences of the perceived level of support and is shown to be related to the amount of stress, control and confidence toward the transition process. Decision independence reflects how an individual perceived the career transition as independent or made with consideration for significant others.

The CTI survey was found through the Walden Library webpage. The CTI was located at the psychological research database under test, measures, and assessments. The survey had a permission statement for reproduction of non-commercial research and educational purposes. The statement also included controlled distribution which meant only the participants enrolled in educational activity were allowed to use the survey. However, to ensure the true meaning of the permission statement I sent an email to the Office of Research Ethics and Compliance (see Appendix A). I also gained permission to use the survey from Dr. Mary J. Heppner (see Appendix B). This was an attempt to avoid application approval delays from the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

The dependent variables were measured by the CTI survey (Heppner, Multon, & Johnston, 1994). This survey specifically measured transition readiness, confidence, control, perceived support, and the decision independence. Readiness consists of 13 items

which reflect how an individual appraises their motivation for making a career transition. All items were reversed scored with the exception of one item. Reverse scoring was as follows: where 6 = 1, 5 = 2, 4 = 3, 3 = 4, 2 = 5, and 1 = 6. The items were summed and placed in three categories of high (65-78); medium (39-64); and low (13-38). Higher scores indicated strong readiness or motivation during the transition from college-to-work; medium scores indicated slight readiness or motivation during the transition from college-to-work; and low scores indicated weak readiness or motivation during the transition from college-to-work.

Confidence consist of 11 items which reflect how much efficacy an individual has toward completing tasks necessary to make a successful transition. Scoring for confidence was as follows: where 6 = 6, 5 = 5, 4 = 4, 3 = 3, 2 = 2, 1 = 1 and the exception of one item with reverse scoring. The items were summed and placed in three categories of high (55-66); medium (33-54); and low (11-32). Higher scores indicated strong efficacy toward completing tasks necessary to make a successful transition; medium scores indicated slight efficacy toward completing tasks necessary to make a successful transition; and low scores indicated weak efficacy toward completing tasks necessary to make a successful transition.

Control consists of six items which reflect how strongly individuals views their career transition as being in their control. Each item was scored as follows: where 6 = 6, 5 = 5, 4 = 4, 3 = 3, 2 = 2, 1 = 1 and no items are reversed scored. The items were summed and placed in three categories of high (30-36); medium (18-29); and low (6-17). Higher scores indicated that an individual had strong views of their career transition as being in

their control; medium scores indicated that an individual had slight views of their career transition as being in their control; and low scores indicated that an individual had weak views of their career transition as being in their control.

Perceived support consists of 5 items which reflect the consequences of that perceived level of support and was shown to be related to the amount of stress, control and confidence toward the transition process. Three items were scored as follows: where 6 = 6, 5 = 5, 4 = 4, 3 = 3, 2 = 2, 1 = 1 and the remaining two items were scored as follows: where 6 = 1, 5 = 2, 4 = 3, 3 = 4, 2 = 5, 1 = 6. The items were summed and placed in three categories of high (25-30); medium (15-24); and low (5-14). Higher scores indicated that an individual perceived support to be strong toward their transition process; medium scores indicated that an individual perceived support to be slight toward their transition process; and low scores indicated that an individual perceived support to be weak toward their transition process.

Decision independence consists of 5 items which reflect how an individual perceives the career transition as independent or made with consideration for significant others. Three items were scored as follows: where 6 = 6, 5 = 5, 4 = 4, 3 = 3, 2 = 2, 1 = 1 and the remaining two items were scored as follows: where 6 = 1, 5 = 2, 4 = 3, 3 = 4, 2 = 5, 1 = 6. The items were summed and placed in three categories of high (25-30); medium (15-24); and low (5-14). Higher scores strongly indicated that an individual perceived the career transition as independent; medium scores slightly indicated that an individual perceived the career transition as independent; and low scores weakly indicated that an individual perceived the career transition as independent.

The demographic questionnaire consists of questions pertaining to the following information: gender (men/women), age, marital status (single, married, divorced, separated, other) family status (at home with parents, living by self, living with spouse/significant other, living with roommate), number of dependents, and military status (active duty, reservist, retired, other). These demographic variables were used to develop a profile of the participants' characteristics and used as covariates.

Validity and Reliability

Reliability of the CTI assessment and its five subscales were reported by Heppner, Multon, and Johnston (1994). Estimates for the five subscales range from .87 for Readiness to .66 for Support **(**Heppner, Multon, & Johnston, 1994). In comparison, similar estimates were found for the five subscales coefficient ranges: .74 (Readiness), .82 (Confidence), .52 (Control), .61(Perceived Support), and .50 (Decision Independence) which were calculated using Cronbach's alpha for total scores of each factor (Howard, 2006). According to Howard (2006) the CTI instrument was found to correlate positively and significantly with age, marital status, and length of time in the transition. Additionally, the CTI instrument has strong internal consistency, significantly high proportion of overall variance, and moderately high stability over time (Heppner, Multon, & Johnston, 1994; Howard, 2006). In contrast, Gaiter (2015) removed (control, perceived support, and decision independence) subscales for the purpose of answering research questions and found reliability of the two subscales of the CTI (i.e., Confidence and Readiness) by calculating Cronbach's coefficients using survey participants' scores. Additionally, to test internal consistency Gaiter (2015) compared the correlation of each

item with the total score test and considered discarding the low scoring items and the high scoring test items. Estimates of the two subscales were as follows: (a) total scale alpha coefficient of .90 and (b) factor scale alpha coefficients of .87 and .83 for the factors of readiness and confidence (Gaiter, 2015). Temporal reliability was demonstrated by the test-retest alpha coefficients for the total CTI .84, readiness .74, and confidence .79 (Gaiter, 2015; Heppner, Multon, & Johnston, 1994).

Data Analysis Plan

The IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) v.21 was used to analyze the data of this study. Several analyses were conducted when the data was collected. The sample was described using the demographic items, and then the hypotheses were tested using a (MANOVA) and a (MANCOVA).

Descriptive Statistics

A descriptive statistics analysis was completed to summarize the data. The means and standard deviations were computed for the continuous demographic items, whereas, frequency and percentage summaries were used to summarize categorical demographic data (age, gender, and family size). Normality testing of the dependent variables were conducted to evaluate the assumptions of MANOVA/MANCOVA. Skewness, kurtosis statistics, and histograms were used to investigate the dependent variables to determine if normal distribution was verified or voided. Finally, I generated scatter plots to determine if anomalies or outliers existed in the data. The measures from the CTI were evaluated for internal consistency reliability by computing Cronbach's Alpha's.

Hypothesis Testing

To test the hypotheses: (a) are there differences in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between nontraditional and traditional undergraduate college students; (b) are there differences in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between military veterans and nonveterans; (c) are there differences in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between nontraditional and traditional undergraduate college students who are military veterans and those who are not; (d) are there differences in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between nontraditional and traditional undergraduate college students, controlling for age, gender, and family size; (e) are there differences in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between veteran and nonveteran undergraduate college students, controlling for age, gender, and family; and (f) are their differences in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work nontraditional and traditional undergraduate college student who are military veterans and those who are not, controlling for age, gender, and family size, MANOVA and MANCOVA were performed. MANOVA and MANCOVA were used to test for significant differences between group means (Green & Salkind, 2010). MANOVA allowed for differences of group means of multiple dependent variables, MANCOVA controlled for covariates. The overall MANOVA and MANCOVA were examined the five dependent variables related to perceptions of transition preparedness.

The research questions and hypotheses for this study were tested in the data analysis which included the following:

RQ1: Are there differences in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between nontraditional and traditional undergraduate college students?

$H_0$1: There is no difference in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between nontraditional and traditional undergraduate college students.

H_A1: There is a difference in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between nontraditional and traditional undergraduate college students.

RQ2: Are there differences in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between military veterans and nonveterans?

$H_0$2: There is no difference in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between military veterans and nonveterans.

H_A2: There is a difference in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between military veterans and nonveterans.

RQ3: Are there differences in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between nontraditional and traditional undergraduate college students who are military veterans and those who are not?

$H_0$3: There is no difference in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between nontraditional and traditional undergraduate college students who are military veterans and those who are not.

H_A3: There is a difference in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between nontraditional and traditional undergraduate college students who are military veterans and those who are not.

RQ4: Are there differences in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between nontraditional and traditional undergraduate college students, when controlling for age, gender, and family size?

$H_0 4$: There is no difference in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between nontraditional and traditional undergraduate college students, when controlling for age, gender, and family size.

$H_A 4$: There is a difference in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between nontraditional and traditional undergraduate college students, when controlling for age, gender, and family size.

RQ5: Are there differences in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between veteran and non-veteran undergraduate college students, when controlling for age, gender, and family size?

$H_0 5$: There is no difference in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between veteran and non-veteran undergraduate college students, when controlling for age, gender, and family size.

$H_A 5$: There is a difference in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between veteran and non-veteran undergraduate college students, when controlling for age, gender, and family size.

RQ6: Are there differences in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between nontraditional and traditional undergraduate college students who are military veterans and those who are not, when controlling for age, gender, and family size?

$H_0$6: There is no difference in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between nontraditional and traditional undergraduate college students who are military veterans those who are not, when controlling for age, gender, and family size.

H_A6: There is a difference in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between nontraditional and traditional undergraduate college students who are military veterans those who are not, when controlling for age, gender, and family size.

Threats to Validity

External validity referred to how generalizable the findings of a study would be outside of the studies population (Campbell & Stanley, 1966; Cook & Campbell, 1979). A concerning threat to external validity in studying the differences between nontraditional and traditional college students was the possibility of veterans not graduating. According to Veterans Administration (2017) general Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) entitlement benefits could be received up to 36 months. The veteran eligibility for the benefits generally ends 10 years from the date of their last separation from active duty, or when all 36 months of entitlement has been used. An example would be if a veteran separated from active duty on December 31, 2017, they would have 10 years to

use their MGIB from the December 31, 2017 date. This means that the benefits for the MGIB will end on December 31, 2027. However, if the veteran chose to use their benefits within this 10-year time frame and has used up to 36 months of the benefit before the 10-year expiration date (December 31, 2027) their MGIB would no longer be available. Lack of college funding could cause an additional external threat. The external threat considered would be the inability to generalize the study beyond the geography of the original study to nontraditional undergraduate veteran students in smaller or larger areas (Kosor, 2016). Stress of not having funding to complete college could result in skewing the results of true feelings.

Internal validity referred to how precisely the study's findings could be defined and understood (Campbell & Stanley, 1966; Cook & Campbell, 1979; Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). A possible threat for this study could include the elements of history. This research was a non-experimental design. However, the history could affect the results of the administered survey. Participants' responses could affect the point in time that the survey was completed (Barker, 2017). An example would be if a traditional student received lower grades and had to repeat courses which caused a delay in graduation and their transition from college-to-work. This could lead to the participant scoring questions differently than if they would if they had not experienced a delay in graduating.

Ethical Procedures

Permission to survey undergraduate students would come from Walden University. The ethical topics of concern were listed in full detail with a description of

how each matter would be handled in the event a breech should occur. The ethical topics included but were not limited to general descriptions of the proposed research topic(s); data collection tools; description of the research participants; community research such as stakeholders and partners; potential risks and benefits; data integrity and confidentiality; potential conflicts of interests; and collection of informed consent of participants (Walden University Research Center, 2017). The protocols for the survey process were followed by all federal regulations. An example of regulations to follow included: the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), Uniform Electronic Transaction Act, and Walden Research Compliance Policies (Walden University Research Center, 2017). In conjunction to the permission process SurveyMonkey requested that permission to conduct the research using SurveyMonkey was completed for; secured transmission provided; informed consent to provide to all participants; and HIPPA compliance. Obtaining written permission to conduct research using SurveyMonkey was attached to the Walden University IRB application. Secure transmission included disabling the IP address tracking to ensure survey participants were anonymous. Secure transmission also included Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) encryption. Informed consent was included on the first page of each survey. Although Walden University and SurveyMonkey complies with the HIPAA act of 1996 this was not applicable to this study.

Ethical concerns related to recruitment materials were possible through the email invitation to the survey and all other collector types. SurveyMonkey provided email invitations that tracked the participants and included their email address and IP address

by default. To ensure that the participants' information remained anonymous I applied the "anonymous response" feature to the survey process. Recruitment through other collector types (social media sites) included IP addresses of each participant. Therefore, the "anonymous response" feature was added to each additional survey process.

Ethical procedures for this study included data privacy, security and confidentiality, data retention, network security, and data breaches. Data privacy was provided through SurveyMonkey will not use the survey, or information collected from the survey. A security statement was added to the link of the survey which described the security measures that were taken using SurveyMonkey. Data retention included personal information and survey data of the participants. Survey data would be retained for one year by SurveyMonkey policy. Additionally, network security was a feature that included the following: (a) system testing of system functionality; (b) firewall protection to restricted access; (c) access control to enforce system management; (d) logging and auditing to capture and archive all internal systems; and (e) encryption in transit which protected communications by using server authentication and data encryption. Each network security feature benefited the participants from potential data breaches. SurveyMonkey would handle data breaches by notifying affected users so they may take appropriate protective action. The notification system would include email notices or posting a notice on the website.

Summary

This chapter discussed the relevant elements to the research design suitable for this study. An in-depth analysis included the methodology of the study, population,

sample and sampling procedures, recruitment of participants, instrumentation, and data collection. Also, included in the analysis was the research questions and hypotheses testing, threats to validity, and ethical procedures. The purpose of this quantitative study was: (a) to compare the perceptions toward transition preparedness in terms of the readiness, confidence, control, perceived support, and decision independence based on veteran status (veteran vs. nonveteran) and student type (nontraditional vs. traditional) of undergraduate college students, and (b) to statistically control for age, gender, and family size to determine if the covariates differed in relationship to student type and veteran status. Quantitative methods were used to answer the research questions. The goal of this study was to provide students with accurate information regarding employment during anticipated transitions.

Chapter 4 will include a description of the data collection and demographic information regarding the participants. The study findings, research results, comparisons made within the literature review are discussed.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative study was to compare undergraduate college students' perceptions toward transition preparedness in terms of the readiness, confidence, control, perceived support, and decision independence based on veteran status (veteran vs. nonveteran) and student type (nontraditional vs. traditional) and statistically control for age, gender, and family size. My goal was to examine if there were differences in perceptions of readiness for the different groups of students.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The research questions and hypotheses for this study were:

RQ1: Are there differences in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between nontraditional and traditional undergraduate college students?

$H_0$1: There is no difference in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between nontraditional and traditional undergraduate college students.

H_A1: There is a difference in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between nontraditional and traditional undergraduate college students.

RQ2: Are there differences in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between military veterans and nonveterans?

$H_0$2: There is no difference in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between military veterans and nonveterans.

H_A2: There is a difference in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between military veterans and nonveterans.

RQ3: Are there differences in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between nontraditional and traditional undergraduate college students who are military veterans and those who are not?

$H_0$3: There is no difference in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between nontraditional and traditional undergraduate college students who are military veterans and those who are not.

H_A3: There is a difference in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between nontraditional and traditional undergraduate college students who are military veterans and those who are not.

RQ4: Are there differences in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between nontraditional and traditional undergraduate college students, when controlling for age, gender, and family size?

$H_0$4: There is no difference in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between nontraditional and traditional undergraduate college students, when controlling for age, gender, and family size.

H_A4: There is a difference in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between nontraditional and traditional undergraduate college students, when controlling for age, gender, and family size.

RQ5: Are there differences in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between veteran and nonveteran undergraduate college students, when controlling for age, gender, and family size?

$H_0$5: There is no difference in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between veteran and nonveteran undergraduate college students, when controlling for age, gender, and family size.

H_A5: There is a difference in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between veteran and nonveteran undergraduate college students, when controlling for age, gender, and family size.

RQ6: Are there differences in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between nontraditional and traditional undergraduate college students who are military veterans and those who are not, when controlling for age, gender, and family size?

$H_0$6: There is no difference in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between nontraditional and traditional undergraduate college students who are military veterans those who are not, when controlling for age, gender, and family size.

H_A6: There is a difference in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work between nontraditional and traditional undergraduate college students who are military veterans those who are not, when controlling for age, gender, and family size.

This chapter details the data collection process, which includes the following four major topics: data collection, treatment and intervention, results of the study, and summary. The data collection for the study describes the time frame, recruitment methods used, and response rates. Discrepancies found during the data collection process will be

explained, and justifications of the models will be detailed. The treatment and intervention of the administrated plan mentioned in Chapter 3, challenges, and preventive methods used to correct challenges found are detailed. The results of the study are presented through descriptive statistics for the appropriate characteristics of the sample. Assumptions met are explained with statistical analysis, findings and hypotheses responds for statistically significant or failure to reject a null hypothesis. Finally, the chapter summarizes the answers found for the research questions and introduces Chapter 5.

Data Collection

I obtained the sample for the study using the convenience method in which each participant responded to a qualifying question and an identifying question. To identify each participant as a traditional or nontraditional student, I relied on the participants' demographic response. Participants responded to demographic questions about age, marital status, dependent status, and veteran status.

Participant surveys were separated into one of the four groups based on the following criteria.

1. Nontraditional undergraduate students transitioning from college-to-work.
2. Nontraditional undergraduate veteran students transitioning from college-to-work.
3. Traditional undergraduate nonveteran students transitioning from college-to-work.

4. Traditional undergraduate veteran students transitioning from college-to-work.

Nontraditional undergraduate students: Nontraditional undergraduate students transitioning from college-to-work met one or more of the following criteria: they were independent for financial aid purposes; had one or more dependents; were a single caregiver; lacked a traditional high school diploma; had delayed postsecondary enrollment; attended school part-time, and had part-time employment (NCES, 2015).

Nontraditional undergraduate veteran students: Nontraditional undergraduate veteran students transitioning from college-to-work met one or more of the following characteristics: independent for financial aid purposes; had one or more dependents; a single caregiver; lacked a traditional high school diploma; delayed postsecondary enrollment; attended school part-time; had part-time employment; and serviced as a member or veteran of the U.S. armed forces (NCES, 2015; Veteran Administration, 2015).

Traditional undergraduate nonveteran students: Traditional undergraduate nonveteran students transitioned from college-to-work met one or more of the following characteristics: were enrolled in college immediately after graduation from high school; attended college full-time; pursued a bachelor's degree; financially dependent on others; had no children; and were employed part-time during the academic year (NCES, 2015).

Traditional undergraduate veteran students: Traditional undergraduate veteran students transitioned from college-to-work met one or more of the following characteristics: attended college full-time; pursued a bachelor's degree; financially

dependent on others; had no children; were employed part-time during the academic year; and serviced as a member or veteran of the U.S. armed forces (NCES, 2015; Veteran Administration, 2015).

The data analysis plan was followed with no adverse events or serious consequences to report. However, the survey invitation launched through SurveyMonkey in March 2018 had a high failure rate and few participants. Therefore, SurveyMonkey suggested discontinuing the survey. A survey specialist from SurveyMonkey provided a consultation to revise the original qualifying question from, "Will you be graduating from a four-year degree within the next year" to "Do you currently attend college?" Another suggestion was to specify the recruited audience by adding filters to the population search. The filters included college students and veterans within the United States rather than college students only. I sent a request to change the study procedure to the Walden University IRB to revise the qualifying question based on the recommendations from SurveyMonkey. The change to the IRB application was made and approved by April 2018. The changes resulted in 278 completed surveys. I sent survey invitations at various dates, using various recruitment methods.

A survey invitation was sent to the Walden Participant Pool in January 2018 and yielded 22 completed surveys. The April 2018 invitation produced enough respondents. However, there was a lack of veteran participants. At the time, the veteran participant count was only at 15. Therefore, another survey invitation was launched and sent only to veterans, which resulted in 169 participants. To solidify the veteran response rate, I launched a second survey invitation in June 2018, which resulted in 87 participants. The

participant demographic information as shown in Table 1 resulted in 99 nontraditional students, 119 traditional students, 57 veteran students, and 161 nonveteran students

Table 1

Demographic Summary of the Sample

	Traditional veterans N = 12		*Nontraditional veterans, N= 45*		*Traditional nonveterans, N = 107*		*Nontraditional nonveterans, N = 54*	
Covariate	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Age	1.33	.060	2.00	.041	1.11	.025	2.00	.033
Gender	1.56	1.04	1.46	.071	1.78	.044	1.78	.057
Family size	.389	.101	.872	.069	.198	.043	.550	.055

Note. There was a total of 571 participants; 278 consented to complete the survey; total participants 218 with 12 traditional veterans (7 men/5 women), age 18-23, with no dependents; 107 traditional nonveterans (55 men/52 women), age 18-23, with no dependents; 45 nontraditional veterans (9 men/36 women), age 24 or older, with dependents; and 54 nontraditional nonveterans (36 men/18 women), age 24 or older, with no dependents.

Results

I conducted normality testing of the dependent variables to evaluate the assumptions of MANOVA/MANCOVA. The assumption of normality for veteran status and student type was not satisfied for all groups of readiness, confidence, control, perceived support, and decision independence as assessed by Shapiro-Wilks test ($p >$ .05). I used skewness, kurtosis, and histograms to investigate the independent variables' normal distribution. The assumption of normality for veteran status and student type was confirmed and satisfied for all group combinations of readiness, confidence, control, perceived support, and decision independence, as assessed by visual inspection of histograms (see Appendix C).

The assumption of normality for veteran status and student type was satisfied for all group combinations of readiness, confidence, control, perceived support, and decision

independence, as assessed by visual inspection of normal Q-Q and normal P-P plots (see Appendix D). Finally scatter plots were generated to determine if anomalies or outliers existed in the data and none were found.

I used a questionnaire to measure the five constructs of the CTI survey. The *readiness* scale consisted of 13 questions, the *confidence* scale 11 questions, the *control* scale 6 questions; the *perceived support* scale 5 questions; and the *decision independence* scale 5 questions. Cronbach's Alpha was used to measure the reliability statistics for the five constructs as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Reliability Statistics With Cronbach's Alpha

Scale	*M*	*SD*	*A*
Readiness	35.80	8.67	.75
Confidence	35.41	8.64	.75
Control	18.33	5.50	.66
Perceived support	19.70	4.30	.49
Decision independence	16.10	4.80	.64

Note. Although all scales from the CTI did not have high reliability statistics with Cronbach's Alpha; internal consistency was met by measuring homogeneity by assessing the Box M's test.

To test the hypotheses for Research Questions 1, 2 and 3, I performed a MANOVA. To examine Research Questions 4, 5, and 6, I performed MANCOVA. MANOVA and MANCOVA were used to test for significant differences between group means (Green & Salkind, 2010). MANOVA allowed for differences of group means of multiple dependent variables, MANCOVA controlled for covariates. The overall

MANOVA and MANCOVA examined the five dependent variables related to perceptions of transition preparedness as shown in Table 3. Then, I examined follow-up ANOVA results generated from the overall analysis.

Table 3

Overall Dependent Variables of Transition Preparedness

	Traditional veterans N = 12		*Nontraditional veterans, N= 45*		*Traditional nonveterans, N = 107*		*Nontraditional nonveterans, N = 54*	
Scale	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Readiness	53.42	7.84	54.56	9.79	53.32	7.53	56.26	7.46
Confidence	34.33	7.85	34.76	9.85	36.22	9.09	40.87	8.93
Control	17.67	4.72	17.67	6.27	17.76	4.99	20.17	5.65
Perceived support	17.25	3.17	18.09	4.18	19.56	3.95	21.83	4.41
Decision independence	16.92	2.54	16.82	2.78	16.88	2.74	17.85	3.49

Note; There were a total of 218 completed surveys with 99 nontraditional students; 119 traditional students; 57 veterans' students; and 161 nonveteran students.

Examining Research Questions with MANOVA

The first three research questions were examined in a single MANOVA. Results of the analysis showed there was homogeneity of variance/covariance matrices, as assessed by Box's M test (p = .017). The research questions examine the main effects of student type, veteran status, and the student type by veteran status interaction. Post hoc analyses were not needed as each of the independent variables has only two levels or categories. The overall MANOVA model was statistically significant between traditional and nontraditional students in the differences associated with perceived transition preparedness F (5,210) = 4.002, p < .002; Wilks' Λ = .913; partial η^2 = .087. As such, the step-down ANOVAs were examined for each of the dependent variables.

To evaluate this Research Question 1, I examined the main effect of student status. The step-down univariate analyses showed that when examining student type (traditional vs. nontraditional), there were significant differences for the CTI measures. The CTI measure of perceived support had a significant main effect for student type (F (1,214) = 10.617, $p < .001$), with nontraditional students reporting slightly higher levels of perceived support (M = 19.96) compared to traditional students (M = 18.405). The step-down univariate analyses for the CTI measures of readiness, confidence, control, and decision independence showed no significant differences for student type (traditional vs. nontraditional).

To evaluate this Research Question 2, I examined the main effect of veteran status. The step-down univariate analyses showed that when examining veteran status (veteran vs. nonveteran) there were significant differences for the CTI measures. First, for confidence, there was a main effect for veteran status (F (1,214) = 9.816, $p < .002$), with nonveterans reporting a higher level of confidence (M = 38.55) compared to veterans (M = 34.54). Second, for perceived support, there was a significant main effect for veteran status F (1,214) =23.226, $p < .000$) with nonveterans reporting higher level of perceived support (M = 20.70) compared to veterans (M = 17.67). The step-down univariate analyses for CTI measures readiness, control, and decision independence showed no significant differences for veteran status (veterans vs. nonveterans).

To evaluate this Research Question 3, I examined the main effect of student type (traditional vs. nontraditional) and veteran status (veterans vs. nonveterans). The step-down univariate analyses showed that when examining the interaction with student type

(traditional vs. nontraditional) and veteran status (veteran vs. nonveteran) there were no significant differences for the CTI measures.

Examining Research Questions With MANCOVA

Results of the analysis showed there was homogeneity of variance/covariance matrices, as assessed by Box's M test (p=.017). The last three research questions were examined in a single MANCOVA. The research questions examined the main effects of student type, veteran status, and the student type by veteran status interaction, controlling for age, gender, and family size. Post hoc analyses were not needed as each of the independent variables has only two levels or categories. The overall MANCOVA model was statistically significant between traditional and nontraditional students in the differences associated with perceived transition preparedness F (5,207) =4.019, p<.002; Wilks' Λ = .912; partial η^2 = .088. As such, the step down ANCOVA's was examined for each of the dependent variables.

To evaluate this Research Question 4, I examined the main effect of student status. The step-down univariate analyses show that when examining student type (traditional vs. nontraditional), controlled for age, gender, and family size, there were significant differences in the main effect for the CTI measures. The CTI measure confidence had significant main effect for student type and gender (F (1,214) =9.146; p < .003), with women traditional students reporting higher levels of confidence (M=36.56) compared to men traditional students (M=34.04); women nontraditional students reporting higher levels of confidence (M=40.26) compared to men nontraditional students (M=34.61). For the CTI measure of control, there was a significant main effect

for gender (F (1,214) =18.917; p <.000), with women traditional students reporting a higher level of control (M=18.21) compared to men traditional students (M=16.00); women nontraditional students reporting higher levels of control (M=20.77) compared to men nontraditional students (M=16.24). The CTI measure decision independence, there was a significant main effect for gender (F (1,214) =10.865; p <.001), with women traditional students reporting higher levels of decision independence (M=17.18) compared to men traditional students (M=15.76); women nontraditional students reporting higher levels of decision independence (M=17.95) compared to men nontraditional students (M=16.47). The step-down univariate analyses for the CTI measures readiness and perceived support show no significant differences for student type (traditional vs. nontraditional) nor with covariates age and family size.

To evaluate this Research Question 5, I examined the main effect of veteran status. The step-down univariate analyses show that when examining veteran status (veteran vs. nonveteran), there were significant differences in the main effect for the CTI measure. The CTI measure for control, there was significant main effect for gender (F (1,214) =13.720; p<.000), with women nonveterans reporting higher levels of control (M=19.38) compared to men non-veterans (M=15.53); women veterans (M=18.50) compared to men veterans (M=16.86). The CTI measure decision independence, there was significant main effect for gender (F (1, 214) =8.257; p<.004), with women nonveterans reporting slightly higher levels of decision independence (M=17.60) compared to men nonveterans (M=15.77); women veterans (M=17.00) compared to men veterans (M=16.70). The step-down univariate analyses for the CTI measures readiness,

confidence and perceived support, show no significant differences for veteran status (veterans vs. nonveterans) nor with covariates age and family size.

To evaluate this Research Question 6, I examined the main effect of the interaction between student type and veteran status, controlling for age, gender, and family size. The step-down univariate analyses show that when examining the interaction of student type (traditional vs. nontraditional) with veteran status (veteran vs. nonveteran), controlling for age, gender, and family size there were significant differences in the main effect for the CTI measures. The CTI measure control (F (1,214) =14.472; p<.000) for women traditional veterans (M=17.20) were lower compared to men traditional veterans (M=20.00). However, women traditional nonveterans (M=18.33) reporting higher level of control compared to men traditional nonveterans (M=15.65). Women nontraditional veterans (M=19.22) reporting high levels of control compared to men nontraditional veterans (M=16.63); women nontraditional nonveterans (M=21.42) reporting higher levels of control compared to men nontraditional nonveterans (M=15.27). The CTI measure decision independence (F (1,214) =8.406; p<.004) for women traditional veterans were reporting slightly lower levels (M=16.90) compared to men traditional veterans (M=17.00). However, women traditional nonveterans were reporting higher decision independence (M=17.21) compared to traditional men nonveterans (M=15.65). Whereas, women nontraditional veterans were reporting higher levels of decision independence (M=17.06) compared to men nontraditional veterans (M=16.67) and women nontraditional nonveterans reporting higher levels of decision independence (M=18.33) compared to men nontraditional

nonveterans (M=16.00). The step-down univariate analyses for the CTI measures readiness, confidence and perceived support, show no significant differences for the interaction of student type (traditional vs. nontraditional) and veterans' status (veterans vs. nonveteran), nor with covariates age and family size.

Summary

The purpose of this quantitative study was to compare the perceptions toward transition preparedness in terms of the readiness, confidence, control, perceived support, and decision independence based on veteran status (veteran vs. nonveteran) and student type (nontraditional vs. traditional) undergraduate college students while statistically controlling for age, gender, and family size. The goal of the study was to provide students with accurate information regarding employment during anticipated transitions.

This chapter included the description of the data collection process, analysis, and results of the study. The data collection for the study described the time frame, recruitment methods used, and response rates. Discrepancies found during the data collection process were explained, and justifications of the models were detailed. The treatment and intervention of the administrated plan mentioned in chapter 3, challenges, and preventive methods used to correct challenges found were included in this chapter. The results of the study were presented through descriptive statistics for the appropriate characteristics of the sample. The analysis resulted in rejecting the null hypothesis for research questions 1and 2.

The results of the hypothesis for research question 3 failed to be rejected. Research questions 4-6 the null hypothesis failed to be rejected overall, when controlling

for age, gender, and family size there was statistical significance in gender for confidence, control, and decision independence of the CTI measures. Chapter 5 will have the interpretation of the findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, implications, and conclusions to the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

Introduction

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2013), traditional undergraduate students are 24% more likely to gain employment after graduating from college compared to undergraduate nontraditional veteran students who are more likely to experience a longer transition period causing a delay toward employment (National Center for Veteran Analysis and Statistics, 2015). Therefore, understanding veterans' perceptions during transition from college-to-work is important to provide students with proper guidance according to degree plan, military education and training, and military work experience. In this chapter, I will discuss the findings of the study; the study's limitations; provide recommendations and implications; and finally, conclusions.

Interpretation of the Findings

When comparing traditional students to nontraditional students, research has indicated that students who lack preparedness for transitioning into college face challenges such as lack of academic preparation and financial resources (Bushnell, 2012; Elam, Stratton, & Gibson, 2007; Kraus, 2012). According to Tovar and Simon (2006), challenges may have an effect on a student's career development process while in college. Tovar and Simon found that students expressed a desire for institutional assistance during the transition process and suggested institutional staff considers academic preparation, employment services, and motivation levels when developing support services and academic programs.

A successful transition from college-to-work differs between traditional and nontraditional undergraduate students (Ruh, Spicer, & Vaughn, 2009; Vance & Miller, 2007). The need to maximize transition readiness for nontraditional undergraduate students is further exacerbated when the student is a nontraditional undergraduate veteran. Results of the analysis showed there were differences between traditional and nontraditional students; veteran and nonveteran students; and family size. As a result, institutional structures, social workers, and support from peer connection (Hoffman-Johnson, 2007) will need to collaborate to effectively increase transition readiness among nontraditional undergraduate veteran students.

Key Findings

The survey category *readiness* measured the participants' motivation for making the move from college-to-work. The overall readiness between student type and veteran status in the differences associated with perceived transition preparedness, showed that traditional veteran students and traditional nonveteran students had similar levels of high readiness (see Appendix E). *Confidence* measured how the participants perceived completing tasks necessary to make a successful transition from college-to-work. The overall level of confidence between student type and veteran status in the differences associated with perceived transition preparedness showed that traditional veteran students and nontraditional veteran students had similar levels of high confidence (see Appendix F). *Control* measured the participants' perception of being in control of the transition from college-to-work. The overall level of control showed that traditional nonveteran students and nontraditional veteran students had the same levels of high control (see

Appendix G). Perceived support measured the participants' form of social support such as the transition process, amount of stress during the process, and progress toward completing the transition process. The overall level of perceived support between student type and veteran status in the differences associated with perceived transition preparedness showed that traditional veteran students had the lowest level of perceived support compared to nontraditional nonveteran students with the highest level of perceived support (see Appendix H). *Decision independence* measured the participants' perception of the transition process as an independent decision with consideration for the needs and desires of significant others. The overall level of decision independence between student type and veteran status in the differences associated with perceived transition preparedness showed that traditional nonveteran students and nontraditional veteran students had similar levels of decision independence (see Appendix I).

As I mentioned in Chapter 4, differences were found for gender only. The covariate gender measured a participants' gender identity, which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned to a person at birth and may or may not be made visible to others. Whereas, family size was measured as a participant having a spouse, children, or any individual related to the participant. The family member was solely dependent on the participant for financial support. Age was measured for the sole purpose of understanding if age-specific programs are necessary to promote positive transition from college-to-work.

Limitations of the Study

This study had a few limitations worth mentioning. First, as I mentioned in Chapter 1, I do not know whether the undergraduate students who participated in the

study were the same on all relevant criteria as those undergraduate students who declined to participate (i.e., undergraduate traditional students who were not attending an online degree through Walden University). Therefore, the covariates (age, gender, and family size) and demographic questions may or may not have been self-reported accurately. The second limitation was specifically with the recruitment of veteran undergraduate students, who were exceptionally difficult to obtain through both participation pools (Walden Student Participant Pool and SurveyMonkey). Therefore, recruitment methods using one-on-one contact rather than online participation may prove more effective. The last limitation was my inability to refine the independent variables. An example would be the independent variable veteran status (veterans vs. nonveterans), which could be studied by the differences between officer and enlisted military members, compared across the levels of rank. Also, difference between career fields such as military infantry division or aero-vac medical personnel compared to careers for nonmilitary members such as police/detectives or emergency medical technicians.

Threats to Validity

External validity refers to how generalizable the findings of a study would be outside of the study's population (Campbell & Stanley, 1966; Cook & Campbell, 1979). A concerning threat to this study's external validity was the failure rate of the second survey invitation. Since the survey had a vague qualifying question, the survey team with SurveyMonkey suggested rephrasing the qualifying question. The second suggestion was to re-launch the survey with a targeted audience of veterans and college students as opposed to the nontraditional undergraduate student population throughout the United

States. Narrowing down the targeted population and the re-launch of the survey made it possible for the results to be skewed based on focused targeted audiences (veteran and college students only) versus the wider audience in colleges within the United States. The adjustment was necessary to obtain the required data. Future researchers may want to target specific universities that appeal to nontraditional veteran students as well as more traditional student populations.

Internal validity threats refer to how precisely the study's findings can be defined and understood (Campbell & Stanley, 1966; Cook & Campbell, 1979; Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). The history threat (Barker, 2017) may be relevant as participants' responses may have been affected by the point in time that the survey was completed (see Barker, 2017). An example would be the original launch of the survey and how the qualifying question's vagueness led to the low participant response and failure of the survey. Therefore, I made a request to Walden University's IRB to revise the original qualifying question and re-launch the survey to obtain a higher success/completion rate. Based on the original limitations to the study listed in Chapter 1, I found that the following limitations existed: it remained unknown whether the undergraduate students who participated in the study were the same on all relevant criteria than those undergraduate students who declined to participate (i.e., undergraduate traditional students who did not attend an online degree through Walden University).

Recommendations

As I mentioned in Chapter 2, among the key factors that contribute to veteran student transition success are colleges' and universities' assimilation of organizational

structures that conform to veteran students (Daly & Garrity, 2013); peer connections and support from veteran services (Jones, 2013); and resources for coping with significant changes during transition experiences (Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008). However, one area that has been shown to be important for traditional students, preparedness for college-to-work transitions (Hooley, Marriott, & Sampson, 2011) has not been adequately studied in the veteran population (Zinger & Cohen, 2010). According to the National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics (NCVAS, 2015), the percentage rate of nontraditional undergraduate veteran students was 32.8% compared to 27.6% of traditional undergraduate nonveteran students. Therefore, understanding veterans' perceptions during transition from college-to-work was important to study as a means to provide students with proper guidance according to degree plan; military education and training; and military work experience to achieve career success and avoid a slow recovery of the civilian labor force.

In this study I examined the perceptions, comparing traditional and nontraditional students, along with veteran and nonveteran students. Based on the CTI measures veterans were reporting higher levels of readiness (M = 53.99) with lower levels of control and perceived support (M = 17.67; see Appendix J).The findings helped to make available three recommendations: (a) to conduct a univariate study on nontraditional veteran students only; (b) incorporate recruitment efforts of nontraditional veteran students with veteran career counseling programs such as Career Scope; and (c) college/universities career counselors/social workers connect with the Veteran Affairs Co-Op training program. Research has indicated that nontraditional veteran students with

a high level of readiness during transition were likely to have a successful transition from college-to-work (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006; Griffin & Gilbert, 2015; Savitsky, Illingworth, & DuLaney, 2009). However, findings in this study suggested that there was a low level of perceived transition preparedness for the CTI measure of decision independence among nontraditional veteran students (M=16.82) during transition. Whereas, the highest level of perceived preparedness for the CTI measure, confidence, was among nontraditional nonveteran students (M=40.87) during transition (see Appendix J).

I made the first recommendation to conduct a univariate study on nontraditional veteran students only and focus on specific counselor work placement programs for veteran students. Programs that enhance nontraditional undergraduate student's degree completion rates. An example of such programs would be The Principles of Excellence Program (PEP) (Veterans Administration, 2018)). PEP requires colleges/universities that receive federal funding through programs such as the GI Bill to follow certain guidelines (i.e., provide an educational plan with timeline; assign a point of contact during ongoing academic and financial advice; and allow nontraditional veteran students with long- and short-term periods of time off due to service obligations) to name a few.

Lack of policy structures addressing transitional challenges during the nontraditional veteran students' transition from college-to-work often correlate with the level of readiness a student has toward seeking employment upon graduation (Hermon & Davis, 2004; Powers, 2010; Ray & Heaslip, 2011). The second recommendation is for

colleges/universities to incorporate recruitment efforts of nontraditional veteran students with veteran career counseling programs such as Career Scope. Career Scope recommends careers that are suitable for a nontraditional veteran student interest and skill level gained through their military service (Veterans Administration, 2018). Provided that a nontraditional veteran student participates in the Career Scope through the Veterans Affairs this assessment would help college/university counselors with degree placement. Career Scope also recommends courses or training programs that can help nontraditional veteran students after courses or training has been completed. Therefore, the success rate of veteran degree completion could possibly increase.

Social support to build a base of knowledge on the academic recruitment of military veterans equates to a beneficial relationship between veteran students and high education (Veterans Administration, 2015). The third recommendation would be for college/universities career counselors/social workers to connect with Veteran Affairs Co-Op training program. This program helps a nontraditional veteran student to have full-time work experience in between periods of attending full-time courses. The veteran's cost for books, tuition, and housing are part of the Co-Op training program (Veterans Administration, 2018). With less stress on financial support for school and housing success rates of degree completion and transition from college-to-work will increase. College/universities offer various programs for nontraditional veteran students as does the Veteran Affairs. However, a lack of incorporating the two entities has caused each program to have a minimized success rate (Veterans Administration 2015).

If these recommendations were used, they would help to promote positive social change for nontraditional undergraduate students when transitioning from college-to-work. The findings from this study could help to improve the well-being of the nontraditional undergraduate veteran student population, by providing specific recommendations for nontraditional undergraduate veteran students actively seeking transition assistance. These recommendations could also bring attention to education institutions that lacked equal distribution of proper guidance according to degree plan based on military work experience, and military education.

Implications

Based on the projected populations to the civilian labor force this study might increase the probability of improving the transition services for nontraditional undergraduate veteran students if the recommendations are implemented. Such implementation would help to promote positive social change for nontraditional undergraduate veteran students when transitioning from college-to-work based on the three recommendations.

Conclusion

A multitude of studies have been conducted on college-to-work transition among military veterans (Burnett & Segoria 2009; DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchell, 2008; Gaiter, 2015; Polach, 2004; Sagen, Dallam, & Laverty, 2000). However, one area that was shown to be important for traditional students, preparedness for college-to-work transitions, was lacking for nontraditional veteran students. This study addressed perceptions of college-to-work preparedness among traditional and nontraditional

students (Turner, 2014) where the nontraditional college students are military veterans, to determine difference between groups.

While scholars have used Schlossberg's transition theory for more than 35 years in which researchers have demonstrated that nontraditional students were vulnerable to financial challenges and family commitments that can affect their levels of stress and decrease degree completion rates. Although, a multitude of studies have been conducted on college-to-work transition researchers have yet to establish if differences in the perceptions toward transition preparedness from college-to-work among traditional and nontraditional college students exists. This study addressed the perceptions of college-to-work preparedness among nontraditional veteran students to understand if academic/career counselors are providing students with accurate information regarding employment during anticipated transitions. The study analysis followed the career transition model, the purpose of this quantitative study was to compare the perceptions toward transition preparedness, specifically concepts of readiness, confidence, control, perceived support, and decision independence, of traditional and nontraditional college students, where the nontraditional college students are military veterans. By intentionally incorporating the transition theory into the career transition model and providing three recommendations based on the findings of this study. Academic advisors will be able to exert a positive impact on nontraditional student transition from college-to-work by incorporating the recommendations with current practices. The dependent variables were measured by the CTI survey. More research is needed to determine differences between current veteran educational practices and programs of nontraditional veteran students.

This study did provide answers to three of the six research questions, and the goal of the study was met by offering recommendations on how to provide accurate information regarding employment to nontraditional veteran students during an anticipated transition.

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Appendix A: IRB Walden Email

From: Laila Turner
Sent: Wednesday, May 03, 2017 6:30 PM
To: IRB@waldenu.edu
Subject: Question on Permission to Use a Test

Hello,

I am currently finishing my written proposal and will be working toward my IRB soon. I have a specific test that I will like to use obtained from Walden University Library and will like to have it distributed through SurveyMonkey. Do I still need to have written permission to use the test and distribute it through SurveyMonkey? According to this test (refer to attachment) it states the following: *"Test content may be reproduced and used for non-commercial research and educational purposes without seeking written permission. Distribution must be controlled, meaning only to the participants engaged in the research or enrolled in the educational activity. Any other type of reproduction or distribution of test content is not authorized without written permission from the author and publisher".*

Thank you,

Laila E. Turner

From: IRB
Sent: Thu 5/4, 5:47 PM
To: Laila Turner
Subject: RE: Question on Permission to Use a Test

Hi Laila,

If the tool is public domain as noted on that permissions page, you will just need to submit that document with your IRB application to document approval to use the tool.
Sincerely,

Libby Munson
Research Ethics Support Specialist
Office of Research Ethics and Compliance
Walden University
100 Washington Avenue South, Suite 900
Minneapolis, MN 55401

Information about the Walden University Institutional Review Board, including instructions for application, may be found at this link: http://academicguides.waldenu.edu/researchcenter/orec

Appendix B: Request to use Survey

Laila Turner

Request to use CTI Survey in Study
2 messages

Laila Turner Wed, May 3, 2017 at 6:54 PM
To: Heppner

Hello Dr. Heppner

My name is Laila E. Turner. I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University, in the Industrial Organizational Psychology program. I am preparing my doctoral research proposal and dissertation to examine the difference between nontraditional and traditional college students' perceptions of transition preparedness. The purpose of my study is to compare the perceptions toward transition preparedness in terms of the readiness, confidence, control, perceived support, and decision independence based on veteran status (veteran vs. nonveteran) and student type (nontraditional vs. traditional) undergraduate college students and statistically controlled for age, gender, and family size. I was fortunate to have served in the Air Force as an Aero Vac Medic. However, once I was honorably discharged, I had difficulty transitioning into civilian life, college, and a new career. The goal of the study is to provide students with accurate information regarding employment during anticipated transitions.

I respectfully request your permission to use the Career Transitions Inventory (CTI) in my study. I have attached a copy of my approved Prospectus to provide more information on how I plan to conduct my study.

Thank you, in advance.

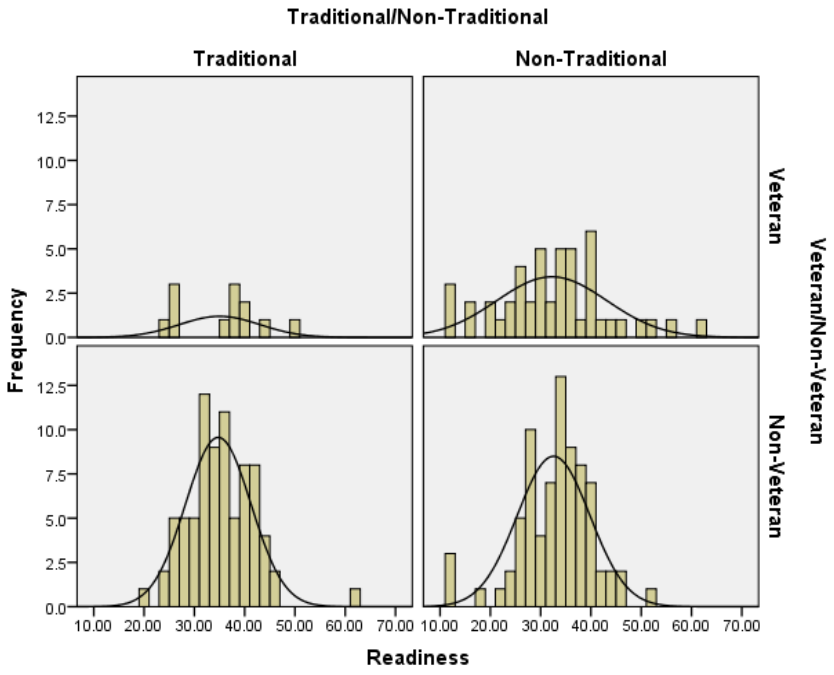
Laila E. Turner

Heppner, Mary Wed, May 3, 2017 at 7:21 PM
To: Laila Turner

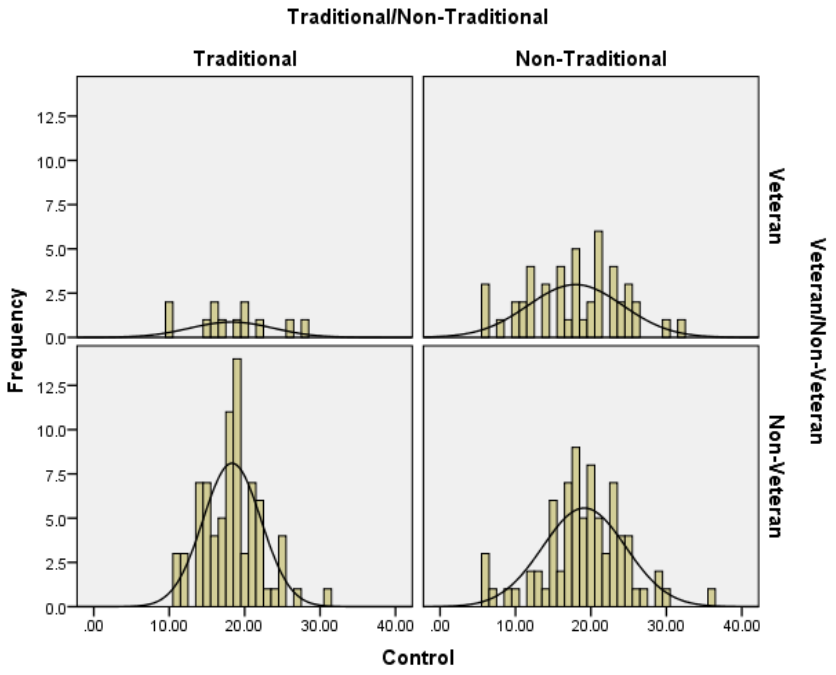
Yes you have my permission to use the CTI in your research. I wish you all the best with this important work! Sincerely, Mary J Heppner PhD

IRB approval #: 11-14-17-0382740

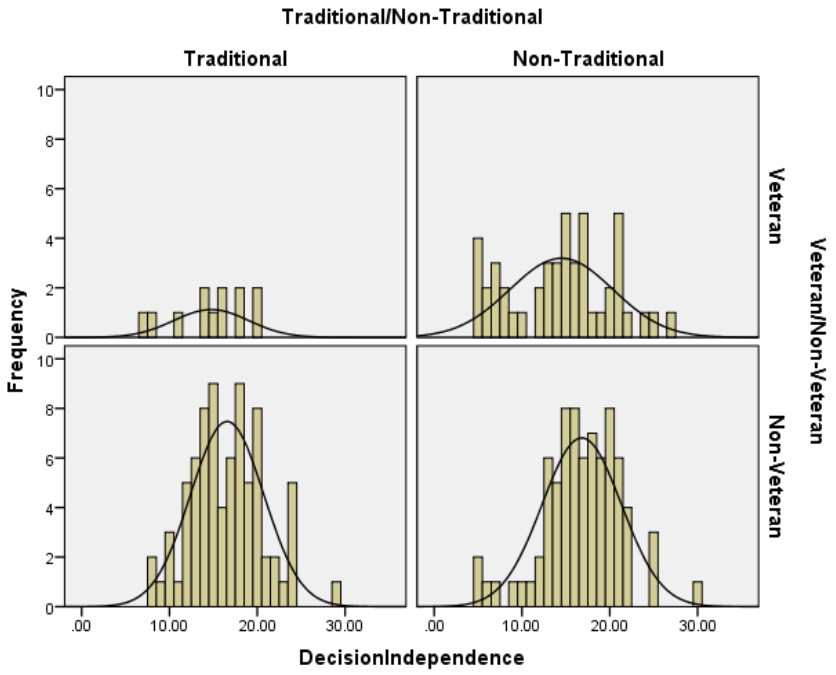
Appendix C: Histograms of Normality for Dependent Variables



Appendix C2

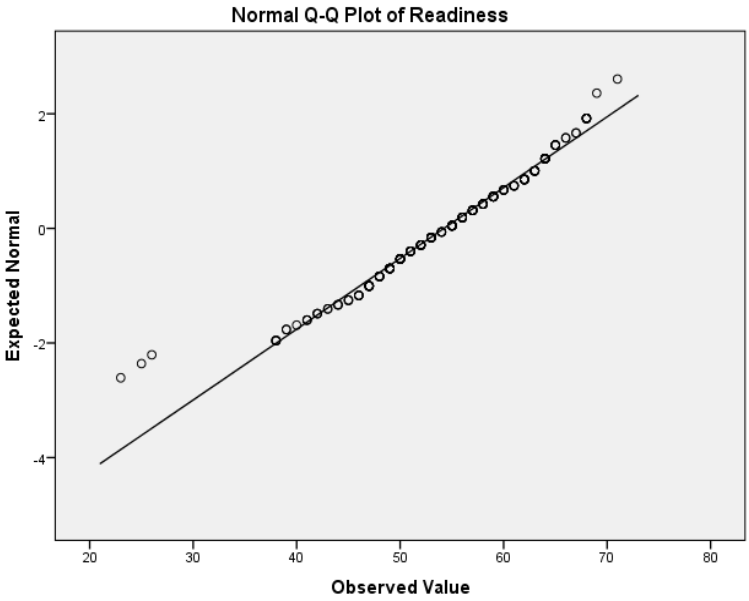

Traditional/Non-Traditional
Traditional
Non-Traditional
Veteran
Non-Veteran
Veteran/Non-Veteran
Frequency
Control
Traditional/Non-Traditional
Traditional
Non-Traditional
Veteran
Non-Veteran
Veteran/Non-Veteran
Frequency
PerceivedSupport

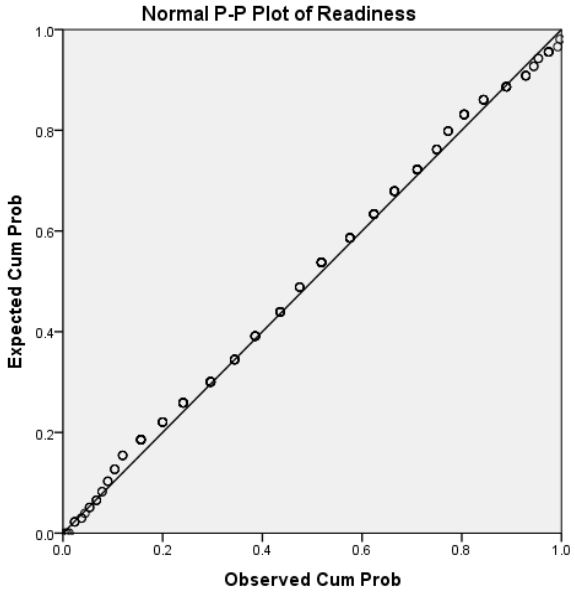
Appendix C3



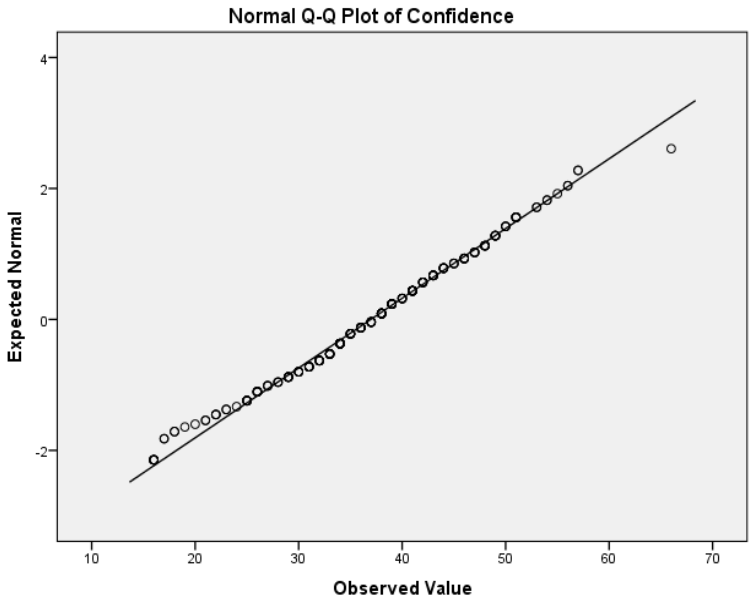
Note. Normal distributions of the dependent variables (readiness, confidence, control, perceived support, and decision independence) across the independent variables (student type vs. veteran status).

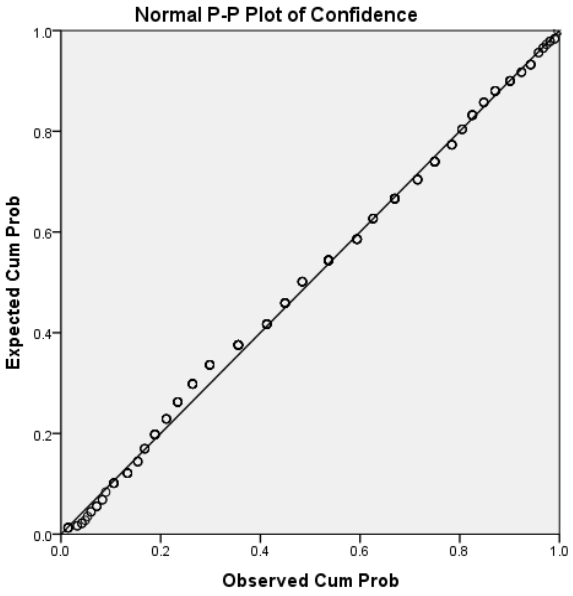
Appendix D1: Q-Q Plots and P-P Plots of CTI Measures



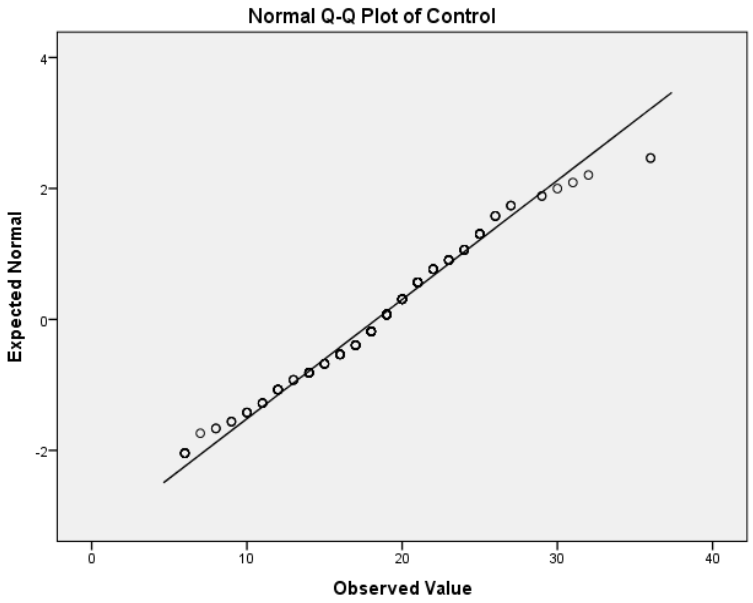


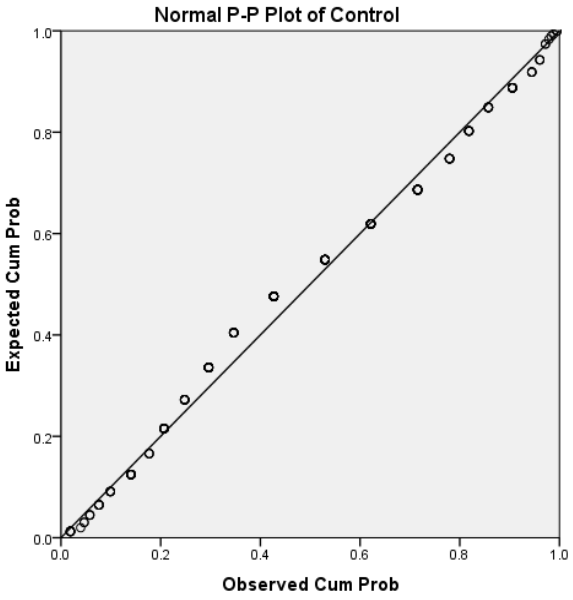
Appendix D2


Normal Q-Q Plot of Confidence
Expected Normal
Observed Value
4
2
0
-2
10
20
30
40
50
60
70

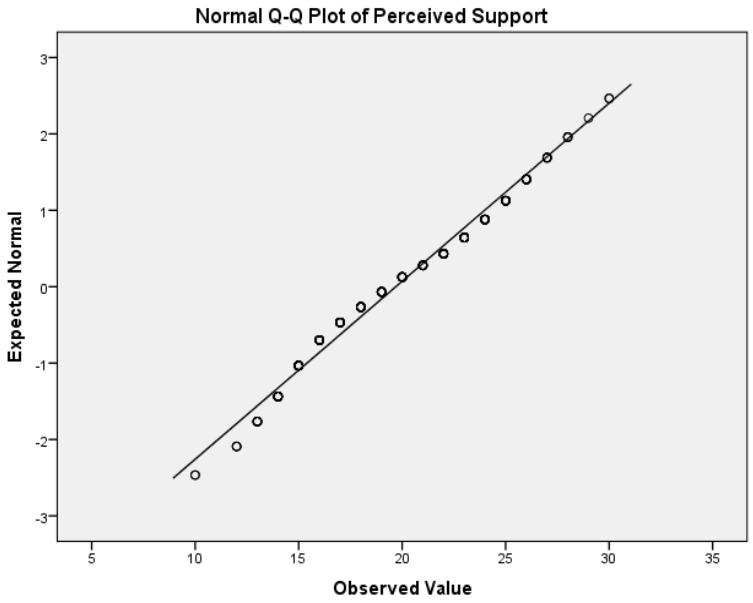

Normal P-P Plot of Confidence
Expected Cum Prob
Observed Cum Prob
1.0
0.8
0.6
0.4
0.2
0.0
0.0
0.2
0.4
0.6
0.8
1.0

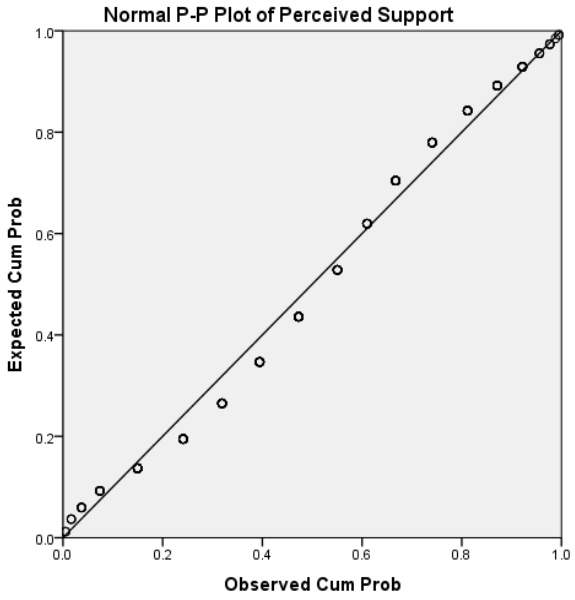
Appendix D3


Normal Q-Q Plot of Control
Expected Normal
Observed Value
4
2
0
-2
0
10
20
30
40

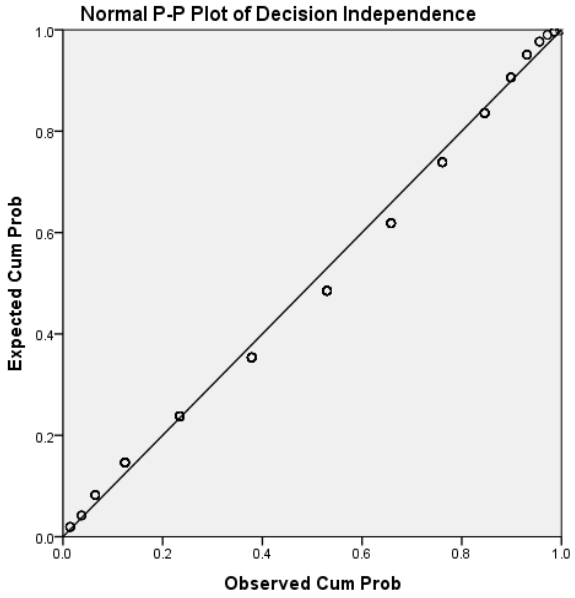

Normal P-P Plot of Control
Expected Cum Prob
Observed Cum Prob
1.0
0.8
0.6
0.4
0.2
0.0
0.0
0.2
0.4
0.6
0.8
1.0

Appendix D4


Normal Q-Q Plot of Perceived Support
Expected Normal
Observed Value
3
2
1
0
-1
-2
-3
5
10
15
20
25
30
35

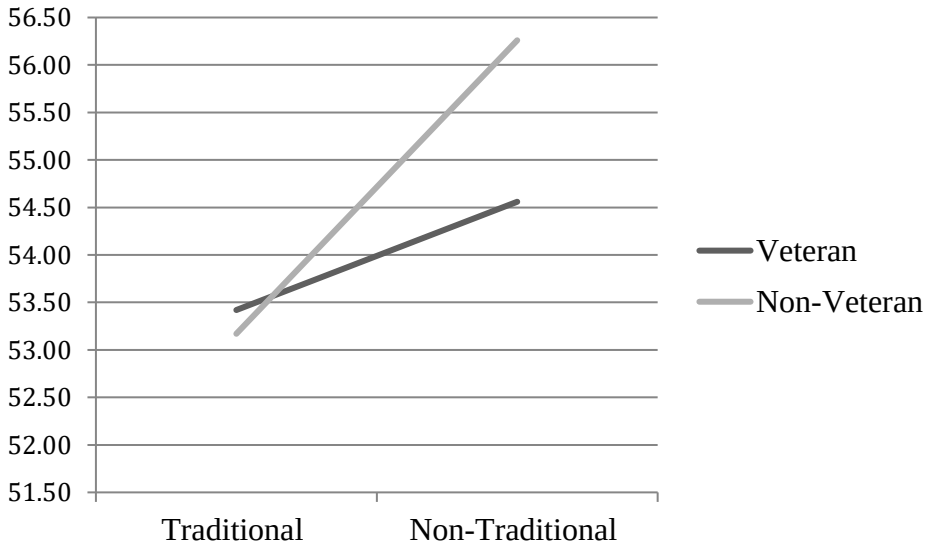

Normal P-P Plot of Perceived Support
Expected Cum Prob
Observed Cum Prob
1.0
0.8
0.6
0.4
0.2
0.0
0.0
0.2
0.4
0.6
0.8
1.0

Appendix D5



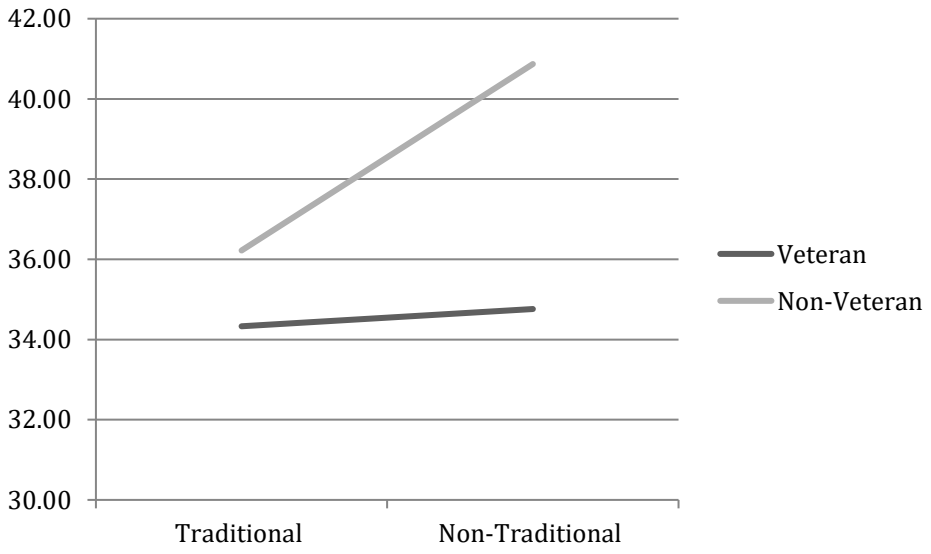
Note. Normal distribution Q-Q plots and P-P plots of the dependent variables (readiness, confidence, control, perceived support, and decision independence) across the independent variables (student type vs. veteran status).

Appendix E: CTI Measure Readiness



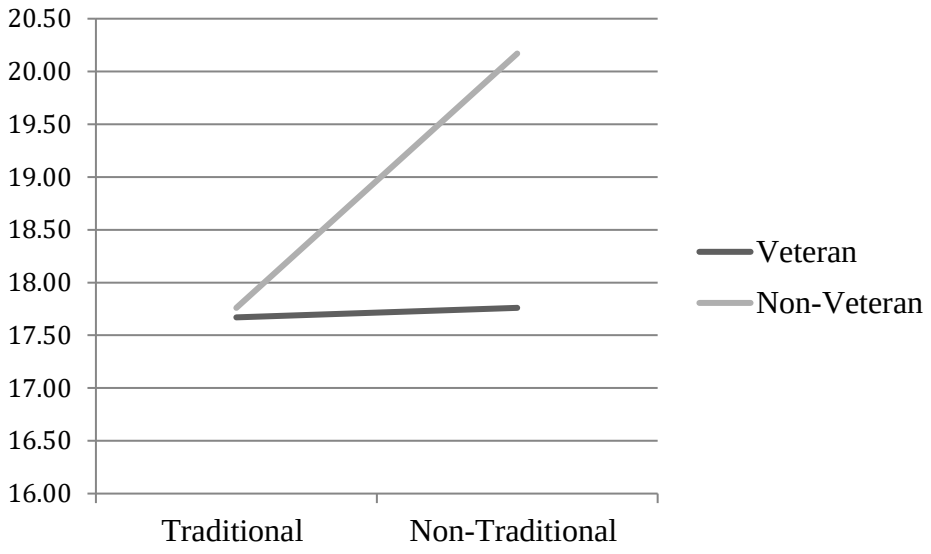
Note. Summary of the MANOVA main effect for the dependent variable readiness. Traditional veteran students (*M*=53.42); and traditional nonveteran students (*M*=53.17) have similar levels of high readiness

Appendix F: CTI Measure Confidence



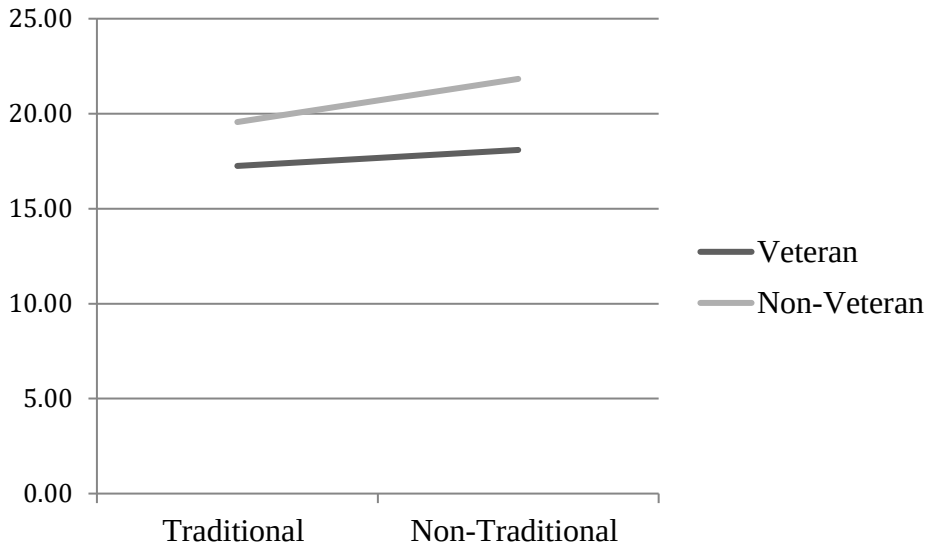
Note. Summary of the MANOVA main effect for dependent variable confidence. Traditional veteran students (*M*=34.33); and nontraditional veteran students (*M*=34.76) had similar levels of high confidence.

Appendix G: CTI Measure Control



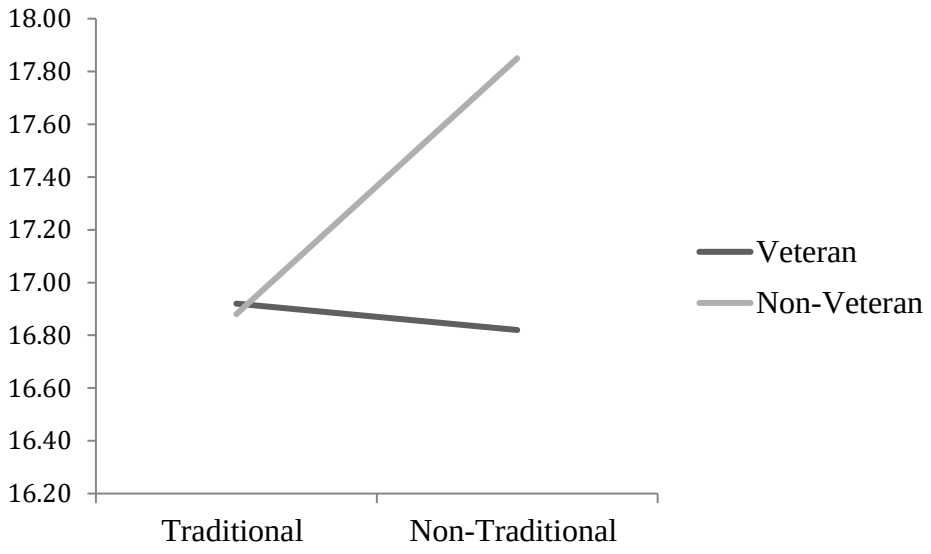
Note. Summary of the MANOVA main effect for dependent variable control. Traditional nonveteran students and nontraditional veteran students (M=17.76) had the same levels of high control.

Appendix H: CTI Measure Perceived Support



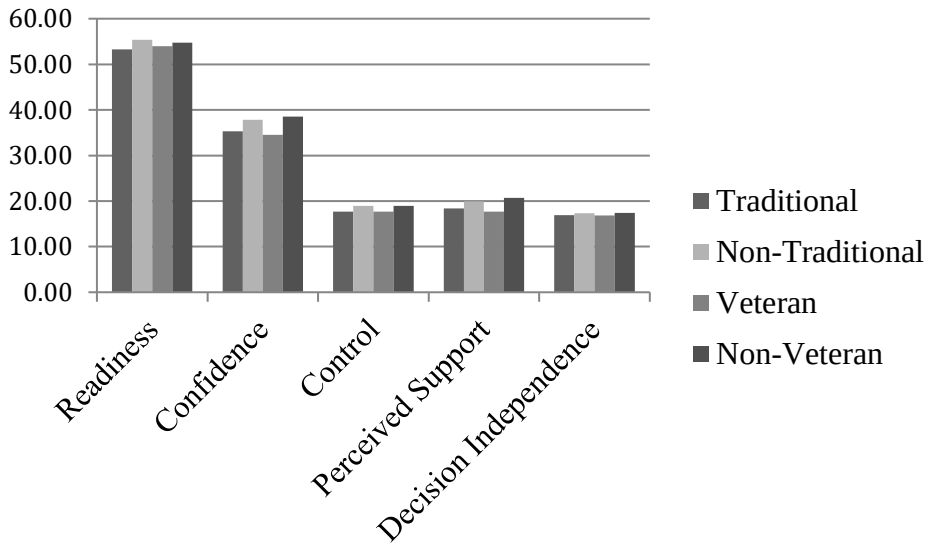
Note. Summary of the MANOVA main effect for perceived support. Traditional veteran students lowest level of perceived support (*M*=17.25); and nontraditional nonveteran students (*M*= 21.83) highest level of perceived support.

Appendix I: CTI Measure Decision Independence



Note. Summary of the MANOVA main effect for dependent variable decision independence. Traditional nonveteran students (*M*=16.88); and nontraditional veteran students (*M*=16.82) had similar levels of decision independence.

Appendix J: Overall CTI



Note. Summary of the MANOVA main effect of overall perceived transition preparedness between student type (traditional vs. nontraditional) and veteran status (veteran vs. nonveteran). Veterans with higher levels of readiness (*M*=53.99) with lower levels of control and perceived support (*M*=17.67).