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The Department of Defense Transition Assistance Program: Servicemember Transition and Reintegration

Angelo Santella
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Walden University

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Angelo Santella

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Walden University
2020

Abstract

The Department of Defense Transition Assistance Program: Servicemember Transition
and Reintegration

by

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MA, St. John's University, 1989

BA, Washington and Lee University, 1977

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

May 2020

Abstract

The Department of Defense (DoD) Transition Assistance Program (TAP) was established by the U.S. federal government to support the transition and reintegration of service members into civilian communities upon discharge or retirement. The problem is that the actual success or failure of the TAP to facilitate that transition is not clearly understood. This quantitative study explored the relationships between former servicemembers who participated in TAP and participation success evaluating program outcomes. Mohr's program theory served as the interpretive lens. Two research questions explored program aspects: (a) What is the individual likelihood that the Individual Development Plan (IDP) and Individual Transition Plan (ITP) process used for servicemember transition and reintegration predicts DoD TAP success and (b) What is the individual likelihood that the academic transition and reintegration process predicts DoD TAP success. A nonexperimental, binary logistic regression using bootstrap sampling was used to conduct the data analyses with 26 student veterans from 3 academic institutions. Key findings illustrated that IDP and ITP did not demonstrate a significant relationship between their use and program success; however, veteran participation in the program's education track did demonstrate a significant relationship between track participation and program success Acceptance ($OR = 9.6, p = .002, CI [-11.295, -9.797]$); Application ($OR = 32.0, p = .002, CI [31.111, 32.609]$). Social change can be supported through focus on continual program improvements such as periodic IDP/ITP reviews, education track reviews, and multiple track attendance in order to enhance servicemember transition and reintegration while maintaining an economically justifiable program to the U.S. taxpayer.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my children, who served their nation as family members of a soldier, and to my wife, who supported my service to this great nation and my other endeavors through over 40 years of marriage. I have no success without their support.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The United States has always counted on its military to provide national security. The United States Department of Defense (US DoD) uses the “conflict continuum” (Department of Defense Joint Publication (DoD JP) 3-0, 2017, p. I-5) to explain the different types of missions that are conducted, to include humanitarian assistance/disaster response, security cooperation, peacekeeping/peacemaking, and combat operations. These missions require servicemembers that are trained to be flexible, operate as a team, and use initiative. Higate (2001) argued that the process of preparing servicemembers to execute these various missions is called “military socialization” (p. 443) which takes the servicemember out of the civilian environment, and prepares that person for military operations.

As Danish and Antonides (2013) highlighted, as of 2009, there were over 2 million servicemember deployments to support multiple operations along the conflict continuum, to include combat and combat support operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, with some of those individuals deploying multiple times. These operations did not stop other military activities from being conducted, such as support to the United Nations Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) which was conducted in 2004 simultaneously with operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. This small example demonstrates the capability diversification required of all servicemembers, regardless of branch of service.

At the end of their tours of duty, regardless of whether it is a single tour or whether the person is completing a military career, all servicemembers return to the

civilian community. However, the process of reintegrating back into that community is not always easy. Higate (2001) argued that military “institutionalization” (p. 446) makes the reintegration process more difficult. Danish and Antonides (2013) emphasized the importance of understanding that regardless of whether the servicemember has been injured during service or not, all returning servicemembers are changed because of their experience (p. 550), which could cause them to feel disconnected from the community. During and after the Vietnam conflict, this disconnection that veterans felt was exacerbated through experiencing protests by the civilian community which caused some veterans to hide their status (Jones, 2017, p. 108). Because of this reintegration difficulty, the United States government, through the US DoD, established the Transition Assistance Program (TAP).

DoD (Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 1332.35, 2016, p. 1) explained that the TAP “Prepares all eligible members of the Military Services for a transition from active duty back to civilian life”; other program definitions highlighted that the program “provides information, tools, and training to ensure Service members and their spouses are prepared for the next step in civilian life whether pursuing additional education, finding a job in the public or private sector, or starting their own business” (military.com, n.d., p. 1). The program has gone through several adjustments over the years but has experienced some of its largest changes since the start of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan in 2002. Cleymans and Conlon (2014) explained that key program changes were initiated by direction of President Obama in 2009 so that servicemembers departing the military would be provided support prior to their departure that would be in line with

their future goals (Cleymans & Conlon, 2014, p. 154). These changes include the establishment of *tracks* so that servicemembers can receive information and guidance in preparation for future employment and/or education as well as “resilience training” to provide the servicemember with methods to mitigate stress during the transition and post-transition processes (Cleymans & Conlon, 2014, pp. 157, 159). This support combination is essential to the success of the individual’s transition and reintegration.

Several independent studies have been conducted to consider the effects of transition and reintegration on servicemembers in both employment and academic settings. However, it was not clear whether independent reviews had been conducted to consider the impact of the TAP on the transition and reintegration process. My study provides some insight into how TAP supports the transition process, and how this transition impacts overall social change within the United States.

This chapter begins with background detail on TAP as explained by both the US DoD and scholars. The study problem and purpose are identified to establish the foundation of the study. The specific research question and affiliated hypothesis follow, along with some general information on the theoretical foundation being used for the study. Information on the methodology is provided, followed by any applicable definitions and assumptions that are required to understand the study’s basis. The study’s scope and limitations are explained, followed by the study’s significance, especially as it pertains to social change. I then provide a synopsis of the key points in the chapter and provide an introduction of the literature review to follow.

Background

Program Details

The DoD TAP has been adjusted over the years to accommodate transition and reintegration requirements and assistance, but it is only since 2009 that the program has provided support in specific transition areas (Cleymans & Conlon, 2014). Prior to that time, programs had provided support in general areas, for example in how to organize a resume and participate in a job interview. However, since 2009, the program has been adjusted to provide detailed support in employment, self-employment, and academic pursuit areas (Cleymans & Conlon, 2014). The current DoD instructions to military organizations responsible for TAP require that each transitioning servicemember develop an individual development plan (IDP) that identifies post-transition goals that will be used to tailor the TAP for the individual (DoDI 1332.55, 2016, p. 46). This individual transition plan (ITP) will be used by the TAP directors to ensure that the servicemember receives the targeted support necessary to achieve the IDP goals (DoDI 1332.35, 2016, p. 46). Mandatory transition training includes pretransition counseling, briefings on benefits provided by the Veterans Administration to the departing servicemember, and preparation of a resume and other employment attainment skills (DoDI 1332.35, 2016). In addition to this, Cleymans and Conlon (2013) identified the three tracks that are available to the servicemember to gain additional support in specific areas: (a) preparation for higher education (p. 159); (b) preparation for technical skills related positions (p. 159); and (c) preparation for small business ownership (pp. 159-160).

Successful program completion is measured by ITP completion by the individual, as determined by the appropriate unit commander (DoDI 1332.35, 2016).

Transition Success

Assuming ITP completion, it could also be assumed that the DoD TAP has met success for that individual. However, meeting program success as determined by the DoD does not necessarily mean that the individual has successfully transitioned into an academic or some type of employment role. There should be some determination as to whether this taxpayer-supported program is actually providing the support necessary for the servicemember to successfully transition.

Additionally, acceptance to an academic institution and/or finding employment is only one part of the transition process. Another key aspect of transition is successful reintegration into the civilian community, which could be made difficult by both the individual and the civilian community itself. One of the key objectives of the DoD TAP is to provide the service member with the tools necessary to mitigate the stress associated with the service member's transition and reintegration process (Cleymans & Conlon, 2013). Cleymans and Conlon (2013) highlighted the resilience training (p. 157) that has been established as part of the TAP to alleviate this problem. However, it is harder to measure success for this training, because although the servicemember may be experiencing stress, he or she may be unable or unwilling to acknowledge it. Danish and Antonides (2013) emphasized the stigma (p. 551) associated with a servicemember's refusal to request assistance. Additionally, the servicemember's reintegration into the community could be impacted by how that community views the veteran. For example,

Danish and Antonides (2013) highlighted the media's fixation with discussing posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as a result of military service when over 80% of their study sample of veterans identified that they had "a stable trajectory of low posttraumatic stress level from pre- to post-deployment or exhibited resilience" (p. 550). In discussing their concept of gaps between the military and civilian community, Rabek-Clemmensen et al. (2012) identified a culture gap that highlights differences in attitudes and values between the two communities that could impact the reintegration process (p. 671). Both the actual transition into employment or academic pursuits and the reintegration process into the civilian community are essential to overall transition success.

The knowledge gap that my study considered is focused on how the TAP impacts the reintegration process. I considered whether the TAP met its identified goals and objectives for the servicemember as it is described in the DoD instructions (DoDIs). Specifically, I considered whether the TAP provided the tools necessary to support the servicemember's reintegration process into an academic community. My study built on the previous studies identified above, but its specific emphasis on how TAP supported the reintegration process for servicemembers allowed for a different focus of the transition assistance process.

Problem Statement

The population of United States military servicemembers as compared to the total United States population is relatively small. Estimates are that about 200,000 servicemembers transition out of the military annually (Department of Defense Transition

to Veteran Program Office [TVPO], n.d.). However, this small segment of the population provides an invaluable service to the nation. Danish and Antonides (2013) argued that assisting a servicemember's transition process is a national responsibility, as these servicemembers have defended the nation's liberty during their service, and although they may return to their communities as changed individuals, these changes are not necessarily negative (pp. 555-556). They also emphasized that most transitioning servicemembers do not have medical issues, but still may have difficulties with the reintegration process. Clemens and Milsom (2008) discussed transition specifically highlighting the importance of preparing enlisted servicemembers for careers upon their discharge and they highlighted the importance of assisting the servicemember in identifying their "self-knowledge" (p. 248) and "occupational knowledge" (p. 249) in preparation for this transition.

The general problem is that although the TAP's success or failure to facilitate this transition/reintegration has established evaluation criteria for the transition process, its ability to support reintegration had not been externally measured. Independent reviews of government programs provide taxpayers with objective information concerning the efficiency and effectiveness of those programs so that people are satisfied that funding is being used wisely to meet the societal need. Additionally, without these reviews, there could be difficulty in adjusting the program because specific needs or unmet program goals may not be clear to program managers. The specific problem is identifying those areas of the program that benefit reintegrating servicemembers and those areas requiring an adjustment in order to better support the reintegration process so that the program

meets its defined goals and objectives while at the same time providing the servicemember with the ability to successfully reintegrate into the civilian community.

A review of the literature highlighted the importance of supporting successful servicemember reintegration into the civilian community and provided a justification of the identified problem. Since servicemembers will eventually depart service, either through completed enlistments, disability, or through retirement, it is important that both the servicemember and the community have methods in place to support the reintegration process. This problem has been discussed by several scholars. Danish and Antonides (2013) argued that the civilian community has difficulty identifying which returning servicemembers have actual transition/reintegration issues based on mental or psychological issues, and which ones are not mentally or psychologically disabled but are still having trouble with the reintegration process. Rahbek-Clemmensen et al. (2012) highlighted the importance of understanding the differences between the military lifestyle and the civilian community, and how those differences could impact the reintegration process. Neill-Harris et al. (2016) addressed this same issue from a collaborative perspective in recommending methods on how military transition and community organizations can coordinate their support activities during the transition process.

Additionally, scholars have reviewed the problem from different perspectives. For example, Ackerman, DiRamio and Garza (2009), Burnett and Segoria (2009), Goldberg, Cooper, Milleville, Barry and Schein (2015), Jones (2017), and Naphan and Elliott (2015) have considered the reintegration process through the eyes of veterans who have entered various academic institutions. Bressler, Bressler, and Bressler (2013),

Heriot, Dickes, and Jauregui (2017), Loughran (2014), and the Small Business Administration (Syracuse University, 2016) have considered the problem from an employment perspective, reviewing both veteran employment by various companies as well as veteran entrepreneurship. All these studies have made various recommendations that impact the particular area that they have reviewed. However, none of these studies has considered whether the DoD TAP has properly prepared the servicemember for transition and the initial reintegration into the civilian community. I considered this to be the key literature gap that my study attempted to address.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of my study was to explore the relationship between the TAP and servicemembers that are participating and have participated in the program, to determine whether the program has assisted those personnel with their overall transition and reintegration from military service to civilian life. To accomplish this, I specifically reviewed how student veterans perceived their experience with the TAP in their transition to academic institutions. To conduct this study, I used a quantitative, nonexperimental method. My dependent variable that I used for the study is DoD TAP success. My independent variables used for the study are a successful completion of the IDP/ITP process, and a successful transition to an academic institution. These variables allowed me to impose a somewhat higher standard than the DoD uses for its program evaluation while also considering an area that the DoD does not evaluate. A self-reporting survey questionnaire was designed, validated, and used to identify program success based on

both successful transition and the servicemember's perception of how the program supported the transition and reintegration process.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

Scholarly research conducted external to the DoD or to the United States government has primarily focused on how veterans perceive their postreintegration status, either as students or as employees, and what actions could be taken to improve their current status. My external study focused on how veterans perceive that the DoD TAP supported the transition and reintegration processes, and what changes, if any, should be made to the program to provide the servicemember better assistance with their reintegration.

Based on this focus and the problem identified above, I have developed the following research questions and hypotheses:

RQ1: What is the individual likelihood that the IDP/ITP process used for servicemember transition and reintegration predicts DoD TAP success?

H_01 : The IDP/ITP process used for servicemember transition and reintegration does not predict DoD TAP success.

H_a1 : The IDP/ITP process used for servicemember transition and reintegration does predict DoD TAP success.

RQ2: What is the individual likelihood that the academic transition and reintegration process predicts DoD TAP success?

H_02 : The academic transition and reintegration processes does not predict DoD TAP success.

H_{a2}: The academic transition and reintegration processes does predict DoD TAP success.

All veterans were asked to respond to questions concerning their overall experience with the TAP, their experience with the IDP/ITP process and whether the educational track supported their efforts to transition into an academic institution; however, student veterans were only requested to respond to those questions focused on areas of the TAP where they participated.

My intent was to explore the relationship between the two independent variables and the dependent variable. To perform this, I used logistic regression. Warner (2013) defined logistic regression as the ability to determine various groupings of individuals (p. 1007). For my study, the dependent variable was measured categorically, either that the veteran believes that the DoD TAP was successful in assisting him or her with their transition and reintegration, or that it did not. The independent variables were measured using a Likert-type scale that identifies the degree of assistance that the veteran believes the program provided. Using Frankfort-Nachmias and Leon-Guerrero (2018, p. 5) as an example, Table 1 illustrates the measurements:

Table 1

Variable Measurement

Variable	Measurement
Dependent – DoD TAP Success	1 – Yes 2 – No
Independent – Overall Successful Transition	1 – No Assistance 2 – Little Assistance 3 – Some Assistance 4 – Extensive Assistance
Independent – Successful Transition to Academic Institution	1 – No Assistance 2 – Little Assistance 3 – Some Assistance 4 – Extensive Assistance
Independent (Optional) – Successful Ability to Manage Stress	1 – No Assistance 2 – Little Assistance 3 – Some Assistance 4 – Extensive Assistance

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that I used for this study was Mohr's program theory, also labeled as process theory. In his review of organizations and their methods, Mohr (1982) juxtaposed process theory with variance theory and explained that while variance theory requires "causality" (p. 38), program theory requires a "probabilistic rearrangement" of events (p. 38). This rearrangement needs to be within a specified time period and needs to produce a final result (p. 38). The theory's key hypothesis is that an organization's achievements can be measured based on the organization's beliefs, or the reasons for the organization's existence (Smith & Larimer, 2013, p. 144). The organization establishes goals and objectives which are focused on the organization's purpose (Smith & Larimer, 2013). The organization then develops processes and procedures that facilitate its ability to meet those goals and objectives (Smith & Larimer,

2013). Program theory establishes the foundation for both internal and external evaluations to determine whether the organization is using those processes and procedures properly and whether its goals and objectives are being attained. I discuss this more fully in Chapter 2.

Program theory can be used to review and evaluate different types of programs. Chen (2005) explained that the theory can be used to evaluate the progress of social programs. I used program theory within my study to evaluate whether the DoD TAP is meeting its objectives of supporting and facilitating both the transition and reintegration processes for servicemembers returning to the civilian community. The theory provided a method to conduct a review of the DoD TAP based on the veteran's perception of whether the program provided assistance in attaining either employment or acceptance into higher education programs, and whether the program provided the tools necessary to combat individual stress during the transition and reintegration processes.

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study was a nonexperimental, quantitative approach. O'Sullivan, Rassel, Berner, and Taliaferro (2017) explained that the quantitative approach allows the researcher to "measure" particular phenomena (p. 42). The nonexperimental design permits the researcher to identify possible relationships between phenomena without the restriction of confirming or denying causality (O'Sullivan et al., 2017, p. 87). Badawy and Bassiouny (2014) used this design to consider the effect of "transformational leadership" on "employee engagement" and on "employee intention to quit" (p. 42). Miskin, Matthews, Wallace, and Fox (2015) used the same design to

explore the relationship between “cultural self-efficacy” (p. 156) and nursing students. For my study, the approach permitted the analysis of potential relationships between the TAP and its participants without the constraints of a controlled environment (O’Sullivan et al., 2017, p. 92).

Data was collected through a survey completed by veterans from two academic institutions. These veterans must have completed the TAP after 2002. This allowed me to measure program success based on changes that occurred in the program between 2002 and 2019. I analyzed the data using logistic regression, which Warner (2013) explained was a testing method used to identify groups by category. This process allowed me to group respondents according to whether the DoD TAP was successful or not in assisting them in general transition and reintegration, as well as in academic institution acceptance.

Definitions

For my study, I provided definitions for the independent variables, and I changed the definition of the dependent variable so that it is different from the DoD definition. The independent variables that I used for this study are a successful completion of IDP/ITP, and successful transition to an academic institution. The dependent variable for this study is DoD TAP success. All of these variables are discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

DoD TAP success: The dependent variable. I defined success as the program accomplishing the goals of facilitating the successful transition of the servicemember into an academic institution while providing the tools necessary to assist the servicemember in mitigating stress during that transition and reintegration period. This differs from how

the DoD measures success, which is the successful completion of the servicemember's ITP, which could include the completion of a job application, an application to a college or university, or actual acceptance in either employment or to an academic institution (DoDI 1332.25, pp. 22-23).

Successful completion of IDP/ITP: An independent variable, measured by whether the veteran perceives that during DoD TAP he or she was provided the tools necessary to successfully transition out of the military and reintegrate into the civilian community. This definition considers the process differently from how the DoD measures success, which is the completion of the IDP/ITP prior to discharge; the key difference is that this definition focuses on the individual's belief concerning the program's support, as opposed to the DoD definition which requires only that the individual completed the program.

Successful transition to an academic institution: An independent variable, measured by whether the veteran was accepted into an academic institution no later than 90 days from the service termination date. This does not mean that the veteran will start classes no later than 90 days after service termination, but that acceptance is received within that timeframe, with the possibility that the veteran will start classes at a later time based on the academic schedule.

Veteran: For this study, a veteran is defined as (a) any servicemember who was honorably discharged from any of the military services (Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marines, and Navy) after 1 January 2002; (b) any servicemember that completed the DoD

TAP prior to their discharge; and (c) any servicemember who is a current student at the two academic institutions from which study participants were solicited.

Additionally, I believed that it was vital to distinguish between transition and reintegration within the context of this study. Because these terms depict the timing of a servicemember's departure from military service to the civilian community, I described them in the order in which they occur:

Reintegration: Used to identify all time after the actual service termination date. Reintegration is not solely focused on when the veteran departed service; it also has to do with how the veteran perceives their individual ability to integrate within the civilian community. The timeframe for this process is individually dependent, and could take days, months, or years.

Transition: The DoD (DoDI 1332.25, 2016) defined transition as “[t]he preparation and process for moving from active service to the civilian sector” (p. 47). That definition places transition squarely within the timeframe prior to the servicemember's termination date. Therefore, within this study, transition was used to identify time from the servicemember's start of TAP up to the servicemember's actual service termination date.

Also, it is important to note that the actual service termination date and completion of active service are not necessarily the same. As discussed above, there is the possibility that a servicemember could use leave/vacation time after completing active service, but before the actual service termination date. This could have an impact on the individual's financial status, as they would be receiving both pay and benefits

during the period between active service completion and the actual service termination date and may impact how they perceived the reintegration process.

Assumptions

For this study, I believed that the key assumption was that all servicemembers that are conducting transition and reintegration are being impacted in some fashion by the process, not just those with physical or mental disabilities. Danish and Antonides (2013) highlighted the fact that not all servicemembers returning from deployments and military service are physically or mentally impaired by that service (p. 550). Rahbek-Clemmensen et al. (2012) emphasized differences in four areas between servicemembers and civilians that could impact reintegration without the servicemember being considered disabled. Clemens and Milsom (2008) identified the transitory nature of military service that could impact a veteran's ability to receive employment upon service termination. My study may have included input from veterans that are designated as both disabled and non-disabled by the uniformed services although I did not directly solicit disabled veteran input for my study.

There are additional assumptions that were required for my study. Since the survey that was used to conduct the study was online, I assumed that the veteran completing the study would have access to a computer and the internet. Additionally, since English was the language used for my study, I assumed that all veterans completing the survey could read, understand, and write in English. Finally, I assumed that responses being provided to me by veterans through the survey process were an accurate portrayal of the veteran's belief concerning the assistance provided them through TAP in

the three areas. These assumptions were necessary to support both the statistical significance and meaningfulness of my study.

Scope and Delimitations

Previous studies have focused on several aspects of servicemember transition and reintegration into the civilian community: education, employment, and general reintegration issues are just a few of the areas discussed. However, there is a limited amount of information that is available on whether the DoD TAP has assisted servicemembers with their transition and reintegration process. My study focused on the impact of TAP on both transition and reintegration from the perspective of the servicemembers experiencing the transition and reintegration process. I explored the aspects of transition and reintegration by considering the servicemember's pursuit of academic progress, but considered it through the support or lack of support provided to the servicemember by the TAP.

My study's emphasis was to collect data from two academic institutions so that both the IDP/ITP process and academic transition and reintegration can be considered. Only veterans as defined above were asked to participate in this study because they are the only individuals that have participated in the TAP and can provide the data required for my study. Also, participation was restricted to only those veterans that departed the service after 31 December 2002 since the TAP was strengthened due to the start of the military conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Although the methodology used for my study allowed me to explore relationships between variables without identifying causality, there is the possibility of the study's

findings being generalized across the study population. Of the original two academic institutions where participants were projected to be solicited, one is an online private institution, and one is a brick-and-mortar public institution. This allowed me to possibly collect data from veterans within the desired population from locations across the country, which could provide future studies with information concerning how the DoD TAP impacted veteran transition and reintegration within different areas of the United States, from outside of the United States, and from the different military services of the United States. Through consideration of both IDP/ITP completion and successful acceptance to academic institutions, my study could allow future researchers to gain insight into which process provided the most assistance to the veteran in their reintegration, and which areas could be considered for adjustment to provide better assistance. My study has the potential to provide relevant information in these areas for more targeted studies.

Limitations

The key limitation of my study was one of internal validity. Warner (2013) defined internal validity as the ability of the researcher to use the study's findings to determine causality (p. 16). Since this study was nonexperimental in design, the methodology that I used specifically precludes the ability to determine causality. However, the findings might provide information concerning DoD TAP success that could be used by future researchers to support their causality determinations.

The original focus on only two academic institutions had the potential to limit the participant pool which could also impact internal validity. Additionally, although

responses were provided by study participants that are either from or are located in different parts of the country (or the world), total numbers from the various regions might not be sufficient to determine statistical significance. These are issues that should be considered by future researchers who might consider using the results of this study for their research.

Finally, because the timeframe that I used spans 17 years, there could have been an issue with a study participant's recall of the specifics of their participation in the DoD TAP. Since the program has been extensively expanded since the September 11, 2001 attack on the United States, I wanted to ensure that I included all possible input from student veterans who could have been impacted by program changes throughout this timeframe. Because I had narrowed the study scope to include only student veterans currently enrolled in two academic institutions, my expectation was that the recall issue could be limited; however, its impact must be considered.

Significance

This study may significantly contribute to future research in the areas of policy and social change. My study considered how taxpayer dollars are used to support the servicemember transition and reintegration processes. Anytime tax funds are used by the government, there should be some type of review to ensure that resources are used wisely and that they are providing the means necessary to accomplish program goals. My study accomplished this by collecting input from individuals currently participating in the program, or who have completed the program, to determine whether they believe that the program assisted them with their transition and reintegration into the civilian community.

The concept of social change has many and varied definitions. Callahan et al. (2012) highlighted that a definition permits a multitude of activities to be considered support to overall social change (p. 3). In their discussion of social change activities, they specifically highlighted the importance of “*Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes*” (Callahan et al., 2012, p. 3) when determining whether an activity supports social change. Knowledge infers that the study or program supports actual situations that are being experienced by people, and that the social change supporters are aware that their activity is more than just academic (Callahan et al., 2012, pp. 3-4). Skills imply that those supporters use the knowledge identified above to execute the program or study, applying various methods to implement that knowledge (Callahan et al., 2012, pp. 4-5). Finally, attitudes are defined as the supporters’ ethical approach to that implementation (Callahan et al., 2012, p. 6).

The DoD TAP meets the criteria established by Callahan et al. (2012) in those three areas. Danish and Antonides (2013) identified the various difficulties associated with the reintegration process to include servicemembers’ feelings of individual stress and their hesitation to request support in mitigating that stress. The United States Government, through its DoD, has established the TAP to support efforts to assist servicemembers with that knowledge (DoDI,1332.35, 2016). The TAP was the program developed to execute assistance in determining and supporting skills (Cleymans & Conlon, 2014; DoDI 1332.55; 2016). The DoD’s implementation guidance established the foundation necessary for the program to be appropriately administered to all transitioning servicemembers. This program was developed to provide support to social

change through assisting servicemembers with their reintegration into the civilian community; exploring whether the program supports that effort contributes to social change.

The findings from my study could support social change. Although causality cannot be determined, findings could provide program directors and DoD managers with additional information that can be used to adjust the program to better meet servicemember needs. My study is not about identifying problems and fixing blame; it is about reviewing how veterans perceived the support provided by the TAP and identifying both the strengths and weaknesses of the program through their input so that strengths can be exploited, and weaknesses improved.

Summary

Within this chapter, I have provided introductory information on the DoD TAP and its function in supporting servicemembers in their transition from military service and their reintegration into the civilian community. The problem that I focused on was whether these servicemembers that participated in the TAP believe that it assisted them with that process. The study's purpose was to consider that relationship. My intent was to use a quantitative, nonexperimental research method to study this problem.

I developed two research questions for my study: (a) What is the individual likelihood that the IDP/ITP process used for servicemember transition and reintegration predicts DoD TAP success, and (b) What is the individual or collective likelihood that the academic transition and reintegration process predicts DoD TAP success. I used IDP/ITP completion and academic institution transition as my independent variables in order to

determine program success. Program theory was used as the theoretical foundation for my study. I believe that the study will provide information that can be used for further research into the program's practicality, as well as its contribution to social change.

In the next chapter, I provide additional detail on the literature that I reviewed as part of my research on this problem, to include details concerning general transition issues experienced by servicemembers, as well as reintegration issues experienced in an academic setting and as a new employee in the civilian workforce. Additionally, I provide further detail on program theory, to include its application within the context of this specific study. Finally, I discuss past research on this topic and affiliated topics and explain the contribution that this study will make to the topic.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Problem and Purpose

The literature review for my study is intended to provide detailed background information on the DoD TAP while focusing on the study's problem and purpose. As I stated in Chapter 1, the overall problem that my study considers is that although the DoD TAP has internal evaluation criteria that can be used to measure success, external evaluation of the program based on veteran reintegration seems to be limited. The specific problem focuses on identifying both program strengths and weaknesses in supporting the reintegration process. These areas include veteran success in attaining employment and/or acceptance at an academic institution, and the veteran's ability to mitigate stress during the reintegration process.

The purpose of my study is to explore the relationship between the DoD TAP process and the participating servicemember to consider whether they view their transition and reintegration process as successful. This consideration can be reviewed from two perspectives. The DoD TAP focus is on the servicemember's successful move from military service to any number of possible statuses, to include undergraduate or graduate education, self-employment or entrepreneurship, or other employment with business or government (Cleyman & Conlon, 2014). The servicemember also has this as a goal; however, in addition to the physical transition, the servicemember must make a mental transition and reintegration which could cause excessive stress or anxiety hindering this process. My study reviewed whether the DoD TAP, in addition to

supporting the physical transition, has also supported the mental transition from the perspective of the individual servicemember.

Current/Key Literature

Based on the TAP GPS (Goals, Plans, Success; Cleymans & Conlon, 2014), the problem could be considered from several perspectives, and scholarly literature has been published exploring the subject from these various possibilities. Many of these areas overlap (for example, a disabled servicemember transitioning into employment or higher education) and the literature highlights how those multiple issues impact the transition process. One area to be considered is disability. MacLean (2010), Wehman (2017), and Oswald (2016) considered how disability impacted transition; MacLean from the perspective of a disabled servicemember's transition, and Wehman and Oswald from a civilian rehabilitation perspective. Danish and Antonides (2013), Higate (2001), Rahbek-Clemmensen et al. (2012), and Clemens and Milsom (2008) considered transition and reintegration of non-disabled servicemembers, while Harley (2014) studied transition from the perspective of ex-offenders being released from prison. All of these individuals face a complex set of issues, some unique to their particular situation, where assistance may be required to support their efforts.

In the area of education, Goldberg et al. (2015) reviewed disabled servicemembers' transition into science, technology, engineering, math (STEM) programs. Burnett and Segoria (2009), Ackerman et al. (2009), and Naphan and Elliott (2015) considered transition into general higher education venues, while Jones (2017) studied servicemembers' transitions into community college. These studies highlighted

specific issues focused on veteran education transition that will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

In the area of employment, Loughran (2014) from the RAND Corporation and Gillums (2016) reviewed general transition into employment, while Bressler et al. (2013), Heriot et al. (2017), and Syracuse University (2016), for the Small Business Administration conducted analyses of servicemembers' transition into self-employment/entrepreneurship. Issues identified in this area were more unique to those veterans that are focused on either employment or self-employment and are highlighted below.

The literature review will provide insight into how these different areas impact the TAP process, and how they have been previously considered by research scholars. My intent was to provide an overview of the different aspects of the TAP, so that the reader will have some general knowledge of its various parts. This study should assist in determining whether servicemembers that have participated in the DoD TAP find the program supportive of their reintegration efforts.

Chapter Synopsis

The literature review for this study is divided into five sections, including this introduction. The literature search strategy section provides details on the key literature identified above, and how that literature is relevant to this study. The theoretical foundation provides insight into program theory, the theory that provides the foundation for my study. The key variables and concepts section identify the research questions to be considered, the general methodology that will be used, the variables that will be

considered, and the rationale for the methodology and the variables. Finally, the summary and conclusion section provide a synopsis of the literature review chapter, as well as identifying the literature gap that is addressed by this study.

Literature Search Strategy

Search Background

The literature used to research this problem is predominantly focused on the key study audience, United States military service members that are preparing to transition from the military back to various civilian communities, or those that have conducted the actual transition. Because this topic is both military specific as well as general public administration in nature, both military and public administration databases within the Walden University library were accessed to identify relevant articles. These articles have reviewed the transition process from various perspectives, including the impact of transition on both disabled and nondisabled servicemembers, as well as the type of transition conducted, which includes transition into higher education establishments, or types of employment, whether it be within a large or small business, or self-employment/entrepreneurship. Search terms used to identify these articles include *Department of Defense*, *transition*, and *military transition*.

Additionally, articles that discuss topics that are related to the military transition process were identified as part of the relevant research material. The articles are focused on civilian disabled and prisoner rehabilitation and transition to/back to the civilian community. These articles were also found through the Walden University library within public administration databases using *transition* and *rehabilitation* as key search terms.

DoD databases were accessed to gain general information on the TAP. This information included the relevant DoDI on TAP execution provided to all services (DoDI 1332.35, 2016) as well as both DoD and United States Army background information on the topic. This material provided needed foundational information on the topic so that proper measurements could be conducted based on program goals and objectives.

External reviews conducted by the RAND Corporation (Loughran, 2014), Syracuse University for the Small Business Administration (2016) and Syracuse University (MacLean & Kleykamp, 2014) provided additional background information targeted to veteran employment (Loughran; SBA) and civilian perception of veterans returning from combat (MacLean & Kleykamp). These reviews provide analyses that are external to the United States Government within these areas that are relevant to the servicemember transition process.

My study is focused on the success or failure of the DoD TAP since 2002, the initial year of the most recent steady conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. I selected this timeframe because the DoD TAP was expanded and modified during this period to support those servicemembers that were both entering and leaving service at this time. Therefore, most of the scholarly articles used as references for my study were written after 2002, with the majority written in 2010 or later. Higate's (2001) article, although written before 2002, provides relevant information concerning the general servicemember transition and reintegration processes, while Simon (1964) and Mohr (1982) provide needed foundational information on program theory, the theoretical basis of my study.

Literature Review

TAP Background

Servicemember transition responsibilities lie within the DoD. DoD publication DoDI 1332.35 (2016) provides guidance to the DoD staff and the uniformed services on the execution of transition assistance. The office within the DoD responsible to support servicemember transition assistance is the Transition to Veterans Program Office (TVPO, n.d.). In their program overview, they state that ***“TAP prepares servicemembers for post-transition career goals”*** (italics and bold in original; TVPO, n.d., p. 5). DoD also provides more specific guidance in how TAP will be executed by the various services through the Transition GPS process (DoDI 1332.35, 2016). This process includes three areas where servicemember participation is required: Transition Counseling, Veterans’ Affairs (VA) briefings on benefits, and “Capstone” (p. 39) participation which is a review of the servicemember’s transition plan and preparation for his or her next career (DoDI 1332.35, 2016).

The Capstone topics focus on the three main goal areas that TAP supports: education, employment, and self-employment (Cleymans & Conlon, 2014). At the end of TAP, the servicemember will need to demonstrate that they are prepared to transition into one of these areas upon discharge (DoDI 1332.35, 2016). One method of successfully completing Capstone is for the servicemember to show that they have either applied for or have been accepted for future employment (DoDI 1332.35, 2016). Additionally, supporting the Capstone requirement are three separate tracks that assist with achieving the TAP’s goals. Servicemembers can participate in one or more of these tracks.

Although attendance is not required, it may be difficult for some servicemembers to complete their Capstone without participation in at least one track (DoDI 1332.35, 2016).

The “Assessing Higher Education” (DoDI 1332.35, 2016, p. 32) track is focused on those servicemembers who wish to pursue undergraduate or graduate degrees from colleges and universities (Cleymans & Conlon, 2014). Seminars are provided on how to select college majors, what aspects of an individual’s overall service may be officially transferable to educational institutions, how to select an institution, and how to apply for acceptance and, if necessary, scholarships and other educational funding, including use of the GI Bill (Cleymans & Conlon, 2016). Successful completion of this track is indicated through either the servicemember’s application preparation or his or her actual acceptance at a school (Cleymans & Conlon, 2014).

The “Career Technical Training” track (DoDI 1332.35, 2016, p. 33) prepares a servicemember for employment specifically in technical fields. Seminar focus in this track is on which certification programs the servicemember might need for employment in the chosen area. This is then considered based on whether current service experience can provide the required certification (Cleymans & Conlon, 2014).

The “Entrepreneurship” track (DoDI 1332.35, 2016, p. 33) supports the servicemember that is interested in starting his or her own business through “Boots2Business” (Cleymans & Conlon, 2014). The Small Business Administration (Syracuse University, 2016) administers this two-step program which starts with a discussion on how to plan and operate a small business. If the servicemember is

interested, the second step provides more detailed instruction on the process (Cleymans & Conlon, 2014; Syracuse University, 2016).

A key aspect of the TAP is providing the servicemember with tools to successfully transition mentally and emotionally. Cleymans and Conlon (2014) highlighted that the TAP incorporates a “resilience training” (p. 157) that provides servicemembers with ways to both identify and mitigate stress throughout the transition process. This is a key aspect of the TAP that this study will consider.

The DoD TAP attempts to provide the servicemember with the physical and emotional preparation necessary to successfully transition to the civilian community through the successful accomplishment of one of the program goals. In the following section, I discuss studies and other scholarly articles that provided different aspects of the impact that transition had on servicemembers.

General Transition Issues

Military service demands that individuals lead a lifestyle that is unique from their civilian counterparts. This uniqueness, although necessary for successful mission completion in the service, can be a hindrance to individuals when returning to civilian communities. Danish and Antonides (2013) reminded readers that those things that servicemembers are taught in order to survive in combat areas do not necessarily seamlessly translate to civilian life. MacLean and Kleykamp (2014) emphasized the dichotomy that servicemembers face from their civilian counterparts when they return home: the mix of received accolades due to their service combined with suspicions concerning their mental stability, regardless of whether the servicemember is disabled or

nondisabled. Higate (2001, p. 446) argued that the military's "institutionalization" of their servicemembers compounded the transition difficulty. He explained that institutionalization was training that resulted in a socialization to the military lifestyle. Danish and Antonides (2013, p. 552) argued that this required an "unlearning" by the servicemember in order to properly "acclimate". The key issues are the servicemember's individual transition difficulty due to this institutionalization combined with a lack of understanding by the civilian community of what the servicemember is experiencing during and after transition. Although the latter issue is much more complex and difficult to correct, programs such as DoD TAP have been developed to attempt to address the individual servicemember's transition difficulties.

Although the matter of civilian acceptance of transitioning servicemembers is complex, there is still a need for civil-military coordination for any transition to be successful. Neill-Harris et al. (2016) argued that local community support was instrumental to transition success, both during the initial transition process and after the servicemember has departed the service. Clemens and Milsom (2008), in specifically discussing enlisted servicemembers, highlighted that issues faced by their civilian counterparts will also be faced by transitioning servicemembers. Rahbek-Clemmensen et al. (2012, p. 673) emphasized four "gaps" that needed to be bridged between transitioning servicemembers and their civilian communities: (a) the cultural gap that emphasizes differences in values; (b) the demographics gap that highlights geographical differences; (c) the policy preference gap that focuses on differences in policy priority; and (d) the institutional gap that focuses on differences between military and civilian organizations.

The DoD TAP has supposedly been developed to facilitate the closing of these gaps in order to enhance the transition process.

Although the military lifestyle can be considered unique, difficulties with transition are not confined to the military sphere. In writing about prisoners with disabilities preparing for release from incarceration, a process called “prisoner reentry”, Harley (2014, p. 12) argued that these prisoners could face a number of difficulties in their transition, to include geographical location, racial/ethnic/gender prejudices, lack of housing, need for continuing education, and health and wellness issues. Oswald (2016), in discussing vocational rehabilitation (VR) for youth with varying disabilities, highlighted the transition difficulty between secondary education, adult VR programs, and actual employment. These problems faced by civilians in unique circumstances are not unlike those faced by servicemembers during transition, and programs used to mitigate these difficulties could be implemented to support the servicemember transition.

The issues identified above can impact almost any servicemember. The DoD TAP has been developed to support servicemembers with these general transition and reintegration issues. In the following sections, I address specific transition issues faced by servicemembers as they initiate their transition process in the different DoD TAP goal areas.

Education Transition

As a voluntary part of their ITP, one track allows servicemembers to receive additional support in preparation for higher education acceptance, or for certain employment activities. The education track provides assistance to the servicemember in

applying for acceptance at colleges and universities. However, once the transition is completed and the servicemember is in college, reintegration could still be difficult. Goldberg et al. (2015) discussed how universities could assist disabled veterans by providing transition assistance for veterans in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) programs through counseling and faculty awareness. Jones (2017) focused his study on reintegration difficulties at a community college, and in his findings he identified what he labeled as six themes that impacted the veteran: their pre-existing understanding of academic requirements, their relationships with members of the college faculty and staff, their relationships with other veterans on campus, how family and friends impact the transition process, their individual experience in the classroom as it relates to both academic requirements and classroom relationships, and their personal feelings concerning the overall transition experience (pp. 113-117).

Jones (p. 118) highlighted the importance of both the academic and social experiences for each of the veterans. Ackerman et al. (2009) studied the effects of reintegration on college students that had deployed to support combat operations. Similar to Jones (2017), they determined that universities need to be aware of veteran transition and reintegration difficulties, and they recommended that colleges develop processes and procedures that allow them to be considered “veteran-friendly” (p. 13). Burnett and Segoria (2009) focused on the community support required to assist student veterans with reintegration, and recommended that universities and colleges develop a mix of administrative organizations and counseling processes that are attuned to transitioning veteran needs. Finally, Naphan and Elloit (2015) emphasized the impact of role exit for

veterans entering higher education, and similar to other researchers, recommended a combination of administrative and social support structures be put in place to assist the veteran with their individual transition.

Servicemember transition into an educational setting requires the servicemember to make both a mental and emotional adjustment in order to set conditions for academic success. For example, student veterans are required to adjust their routines to accommodate the academic environment (as opposed to a work environment) while simultaneously adjusting their lifestyle so that it conforms with a civilian setting. In their study on combat veterans, Ackerman et al. (2009, p. 10) identified the need to reestablish study skills as an area that student veterans considered essential. Because these skills atrophied while in the service, student veterans who had been successful students previously were experiencing difficulty achieving past academic success. In their study on veteran STEM degree programs, Goldberg et al. (2015) emphasized a veteran's lack of understanding of how to successfully negotiate academic bureaucracy as an issue that could both stymie success while increasing individual stress. Jones (2017) also identified this issue in his qualitative study of student veterans in a community college. Burnett and Segoria (2009) argued that part of this problem rests with academic institutions that provide uneven support to student veterans on campus. The veteran's ability to understand and successfully embrace the academic environment is essential to achieving academic success.

However, this individual goal is also impacted by the student veteran's ability to successfully transition into the civilian community in general, and specifically the

academic civilian community. In their qualitative study of eleven student veterans attending a public university, Naphan and Elliott (2015, p. 38) explained that the transition is, in essence, a “role exit” where the new veteran is departing the role of the servicemember and entering the role of student. They believe that the training learned in the previous role makes the transition to the new role much more difficult. This concept parallels Higate’s (2001, pp. 443-444) concepts of military socialization and “institutionalization” that, although they provide the servicemember with the tools for success in the military, also make the servicemember’s transition much more difficult when service is completed.

In addition to adjusting roles, servicemembers have expressed difficulty with establishing relationships with fellow students which also hinders an effective transition. Burnett and Segoria (2009) argued that how non-veteran students and faculty perceive student veterans has a significant impact on a successful transition. Veterans were negatively impacted by inappropriate questions from their fellow students as well as comments from faculty that disparage the military in general and its responsibilities (Burnett & Segoria, 2009, p. 55). They further emphasized that much of their attitude is based on a lack of understanding of the student veterans experiences. Jones (2017) found that student veterans perception of the academic environment sometimes negatively impacted their ability to successfully integrate. Also, in his study, many student veterans specifically identified the age gap between them and non-veteran students as a key issue in establishing relationships.

Interestingly, the inability to establish relationships with non-veteran students did not necessarily translate into a desire to establish relationships with other student veterans. Although Naphan and Elliott (2015) recommended that institutions develop student veteran organizations, Jones (2017, p. 114) argued that student veterans may believe it more important to either ignore relationships altogether on campus or attempt to establish relationships with non-veteran students in order to be considered “*normal*” (italics in original). Jones (2017) believed that this concern impacted the student-veteran’s desire to participate in or take advantage of any organization on campus that is affiliated with the student-veteran’s past status. Ackerman et al. (2009), Burnett and Segoria (2009), Goldberg et al. (2015), and Naphan and Elliott (2015) identified the need for institutions to provide assistance to student veterans to support the transition process, including training for faculty without military experience, establishing a faculty mentor program for student veterans, and coordination with community-based and veteran organizations to facilitate the transition process. The keys to successfully supporting servicemember transition in an academic environment seem to be establishing services available to the student-veteran to assist with both the mental and emotional aspects of the transition process while mitigating the stigma of the student-veteran actually using those services.

There are other transition and reintegration processes that can be made by the servicemember in addition to the move into an academic environment. Some of these transition and reintegration activities occur individually, and some simultaneously. I will

now discuss transition and reintegration into employment and self-employment/entrepreneurship.

Employment Transition

The other two tracks are focused on certification achievement for future employment in technical areas, and on entrepreneurship. Bressler, Bressler, and Bressler (2013) discussed how military reserve activations and subsequent in-activations impact both businesses and the individuals activated. They concluded that veterans who own small businesses tended to be white males, but that there seemed to be an increase in female veteran-owned small businesses. Heriot, Dickes, and Jauregui (2017) focused their study on the Small Business Administration's Boots2Business (B2B), a program conducted in conjunction with the US DoD to prepare transitioning servicemembers for small business ownership. Although they highlighted that veterans are more inclined than non-veterans to start small businesses, they could not determine how much impact B2B had on a transitioning veteran's ability to start a new business and recommended that further outside studies of the program be conducted (Heriot et al., 2017).

Syracuse University (2016) conducted an assessment of the B2B program for the SBA and determined that the program does pique a transitioning veteran's interest in starting a business upon transition and reintegration. Loughran (2014) of the RAND Corporation developed a study for the Office of the Secretary of Defense which discussed the reason for high veteran unemployment. He determined that a veteran's health, the various employment selection processes used by businesses, discrimination against veterans, an inability to demonstrate that military skills compare to civilian employment

requirements, and the time required to find a job after transition all impact the veteran's ability to find work.

Servicemembers transitioning into employment can move into positions within various small or large businesses, or they can attempt to start their own business. The DoD TAP program is organized to facilitate either path. Servicemembers are expected to develop a job application package during TAP that includes a completed resume, completed and/or submitted job applications, and/or an acceptance letter from an employer (DoD 1332.35, 2016, p. 22). Also, the program provides two voluntary GPS Tracks that support employment transition: a track that assists with technical training certifications required for some employment positions, and an Entrepreneurship Track that supports self-employment (DoDI 1332.35, 2016, pp. 32-33).

Studies reviewing successful servicemember employment have identified different reasons for the lack of employment, but have recommended similar solutions to fix the problem. In a RAND Corporation study conducted in 2014 (Loughran, 2014), it was determined that veterans who had recently transitioned from service had a more difficult time finding jobs than non-veterans. However, the discrepancy between veterans and non-veterans was reduced based on the veteran's age, and based on length of time since transition; the longer veterans had been out of the service, and the older that the veteran became, the less likely that veterans would have a more difficult time finding employment as compared to non-veterans (Loughran, 2014, p. 5). Five potential reasons were provided for this finding: (a) the status of the service member's health upon service discharge; (b) individual veteran characteristics that, although possibly beneficial for

military service, might not be considered beneficial for civilian employment; (c) prejudices against veterans, or the military in general, by prospective employers; (d) a veteran's military experience that does not match skills required for civilian employment; and (e) the time that it takes to find employment once the servicemember is discharged (Loughran, 2014, pp. 17-24). Loughran's (2014, pp. 25-27) study recommended a mix of internal policies (using DoD TAP to prepare the servicemember for employment) and external policies (employer "stimulation" to hire veterans) to support veteran employment. Gillums (2016, p. 4) identified veteran disconnection from the civilian community as a potential problem in finding employment. He argued for "Holistic Transition" that includes support from the military services, veterans' organizations, and the civilian community (Gillums, 2016, p. 4). He further emphasized that this process could be used for disabled or non-disabled veterans (Gillums, 2016). In both cases, the need for a program to assist with the transition process was combined with the need to educate the civilian community on the benefits of hiring veterans.

The other method of employment available to veterans is self-employment, or what the DoD calls entrepreneurship (DoDI 1332.35, 2016, p. 33). The name provided to this program is Boots to Business (B2B) (Syracuse University, 2016, p. 2) which is conducted in cooperation with the Small Business Administration (SBA). The program's intent is to provide transitioning service members with the knowledge to understand those areas necessary for an individual to open and maintain their own business (Syracuse University, 2016). The course is divided into two parts: a two-day introductory program so that the servicemember can make an initial determination concerning whether there is

a real interest in the project, and a follow-on eight-week program completed online that provides additional details in areas including finance, operations, and marketing (Syracuse University, 2016, pp. 17-18).

Although the Syracuse University (2016) study identified positive results in both servicemember interest in self-employment, and in initial business success, other studies reached different conclusions. Heriot et al. (2017) attempted to compare B2B to two other SBA programs and concluded that there was not enough B2B data to determine the program's success, citing the Syracuse University (2016) report as biased because they were "...a resource partner of the SBA" (p. 9). Their recommendation was for a study that focused on B2B's *program outcomes, process and strategic scope* (italics in original, pp. 10-11). Bressler et al. (2013), in reviewing veteran-owned small businesses, determined that gender and ethnicity impacted veteran ownership, with white males being the predominant owners of veteran businesses.

Synopsis

It seems that although there is some data concerning the success of the various education and employment transition programs, there is not enough objective data to determine whether the program is meeting the DoD established goal of supporting a servicemember's transition from military service into the civilian community. Additionally, although the actual transition into one of the TAP goal areas may be successfully affected, some of the studies reviewed above identified post-transition/service-departure issues in both the education and employment areas that could negatively impact an individual's successful transition.

Transition should be considered from two distinct perspectives to determine TAP success. Initially, the TAP should support and assist the servicemember's successful acceptance at an academic institution or should support success in finding and gaining employment. Additionally, the TAP should also provide the tools necessary for an individual to cope with the stress affiliated with the transition process. My study considered both of these key perspectives and focused on one specific transition area: acceptance to academic institutions.

Theoretical Foundation

Theory Background

Any exploration of the DoD TAP requires a foundational theory that allows the researcher to establish a basis for program review and eventual evaluation. The theoretical framework that I used for this study is program theory which was originally discussed by Lawrence Mohr. In his book on organizational behavior, Mohr (1982) called his theory "process theory" (p. 35), and explained that for the theory to be useful in an organizational review, the act or acts need to precede the result, they need to be specific to the organization, they need to produce a result, and that the timing of the act or acts is significant to the relevance of the result (p. 38). Mohr (1982) further highlighted that risk could impact any result, so any reached end-state could be the result of pure luck (p. 51). He emphasized the theory's relevance in organizational planning because of timing's importance to the result (pp. 53-54).

Other scholars have expanded the discussion on this theory. Smith and Larimer (2013, p. 144) define the theory as beliefs accepted by the organization managing the

program that establishes the basis for the program's processes and procedures. In essence, the theory provides the organization with the method or methods required to measure organizational success. The organization starts with the establishment of goals and objectives that they would like to achieve through program execution (Smith & Larimer, 2013), and once these are established, an "outcome outline" (p. 144) is developed to demonstrate the appropriate path that the program should take to achieve the goals and objectives. The assumption is that if both management and employees follow the designated path, the program will achieve success.

Program theory could be used to review many types of organizational activities, including public, commercial, and individual. In this case, DoD TAP could be considered a public policy/social program. In his review of program theory, Chen (2005) focused on programs established to support and assist social causes. He considered both the program's purpose and the methods necessary to achieve that purpose. He defined foundational program assumptions as both prescriptive and descriptive, where descriptive assumptions are focused on achieving program objectives, and prescriptive assumptions establish the basis for how the program will be executed to achieve program objectives (p. 2). He defined methods used to execute the program as determinants, and explained that these determinants could be adjusted during program execution through either intervention or treatment in order to ensure program success (p. 2).

In his review of organizational goals, Simon (1964) argued that organizational programs are restricted by the goals that they establish (p. 1). These goals should positively impact an organizational objective or objectives. As an example, Simon

(1964) explained that a company selling animal feed has selling the feed as an objective, but that its goals may be to both make a profit and sell the best feed which the organization believes will help it reach its objective (p. 6). These established goals and objectives will impact the methods established and executed by management (Simon, 1964, p. 7). Consequently, these will also be used as the basis for program review and evaluation.

The theory is flexible enough to allow for program development and evaluation of a number of different types of programs. Benijts and Lagae (2012) used the theory to review reforms within sports cycling. Using the “Program Theory Evaluation (PTE)” process, they were able to conclude that PTE allowed them to determine if reform is impacted through either its design or its implementation (Benijts & Lagae, 2012, p. 105). Botein and Hetling (2010) used program theory to consider how a housing program supporting individuals that are victims of domestic violence were viewed by both the administrators managing the program and the victims receiving the support. They were able to conclude that there were program priority differences between administrators and victims that required further review (pp. 203-204). Grammatikopoulos (2012) use the theory as a foundation to explore “Early Steps”, an educational program and determined that the program could be review through both “systems concepts” and “theory-based evaluation” (p. 62). Harden (2006) used the theory to review faith-based programs to determine how religious beliefs impact the actions of religious organizations in providing social support (p. 502). Louw (2012) used the theory to review human resource management and concluded that periodic program evaluation allows managers to

determine both whether a program is needed, and once established, whether the program is meeting its objective.

Theory Rationale

Based on the above, program theory is a sound fit for use to explore the DoD TAP. DoDI 1332.25 (2016) identified transition and reintegration preparation as the key objective for the program (pp. 1-2). Using Mohr's (1982) elements of program theory (p. 48), the DoD guidance for successful TAP completion (DoDI 1332.35, 2016, pp. 22-23), and the focus area for my study (acceptance to academic institutions), the following two tables provide examples of how program theory could be used to measure TAP success. Table 2 focuses on the hypothesis that the IDP/ITP process predicts TAP success with the individual servicemember as the focal unit:

Table 2

Elements of Program Theory – Part 1

Outcome	Necessary Conditions	External Directional Forces	Probabilistic Processes	Definition of Outcome
Complete CRS	Attend TAP Complete ITP Complete Budget Development Register for VA Benefits Evaluate Skills Transferability Identify Certification Requirements Complete Individual Assessment Tool	Required Attendance Complete Status Reviews Command Responsibility	Servicemember Attends TAP	Servicemember Successfully Transitions

Derived from Explaining Organizational Behavior by L. Mohr, 198, pp. 48-49.

Table 3 focuses on the hypothesis that a servicemember's transition into an academic institution predicts TAP success, also with the individual servicemember as the focal unit:

Table 3

Elements of Program Theory – Part 2

Outcome	Necessary Conditions	External Directional Forces	Probabilistic Processes	Definition of Outcome
Complete TAP to Include Higher Education Track	Submit Application to University	Institutional Selection Process	Servicemember Attends TAP Servicemember Attends Higher Education Track	Servicemember is Accepted to Higher Education Institution

Derived from Explaining Organizational Behavior by L. Mohr, 198, pp. 48-49.

Using the initial goal as an example, for DoD the goal, identified by Mohr as the theory, is the servicemember's successful transition. The unit being measured for this goal is the individual servicemember/veteran. The outcome being measured is the servicemember completing the Career Readiness Standards, which DoD defined as "[a] set of common and specific activities and associated relevant deliverables...that must be achieved to demonstrate Service members are prepared to transition effectively..." (DoDI 1332.35, 2016, p. 45). The necessary conditions identified are those actions that the servicemember needs to execute in order to achieve the outcome. The external directional forces are those elements that impact the outcome; in this case, the servicemember is directed to attend TAP, the servicemember's results are periodically reviewed, and commanders are held responsible to ensure that servicemembers complete the program. The probabilistic process in this example is the servicemember's actual attendance, and the definition of outcome is that the servicemember completes a successful transition from military service to the civilian community.

Based on the study's problem and purpose, I have identified two goals where I focused the study's efforts: successful TAP completion, and successful acceptance to a higher education institution. Using program theory as the foundation for my review, I was able to determine whether the steps incorporated into the current TAP successfully support the servicemember's/veteran's transition in both of those areas. Additionally, this measurement will be driven through the eyes of the individual servicemember/veteran who has participated in the program and can best determine its usefulness.

Synopsis

Program theory provides an excellent foundation for the review of the DoD TAP. Its focus on the organization's goals and objectives, and whether those goals and objectives are being attained, allow the researcher to determine both program strengths and weaknesses so that strengths might be maintained and/or enhanced, while weaknesses could be addressed through program adjustments. The following section will provide details on how the theory supports the review of the DoD TAP.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables

Research Question and Variables

Exploring the total DoD TAP program through the eyes of a large number of TAP participants would make my study cumbersome. I have developed my research questions and variables so that program success in two areas discussed above can be considered: (a) whether the program facilitated successful overall transition and reintegration from the military into the civilian community; and (b) whether the program supported successful

transition from the military into the academic community. To reiterate from Chapter 1, the following are the research questions and hypotheses that I explored in this study:

RQ1: What is the individual likelihood that the IDP/ITP process used for servicemember transition and reintegration predicts DoD TAP success?

H_01 : The IDP/ITP process used for servicemember transition and reintegration does not predict DoD TAP success.

H_{a1} : The IDP/ITP process used for servicemember transition and reintegration does predict DoD TAP success.

RQ2: What is the individual likelihood that the academic transition and reintegration process predicts DoD TAP success?

H_02 : The academic transition and reintegration processes does not predict DoD TAP success.

H_{a2} : The academic transition and reintegration processes does predict DoD TAP success.

The research question and the hypotheses have been developed using the guidance provided in DoDI 1332.35 (2016) as a foundation. In their instructions, the DoD clearly stated that a key policy requirement is to prepare servicemembers for transition to the civilian community (p. 1). Using program theory as the basis for the review, this policy could be considered the program objective. Additionally, the DoD provided guidance on measuring successful completion of the program as completion of a job application, employment acceptance, or education institution acceptance (DoDI 1332.25, 2016, pp. 22-23); these could be considered the program “*Goals and Outcomes*”

(italics in the original; Chen, 2005, p. 2 of 4). Finally, the development of the various applications could be considered “*Determinants*” (italics in the original; Chen, 2005, p.2 of 4), since they are the products used by the DoD to measure program success.

My main intent was to consider success from the perspective of the DoD TAP participant, the servicemember/veteran. Based on this desire, I identified variables that will allow me to measure actual DoD TAP activities combined with how the veteran views the activity’s relevance to their particular transition and reintegration. For my study, I have selected DoD TAP success as the dependent variable. I selected the independent variables based on the DoD TAP areas that I wish to explore. For RQ1, the independent variable is successful completion of the IDP/ITP. For RQ2, the independent variable is successful transition to an academic institution. In both instances, the dependent variable will be measured based on both the DoD’s definition of TAP success, and whether the individual believes that the program facilitated reintegration into the civilian community. I will now discuss both independent variables as they relate to the dependent variable.

DoD TAP Success

Previous independent research has reviewed transition and reintegration through a number of perspectives, but has not specifically considered how DoD TAP has supported the transition and reintegration process. In considering the servicemember’s/veteran’s overall transition and reintegration, Danish and Antonides (2013) viewed potential veteran support structures from a locally-based community perspective (p. 554). Their recommendation was that after service transition, the veteran should receive support

through local public and private organizations that would provide comprehensive (social, emotional, physical, spiritual) reintegration support (p. 553). Gillums (2016) called his comprehensive transition support recommendation a “holistic transition” (p. 4) that would assist servicemembers with both the transition and reintegration processes. Neill-Harris et al. (2016) also considered reintegration from a community perspective, and recommended appropriate teaming between the DoD TAP facilitators and local organizations so that both military program directors and civilian community organizations would be knowledgeable of each other’s capabilities so that servicemembers/veterans would be properly supported during the transition process. Clemens and Milsom (2008) specifically considered transitioning enlisted servicemembers and recommended training and assigning career counselors that would focus their efforts on this particular group. In their review of the gaps between the servicemember/veteran and the civilian community, Rahbek-Clemmensen et al. (2012) emphasized that understanding these gaps is significant to providing the servicemember/veteran with reintegration support. Although these studies provide a number of recommendations that can assist with the reintegration process, none of them considered whether the servicemember/veteran believed that DoD TAP attendance facilitated their overall reintegration into the civilian community.

Reviewing integration from an academic perspective elicits similar results. Goldberg et al. (2015) reviewed disabled veterans currently involved in STEM programs and recommended a counselling regimen that could be conducted on campus through the academic institution. Jones (2017) also explored veterans in post-transition in a

community college setting, and recommended developing a combined academic and administrative support structure on campus to assist the veteran with reintegration. Ackerman et al. (2009) also studied post-transition veterans attending public research and regional universities (p. 5) and determined that veterans returning to an academic institution from military service require additional assistance from the campus administration with their reintegration process. Similar to some of the overall reintegration studies, Burnett and Segoria (2009) argued that the local community, in addition to the academic institution, has a responsibility to support veteran reintegration. Finally, in their analysis of how “role exit” impacted veterans entering academic institutions, Naphan and Elliott (2015, p. 36) discussed the post-transition process from the campus perspective.

These studies provide excellent insight into the plight of the post-transition veteran, and how various public and private organizations can assist with the reintegration process. Additionally, both of these areas can be measured based on how the DoD has defined program success. However, none of these studies considered whether the veteran determined attendance at DoD TAP to have been beneficial to their reintegration process. Therefore, all three variables being used in my study were considered in light of both whether the veteran met DoD requirements during the TAP, and whether the veterans themselves considered the program to have been beneficial to them in facilitating reintegration.

Study Methodology

The nature of my study is a nonexperimental, quantitative approach. O'Sullivan et al. (2017) explained that the quantitative approach allows the researcher to "measure" particular phenomena (p. 42). The nonexperimental design permits the researcher to identify possible relationships between phenomena without the restriction of confirming or denying causality (O'Sullivan et al., 2017, p. 87). Badawy and Bassiouny (2014) used this design to consider the effect of transformational leadership on employee engagement and on employee intention to quit (p. 42). Miskin et al. (2015) used the same design to explore the relationship between cultural self-efficacy and nursing students (p. 156). For my study, the approach permitted the analysis of the potential relationships between the TAP and successful transition and post-transition activities without the constraints of a controlled environment and without the need to determine specific causality (O'Sullivan et al., 2017, p. 92).

Independent studies that have been conducted in the area of servicemember transition and veteran reintegration are a mix of general reviews and different methodologies. For example, Danish and Antonides (2013) focused their efforts on developing a procedure to facilitate the reintegration process for returning servicemembers. In their review of how military and civilian transition organizations support the transition process, Neill-Harris et al. (2016) conducted a mixed methods case study focused specifically on the Hampton Roads, Virginia area. Rahbek-Clemmensen et al. (2012) conducted a literature review to develop their idea of the "civil-military gap" (p. 669). MacLean (2010) conducted a quantitative study using existing Panel Study of

Income Dynamics data to review how combat experience could impact employment. Goldberg et al. (2015) conducted a case study to review disabled veteran success in STEM programs. Ackerman et al. (2009) conducted interviews of transitioned servicemembers that were in college to identify their difficulties in reintegration in an academic environment. Jones (2017) focused his qualitative study on transitioned servicemembers attending a community college. Naphan and Elliott (2015, p. 39) focused their qualitative study on eleven student veterans. Although these studies touch on a number of different aspects of the transition process, none of the studies focus on whether the transition process was successful in both meeting its established objectives and goals, and in supporting the general post-transition, reintegration process.

For my study, the quantitative methodology allowed me to solicit input from a number of individuals that have completed DoD TAP, and/or have already transitioned into employment, the academic community, or both. Furthermore, the methodology allowed me to collect data from transitioning or transitioned servicemembers from various locations so that the reintegration process can be considered from various civilian community perspectives.

Summary and Conclusions

Based on the literature review, two general themes have emerged that warrant consideration within this study. These themes highlight both the difficulty for servicemembers to reintegrate into the civilian community once their military service is completed, and how veterans are perceived by the non-veteran, civilian community. All

of the researchers that I have discussed identified issues affiliated with these themes, with some providing recommendations on how to mitigate the issues.

However, none of these independent studies reviewed whether the DoD TAP provided servicemembers with the tools and information required to support their transition and mitigate a difficult reintegration into the civilian community. More importantly, they did not highlight whether the veteran believes that the program supported the process. That is why my study did not confine itself to how the DoD defines program success for their TAP; my study took the process a step further to determine how post-transition has affected the servicemember. Using program theory as the basis for my analysis, this is the literature gap that my study explored. In the next chapter, I provide detail on the methodology to be used for this study, including the sampling method, participant recruiting methods, and data analysis processes.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

United States military servicemembers conduct the nation's defense regardless of the type of mission execution required to provide that defense. This activity could place the servicemember in continually stressful situations, irrespective of whether the servicemember is participating in actual combat operations. This stress could be caused by any situation, from preparing for unknown operation types and the separation from family and friends that accompanies the conduct of those operations, to actual participation in combat activities while deployed. As Danish and Antonides (2013) reminded us, the nation has a responsibility to aid those that volunteer to provide security to the nation (p. 556). The DoD TAP is one of the methods that has been developed by the government to provide that support.

In reviewing the literature, there seemed to be limited information on how well the DoD TAP provides that assistance. The DoD, in their instructions to their subordinate organizations tasked with the mission of conducting the TAP (DoDI 1332.35, 2016), provided those organizations with internal measurements of effectiveness to monitor program success. However, there seemed to be limited information on whether the veterans that participated in the program believe that the program facilitated their successful reintegration process.

Since the DoD TAP has been developed to provide transition support in several areas, I narrowed the scope of my study to focus on two of the key areas: general transition and reintegration support, and acceptance into an academic institution.

Therefore, the purpose of my quantitative study is to explore whether the TAP facilitated success in these areas. My focus was two-fold: whether the veteran successfully met the requirements as identified in the DoD instructions, and whether the veteran believes that the program facilitated that success.

This chapter focuses on the methodology that was used for my study. I will start with a discussion of the research design, how that design aligns with the variables to be studied, and how it relates to the study discipline. This is followed by a detailed discussion of the methodology, to include the target population, the sampling procedures, and data collection processes. An overview of the planned pilot study is then provided, followed by a discussion of my study's potential reliability and validity issues. The chapter concludes with discussions on data analysis and how ethical procedures were included within my study.

Research Design and Rationale

These two research questions and associated hypotheses form the basis for my study:

RQ1: What is the individual likelihood that the IDP/ITP process used for servicemember transition and reintegration predicts DoD TAP success?

H_01 : The IDP/ITP process used for servicemember transition and reintegration does not predict DoD TAP success.

H_{a1} : The IDP/ITP process used for servicemember transition and reintegration does predict DoD TAP success.

RQ2: What is the individual likelihood that the academic transition and reintegration process predicts DoD TAP success?

H₀2: The academic transition and reintegration processes does not predict DoD TAP success.

H_a2: The academic transition and reintegration processes does predict DoD TAP success.

To answer these questions, I have identified variables that allowed me to explore those specific aspects of the DoD TAP, as opposed to reviewing the entire program. The single dependent variable for my study is DoD TAP success. Therefore, all measurements made during this study were focused on how success is identified. I earlier defined success as facilitating the servicemember's transition from military service and reintegration into the civilian community. The DoD measures program success in a similar fashion and my study reviewed whether a veteran's participation met success from a DoD perspective; however, my study focused predominantly on whether the veteran believes that the program facilitated the transition and reintegration process.

To predict the likelihood of success, I have identified two independent variables: successful completion of the IDP/ITP and successful transition to an academic institution. IDP/ITP completion measured whether the servicemember met DoD TAP goals as per the written DoD guidance (DoDI 1332.55, 2016) and allowed me to identify whether the veteran believes that the process was supportive of their individual transition and reintegration. Successful transition to an academic institution was measured based on both the veteran's successful acceptance to a college or university and whether the

veteran believes that the education track of the DoD TAP facilitated that successful acceptance.

The research design that I used for this study supports the data collection requirements necessary to answer my two research questions. In determining a research design, Babbie (2017) suggested that key to the selection process are the topic, the study population, and the reason for the study (p. 119). Since the topic is the DoD TAP, study participants needed to be individuals that have participated in the program. The nation's most recent military conflicts have occurred since the attack on the United States in September 2001; I therefore restricted my target participant pool to those veterans that completed military service after 1 January 2002 and that participated in any version of the DoD TAP prior to their service completion. This allowed me to explore how different veterans with varied military backgrounds experienced the TAP based on the timing of their departure from military service.

Because I had narrowed the scope of my study to focus only on those veterans that were accepted into academic institutions after service completion, I had further narrowed the target study population to veterans currently attending academic institutions. I originally identified two universities for my study: an online institution and a traditional university located in the southeastern United States. Both have veteran organizations and/or a university study pool that can facilitate the research process. Based on the limited number of survey responses received from these locations, I expanded the participant pool to include a second traditional institution also located in the southeastern United States. This will be discussed further in Chapter 4. Participants

were required to meet the definition of a veteran as operationally defined in Chapter 1: they must have received an honorable discharge from military service, be currently attending one of the two academic institutions being considered for the study, and have completed a version of the DoD TAP prior to their service departure.

The third research design consideration as identified by Babbie (2017) is the study's purpose. I identified the purpose as an exploration of the DoD TAP. This allowed me to identify aspects of program success based on both DoD measurement and individual veteran consideration without the restriction of determining causality.

Based on the above, I used a quantitative methodology process to explore the research questions. I used a survey as the research device in order to collect the necessary data to respond to both research questions while limiting the amount of personal information needed from each participant. Narrowing the participation to two universities assisted in expediting the data collection process. Using this process minimized resourcing issues, as I could manage the online survey responses without assistance. Additionally, since the only timing requirement deals with a veteran's service departure date, there was little risk of obsolete data collection. However, there were differences in veteran experience based on when they departed service, as changes to the DoD TAP could impact that experience. This is an area that I explored with my study.

My planned research design was synchronous with other studies conducted within the public policy area. These studies highlighted reviews of policy activities that impact both military and civilian individuals, including local government activities,

servicemember health and welfare, and national government budget activity. I provide further details on this relationship later in this chapter.

Methodology

Population

For my study to be both statistically significant and meaningful, it required the participation from individuals that met the definition of veteran provided earlier, and that had completed some version of the DoD TAP prior to their service departure. Many veterans may have completed different versions of the TAP over the years, so I had further narrowed the target population to those individuals that have served during the most recent military conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan; I solicited participation from those veterans that departed service after 1 January 2002. Gender, age and race were not relevant to this study; my focus was on the generic veteran. Additionally, serving in actual combat or in a combat area was not required for participation; the focus was on those individuals that were performing military service during the specified timeframe.

Even with this target population, a large number of veterans could be considered for participation that have transitioned into any of the areas that the TAP was developed to support: (a) academic institution acceptance, (b) job acceptance, or (c) self-employment. Therefore, I further narrowed the focus of the study to concentrate on only those veterans that had been accepted into academic institutions. For my study, I selected two different academic institutions from which to solicit participation: one is an online university with a United States-centric and global student body, and the other is a more traditional university campus located in the southeastern United States. By controlling

the specific study through a focus on a limited number of universities, study results were more manageable while still allowing for an exploration of the research questions without the requirement to determine causality.

Sampling and Sampling Procedures

My sampling strategy was based on both the target population and the specific research questions. Responses to questions on the DoD TAP framed both the study and the target study population to those individuals that have participated in the program. Since the program is focused on those individuals that have volunteered for and are completing military service, identifying veterans as the target population for participation was the most efficient way to ensure that knowledgeable responses to program questions were provided. Additionally, since the research questions further narrowed my study's focus to those veterans that are transitioned from military service to academic institutions as students, soliciting responses from veterans currently enrolled in academic institutions allowed me to collect relevant study information from the target population.

In order to identify the veteran population at the academic institutions where I conducted my study, I worked with campus veteran organizations that could provide me with both general information concerning the student veteran population and access to those student veterans. Additionally, I worked with university research organizations where available in order to access survey completion volunteers that meet my population criteria. Because my survey was a written questionnaire, I conducted the survey through the Internet. The campus veteran organizations helped in advertising the survey so that student veterans could participate in the survey with minimal risk to confidentiality.

One of the key results of my sampling procedure was projected to be high statistical power. Field (2018) identified statistical power as the degree of effect of a particular test. The higher the statistical power, the more probable that the results are identifying a true effect (Field, 2018, p. 84). In his review, Field highlighted 0.8, or 80%, as the typical power level desired by a researcher (p. 84). For my analysis, I attempted to achieve a 0.95 statistical power, or a 95% chance that I was identifying a true effect with my analysis.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Because I conducted this survey through the Internet, and because my intent was to limit confidentiality and mitigate anonymity concerns, I conducted my survey recruiting process directly through a website study introduction, and indirectly through campus student-veteran organizations who could direct student veterans to the website. The recruiting process included an explanation of the study's purpose and how the study could benefit future DoD TAP participants. I limited demographic information collection to a confirmation of the student-veteran's discharge status, branch of service, TAP attendance, service completion status (retiree or nonretiree) and university based on my earlier definition of a veteran, my specified timeframe and the prospective participant's enrollment status: that the participant was honorably discharged from military service on or after 1 January 2002 and that they are currently enrolled in one of the two academic institutions being considered for my study. I hosted my survey tool on SurveyMonkey® and ensured response confidentiality by specifically setting a collection rule to not capture or retain IP submission domain identifiers.

All participants were informed that their consent to provide information for this study was both required by me and voluntary for them. Babbie (2017) stated that study participation must be voluntary, mitigate or eliminate any negative impact on the participant, and must provide the participant confidentiality and mitigate anonymity. I provided each participant with an informed consent statement that highlighted these key areas. I provided the details of this statement later in this chapter. It was placed as the initial document in the survey so that all prospective participants were required to review and confirm their consent before they started the actual survey. I ensured that I did not collect any IP address information from any of the participants. Additionally, they were not asked to provide any demographic information, other than what has been identified above. This assisted me in retaining confidentiality and mitigating anonymity issues. Study participation was concluded once the participant provided responses to the study questionnaire; there was no intent to conduct any follow-up with participants once they submitted their survey responses.

Data was collected through the surveys provided to the participants to complete. Each question response was recorded and consolidated in order to determine estimated overall results; I was not focused on individual cases. This process also assisted with maintaining confidentiality and mitigating issues with anonymity. However, individual results were also maintained so that raw data can be provided for review if necessary, as required by the universities. Again, since names and other demographic data that can be used to identify individuals was not collected, participant confidentiality was not jeopardized by maintaining this information, and anonymity issues were mitigated.

Pilot Study

In order to validate my constructed survey questions and to subsequently test their reliability, I had planned to conduct a pilot study prior to releasing the study for participant responses. The pilot study phase included instrument review by my Committee and from a small group of veterans that retired after 1 January 2002 but that are not necessarily student veterans in order to identify problematic question flow and any content misunderstanding. Each pilot study participant was to be provided the developed survey in the format in which I had planned to release it. They would have been requested to complete the entire process, to include a review and confirmation of individual consent. The focus of my Committee's input would have been to support survey validation efforts from the perspective of on line hosted research methodology expertise (Chair) and subject matter perspectives (Committee Member), and other pilot study participants would have provided additional subject matter input in relation to the veracity and usability of content throughout my constructed instrument.

Actual question responses to this pilot study would have been of secondary importance; the priority was for me to receive written input from each pilot study participant concerning their ability to understand the consent document and the study questions being presented. I would have then reviewed their comments and considered making adjustments based on their recommendations if those recommended adjustments were in keeping with valid statistical methods and content presentation. Once adjustments were completed, I would have then released the survey for participant completion. Ultimately, and based on consultation with my committee and the

institutional review board (IRB), the pilot study was not conducted. Rationale for this change and any additional methodology changes are discussed in Chapter 4.

Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs

Although the survey that I used is not a published instrument, the basis for the development of my survey is the Likert scale. Babbie (2017) defined the scale as Likert's approach to standardizing responses so that researchers could measure data appropriately while giving the participant the ability to provide more than an either-or/yes-no response (p. 182). For my study, participants were provided four response categories to questions relating to successful completion of IDP/ITP and successful transition to an academic institution: no assistance, little assistance, some assistance, and extensive assistance. Through these responses, I was able to determine both program success from a DoD perspective, and whether the individual felt that the program benefitted their individual transition.

Likert scale surveys have been used in a number of public policy studies. For example, Taylor (2015) used a Likert scale of better, same or worse when questioning study participants about the quality of their fire and police support in reviewing property tax decreases in Indiana (p. 528). Tao and McCabe (2012) used the Likert scale to gauge individual beliefs concerning how various community managers view homeowners' association impact on local governments (p. 686). Lavena (2016) used the scale to measure the impact of the government workplace on an individual's decision to be a whistle-blower (pp. 124-125).

Studies of military topics have also used the Likert scale as part of their data collection process. Clark, Heileson, DeMay, and Cole (2017) used the scale to gain responses from study participants concerning whether they believed that they were “at the right weight, overweight, or underweight” in a study of weight misperceptions in the military (p. 1793). Herberman et al. (2016) used the scale to determine drinking regularity in their study on alcohol and its impact on suicidal behavior (p. 814). Because the scale has fit similar previous public policy and military studies, I believe that it is an excellent fit for my study.

In addition to its fit, my study’s measurement process can also be justified and validated. Babbie (2017) defined reliability as the ability to achieve the same result from a repeated process (p. 149) and validity as a process that actually measures the intended study topic (p. 152). Within a logistic regression study, Warner (2013) informed us that either a multiple R for multiple logistic regression (p. 1019) or an R^2 for binary logistic regression (pp. 1019-1020) can be used to confirm the goodness of fit of the study’s results, and these processes were used in my study to determine both reliability and validity.

Because I accept that my study will not be able to determine causality, I also accept that there may be an issue with my study’s internal validity and reliability. I evaluated internal reliability through a *post hoc* test using Cronbach’s alpha. Warner (2013) defined this test as a process used to assess response consistency within a specific construct (p. 1081). Field (2018) informed us that this test supports a review of “split-half reliability” (p. 822) which allows the researcher to review the data analysis through a

score's scale position. Field (2018) also highlighted that a score of 0.7 to 0.8 is an acceptable Cronbach's alpha, although different researchers lean towards one or the other score (p. 823). I considered my constructed instrument to be reliable if at least a Cronbach's alpha of 0.7 or greater was achieved in this post hoc assessment.

In developing the questionnaire for the survey, I remained mindful of Dillman, Smith, and Christian's (2014) emphasis on four key areas that assisted in achieving successful data collection through the survey instrument. These are mitigating "*Coverage Error*", defined as ensuring that the population being studied is properly represented, "*Sampling Error*", which defines the difference between the entire population and the population sample being considered, "*Nonresponse Error*", which highlights the difference between the total sample population and those within the sample population that did not respond to the survey, and "*Measurement Error*", which takes into consideration value differences based on participants providing incorrect responses to the survey question (italics in the original; p. 3). Each of these were addressed through my data collection process.

Coverage error focuses on the population being considered for the study (Dillman et al., 2014, p. 4). To mitigate this error, the researcher needs to ensure that the sample population comes from the total population of the study area. In my study, the total population was all student veterans who have completed service after 1 January 2002. Given that accessing the total veteran population enrolled in academic settings post service is unlikely I attempted to mitigate coverage error by selecting enrolled student-veteran populations from two different universities, an on-line program with a global

student reach and a traditional campus-based program. These two student bodies provided responses from diverse university settings and geographical locations.

Sampling error emphasizes the difference between the total population and the sample population (Dillman et al., 2014, pp. 4-5). This error can be mitigated through a study's power analysis. As I identified earlier, the acceptable statistical power for a study is 0.8 or 80% (Field, 2018, p. 84). My intent was to reach a 0.95 or 95% statistical power so that I could demonstrate that my study provides a solid relationship between the analysis of the study's variables and the true effects of the independent variables on the dependent variable.

Nonresponse error focuses on the individual beliefs of the respondents (Dillman et al., 2014, p. 5). The concept highlights bias that individuals hold and how those biases could impact data analysis. In my study, the key bias that could provide a negative impact is if a large majority of my respondents have either a very negative or very positive outlook concerning the overall DoD TAP. A question concerning the participants' overall beliefs on the program helped mitigate this issue and was included in the test instrument.

Finally, measurement error identifies issues with collecting and analyzing the data provided (Dillman et al., 2014, pp. 6-8). This type of error could be impacted by nonresponse error or through reliability issues (Dillman et al., 2014, pp. 7-8). Actions that I took to mitigate this error included those actions that I have identified above to mitigate nonresponse error as well as using a *post hoc* analysis of Cronbach's alpha to ensure a suitable reliability threshold had been reached. Additionally, the Cox and Snell

and Nagelkerke tests were used to demonstrate the study's goodness of fit, and the Hosmer and Lemeshow test were used to ensure linearity (Field, 2018, pp. 883, 886).

The questionnaire that I used to collect the data included questions that focus on both research questions being considered for the study. Additionally, through provided responses, I was able to explore simultaneously what the DoD considers as TAP success and what the individual considers as TAP success. This process not only allowed me to gain insight into the program based on the student veteran's perception, but it also allowed me to compare that perception against how the DoD measures program success.

Operationalization

Earlier in the chapter, I identified my two research questions and their corresponding hypotheses. I will now provide definitions for the key variables being considered. These variables are: (a) DoD TAP success; (b) Successful completion of IDP/ITP; and (c) Successful transition to an academic institution.

The dependent variable being studied is DoD TAP success. The DoD measures program success in a variety of ways, to include ITP and CRS completion (DoDI 1332.35, 2016, p. 45), and I used these various effectiveness measurements to explore program success. However, the key aspect of the dependent variable in my study is whether the student veteran considers the program to have been successful. Therefore, the definition that I used for DoD TAP success is that the student veteran believes that their transition and reintegration process was facilitated by attending the DoD TAP and meeting the program's requirements. This is a subjective measurement that was juxtaposed to the DoD's objective measurement through an individual's completion of

various program activities. This variable has a binary (yes/no) measurement that was based on responses from the independent variables. For measurement purposes, “Yes” responses were coded as “1” and “No” responses were coded as “0”. For example, if a student-veteran stated that the DoD TAP was instrumental in their ability to be accepted into an academic institution, then the response recorded against the dependent variable was “Yes = 1”.

The first independent variable in my study is successful completion of the IDP/ITP. The IDP is the servicemember’s transition plan that is developed to meet the servicemember’s individual post-service goals and objectives, and the ITP is the checklist used by the servicemember and DoD to ensure that the servicemember participates in those TAP activities that support the IDP (DoDI 1332.35, 2016, p. 46). From a DoD perspective, completion of the IDP/ITP through TAP participation signals program success. However, the participating servicemember may have believed that the process was not supportive of their individual transition requirements. Therefore, this variable could provide two distinctly different responses. From a DoD perspective, the response is binary: either the servicemember met their IDP/ITP through TAP attendance or they did not meet it. From a servicemember perspective, the results may not be as clear, as the student veteran may believe that parts of the program facilitated transition activities while other parts of the program did not. For this reason, I used a Likert scale to measure student veteran perceptions of program success: (a) The IDP/ITP process provided no assistance to transition and reintegration; (b) The IDP/ITP process provided little assistance to the transition and reintegration process; (c) The IDP/ITP process provided

some assistance to the transition and reintegration process; and (d) The IDP/ITP process provided extensive assistance to the transition and reintegration process. The lower scores provided evidence of a lack of TAP success for that individual; the higher scores highlighted the individual's belief that the process facilitated the individual's transition and reintegration process. I conducted two different analyses from these responses, both using logistic regression. First, I combined the results of responses 1 and 2, and then combined responses 3 and 4, and identified the predictability of student-veteran satisfaction with the program based on their responses (Field, 2018, pp. 901-902). I then followed-up this analysis with a review of each response as they compare to the overall total number of responses. This provided me further detail on the predictability of a student-veteran's degree of satisfaction with the program (Field, 2018, pp. 901-902).

For the second independent variable, successful transition to an academic institution, measuring success was similar to measuring the success of the IDP/ITP process. The DoD considers the "Accessing Higher Education Track" as optional, and uses the track to prepare servicemembers to apply to colleges and/or universities (DoDI 1332.35, 2016, pp. 32-33). Therefore, from a DoD perspective, success may be measured as only the individual's attendance in the track. However, student veterans may have opinions on how well the track provided the assistance necessary to be accepted to a higher education institution. To measure these opinions, I used a Likert scale similar to the one used for the first independent variable: (a) The DoD TAP process provided no assistance in being accepted to a higher education institution; (b) The DoD TAP process provided little assistance in being accepted to a higher education institution; (c) The DoD

TAP process provided some assistance in being accepted to a higher education institution, and; (d) The DoD TAP process provided extensive assistance in being accepted to a higher education institution. The lower scores identified that student-veterans did not consider the DoD TAP as supportive of their transition into an academic institution, and the higher scores attest to the student veteran's perception that the DoD TAP provided assistance in their academic transition. Results were recorded and analyzed in the same manner as for the first independent variable.

I have developed my test instrument so that it provides the ability to collect data on the variables identified above. The instrument consists of 15 questions. The first five questions are demographic in nature in order to confirm the participant requirements identified earlier. The first two of these questions, focused on service discharge status and date, and TAP attendance, are potential disqualifiers; if the prospective participant answered "No" to either of these questions, they were immediately taken through "skip logic" to a page explaining that they do not meet the criteria for the study, and thanking them for their time. If they answered "Yes", the remaining three questions focus on their type of service termination (service completion vs. retirement), branch of military service (Army, Navy, etc.) and the university that they are currently attending (one of two choices). These questions allowed me to further analyze responses based on these criteria.

The demographic questions are followed by six questions focused on the participant's overall experience with the TAP. The first two questions in this section solicited comments on the participant's use of the Individual Development Plan (IDP)

during the TAP. The first question confirmed that the student-veteran used an IDP during the program. Assuming that the participant responded “Yes”, they could then answer the following question that solicited their experience with the plan’s effectiveness in supporting their transition and reintegration efforts; if they answered “No”, they could then move to the following two questions that are focused on the Individual Transition Plan (ITP). These two questions highlight the participant’s use of the ITP, using the same data collection process as for the IDP. The final two questions allowed the participant to provide information on how the TAP assisted them in mitigating stress, and their overall opinion of how TAP supported their individual transition and reintegration process.

The final section consists of four questions that allowed the participant to express their opinion concerning the Accessing Higher Education Track of the TAP. After a question that confirmed that the student veteran participated in that track, they were asked questions concerning how supportive they believe that the track was in being accepted to a university, and in applying to a university. All participants, to include those that answered “No” to the track attendance question, were able to respond to the final question that focuses on when they were accepted to their university (before, during, or after TAP). I then closed the survey providing the participant with an opportunity to provide any written comments concerning the program and then thanked them for their participation. Additionally, I provided them with a text box where they could enter their email address if they wish to receive a copy of the aggregated survey results.

Six of the 15 questions are specifically formatted to use a Likert scale for the data collection process. The four-tier Likert scale allowed me to measure both individual student-veteran consideration of the various TAP support activities, and a certain degree of their consideration. Lower scores (1 – No Assistance, 2 – Little Assistance) demonstrated that student veterans did not consider the DoD TAP to be effective in these areas while higher scores (3 – Some Assistance, 4 – Extensive Assistance) highlighted that the student-veteran considered the DoD TAP to provide some degree of facilitation to their transition process. As an example, if I receive ten student veteran responses that identify that three student veterans believe that the IDP/ITP process provided little or no assistance and that seven believe that the process provided some or extensive assistance, I would conclude that the program in this area was providing some transition and reintegration facilitation; however, the degree of facilitation would be determined based on whether the responses identified “some” assistance or “extensive” assistance.

Data Analysis Plan

I used SPSS software, v. 25 and binary logistic regression to identify significance values and determine variable likelihood. Field (2018) identified binary logistic regression as the ability to determine in which category a participant can be identified based on responses to various questions (p. 879). For my study, a student veteran can be categorized as either an individual that believes that the DoD TAP supported their transition and reintegration from military service into the academic community as a student, or that the program did not support their efforts. In both cases, DoD TAP success is the dependent variable, so my binary logistic regression model determined the

likelihood of whether student veterans categorize the DoD TAP as either successful to their transition and reintegration or unsuccessful. Using the two independent variables, the IDP/ITP process and the academic transition and reintegration process, student-veterans were able to provide input concerning the success or lack of success of those two sub-processes within the DoD TAP, based on their individual experiences with the program. These results also allowed me to explore which parts of the program that are being reviewed are deemed successful by participants, and which parts might need improvements to better support participants.

As stated earlier, data was collected using SurveyMonkey®. Both the consent form and the survey were included on the site for prospective participant review and completion. Each completed survey was reviewed to determine whether all questions were provided responses. However, the lack of a response on a survey for this study does not necessarily negate the ability to use the other responses for study analysis. A category identifying that a response was not provided for a particular question or that the participant desired not to answer the question was included in the data totals. All responses were consolidated before I conducted any analysis. The intent was to review input from an overall perspective.

Data analysis was completed using the standard SPSS process for binary logistic regression. The key to the analysis was to ensure that the model provided a good fit for the results and that the odds ratio could be properly interpreted (Field, 2018, p. 883). I intended to follow Field's (2018) guidance in using "parsimony" in providing my results of the study. Therefore, my intent was to provide synopsis study results combined

with proof of a good model fit through the results of the Cox and Snell and Nagelkerke tests (Field, 2018, p. 883). Field (2018) also highlighted the importance of conducting a backward stepwise method when attempting to explore probability without identifying causality (p. 885). This requires the development of a test model which identifies all predictor variables, and then eliminates the predictors that do not impact the model's results fit (p. 885).

Field (2018) also reminded us that although the standard biases inherent in quantitative testing need to be avoided, two additional biases need to be considered in logistic regression: linearity and independence of errors (p. 886). For logistic regression, linearity is defined as the “linear relationship between any continuous predictors and *the logit of the outcome variable*” (italics in the original, Field, 2018, p. 886). I used the Hosmer and Lemeshow test to confirm linearity in my study (Field, 2018, p. 886). Overdispersion is defined as a larger than anticipated variance between the categories (Field, 2018, p. 889). I used the chi-square test to determine proper dispersion (Field, 2018, p. 890).

Threats to Validity

Babbie (2017) defined validity as the ability to develop an effectiveness measurement that fits the item that the researcher desires to study (p. 497). For my study, I needed to consider internal validity, external validity and construct validity, and how I might be able to either eliminate or mitigate threats to each of those constructs. I discuss those processes below.

Babbie (2017) highlighted that external validity focuses on the researcher's ability to relate obtained study results to equivalent but different circumstances and situations (p. 490). Because I did not identify the entire population of student veterans that completed military service as of 1 January 2002 as my target population, external validity was somewhat compromised. However, by identifying distinctly different student veteran populations, one studying at an online university and two studying at a traditional brick-and-mortar university, I attempted to mitigate external validity weaknesses through my sampling procedure so that an acceptable representation of the target population could participate. Although this process did not negate the validity issue, it may allow my study's results to be considered in other studies of this nature.

The key validity issue with my study, as I mentioned in Chapter 1, was with internal validity. In considering internal validity, Babbie (2017) emphasized that the lack of a true relationship between the study's results and the actual conduct of the study could cause validity issues (p. 491). Warner (2013) related the internal validity issue to causality, and claimed that a study lacks internal validity if it cannot determine or identify causality (p. 16). I acknowledged this validity issue by identifying my study as nonexperimental in nature. The intent of my study was not to determine causality, but to explore potential issues with the DoD TAP that may affect prospective student veteran transition and reintegration. I believe that results from my study would need to be used with results from other similar studies so that causality could be determined.

Finally, Babbie (2017) identified construct validity as the researcher's ability to ensure that variables identified within the study actually relate to each other (p. 153). For

my study, this relationship needed to be within the program theory framework. Therefore, my requirement was to ensure that both of my independent variables, successful completion of IDP/ITP and successful transition to an academic institution, related to my dependent variable, DoD TAP success. This aspect of validity was projected to be reviewed during the pilot test, where both my dissertation committee and a group of selected veterans would have reviewed the proposed survey instrument for both subject matter and methodology validity; since the pilot test was not completed, this review was not conducted. Earlier in this chapter, I identified both the Cox and Snell and Nagelkerke tests as means that I used to ensure goodness of fit during my data analysis (Field, 2018, p. 883). Additionally, I used the Hosmer and Lemeshow test to determine logistic regression linearity (Field, 2018, p. 886). Through these processes, I was able to identify proper study construct and ensure construct validity.

Ethical Procedures

Cooper (2012) explained that ethics is a process that individuals use to ensure that follow-on actions taken are considered moral and proper (p. 2). For any study, ethical procedures must be considered before the study commences. This section will explain the ethical processes that I followed to ensure that student veterans participating in my study were treated properly.

The action that I took to ensure that the student veteran was comfortable with his or her participation was to provide the participant an opportunity to understand the purpose for the survey and data collection through a consent form that was positioned as the initial section of the test instrument that I provided for review on my SurveyMonkey®

on-line website. The “Consent to Participate” includes: (a) background information on the study and the study’s purpose; (b) the procedures that any potential participant will be asked to follow if they decide to participate; (c) the fact that study participation is completely voluntary; (d) some of the risks and benefits possibly affiliated with participating in the study; (e) privacy measures that I took to ensure confidentiality and mitigate anonymity; and (f) contact information where potential participants can reach me to ask any questions prior to completing the survey. Once the potential participant reviewed the consent form, if they decided to participate, they were asked to click on a link which acknowledged their consent, and they were then taken to the test instrument.

Based on information from both academic institutions, I had to complete two separate processes for study approval. I was first required to receive IRB approval from Walden University, which was received conditionally until I received approval from the second university for data collection. The second university required a review of my proposal, including a copy of the actual survey, so that an authorized university representative could provide me the approval to work through their student veteran organization to solicit participants for the study. This written approval was then forwarded to the Walden University IRB so that I could receive IRB approval prior to initiating data collection. Finally, I had to receive approval from the third institution’s Research Review Committee (RRC) prior to receiving IRB approval from Walden University to collect data from the third institution. This process will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4. Final Walden IRB approval was granted on 2 July, 2019 and assigned IRB#07-02-19-0721489.

My ethical procedures used in this process were both articulated and approved prior to initiating the data collection process. The nature of the study restricted participation to those student veterans that are currently enrolled within the approved academic institutions; my intent was to not identify the institutions within my study results. Prospective participants were informed that their participation is voluntary, that they can choose to not respond to any question on the survey that they are not comfortable completing, and that they can stop their participation at any time while they are completing the survey. I did not ask prospective participants to provide their names or to provide any categorical data concerning race, gender, age, etc., except to confirm the following: (a) That they are veterans; (b) That they completed military service after 1 January 2002; (c) That they received an honorable discharge from military service; (d) Whether they are retired from military service or not; and (e) That they are currently enrolled in an academic institution. Through these methods, issues with confidentiality were eliminated while issues with anonymity were mitigated.

All data collected during the study process was maintained in two separate locations both controlled by me: one on my study computer and one external drive. All files on my computer are password protected so that external access is prohibited. Since no names or other categorical data were being collected during this study, and since I did not collect IP addresses from the survey site, data should not be able to be traced to its original source. I will release data only to those involved in reviewing the study's procedures, and only in a collective fashion so that the ability to trace any individual

responses is mitigated. All study data will be retained for 5 years in a password protected electronic file and then destroyed by reformatting the external storage drive.

Summary

Chapter 3 provided information on how I planned to collect and analyze my study data. Key to my process was that I used binary logistic regression to analyze the data to explore the research questions. I explained to participants both the study's procedures and its potential benefits to future TAP participants. Participants were restricted to student veterans from two academic institutions that participated in the DoD TAP after 1 January 2002 and that met the definition of a veteran identified in Chapter 1. IRB approval was procured before any data was collected, and processes were in place to ensure that participant information remained both confidential and anonymous.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

Prior to identifying the study's results, I will reiterate the study's purpose, the research questions that were studied, and the hypotheses that were reviewed through the data analysis of all the collected data. As described in Chapter 1, the purpose of my study was to explore the relationship between the TAP and servicemembers that are participating now and have participated in the program, to determine whether the program has assisted those personnel with their overall transition and reintegration from military service to civilian life. In order to consider this relationship, I developed the following two research questions, and their applicable hypotheses:

RQ1: What is the individual likelihood that the IDP/ITP process used for servicemember transition and reintegration predicts DoD TAP success?

H_01 : The IDP/ITP process used for servicemember transition and reintegration does not predict DoD TAP success.

H_{a1} : The IDP/ITP process used for servicemember transition and reintegration does predict DoD TAP success.

RQ2: What is the individual likelihood that the academic transition and reintegration process predicts DoD TAP success?

H_02 : The academic transition and reintegration processes does not predict DoD TAP success.

H_{a2} : The academic transition and reintegration processes does predict DoD TAP success.

Both research questions focused on specific tools that were developed for the DoD TAP to be used by the servicemember to assist with their individual transition process. IDP is used by the individual transitioning to identify post transition goals, while the ITP is the document used by the both the individual and the TAP managers to ensure that the transitioning individual's TAP participation supports those goals (DoDI 1332.35, 2016, p. 46). This is the focus of the first research question. The second research question focuses specifically on the education track of the program, and whether that track assisted with the servicemember's transition into an academic institution.

In this chapter, I will discuss the results of the study. I will start with an update on the conduct of the pilot study that was originally planned as part of the research process. I will then discuss the data collection process, specifically how the participant pool was developed and expanded to attempt to collect enough data for the study and problems that occurred during the collection process. The study's results will then be provided, including *post hoc* analyses that were conducted in addition to those analysis processes discussed in Chapter 3. Finally, I will provide a chapter summary that will set the conditions for the findings that will be identified in Chapter 5.

Pilot Study

I discussed the initial concept and intent of the pilot study details in Chapter 3. Ultimately, my final methodology did not include the pilot study. Two key factors led to the decision to remove this portion of my research. First, my original intent was to request assistance from veterans that had retired from military service after 1 January 2002, but these participants would not necessarily be student veterans. Upon further

review of this potential participant segment, I determined that this process would not allow me to collect information and recommendations from individuals that had first-hand knowledge of either the DoD TAP or the specific education program used to assist with transition into an academic environment.

Second, during the IRB review process I learned that the university had moved access to campus student groups into a general participant pool; therefore, direct access to the online university's student veteran association was not permitted for research purposes. This restriction further limited my pool of potential pilot study participants to those eligible students from my second university research site. Given that recruitment efforts to obtain at least my minimum number of required participants from both settings were unknown, I opted to remove the pilot study phase so that all eligible respondents were eligible to participate, and their data could be used for statistical purposes. My committee's expertise in the creation of online survey instruments and subject matter expertise in military transition programs for veterans accessing academic programs offered perspectives that encouraged modifications to the visual presentation of the SurveyMonkey® hosted survey instrument and some basic wording changes for content clarity. See Appendix B for the final online survey instrument.

Data Collection

The original web link for the survey used for data collection was initiated on 25 April 2019. I started the survey at that time so that I could develop the survey in SurveyMonkey® and test its mechanics in order to ensure that it was prepared for actual use.

Upon proposal approval, I submitted an application to IRB at Walden University to initiate actual data collection. This application highlighted the process that I had identified in Chapter 3: In essence, I would contact the two institutions' student veteran organizations and solicit support through those organizations for survey. However, this process had to be adjusted, since IRB approval was predicated on a restriction on any contact with potential survey participants from the online institution, either directly or through the student veteran organization. Initial IRB approval to initiate data collection from the online institution was provided on 2 July 2019. There was no access to the survey by online institution participants prior to IRB approval.

Once IRB approval was provided, I then coordinated with the traditional institution to receive their approval for data collection. I did not need to receive their IRB approval, since they used a modified review process to review my request, which was approved on 7 August 2019, with the stipulation that I was not authorized to make any direct contact with student veterans; all contact had to be made through the student veteran organization point of contact. Once that approval was received, I submitted the applicable documentation to the Walden University IRB to receive IRB approval to initiate data collection at the traditional university. This approval was received on 15 September 2019. Upon receiving approval, I forwarded the IRB-approved request for assistance letter to the student veteran organization point of contact for distribution to their organization. Again, there was no access to the survey by potential participants from this institution prior to the request for assistance letter distribution.

However, even after permission was provided to collect data from traditional institution participants, only a very small data sample was collected with my initial participant invitation distribution. To increase participation, multiple attempts were made to solicit support through informal methods that were within approved IRB parameters to include the use of social media (Facebook and LinkedIn) to indirectly contact potential participants. I also attempted to contact the student veteran organization point of contact at the traditional institution to request the ability to directly contact participants that had provided email addresses in their survey response so that they might contact other potential participants. Neither of these initiatives produced any tangible results. Therefore, in coordination with my committee, I opted to expand my potential data pool to include additional locations. I attempted to contact three different traditional institutions through their student veteran organizations to solicit their support; only one of those contacts provided positive results.

After the initial coordination with that institution's student veterans' organization to determine support interest, I formally requested their support by submitting the appropriate documentation to their Research Review Committee ([RRC], their version of the IRB). This submission was provided to their RRC on 22 October 2019. Final approval from their RRC to collect data from their student veterans was received on 13 November 2019. As with the first traditional institution, approval was predicated on restricting any direct contact with student veterans; all contact had to be made through the student veteran organization's point of contact. Once I received this approval, I then submitted the procedural change request to the Walden University IRB for their approval.

IRB approval was provided on 2 December 2019, and the approved request for assistance letter was sent to the student veteran organization point of contact for distribution; information on how to access the survey was provided in the letter. The survey was available for participation until 31 January 2020, when I closed the survey.

A total of 32 student veterans attempted to participate in the survey. Based on exclusionary criteria identified in Chapter 3, four potential participants were disqualified: one participant did not meet the discharge status/timing requirement, and three did not participate in the DoD TAP prior to their service departure. Once they identified their disqualifying criteria in their responses, they were taken to a page which thanked them for their interest and did not allow them to provide further responses. Additionally, although one respondent met participation criteria, they did not provide any responses beyond the initial two questions, so although that student veteran is counted in the overall total of participants, there is no tangible data provided through that survey. Also, one respondent provided responses to the demographic data (Questions #1 through #5) but did not respond to any other questions. The remaining 26 participants completed all or part of the survey. The following tables depict the baseline characteristics and demographics of the participants solely based on provided demographic data:

Table 4

Demographic Data (Questions 3 and 5)

	Yes	No
Military Retiree	5	22
Traditional University	26	1

Table 5

Demographic Data (Question 4)

	Yes
US Air Force	7
US Army	7
US Coast Guard	2
US Marine Corps	5
US Navy	6

As mentioned in Chapter 3, demographics such as gender, age and race were irrelevant to this survey; the focus was on student veterans that met the discrete criteria identified above. Therefore, only discharge status, institution type, and military service/organization information were collected from participants. The sample provided representation from all the military services so that DoD TAP program conduct by each service could be explored. Additionally, the participant sample demonstrated overwhelming survey participation from nonretirees that were located at traditional institutions. For survey purposes, nonretirees are those student veterans that were discharged from the service prior to becoming pension eligible. Additionally, all participants were from traditional institutions except for one who participated from the online institution. The lack of online institution participation will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

My original representation intent was to solicit participation from two different institutions which would allow me to explore the research questions, without determining causality, within manageable parameters. Problems with participation required me to add

the third institution for data collection. This addition allowed me to expand the potential participant pool while staying within the parameters of the institution types that were originally developed (online vs. traditional). The expansion did not help with achieving mixed representation between institution types; however, it did support the receipt of additional data through expanded participation.

Results

As stated above, 28 of the 32 student veterans that initiated the survey process were identified as eligible to complete the survey, although only 26 of the 28 provided usable input for statistical analyses. Initial analysis of each research question was completed using the total of all provided responses. After the initial analysis, a *post hoc* analysis was completed on each research question. Additionally, an initial analysis and *post hoc* analysis were conducted to explore the relationship between stress mitigation techniques that were provided during the DoD TAP and program success. Each of these areas are discussed separately below.

Study Results Sample Size and Bootstrap Modeling

In Chapter 3, I highlighted my focus on high statistical power using Fields's definition of statistical power as the degree of effect of a particular test. My original target for this study was 0.95 or 95% statistical power. However, Field (2018) identified a minimum target of 80% as the desired percentage especially when examining a priori predictive relationships. Using G* Power 3.1 (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009) for logistic regression with two independent variables setting alpha .05, effect size .03, and power .80, my study would have required at least 108 total responses to achieve the

80% power threshold. Despite initial and modified recruitment strategies, my total survey responses remained below this computed threshold.

However, there is precedent in using a smaller sample size in logistic regression to determine statistical significance. Peduzzi, Concato, Kemper, Holford, and Feinstein (1996) highlighted that an “events per variable” (EPV) of greater than 10 can be used to demonstrate statistical significance within a logistic regression analysis (p. 1373). Additionally, Vittinghoff and McCulloch (2006) stated that there are instances when a total of less than 10 EPV could demonstrate statistical significance within a logistic regression analysis (p. 710). Based on these theoretical justifications, I initially conducted my logistic regressions using standard modelling with the available participant responses. Across all three regression models (RQ1, RQ2, and *post hoc* analysis of stress as a predictor), the Hosmer-Lemeshow test illustrated my data were not achieving required goodness-of-fit assumptions. To mitigate these assumption violations, I opted to compute each regression model using 1,000 bootstrap samples. For RQ1 and the analysis of stress as a likelihood predictor of TAP success, the Hosmer-Lemeshow tests remained significant, indicating these data are not a good model fit; therefore, results of these bootstrap models should be interpreted with caution. For RQ2, the Hosmer-Lemeshow test was nonsignificant, indicating these data were a good model fit and results of these bootstrap models could be interpreted with statistical confidence.

Research Question #1

RQ1 was designed to explore the relationship between the use of the IDP and ITP during the DoD TAP, and how the student veterans perceived program success based on

their program involvement. The question posed for this analysis was: *What is the individual likelihood that the IDP/ITP process used for servicemember transition and reintegration predicts DoD TAP success?* The null hypothesis would identify that there is no relationship; the alternate hypothesis would identify a relationship.

I conducted my consolidated RQ1 analysis using binary logistic regression. Field (2018) stated that this type of analysis produces an either-or response (p. 1009). My intent was to show whether use of the IDP and ITP tools indicated DoD TAP program success. The DV for this research question is based on responses to survey Question #11: whether the program aided in the student veteran’s transition and reintegration process or not. The IVs were based on Questions 7 and 9: the assistance that the IDP and ITP provided to the student veteran during the DoD TAP. Initially, responses to Questions 7 and 9 were consolidated: “No Assistance” and “Little Assistance” responses were down coded to “No” and “Some Assistance” and “Extensive Assistance” responses were down coded to “Yes”. After determining that these consolidated results did not provide sufficient detail for analysis, individual responses of “No Assistance”, “Little Assistance”, “Some Assistance”, and “Extensive Assistance” were returned and used to evaluate regression outcomes. The following tables highlight RQ1 findings:

Table 6

Bootstrap for Variables in the Equation – RQ1

		<i>B</i>	Bias	Std. Error	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	95% CI	
						Lower	Upper
Step 0	Constant	-.405	-.043 ^a	.592 ^a	.421 ^a	-1.872 ^a	.693 ^a

Unless otherwise noted, bootstrap results are based on 1000 bootstrap samples
a. Based on 999 samples

Table 7

Bootstrap for Variables in the Equation – RQ1

Step 1	<i>B</i>	Bias	Std. Error	<i>Sig.</i> (2-tailed)	95% CI	
					Lower	Upper
Constant	-1.350	-1.307 ^a	7.960	.050 ^a	-39.139 ^a	1.060 ^a
IDP Assistance	.514	-3.237 ^a	11.933 ^a	.209 ^a	-22.351 ^a	11.082 ^a
ITP Assistance	.238	3.882 ^a	12.468 ^a	.309 ^a	-10.441 ^a	23.018 ^a

Unless otherwise noted, bootstrap results are based on 1000 bootstrap samples

a. Based on 863 samples

Using a bootstrap sample, the results were determined to be not statistically significant (IDP [$p = .209$]; ITP [$p = .309$]). Additionally, the variables in the equation identified both IVs to be statistically insignificant. Based on this information, I determined that the model did not predict any relationship between the DV and the IV and the null hypothesis for RQ1 was retained; neither the IDP or the ITP have any significant effect on the success of the DoD TAP.

Once this was identified, I then conducted a *post hoc* analysis to explore whether any of these data could provide any additional insight. Field (2018) identified these tests as explorations of groupings that were not considered prior to the conduct of the initial analysis (p. 1030). In this case, I used this analysis to further test the RQ1 hypothesis. The following descriptive statistics are focused on RQ1:

Table 8

IDP/ITP Use (Questions 6 - 9)

	Yes	No	No/Little Assistance	Some/Extensive Assistance
IDP Use	17	8	12	8
ITP Use	17	8	14	4

I believe that it is important to note the difference in the number of responses between IDP/ITP use (Questions #6 and #8) and the assistance that those tools provided (Questions #7 and #9). Questions #7 and #9 specifically requested responses only if the respondent used the tools. However, in three cases, respondents answered Question #6 as “No”, but still answered Question #7 with a “No Assistance” or “Little Assistance” response. Although not as pronounced, Questions #8 and #9 had a similar issue; in one instance, the respondent answered “No” to Question #8, but then provided a response (“No Assistance”) to Question #9. Additionally, one respondent who responded to Questions #6 and #7 did not respond to either Question #8 or #9.

To conduct this analysis, I organized the data based on the student veteran’s institution participant responses. The response options were described as (a) Online, (b) Traditional #1 and, (c) Traditional #2. The institutional breakdown is as follows:

- Online – 1
- Traditional #1 – 20
- Traditional #2 – 5

One respondent who met the study inclusion criteria did not provide any information beyond responses to the first two qualification questions. This participant was not included in my *post hoc* analysis. Additionally, the participant that provided demographic data responses only, but no other responses, was equally eliminated from my *post hoc analyses*. Finally, due to the lack of responses from the Online institution-only participant, I eliminated that response data from this analysis. What follows is the post hoc analyses from the 19 participants who identified that they are enrolled students at the two traditional institutions.

Responses on Questions #6 through #9 from the student veterans at Traditional #1 institution are as follows:

Table 9

RQ1 Responses – Traditional #1 (Questions 6 - 9)

	Response	No Response
Question #6	19	1
Question #7	14	6
Question #8	19	1
Question #9	13	7

Questions #6 and #8 were focused specifically on whether the IDP and ITP were used by the TAP participant. Nineteen of the 20 student veterans responding confirmed that they either did or did not use these tools during their program participation.

Responses for Questions #7 and #9 focused on whether the particular tool (either the IDP or ITP) provided assistance to the student veteran. Only those that used the tools should have responded to these questions. However, in this case, three student veterans

answered the question even though they had not used the tool; all cases responded with “No Assistance”. Additionally, some student veterans provided no response because they had answered “No” to either or both of Questions #6 and #8 (as requested in the survey). Based on this information, the following table depicts total responses from Traditional #1 institution for Questions #6 through #9. Student veteran non-responses are included as “No/Little Assistance” or “No” responses:

Table 10

IDP/ITP Use (Traditional #1 – Questions 6 - 9)

	Yes	No or No Response	No/Little Assistance or No Response	Some/Extensive Assistance
IDP Use	11	9	14	6
ITP Use	12	8	17	3

For Traditional #2, there were six responses to the survey. Responses on Questions #6 through #9 from those student veterans are as follows:

Table 11

RQ1 Responses – Traditional #1 (Questions 6 - 9)

	Response	No Response
Question #6	5	1
Question #7	5	1
Question #8	5	1
Question #9	5	2

For this analysis, I conducted the same review as I did for Traditional #1. As mentioned above, one respondent answered all of the demographic questions, but none of the other questions. Therefore, the respondent is counted as an “Incomplete” survey (as opposed to a disqualification) but is included in the responses used for the *post hoc* analysis. For Questions #6 and #7, five (5) student veterans provided responses to all questions. For Questions #8 and #9, five (5) student veterans responded to Question #8, and four (4) responded to Question #9. The lack of a response to Question #9 is appropriate because that student veteran responded “No” to Question #8. Based on this information, the following table depicts the responses from Traditional #2 for RQ 1:

Table 12

IDP/ITP Use (Traditional #2)

	Yes	No	No/Little Assistance	Some/Extensive Assistance
IDP Use	5	0	4	1
ITP Use	4	1	3	1

From both Traditional institutions, there were clearly more “No Assistance” or “Little Assistance” responses than there were “Some Assistance” or “Extensive Assistance” responses for both IDP and ITP use. This likely demonstrates that respondents did not find either document helpful during their program attendance. I will discuss these results further in Chapter 5.

Research Question #2

Research Question #2 (RQ2) attempted to explore the relationship between the DoD TAP education track and DoD TAP success. The question posed for this analysis

was: *What is the individual likelihood that the academic transition and integration process predicts DoD TAP success?* The null hypothesis would identify that there is no relationship; the alternate hypothesis would identify a relationship.

I also conducted my consolidated RQ2 analysis using binary logistic regression. The DV for this research question was the same as for RQ1: whether the program provided assistance in the student veteran's transition and reintegration process. The IVs were based on Questions #13 and #14: whether the education track provided the student veteran assistance in institution acceptance and in submitting an application to an institution. As with the earlier IVs, responses to Questions #13 and #14 were "No Assistance", "Little Assistance", "Some Assistance", and "Extensive Assistance". Initially, "No" and "Little" Assistance responses were down coded to No, and "Some" and "Extensive" Assistance responses were down coded to Yes. After determining that these consolidated results did not provide sufficient detail for analysis, individual responses of "No Assistance", "Little Assistance", "Some Assistance", and "Extensive Assistance" were returned and used to evaluate regression outcomes. The following tables highlight RQ2 findings:

Table 13

Bootstrap for Variables in the Equation – RQ2

		<i>B</i>	Bias	Std. Error	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	95% CI	
						Lower	Upper
Step 0	Constant	.000	.005 ^a	.778 ^a	1.000 ^a	-1.946 ^a	1.946 ^a

Unless otherwise noted, bootstrap results are based on 1000 bootstrap samples

a. Based on 989 samples

Table 14

Bootstrap for Variables in the Equation – RQ2

Step 1	<i>B</i>	Bias	Std. Error	<i>Sig.</i> (2-tailed)	95% CI	
					Lower	Upper
Constant	-.405	.050 ^a	.821 ^a	.639 ^a	-1.609 ^a	1.386 ^a
AHET Acceptance Assistance	-10.399	-.025 ^a	.411 ^a	.002 ^a	-11.295 ^a	-9.797 ^a
AHET Application Assistance	32.007	-.025 ^a	.411 ^a	.002 ^a	31.111 ^a	32.609 ^a

Unless otherwise noted, bootstrap results are based on 1000 bootstrap samples

a. Based on 500 samples

Using a bootstrap sample with 500 iterations, both IVs were statistically significant (AHET Acceptance [$p = .002$]; AHET Application [$p = .002$]). Therefore, the null hypothesis for RQ2 is rejected in favor of the alternative; there are statistically significant predictive likelihoods between attending the TAP education track and program success. For AHET Acceptance Assistance, the negative direction implies a negative relation; a directional response towards “No or Little Assistance”. As such, the *OR* 9.6 [1.00/10.399] illustrates for each unit decrease on the response scale a student veteran is 9.6 times more likely to receive No or Little Acceptance Assistance in their TAP program success experiences. For AHET Application Assistance, the positive direction indicates a greater likelihood for a “Some or Extensive Assistance” response.

As such, the *OR* 32.007 illustrates for each unit increase on the scale a student veteran is 32 times more likely to receive Some or Extensive Application Assistance in their TAP program success experiences. Additionally, as with RQ1, I then conducted a *post hoc* analysis to further explore the RQ2 hypothesis. The following descriptive statistics are focused on RQ2:

Table 15

Experience with DoD Higher Education Track (Questions 12 - 14)

	Yes	No	No/Little Assistance	Some/Extensive Assistance
Education Track Participation	5	19		
Support to University Acceptance			5	3
Support to University Application			5	3

One of the significant differences between RQ1 and RQ2 is that all TAP participants should use the IDP and ITP as part of their participation process, while participants can elect to either take or not take the education track. Therefore, there could be a lesser number of positive responses that identify education track participation than there were positive responses for IDP/ITP use. I will elaborate on this further in Chapter 5.

Again, these data were organized by institution. Also, since the Online institution had only one response, I eliminated it from the analysis leaving response data from

Traditional #1 and Traditional #2 for analyses. Responses on Questions #12 through #14 from the student veterans at Traditional #1 institution are as follows:

Table 16

RQ2 Responses – Traditional #1 (Questions 12 - 14)

	Response	No Response
Question #12	18	2
Question #13	4	16
Question #14	4	16

The two student veterans that did not respond to Question #12 also did not respond to Questions #13 and #14. Additionally, only those student veterans that responded “Yes” to Question #12 provided responses to Questions #13 and #14. Therefore, for Traditional #1, all 18 responses provided relevant data for analyses. Based on this information, the following depicts total responses from Traditional #1 for Questions #12 through #14. Student veteran non-responses are included as “No” and “No/Little Assistance” responses:

Table 17

Experience with DoD Higher Education Track – Traditional #1 (Questions 12 - 14)

	Yes	No/No Response	No/Little Assistance or No Response	Some/Extensive Assistance
Education Track Participation	2	18		
Support to University Acceptance			19	1
Support to University Application			19	1

For Traditional #2, there were six potential participants. Responses to Questions #12 through #14 were as follows:

Table 18

RQ2 Responses – Traditional #2 (Questions 12 - 14)

	Response	No Response
Question #12	5	1
Question #13	4	2
Question #14	3	3

Only two of the participants provided a “Yes” response to Question #12, so there should have been only two responses to Questions #13 and #14. However, all three “No” respondents provided either one or both answers to Questions #13 and #14 with “No Assistance” or “Little Assistance” responses. Therefore, responses from Traditional #2 to RQ2 questions are as follows:

Table 19

Experience with DoD Higher Education Track – Traditional #2 (Questions 12 - 14)

	Yes	No/No Response	No/Little Assistance or No Response	Some/Extensive Assistance
Education Track Participation	2	4		
Support to University Acceptance			5	1
Support to University Application			5	1

As with RQ1, there were more “No Assistance” and “Little Assistance” responses than there were “Some Assistance and “Extensive Assistance” responses. This would seem to imply that participants did not find the education track helpful for either higher education institution application or acceptance. I will also discuss this further in Chapter 5.

Stress Mitigation

In Chapter 1, I identified “Successful Ability to Manage Stress” (p. 11) as an optional IV. Although not specifically covered by a research question, I believed the subject to be sufficiently relevant to explore through the survey process. There were 25 total responses to that question (Question #10). For this analysis, the DV remained Question #11: whether the program provided assistance in the student veteran’s transition and reintegration process. The IV used was from Question #10: did the program provide

stress mitigation during the transition and reintegration experience? As with RQ1 and 2, these data were evaluated using SPSS v. 25 for regression outcomes. The following tables highlight the results:

Table 20

Bootstrap for Variables in the Equation – Stress Mitigation

		<i>B</i>	Bias	Std. Error	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	95% CI	
						Lower	Upper
Step 0	Constant	-.336	-.015	.441	.545	-1.335	.511

Unless otherwise noted, bootstrap results are based on 1000 bootstrap samples

Table 21

Bootstrap for Variables in the Equation – Stress Mitigation

Step 1	<i>B</i>	Bias	Std. Error	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	95% CI	
					Lower	Upper
Constant	-.726	-.005	.801	.276	-2.281	.972
Stress Mitigation Assistance	.306	-.003	.496	.470	-.727	1.232

Unless otherwise noted, bootstrap results are based on 1000 bootstrap samples

Using a bootstrap sample with 1000 iterations, the IV was not statistically significant ($p = .470$). Therefore, this test implies that there is no significant relationship between stress mitigation assistance provided during the program and success of the TAP program. I then conducted a *post hoc* analysis to explore whether any of these data could

provide additional insight. The following descriptive statistics are focused on stress mitigation:

Table 22

Stress Mitigation Responses (Question 10)

	Response	No Response
Online	1	0
Traditional #1	19	1
Traditional #2	5	1

Table 23

Overall Experience with DoD TAP (Questions 10 - 11)

	No Assistance/ No Response	Little Assistance	Some Assistance	Extensive Assistance
Stress Mitigation Assistance	9	11	6	1
Transition/Reintegration Assistance	5	11	9	2

In total, there were more responses provided to this area than to the RQ areas. A preponderance of the responses imply that it is likely that participants receive no to little assistance in stress management during their participation in the program. I will discuss this further in Chapter 5.

Summary

In conclusion, RQ1 and the test on stress mitigation implied there were no significant predictive relationships between the IVs and TAP program success. For RQ2, results indicate there is significant predictive likelihood between participation in the education track of the program and overall TAP program success. Given that bootstrap sampling was required due to low participation, all results should be evaluated with caution. Additionally, responses from the survey participants do indicate that they have some belief concerning how these activities supported their transition process.

In Chapter 5, I will discuss the findings based on these identified results in order to provide insight into participant perceptions concerning TAP program success. Finally, I will identify study limitations, any recommendations based on the study's results, and the social change implications of my findings.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of my study was to explore the relationship between the DoD TAP and servicemembers that participated in the program to inquire into whether the program supported servicemember transition from military service and reintegration into the civilian community. To do this, I studied three aspects of the program: (a) the documentation used by servicemembers and DoD TAP staff to facilitate the servicemember's program participation, (b) the voluntary education track designed to support a servicemember's transition into an academic institution, and (c) the stress mitigation tools that are provided during the program to support transition and reintegration. I used a nonexperimental, quantitative approach consisting of a 15-question online survey designed to gather participant response data from one online and two traditional academic institutions.

The overall results for RQ1 and RQ2, which focused on DoD TAP documentation and the education track respectively, were mixed. For RQ1, regression outcomes resulted in retaining the null hypothesis, implying that there was no likely relationship between the IVs and the DV; for RQ2, I was able to reject the null hypothesis, implying that there was likely relationship between the IVs and the DV. The *post hoc* analysis that I conducted on both RQs provided additional insight into how survey participants measured the support provided within those two areas during their individual transition processes. I will discuss those details in the interpretation section below. Additionally, my review of the stress mitigation support provided by the program implied that there

was no likely relationship between stress mitigation assistance and program success. However, the *post hoc* analysis identified specific results on how TAP participants perceived the program's approach to stress mitigation. This will also be discussed below.

Interpretation of the Findings

Research Question 1

RQ1 focused on the relationship between program documentation and program success. The tested hypothesis was that program documentation used by the servicemember would affect the success or failure of the program. The initial analysis using SPSS determined that the results could not predict any significant relationship between IDP/ITP use and program success. However, the *post hoc* analysis provided some insight into TAP participant perceptions on how the documentation supported their transition process.

In the case of both IDP and ITP use, 17 of the 25 respondents stated that they used the documents during their participation in TAP. This is a 68% usage rate. Although this depicts a high percentage usage, both of these documents are intended to be required for use by both the servicemember and the TAP staff to assist in the servicemember's program participation; therefore, it could be argued that anything less than 100% is demonstrating a process deficiency in one of more steps of the program. However, there are several factors that could have contributed to the lack of documentation use. A key factor could be that survey respondents completed TAP participation prior to making documentation use mandatory. During the early part of the period being studied (1 January 2002 and beyond), these documents were not part of the TAP process, so

servicemembers that participated in TAP in an earlier timeframe would not have used the documents. Additionally, it is possible that the TAP staff at various locations where the program was being administered were lax in documentation use. One response from a study participant provided some insight:

I retired from the Army in April of 2014. My experience with TAP was not very good...based on the comments from my fellow soldiers going through the process at the same time, all of the counselors there were just going through the motions.

The TAP experience will only provide support to the servicemember if both the servicemember and the program staff are focused on the goals developed by the servicemember, and monitored by the staff to ensure that they are achieved. According to my study's results, the documentation is not currently a successful mechanism.

Also insightful were the actual participant responses. Of the 20 provided responses that were focused on IDP use, 12 reported that the document provided them no or little assistance. This is a 60% response rate, which could illustrate that most of my program participants responded that they did not find the document to be of any assistance during their program participation. Of the three responses that are in addition to the number of participants that supposedly used the document (20 respondents vs. 17 users), two responded "No Assistance" and one responded "Little Assistance" which could also reflect their lack of use of the document.

ITP use response results were similarly negative. Of the 18 provided responses that focused on program participant use of the ITP, 14 stated that the document provided them no or little assistance. This is a 78% response rate, which could illustrate an even

stronger negative respondent perception than for IDP use. The one additional respondent to the ITP assistance question stated that the document was “No Assistance”, which could reflect that respondent’s lack of document usage.

As I explained in Chapter 1, the IDP is supposed to be used by the servicemember participating in the program to establish posttransition goals, and the IDP is the document that the program managers are supposed to use to establish the plan necessary to facilitate the servicemember meeting those goals (DoDI 1332.35, 2016, p. 46). Responses from the survey participants illuminates that neither of these documents is meeting those requirements nor are the process steps being accurately followed. There are a number of possibilities for why this is occurring, including a lack of attention by the program managers in developing a plan that facilitates the individual transition needs, and the possibility that the individual servicemember changed transition goals without notifying the program managers. Both possibilities should be explored in future program reviews.

In summary, many of the study participants did not believe that either document was useful in supporting their individual process through the DoD TAP. In Chapter 2, I discussed issues with veteran transition and reintegration that are supposed to be mitigated through the DoD TAP program. Rahbek-Clemmensen et al. (2012) highlighted four areas, cultural, demographic, policy preference, and institutional that could cause transitioning servicemembers difficulties with their reintegration into the civilian community (p. 673). Whether it is problems with reinterpreting military experiences for use in the civilian community (Danish & Antonides, 2013) or the difficulties with reducing institutionalization perceptions (Higate, 2001), the DoD TAP was developed, in

part, to assist the servicemember with navigating those difficulties. The IDP and ITP documents should be developed to assist both the servicemember and the DoD TAP staff to support those efforts throughout program attendance.

Research Question 2

RQ2 focused on the relationship between the education track of the program and program success. The tested hypothesis was that servicemember participation in this track would affect the success or failure of the program. The initial analysis using SPSS determined that there is a likely significant relationship between participation in the program's education track and program success. Also, the *post hoc* analysis provided additional insight into TAP participant perceptions on how this specific track supported their transition process.

The key aspect of the analysis for this question was the number of respondents currently attending academic institutions that did not participate in the education track. Track attendance is voluntary so it is not expected that every DoD TAP participant will attend. However, of the 24 respondents only five identified participation in the track. This is a 21% participation rate, which could imply that the track provides little useful support to the servicemember in transitioning to an academic institution. Possible explanations are that the servicemember was not aware of the track's availability, or that the servicemember participated in the program prior to the track being available; any number of potential reasons for the limited participation are plausible. Additionally, if an individual was unsure of their specific direction after transition and reintegration, it is possible that they may have participated in one of the other tracks during the program.

Another key point for discussion is that of the five survey respondents that participated in the track, three stated that the track provided at least some assistance in applying to and gaining acceptance from an academic institution. Although from a small sample size, a 60% assistance rate does imply that the education track did assist with a servicemember's transition into an academic institution, if the servicemember participated in the track. This finding could demonstrate that the track provides some benefit to those servicemembers interested in pursuing an education upon service completion.

In summary, of those that participated in the education track, some benefits were gained from DoD TAP program participation. As mentioned in Chapter 2, transition into an academic setting requires the servicemember to adjust to their new environment both mentally and emotionally. Ackerman et al. (2009) stressed the need for newly matriculated veterans to reestablish study skills, while Jones (2017) emphasized the need for veterans to relate their individual service experiences to the classroom. Burnett and Segoria (2009) and Naphan and Elliott (2015) discussed the need for academic institutions to assist veterans in these and other reintegration processes. In addition to institution application and acceptance, the education track may be of some assistance in providing participants the tools necessary to meet or support these needs. However, the tools can only be provided through servicemember track participation. This may require program managers to consider servicemember participation in multiple tracks during their TAP attendance.

Stress Mitigation

Although not a specific research question, I considered stress mitigation assistance an important part of the overall program and conducted a separate review of this area using SPSS, and through a *post hoc* analysis. Mitigating the stress induced on the servicemember through both the transition out of the service and their reintegration into civil society, in this case specifically into an academic institution, could help with what Danish and Antonides (2013) argued was a servicemember's reacclimating process. My SPSS analysis determined that there was likely no significant relationship between stress mitigation assistance and program success. However, the *post hoc* analysis provided insight into servicemember perceptions concerning support in this area.

I received 27 total or partial responses examining stress as a predictor, which was larger than for either of the two research questions. Twenty of the 27 responses indicated that the program provided the servicemember either no or little assistance with stress mitigation, with most of those responses ($n = 11$) indicating that some minor assistance may have been received. This 74% response rate may demonstrate relevance. A few of the important results that should be taken from the program by the servicemember are a certain comfort level with the servicemember's transition direction, and some tools that could assist with the servicemember's reintegration process; in this case with their transition into an academic environment. Responses provided imply that this is not the case.

Theoretical Context

Through conducting this study, I was able to confirm the applicability of Mohr's program theory to future reviews and evaluations of the DoD TAP. This theory focuses on (a) its usefulness to organizational review, (b) the fact that certain acts need to occur that precede any result, (c) that those acts be specific to the organization, (d) that they produce some type of result, and (e) that they are relevant to the result (Mohr, 1982, p. 38). My study provided an opportunity to examine each one of these five aspects.

Individual and staff tracking of a servicemember's program participation are relevant to whether the program provides the participant with the assistance necessary to support the transition effort, hence its usefulness to organizational review (Mohr, 1982). Additionally, using Mohr's process identified above, I argue that stress mitigation support enhances that assistance. Since the servicemember participated in the program prior to their individual program evaluations through survey completion, the acts that were evaluated preceded the results. All these acts were specific to the organization, as they were all part of the DoD TAP. Finally, the actions produced a result and were an integral part of the servicemember's interpretation of the action's success or failure, which identified the relationship between the act and the result.

Limitations of the Study

My study has elucidated findings concerning the DoD TAP's usefulness to a servicemember that is preparing to transition from the military community to an academic institution. However, there were identified study limitations, which should

advise current and future researchers to interpret my findings with caution. I addressed some of these limitations in Chapter 1 and will now elaborate further.

From the beginning, I chose to conduct a non-experimental study, which established internal validity as a key limitation (Warner, 2013, p. 16). My original analysis with consolidated results identified no significant relationships between the DV and IVs. Once the variables were returned and used, and bootstrap was applied, I only identified one area, the relationship between the education track and program success, as having a significant relationship.

My original target population was identified as one online and one traditional academic institution. The intent of this divided participant pool was to identify significant differences, if any, between student veteran groups in both types of academic settings. However, the online institution restricted direct recruitment activities to their student veteran organization, requiring me, instead, to recruit using a general participant pool in which the student veteran may have been a member. With only one response using this participant pool method, I expanded participant recruitment to a third academic institution, which was also a traditional institution. These online university restrictions further prohibited me from conducting any type of study recruitment activities to enrolled student veterans; both traditional institutions allowed recruitment activities through their student veteran association designated point of contacts.

In general, I received very limited feedback from the online institution. One student veteran responded to the survey with useable data. Although, as discussed in Chapter 1, internal validity would have been an issue because of the limited number of

locations identified as potential participant pools, the fact that my responses were overwhelmingly from traditional institutions exacerbated the study's internal validity issue from the originally intended perspective of evaluating participants from two different academic settings.

The timeframe that I used to determine participation criteria did have an impact on the study, although not necessarily in the way that I had originally described in Chapter 1. Those that participated, and some that attempted to participate but did not meet the criteria, seemed to demonstrate excellent recall of their transition experiences. For example, one respondent who was discharged from the service in 1972 upon returning from Vietnam (did not meet my study sample frame) wrote me to state that his transition assistance consisted of a warning to "try to avoid the hippies at the airport". However, the timeframe did allow respondents who may not have had the documentation available to them to participate as they had departed service prior to the documentation requirement but within my study's timeframe. Also, it was possible that the education track was not available to certain study participants for the same reason.

One of the aspects that was highlighted is that although the conduct of the program is proscribed by DoD, and there is general uniformity as to what will be included in the program, there are no confirmations from my research as to the locations where each servicemember participated in the TAP. It is possible that each student veteran who submitted survey responses could have participated in the program from a different location; the military service breakdown provided in Chapter 4 implies that difference. Therefore, although the program was organized similarly at each location,

program conduct, or more specifically, individual TAP staff conduct in administering and executing the program could have differed. For example, one United States Coast Guard servicemember highlighted that both the IDP and ITP provided him “Extensive Assistance” with the transition and reintegration, whereas another United States Coast Guard servicemember who participated in TAP at an Army facility claimed that “none of my questions or concerns (were) answered because I was in the Coast Guard”.

Finally, responses that I used within my survey could be confusing to other researchers when attempting to interpret study results and findings. For most of the IV questions I provided four possible responses for survey participant answers: “No Assistance”, “Little Assistance”, “Some Assistance” and “Extensive Assistance”. Although “No Assistance” and “Extensive Assistance” responses could be clearly understood, the difference between “Little Assistance” and “Some Assistance” could be limiting in their discrete ability to accurately and separately qualify a true response value. For future research, it may be more appropriate to provide one response that covers the area between “No Assistance” and “Extensive Assistance”. For example, using the term “Partial Assistance” and explaining its definition in Chapter 1 might allow for clearer results and interpretation findings. This limitation could also be mitigated by creating a survey where response options were structured to offer a scale ranging from 0 = No Assistance through 10 = Extensive Assistance and then requesting the participant to grade their response across the scale by selecting a radio button that corresponds to a scaled value. Those scaled values could then be used for further inferential statistical analyses.

Recommendations

Due to the limitations identified above, there are a number of potential research avenues in the future to examine both the utility and efficacy of the DoD TAP program. My study was non-experimental; as such, it negated the ability to determine causality. Future researchers may want to consider a qualitative or mixed methods study focused on a specific population of student veterans that could be more deterministic.

The participant pool adjustments that were required for my study exacerbated internal validity issues. It was unanticipated during my study design that access to a very well endorsed student veterans' association at the online university would be deemed "off limits" for direct contact to solicit study participation leaving recruitment to a blinded participant pool only. Future researchers may want to ensure that they investigate and fully understand an institution's restrictions on how potential participants could be recruited into any study and how a study could be marketed before they identify a location as a potential participant pool.

I established a timeframe for my study that I thought would allow me to collect data from post-September 2001 veterans. However, to provide a more narrowed sample frame, I should have enforced a more precise timeframe in order to receive input from student veterans that had generally participated in the same TAP format. Future researchers should consider carefully the sample frame and timelines in order to permit a clearer review timeframe associated with specific program. Variations in tool formats, timeframes, and instructions may yield outcome differences that are operational in nature and not reflective of true differences in outcome experiences.

Finally, although all of my study's participants attended TAP, it is highly probable that they attended the program at various military installations around the country, and in some cases, around the world. This increases the possibility that although the program's syllabus may be uniform, its presentation may be different at different locations, thus variability in program inputs and throughputs yielding potential program outcome variability. Future researchers should consider a mixed methods approach of student veterans in order to capture more detailed participant descriptive data and then incorporate student veterans' interviews regarding their lived experiences with TAP in specific locations and service branches.

Implications

Positive Social Change

When discussing social change in Chapter 1, I focused on the impact that my study could have on the future servicemembers that will participate in TAP. TAP was originally established to provide some assistance to servicemembers in their transition processes; this purpose has grown, and continues to grow, so that specific areas of transition are supported the way the education track supports a servicemember's transition to an academic institution. Studies such as these allow the program to be reviewed externally so that program strengths and weaknesses can be identified and either enhanced or corrected. Findings from my study have identified potential weaknesses in how the program is being administered, either through the different services or through the different locations, and how transition tools in those settings are being provided to TAP participants. My research intent has not been to identify problems

and fix blame; my intent has been to explore a program that had been developed for the benefit of the departing servicemember and identify areas where program management could improve or sustain performance. I believe my study met its goal despite being notably constrained, in part due to low participation and limited recruitment settings.

Additionally, any improvements to the TAP support a more efficient and effective use of taxpayer dollars. The history of the TAP, especially since 1 January 2002, demonstrates that the DoD is interested in making the program more responsive to the needs of departing servicemembers, which in turn makes the program more economically justifiable to the United States citizen. My study has identified areas of needed improvement that could assist TAP management with that justification. However, these improvements should be made in line with the original purpose of the TAP. A servicemember's transition from military service and integration into the civilian community can be stressful. Servicemembers attending the TAP may have a particular belief concerning their desired future path, and may focus their TAP efforts to meet that particular goal, only to change their path once they have been discharged from the service. Therefore, program effectiveness should not be evaluated solely from the perspective of the veteran post-discharge. It may require that the program be evaluated from the perspective of the servicemember during TAP attendance, and then again after a period of time from the servicemember's discharge, so that TAP efficiency and effectiveness can be measured against the veteran's original goal, and the veteran's eventual goal. Conducting regular program evaluations during these periods should support continual program improvement.

Theoretical Context

As mentioned above, my study also supports the use of program theory to explore logical linkages within program process steps. I recommend no changes to the theory as it has offered a constructive and logical flow to my analyses. Future researchers should consider using Mohr's program theory in future TAP studies.

Recommendations for Practice

Results of my study provides examples that can be used by both TAP participants and managers to enhance program success. Program documentation was developed for both the servicemember and the TAP staff to guide the servicemember through the program so that they can receive maximum individual assistance. This requires the servicemember to highlight problems with documentation use, but it also requires the servicemember to develop an individual transition plan and then focus their efforts on gaining the assistance necessary to meet the plan. TAP managers must be cognizant of these individual servicemember plans and, through their documentation tracking process, do the things necessary to support the servicemember's plan.

Attendance at the various tracks (education, employment, entrepreneurial) should be based on a servicemember's plan. However, servicemembers should be encouraged to attend multiple tracks so that they can continue to refine and revise their original plans. There is no foolproof method for success in this area; for example, once they transition, servicemembers could change their goal from employment to education, so any experience in all of the tracks might assist the servicemember once TAP is completed.

Finally, any assistance that TAP can provide to a servicemember on stress management will support the servicemember's reintegration process. The program itself, if conducted effectively, provides a modicum of stress management, as it would provide a foundation for the reintegration process. Discussions concerning the general reintegration process and the difficulties faced during reintegration might prepare servicemembers for that next step. Additionally, discussions within the particular tracks concerning stress as it relates to particular areas, for example civilian employment or academic enrollment, may provide servicemembers methods to mitigate stress within a particular environment.

Conclusion

Service to the nation, particularly but not solely during wartime, is a vital part of maintaining the nation's security. However, since a very small percentage of the nation's citizens volunteer for this service, the stress that a servicemember faces during both service and transition from service is mostly unknown to the nation's civilian community. The DoD TAP has been developed to both support the servicemember in their return to the civilian community upon completion of their service and assist in mitigating the stress related to this transition and reintegration. My study has attempted to consider one small aspect of that transition: a servicemember's desire to improve their education in preparation for that reentry. It is vital that this program continue to receive scrutiny so that it continually improves and supports the servicemember who was prepared to sacrifice all in support of their nation.

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Appendix A: Original (Pre-IRB) SurveyMonkey® Test Instrument

Department of Defense Transition Assistance Program**Consent to Participate**

You are invited to take part in a research study about the Department of Defense Transition Assistance Program (DoD TAP). This is the program established to support a servicemember's transition from military service to the civilian community. The researcher is inviting all student veterans who have been honorably discharged from military service after 1 January 2002 and that attended DoD TAP to be in the study. I obtained your name and/or contact information through university organizations. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Angelo Santella who is a doctoral candidate at Walden University. Some of you might have known the researcher while in military service, but this study is separate from that role.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between the DoD TAP and student veterans that participated in the program to determine whether the program has assisted those individuals with their transition from military service and their reintegration into civilian life.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Complete one electronically-based survey that is focused on your personal experience with the DoD TAP.

- Respond to questions that will provide insight into your experience with the overall DoD TAP, as well as your experience with the education track portion of the DoD TAP.
- Take no more than 20 minutes of your time to respond to this one survey.

Here are some sample questions:

- My experience with the Individual Development Plan (IDP) and Individual Transition Plan (ITP) provided me “No Assistance”, “Little Assistance”, “Some Assistance”, “Extensive Assistance” with my overall transition and reintegration process.
- My experience with the DoD TAP education track provided me “No Assistance”, “Little Assistance”, “Some Assistance”, “Extensive Assistance” with my acceptance and transition into an academic institution.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

This study is voluntary. You are free to accept or turn down the invitation. No one at [REDACTED] will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to be in the study now, you can still change your mind later.

You may stop at any time. All who volunteer will have their responses included as part of the study as aggregate data; no individual responses will be reported.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as the possible stress involved in reliving the transition

experience. Additionally, completing the survey will require some of your valuable time. However, being in this study would not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing.

The intent of this study is to identify aspects of the DoD TAP that most benefitted participants, as well as aspects of the program that might benefit from changes and/or improvements. Your participation in this study will not provide you any direct benefit, but it may provide future servicemembers that are preparing to transition, and that will attend the DoD TAP, a more beneficial experience.

Payment:

There are no payments, thank you gifts, or reimbursements involved with this study.

Privacy:

Reports coming out of this study will not share the identities of individual participants and IP addresses associated with your response device will not be captured or retained. Individuals will not be asked to provide their names or any other contact information. Details that might identify participants, such as the branch of service or location of the study, also will not be shared. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purpose outside of this research project. Data will be kept secure through a password protected electronic file. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years and then destroyed, as required by the universities.

Contacts and Questions:

You may ask any questions you have by contacting the researcher at

████████████████████. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call the Research Participant Advocate at my university at. Walden University's approval number for this study is IRB [PENDING] and it expires on [PENDING].

Please print or save this consent form for your records. You may also request a copy of this consent by contacting me at █

Obtaining Your Consent:

If you feel you understand the study well enough to make a decision about participating, please select the “Next” button below to move forward to the survey questions. Selecting “Next” serves as your acknowledgement of your willingness to participate.

You may leave the survey at any time by closing your Internet browser.

Department of Defense Transition Assistance Program**Participant Descriptive Information**

1. Please confirm that you are an honorably discharged United States (US) military veteran that completed military service after 1 January 2002.

- Yes - I am an honorably discharged US military veteran that completed military service after 1 January 2002.
- No - I am not an honorably discharged US military veteran that completed military service after 1 January 2002.

Department of Defense Transition Assistance Program

2. Please confirm that you participated in the DoD TAP before completing military service.

- Yes - I participated in the DoD TAP before completing military service.
- No - I did not participate in the DoD TAP before completing military service.

Department of Defense Transition Assistance Program

3. Please identify your term of service completion status.

- Military Retiree
- Military Non-Retiree

4. Please provide branch of military service.

- US Air Force US Marine Corps
 US Army US Navy
 US Coast Guard

5. Please confirm the university where you are currently enrolled.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Department of Defense Transition Assistance Program

Overall Experience with DoD TAP

Use of the Individual Development Plan (IDP): DoD defined the IDP as “A written plan designed to meet particular goals for individual career development that is aligned with the eligible Service member’s organizational and operational missions” (DoDI 1332.35, 2016, p. 46). Based on that definition, please answer the following questions concerning the IDP:

6. During TAP, I used the IDP as a guide.

- Yes
 No

7. (Only if you used the IDP) Using the IDP provided me ___ with my transition and reintegration process.

- No Assistance
 Little Assistance
 Some Assistance

- Extensive Assistance

Use of the Individual Transition Plan (ITP): DoD defined the ITP as “An OSD (Office of the Secretary of Defense) standardized document that is created, evolves, and is maintained by the Service member that provides the framework to perform detailed assessments of their personal and professional preparedness to achieve realistic career goals after separation from active duty” (DoDI 1332.35, 2016, p. 46). Based on that definition, please answer the following questions concerning the ITP:

8. During TAP, I used the ITP to guide me.

- Yes
- No

9. (Only if you used the ITP) Using the ITP provided me_ with my transition and reintegration process.

- No Assistance
- Little Assistance
- Some Assistance
- Extensive Assistance

10. The DoD TAP provided me__ with stress mitigation during my transition and reintegration experience.

- No Assistance
- Little Assistance
- Some Assistance
- Extensive Assistance

11. Overall, the DoD TAP provided me_ with my transition and reintegration process.
- No Assistance
 - Little Assistance
 - Some Assistance
 - Extensive Assistance

Department of Defense Transition Assistance Program

Experience with DoD TAP Higher Education Track

DoD defined the Accessing Higher Education Track as the track that provides servicemembers with “guidance to prepare for the application process” (DoDI 1332.35, 2016, p. 32). DoD further stated that the servicemember should be prepared for the following after completing this track:

1. “Complete an application to an accredited academic institution offering a sound program of study towards the Service member’s career aspirations within the member’s financial means”.
2. “Schedule a session with a counselor from an academic institution.”
3. “Meet individually with education counselors, as needed” (DoDI 1332.35, 2016, p. 33).

Based on this definition, please answer the following questions:

12. During TAP, I participated in the Assessing Higher Education Track.
- Yes
 - No
13. (Only if you attended the Accessing Higher Education Track) Attending the Accessing Higher Education Track provided me_____ in getting accepted to a

university.

- No Assistance
- Little Assistance
- Some Assistance
- Extensive Assistance

14. (Only if you attended the Assessing Higher Education Track) Attending the Assessing Higher Education Track provided me ___ in applying to a university.

- No Assistance
- Little Assistance
- Some Assistance
- Extensive Assistance

15. I was accepted to a university ___ DoD TAP attendance.

- Before
- During
- After

Final Comments

Please provide any additional comments that you may have concerning the DoD TAP.

12. DoD TAP comments.

This completes the survey. Thank you very much for your participation. If you wish a copy of the results once compiled, please provide your contact e-mail address in the box below.

13. Contact E-Mail Address

Appendix B: Final (Post-IRB) SurveyMonkey® Test Instrument
(with IRB-Approved Consent to Participate)

Department of Defense Transition Assistance Program

Consent to Participate

You are invited to take part in a research study about the Department of Defense Transition Assistance Program (DoD TAP). This is the program established to support a servicemember's transition from military service to the civilian community. The researcher is inviting all student veterans who have been honorably discharged from military service after 1 January 2002 and that attended DoD TAP to be in the study. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Angelo Santella who is a doctoral candidate at Walden University. Some of you might have known the researcher while in military service, but this study is separate from that role.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between the DoD TAP and student veterans that participated in the program to determine whether the program has assisted those individuals with their transition from military service and their reintegration into civilian life.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Complete one electronically-based survey that is focused on your personal experience with the DoD TAP.

- Respond to questions that will provide insight into your experience with the overall DoD TAP, as well as your experience with the education track portion of the DoD TAP.
- Take no more than 20 minutes of your time to respond to this one survey.

Here are some sample questions:

- My experience with the Individual Development Plan (IDP) and Individual Transition Plan (ITP) provided me “No Assistance”, “Little Assistance”, “Some Assistance”, “Extensive Assistance” with my overall transition and reintegration process.
- My experience with the DoD TAP education track provided me “No Assistance”, “Little Assistance”, “Some Assistance”, “Extensive Assistance” with my acceptance and transition into an academic institution.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

This study is voluntary. You are free to accept or turn down the invitation. No one at [REDACTED] will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to be in the study now, you can still change your mind later.

You may stop at any time. All who volunteer will have their responses included as part of the study as aggregate data; no individual responses will be reported.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as the possible stress involved in reliving the transition

experience. Additionally, completing the survey will require some of your valuable time. However, being in this study would not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing.

The intent of this study is to identify aspects of the DoD TAP that most benefitted participants, as well as aspects of the program that might benefit from changes and/or improvements. Your participation in this study will not provide you any direct benefit, but it may provide future servicemembers that are preparing to transition, and that will attend the DoD TAP, a more beneficial experience.

Payment:

There are no payments, thank you gifts, or reimbursements involved with this study.

Privacy:

Reports coming out of this study will not share the identities of individual participants and IP addresses associated with your response device will not be captured or retained. Individuals will not be asked to provide their names or any other contact information. Details that might identify participants, such as the branch of service or location of the study, also will not be shared. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purpose outside of this research project. Data will be kept secure through a password protected electronic file. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years and then destroyed, as required by the universities.

Contacts and Questions:

You may ask any questions you have by contacting the researcher at [REDACTED]. If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call the Research Participant Advocate at my university at. Walden

University's approval number for this study is 07-02-19-0721489 and it expires on July 1st, 2020.

Please print or save this consent form for your records.

Obtaining Your Consent:

If you feel you understand the study well enough to make a decision about participating, please select the "Next" button below to move forward to the survey questions. Selecting "Next" serves as your acknowledgement of your willingness to participate.

You may leave the survey at any time by closing your Internet browser.

Department of Defense Transition Assistance Program**Participant Descriptive Information**

1. Please confirm that you are an honorably discharged United States (US) military veteran that completed military service after 1 January 2002.

- Yes - I am an honorably discharged US military veteran that completed military service after 1 January 2002.
- No - I am not an honorably discharged US military veteran that completed military service after 1 January 2002.

Department of Defense Transition Assistance Program

2. Please confirm that you participated in the DoD TAP before completing military service.

- Yes - I participated in the DoD TAP before completing military service.
- No - I did not participate in the DoD TAP before completing military service.

Department of Defense Transition Assistance Program

3. Please identify your term of service completion status.

- Military Retiree
- Military Non-Retiree

4. Please provide branch of military service.

- US Air Force US Marine Corps
 US Army US Navy
 US Coast Guard

5. Please confirm the university where you are currently enrolled.

[REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]

Department of Defense Transition Assistance Program

Overall Experience with DoD TAP

Use of the Individual Development Plan (IDP): DoD defined the IDP as “A written plan designed to meet particular goals for individual career development that is aligned with the eligible Service member’s organizational and operational missions” (DoDI 1332.35, 2016, p. 46). Based on that definition, please answer the following questions concerning the IDP:

6. During TAP, I used the IDP as a guide.

- Yes
 No

7. (Only if you used the IDP) Using the IDP provided me ___ with my transition and reintegration process.

- No Assistance
 Little Assistance

- Some Assistance
- Extensive Assistance

Use of the Individual Transition Plan (ITP): DoD defined the ITP as “An OSD (Office of the Secretary of Defense) standardized document that is created, evolves, and is maintained by the Service member that provides the framework to perform detailed assessments of their personal and professional preparedness to achieve realistic career goals after separation from active duty” (DoDI 1332.35, 2016, p. 46). Based on that definition, please answer the following questions concerning the ITP:

8. During TAP, I used the ITP to guide me.

- Yes
- No

9. (Only if you used the ITP) Using the ITP provided me_ with my transition and reintegration process.

- No Assistance
- Little Assistance
- Some Assistance
- Extensive Assistance

10. The DoD TAP provided me__ with stress mitigation during my transition and reintegration experience.

- No Assistance
- Little Assistance
- Some Assistance
- Extensive Assistance

11. Overall, the DoD TAP provided me_ with my transition and reintegration process.

- No Assistance
- Little Assistance
- Some Assistance
- Extensive Assistance

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Experience with DoD TAP Higher Education Track

DoD defined the Accessing Higher Education Track as the track that provides servicemembers with “guidance to prepare for the application process” (DoDI 1332.35, 2016, p. 32). DoD further stated that the servicemember should be prepared for the following after completing this track:

4. “Complete an application to an accredited academic institution offering a sound program of study towards the Service member’s career aspirations within the member’s financial means”.
5. “Schedule a session with a counselor from an academic institution.”
6. “Meet individually with education counselors, as needed” (DoDI 1332.35, 2016, p. 33).

Based on this definition, please answer the following questions:

12. During TAP, I participated in the Assessing Higher Education Track.

- Yes

No

13. (Only if you attended the Accessing Higher Education Track) Attending the Accessing Higher Education Track provided me _____ in getting accepted to a university.

- No Assistance
- Little Assistance
- Some Assistance
- Extensive Assistance

14. (Only if you attended the Assessing Higher Education Track) Attending the Assessing Higher Education Track provided me _____ in applying to a university.

- No Assistance
- Little Assistance
- Some Assistance
- Extensive Assistance

15. I was accepted to a university ___ DoD TAP attendance.

- Before
- During
- After

Department of Defense Transition Assistance Program**Final Comments**

Please provide any additional comments that you may have concerning the DoD TAP.

12. DoD TAP comments.

This completes the survey. Thank you very much for your participation. If you wish a copy of the results once compiled, please provide your contact e-mail address in the box below.

Contact E-Mail