

ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF MEANINGFUL EMPLOYMENT ON THE
SELF-ESTEEM OF MALE VETERANS

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examined the relationship between meaningful employment and self-esteem in male veterans. Meaningful employment is an important element of reintegration, the process all veterans go through to transition from active duty military service back into society. Reintegration involves three major areas: physical and mental health, employment, and family and friend relationships. A sample of 30 male veterans were interviewed. After the interviews, two instruments were used to further examine the variables (meaningful employment and self-esteem). The instruments were administered to measure the individual's perception regarding meaningful employment and level of self-esteem. The interviews were the primary focus, with the instruments providing additional evidence to support the information gathered in the interviews.

This mixed-methods study involved analyzing the interviews for consistent themes related to answering the research questions and, through systematic coding, identifying and categorizing the connectivity of concepts and trends. The two instruments were analyzed using cross-tabulations to triangulate information gathered in the interviews. A significant correlation was found between meaningful employment and self-esteem in male veterans. The study also identifies traits male veterans consider necessary for employment to be meaningful. Future studies should examine the relationship between meaningful employment and veteran suicides.

Key Words: Veterans, Meaningful Work, Self-esteem

To my four sons, William (Billy), Alton James (Jimmy), Gary Jr., and Charles (Chuck), I failed to tell you tell you often enough how much I love you. We lost Gary Jr. over 14 years ago, and a day does not go by that I do not think about him or the accomplishments he might have achieved. Billy and Jimmy have taken paths different from mine but both are successful in their own rights. Chuck has matured into a young man who is wise beyond his years and a hero of mine who has chosen to serve our nation in the highest tradition.

To my mother, who through love and patience taught me that perseverance will prevail, I cannot find the words to express my gratitude and love. To my dearly departed father who was a Korean War veteran who experienced combat under the harshest conditions: As a boy growing up I didn't understand my father, but as the years go by I realize how much I have become like him and admire him for what he endured.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

Re-entry into society upon leaving military service can be a great challenge for veterans and their families. In recent years the main focus of funding to assist veterans has centered on developing social support services and networks for veterans (Briggle, 2013; Perlin, Kolodner & Roswell, 2004). While social support is an important component of re-entry there are several other factors that are of similar importance. An under-studied area includes finding and maintaining meaningful employment and its association with self-esteem, since the job that one does is an integral part of a person's identity (Jahoda, 1982). Social support can have positive and negative implications for a veteran; however, one's association with meaningful employment not only enhances one's sense of identity and self-esteem but also provides a sense of purpose and meaning in life. With the epidemic of suicide among veterans, we are challenged to discover how to find a balance between the components of re-entry (employment, family and friend relationships, and physical and mental health). Therefore, the focus of this dissertation is to explore the association between meaningful employment and self-esteem as they are associated with personal identity.

Finding, securing, and engaging in meaningful employment are important elements of self-esteem in American workers (Jahoda, 1982). Veterans, however, face additional challenges as they reintegrate back into society, and meaningful employment may have a greater impact on their self-esteem than on the average worker because typically veterans experienced success in

the military. However, once they leave military service they often find themselves starting work at the same level as someone who never served in the military or even in some cases someone right out of high school. When the self-esteem of a veteran is positive the beneficial psychological effects impact the veteran's personal relationships and psychological well-being (Plumer, 2013).

Approximately 200,000 individuals leave military service each year (Partnership for Public Service, 2017). It is estimated up to 17% will have lingering emotional side effects (Traumatic Brain Injury, PTSD, physical disability) that inhibit their abilities to find and retain employment (American Psychiatric Association, 2014; Williamson & Mulhall, 2009). Most veterans are capable of independent functioning. If not, the priority is psychological and medical support to restore the veteran to independent functioning so he may transition to the civilian community.

Reintegration is the process all veterans go through to transition from the military back into society. There is no set timeframe for this process to occur. Each veteran is an individual and the process is impacted by the veteran's experiences in military service, length of deployments, combat exposure, and his physical and mental health, family situation, preparation before and right after discharge, and social support (Beder, 2012; Robertson, 2013; Sayer, Carlson, & Frazier, 2014). Reintegration may be relatively simple for some veterans, especially if they have no lingering psychological and physical problems and they gained experience and expertise in a trade while in military service that is easily transferrable into civilian life.

For all veterans reintegration involves three major areas: finding gainful and meaningful employment, reestablishing family and friend relationships, and, if needed, securing services that can assist with personal mental health. If any one of the three areas is deficient, the veteran has

an increased chance of future adaptation problems that can interfere with all areas of his life (Briggle, 2013; Resnik et al., 2012). On September 12, 2013, the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) and the National Defense Industrial Association cohosted the Warrior-Family Symposium in Washington, DC. During this symposium they emphasized the value of peer-to-peer connection and meaningful engagement to achieve emotional stability (MOAA, 2013). This engagement can be employment, volunteerism, or any activity that produces meaning in the veteran's life.

Reintegration encompasses the combination of employment, family, and mental health (Briggle, 2013). Embedded within those constructs is a positive sense of self-identity and self-esteem. Even though all these elements play an important part in a veteran's reintegration, this study proposed that once the male veteran has reached a level of self-sufficiency (capable of obtaining and maintaining employment), meaningful employment is an extremely important element of reintegration. To explore the definition of meaningful employment and the relationship to self-esteem, this study examined employed male veterans.

The premise is that regardless of disability status, all returning military veterans need to seek meaningful employment, and this study examined whether they perceive their employment as meaningful and the impact it has on their self-esteem. Other issues outside the scope of this study, such as the impact of a spouse and children (family relations), were not specifically examined in this study. The primary relationship examined was between meaningful employment and positive self-esteem, with personal identity as an embedded element that moderates positive self-esteem. The male veteran develops personal identity through the verification process that occurs from experiencing increased competencies from various roles that affect how the veteran perceives himself.

For this study the variables of meaningful employment and positive self-esteem were defined as follows:

(a) Meaningful employment. Meaningful employment is work that satisfies the individual's view of activity that nurtures pride and satisfaction, which is dependent on the personal perceptions of the individual. Since meaningfulness is particular to the individual, a job that is perceived to be meaningful employment to one person may be perceived by another as low and minimally adequate employment. Pay is not a determinant for meaningful employment unless the individual perceives it to be. The individual may be meaningfully employed in a volunteer position with no financial compensation (Grimm-Thomas & Perry-Jenkins, 1994; Kammeyer-Mueller, Judge & Piccolo, 2008; Kay 2013).

(b) Positive self-esteem. The two facets of self-esteem are global and specific. Global self-esteem is the amount of positive or negative feelings individuals have about themselves overall. Specific self-esteem takes in the perceived feelings individuals have about themselves concerning a specific area of their lives. These two facets are interrelated but not interchangeable. A positive specific self-esteem perceived by the individual toward employment skills may have crossover impacts on global self-esteem and specific perceptions and self-esteem in other areas of life and vice versa (Rosenberg, Schoenbach, Schooler & Rosenberg, 1995).

Meaningful employment is an important element of identity and self-esteem and demonstrates an individual's ability to assume responsibilities that are valued by our society (Kay, 2013). Consequently, increases in positive self-esteem enhance an individual's personal identity and personal relations with family and friends (Mruk, 1995). For those discharged from the military, the young age in which they entered and the interest in securing stable employment may have motivated them to join the military. Many veterans may never have had a permanent

job before they joined the military. They may not know how to create a résumé highlighting their military experience and skills in a way that enhances securing a civilian position. Furthermore, they may not know how to network or conduct themselves in a job interview (Baird, 2013). These factors makes employment a crucial factor to consider in successful reintegration. The present study has shown there is a significant correlation between meaningful employment and self-esteem in male veterans. Veterans may need additional resources to learn how to prepare themselves and compete in today's market so that they can obtain meaningful employment.

The Meaningful Employment Challenge

The current unemployment rate for all post 9/11 veterans is 5.8% compared to the general population unemployment of 5% (U.S. Department of Labor, 2016). This difference is particularly noteworthy when considering that a veteran has shown some level of accepting responsibility and functioning as part of a team while several younger members of the general population may be starting employment for the first time with no such history. The veteran unemployment rate amounts to over 190,000 veterans who gallantly served their country but cannot obtain worthwhile employment in American society. Veterans age 25 to 34 have a 6.8% unemployment rate. The consequence to society is a staggering number of veterans who need help.

A veteran who takes a job solely for the pay may experience the following: he does not perceive the job as personally fulfilling, the job does not measure up to his skill level or abilities, or the job does not hold future potential. Those factors are considered necessary for meaningful employment to many veterans. Pay is not a determinant for meaningfulness unless the veteran

perceives it to be. The veteran may be meaningfully employed in a volunteer position with no financial compensation.

There is a relationship between unemployment and suicide (Delaney, 2014; Solman, 2013). Unfortunately, no studies were found that reported the number of veterans who committed suicide who did not have meaningful employment (Eisen et al., 2013; Magruder, Yeager, Brawman-Mintzer, 2013). In fact, there is no reliable estimate of the number of veteran suicides because there is no nationwide surveillance system (Bagalman, 2016). Veterans Affairs reported in 2012 that 18 to 22 veterans commit suicide daily (Kemp & Bossarte, 2012).

Veteran suicides are often linked to combat experience. However, the suicide rate is higher with veterans who never experienced combat, so there are variables present beyond combat trauma. Tim Bullman, a VA representative, postulated that suicides may be the result of a weak economy creating greater challenges to veteran reintegration (Zarembo, 2015).

It is difficult to divide suicide victims into distinct categories so that the number of veteran suicides impacted primarily by lack of meaningful employment can be determined, and no studies could be found to state that meaningful employment could deter suicidal feelings. It may be the case that there are no instances wherein meaningful employment is the primary stressor, but meaningful employment could be a confounding variable that correlates with the independent variable that is the actual causal variable.

Two major characteristics are highly intertwined with veteran suicides: psychiatric conditions (major depression, PTSD, and bipolar disorder) and substance abuse (alcohol and illegal and prescription drugs) (Blakeley, 2014; Mayo Clinic, 2012; Wood, 2013). Both psychiatric conditions and substance abuse also have a relationship with unemployment status (Elements Behavioral Health, 2013). If veteran unemployment is not addressed, the problem of

suicide may be exacerbated by the addition of over 600,000 service members transitioning into civilian life over the next three years (Partnership for Public Service, 2017). Veteran reintegration is a national challenge that will require additional investment in job training and creation and mental health programs (Plumer, 2013).

Control over behavior is characterized by not having emotional outbursts or fits and being able to focus on life tasks. Reestablishing a relationship with his spouse and children creates an environment in which the veteran perceives himself as being supportive and one in which the veteran is comfortable and is functioning well and amicably with family members.

Reintegration for veterans requires a holistic approach that addresses meaningful employment, a positive sense of self identity, psychological well-being that includes positive self-esteem, and family support. If any one of these areas is deficient, the veteran's transition from the military may be challenging (Briggle, 2013; Resnik et al., 2012). However, the impact of meaningful employment on all other aspects of reintegration has not been the focus of studies associated with veterans transitioning back into society.

Employment demonstrates an individual's ability to assume responsibilities that are valued by our society (Kay, 2013). As Americans we are brought up in a society that values good citizenship, and employment and social responsibility are pillars of good citizenship. Based on the lack of research in this area regarding veterans, it may be postulated that obtaining meaningful employment has a direct positive impact on male veterans' self-esteem.

The approaches used to address veteran reintegration and specifically meaningful employment may impact military recruitment for the next 30 years. Veterans face a difficult challenge, as they may not only change occupations but reenter civilian life in a society that may not understand or value their military experiences. The transition back into civilian life can be

complicated by civilians in leadership positions who have never served in the military and who may have a limited concept of what responsibilities the veteran has shouldered. Veterans may believe they are slighted when employers expect them to start at the same level as other individuals who recently graduated high school. Reintegration is an individual process that has no timetable, no benchmarks, and for all intents and purposes no ending. Meaningful employment is just one important step of the process. When clearly understood, however, it may provide the veteran a sense of accomplishment that will boost his self-esteem and provide the path for returning as a positive contributing member of society.

The military is made up of five unique organizations that all have the same basic value of “no man left behind.” This value is engrained in members of the military and is not a value that is easily discarded. Unfortunately, it may create a burden on the veteran, because he has grown to expect this same value from others (Baird, 2013). The current military is an all-volunteer force. Future generations may judge and make decisions on whether to serve their country in the military based on how society treats veterans. The present study examined how male veterans define meaningful employment and the relationship of meaningful employment and self-esteem in male veterans.

Successful reintegration back into civilian life is measured by the veteran’s personal abilities to control his behaviors, reestablish a relationship with his spouse and children, and find meaningful employment. This study examined the following: (a) How do male veterans define meaningful employment, and (b) How does finding meaningful employment affect male veterans’ self-esteem?

Theoretical Framework

Some theorists support the relationship of meaningful employment and self-esteem (Grimm-Thomas & Perry-Jenkins, 1994; Winefield & Tiggemann, 1985). Others have studied the impact of a positive identity. Identity theory is a widely popular theory that is often cited for relationships that involve the self in some form and identity (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995; Stets & Burke, 2000). This study focused on veterans who have not been included in the literature about meaningful employment and its association with positive identity or positive self-esteem. This section will briefly describe identity theory with the variables of identity and identity salience. While identity theory focuses on the general population, the purpose of this study was to specifically examine the relationship of meaningful employment and self-esteem within the male veteran population.

Identity comprises unique characteristics that an individual exhibits in the different roles of his life. Everyone has numerous roles, each with its own identity. For example, an individual may be a student, fast-food employee, spouse, parent, or member of a band. Each role has its own meanings, expectations, acceptable behaviors, and required competence. Role identities influence everyday life and create the standards for self-appraisal of one's performance (Burke & Stets, 2009; Jasso, 2002; Stets, 2006; Stryker & Burke 2000).

Often, people find themselves working, playing, loving, and learning in different social contexts within which it is possible for them to take on different identities. In fact, it seems that among the major psychological challenges of our era is the multiplicity of roles and identities that individuals must adopt. (Ryan & Deci, 2012, p. 239)

For veterans, personal identity is influenced by the preservice, service, and post service experience of who they are as individuals. Reintegration from the military leaves them with a sense of being betwixt and between ideas about who they are and how they fit into society.

Sheldon Stryker (1980) created identity theory in the 1960s and included self-esteem as an essential element of identity theory. The self comprises multiple identities derived from the individual's various roles. Identities are related to roles that result from the person-in-environment experience. When an individual assumes a role, he develops the competencies and knowledge to perform the tasks required in that role. The perception that he has mastered the performance tasks required for that role has a positive effect on his self-esteem. Society, which includes the individual's specific environments, influences individual behaviors, and self-esteem develops within the framework of the various roles an individual assumes within a complex society (Burke & Stets, 2009; Stryker, 1980).

Meaning is the individual's self-perception of his standing in a role. An individual assigns meaning to self as an object in a role or social circumstance. The process of verification occurs as self-perceived meaning in personal identity grows closer to the self-perceived meaning the role requires. The support or disapproval of relevant actors significantly impacts the verification process (Stryker, 1980). The verification process is the individual's self-perceived standing in a role as he develops competency and receives positive reinforcement from the appropriate actors. Increased self-esteem and self-worth are by-products of a positive verification process. Conversely, a negative verification process reduces self-esteem (Cast & Burke, 2002; Feshbach & Weiner 1982; Stryker, 1980). "When self-in-situation meanings do not match identity-standard meanings, behavior is modified to restore meaning of the self in the

situation to correspond with identity-standard meanings, thereby moving the self from a state of identity-non-verification to identity-verification” (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 54).

Most behaviors are a matter of habit formed from prior life successes. However, when faced with a problematic situation that requires more than a habitual response, the individual must evaluate, process, redefine, and adjust behavior. Such a situation is created by new employment. Even if competency skills are high from prior training and experience, the new environment with unfamiliar procedures, interactions, and unique complexities creates internal conflicts that require a new role-identity verification (Stryker, 1980).

In the relationship of meaningful employment and self-esteem, the workplace is the environment in which the identity role exists. According to this theoretical framework, the individual strives to internalize the meaning and behavioral characteristics of his perceived ideal model for that role. As he becomes more proficient and experiences more successes, he receives positive remarks and ratings from supervisors and perceived significant peers. This is the verification process. A positive verification process increases the self-esteem that carries over to his personal life, according to the theoretical framework (Stets & Burke, 2000; Swann & Buhrmester, 2012). This is key to an individual’s self-esteem, as he develops a positive identity from role competencies in his meaningful employment that in turn impacts his self-esteem. This study examined whether the meaningful employment connection to self-esteem is applicable to the male veteran population.

Identity salience reflects how an individual organizes self in a specific situation. An individual has multiple identities ranked into a salient hierarchy, and the higher the ranking the more probable that identity will be engaged in multiple situations. Identity salience is the likelihood of an individual exercising a specific identity. Higher-ranked identities have more

impact on behavior and often control lower identities. It is possible for an individual to exhibit characteristics of more than one identity in a situation. However, the salience hierarchy consists of the identities that develop in a specific circumstance, which may not reflect the ideal self. It is just the identity that the individual believes is the most beneficial to meet the demands of the immediate situation. For this reason, the salience hierarchy is considered fluid and somewhat unstable. New identities are adopted, older identities evolve, and identities with no further utility are slowly forgotten (Burke & Stets, 2009; Stryker, 1980).

Veterans may have a more difficult time when reintegrating because they have had several sets of salient hierarchy identities from civilian to military to civilian life. Upon returning to civilian life, veterans find themselves dealing with the salience hierarchy they experienced prior to military service and their military service salience hierarchy is either disregarded by others or they experience a sense of disenfranchisement from military identities. Because meaningful work in our society is what defines personal identity for many, it rises to the top of the salience hierarchy. Many have difficulty finding meaningful work and therefore have difficulty reestablishing a civilian sense of personal identity that provides a foundation upon which they can view self and the world.

Veterans have matured in a military environment that nurtured and defined the path to success. It is clear what steps a service member must take to achieve promotions and other benchmarks that signify success. Unfortunately, civilian life does not come with such a roadmap for the most part. Our society values and provides respect to individuals based on their employment. It is important enough that meaningful employment or lack of it can highly impact the veteran's personal identity and self-esteem and the relationships the veteran maintains with family and friends.

One's skills to complete a job successfully in the military may not be translated to a position in the civilian world. Often, a veteran may have had the responsibility of supervising many subordinates and managing a large budget. After leaving military service he may have a position that requires a high school education, and that is vastly different from the higher levels of skill and competence demonstrated in military work. This difference requires one to manage expectations on re-entry and be realistic about what one might do to be successful. Retraining may be an option that will lead to comparable work to that which had been required in the military. This change may cause further confusion about personal identity and self-worth.

The present study examined how male veterans define meaningful employment and the relationship of meaningful employment and self-esteem in male veterans. Participant veterans had to be employed to be in this study. Unemployment is an issue for many veterans and they may be looking for employment, but this study examined only employed veterans and whether their employment is meaningful. Identity theory describes the salient hierarchy of roles that an individual has within his life. More important roles have greater impact on attitudes and behaviors. Meaningful employment is an important role in a male veteran's life. The verification process occurs as the veteran becomes more proficient in his employment. A positive process occurs when the veteran perceives he is achieving the necessary skills and behaviors that the role requires, and this subsequently impacts his self-esteem. However, the importance of the role also impacts the amount of self-esteem that is the consequence of the verification process. Meaningful employment has more importance than simply employment. It may be inferred that if a veteran obtains meaningful employment and has a positive verification process that develops a positive identity his self-esteem will increase.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Background of Concepts

As outlined earlier, the importance of meaningful employment leading to a positive self-esteem is central to understanding how a veteran will reintegrate back into society. Self-esteem may be defined as “the totality of the individual’s thoughts and feelings having reference to himself as an object” (Rosenberg, 1979, p.7). The veteran has an opinion of himself that he developed from other important actor appraisals and achievements that he has obtained (Wylie, 1979). All veterans want to consider themselves strong and independent, but generally they develop their self-concept around their interactions with others.

Not all the environments in which an individual functions are equal in importance to a veteran’s self-esteem. Depending on the importance the individual places on a particular environment, he will personally assign an appropriate amount of emphasis on appraisals received in that environment. This assignment is totally self-centric in nature. The importance one individual places on an environment may be totally different from the importance assigned by another individual in the same environment. Self-esteem is our concept of the personal self that is developed from the interactions with others in various environments and situations within our life (Brockner, 1988). Therefore, low self-esteem is assumed to be our perceived gap between our aspiration and performance (Coopersmith, 1967).

Self-esteem is a difficult concept to define and almost always translates into a specific behavior or attitude. An individual can appear to be self-confident and courageous but still have

low self-esteem. Throughout the literature the terms self-esteem, self-respect, and self-worth are often used interchangeably (Robinson, Shaver, & Wrightsman, 1991). According to Mruk (1995),

The first thing to note about understanding self-esteem as an attitude is that there are cognitive as well as affective dimensions to consider. This shift in focus allows us to see that self-esteem is not just feeling: it involves all the perceptual and cognitive factors involved in attitude formation. (p. 13)

Self-esteem is a construct that has been discussed and researched since William James (1890) wrote about the self-concept. It was James who first defined self-esteem as an individual's successes compared to his pretensions or, in modern terms, his achievements compared to his aspirations and goals (James, 1890/2010). Countless researchers have dissected the conceptual and theoretical definitions of self-esteem, but probably the most well known and most often cited is Morris Rosenberg (Rosenberg et al., 1995). Rosenberg and colleagues postulated there are two facets of self-esteem. Global self-esteem is the degree of positive or negative feelings an individual has about himself overall. Specific self-esteem is the self-confidence and perceived view an individual has about himself in a specific area of his life. Even though these two facets are interrelated, they are not interchangeable. So, a positive specific self-esteem toward one's skills at work can have crossover effects on global self-esteem and the perceptions and self-esteem in other areas of his life, outside of the workplace, and vice versa. In the area of employment, global self-esteem impacts the individual's overall attitudes and well-being, whereas specific self-esteem has more impact on the individual's specific actions or behaviors at work. So, for example, an individual who feels very good about himself overall does not automatically transfer those feelings to carpenter skills. On the other hand, an

individual who considers himself a great plumber may not have overall positive feelings about himself. The key to these definitions is the way the individual feels about himself. Specific self-esteem is associated with cognitive behavior, and global self-esteem is more psychological (Demo, 1984; Rosenberg et al., 1995; Schmitt & Allik, 2005). Rosenberg (1965) created the scale that has become the gold standard for measuring self-esteem.

No matter how you define self-esteem, it is considered a measurable component of personal identity and self-concept. The first challenge is selecting an instrument that measures self-esteem and no other constructs that may be related. The very nature of self-esteem complicates the measurement. Self-esteem can fluctuate based on the situations we experience, such as a personal loss or success. If the life event is significant enough it can impact self-esteem for a long time or forever. Conceptually, self-esteem is often viewed as an individual's perceived difference between who he is and the ideal person he should be. This presents a subjective concept that is almost always measured by some form of self-report.

There are different opinions on the specificity of the instrument. Rosenberg contended that we will learn more by measuring global self-esteem. Others emphasized the specific measurement. The optimum selection is an instrument that measures global self-esteem with the specificity that addresses the theory underlying the research (Brockner, 1988; Huang & Dong, 2012; Mruk, 1995; Robinson et al., 1991; Rosenberg et al., 1995).

For this study positive self-esteem was viewed as a required psychological component for a motivated veteran to assume a successful role in society, and, conversely, a diminished sense of self-esteem was viewed as the breeding ground for maladjustment (Weiss, McGuire, Ritzler, Kose, & Watson, 2008). The premise of this study was that meaningful employment increases global self-esteem in the male veteran. If meaningful employment is not obtained, mental

instability and psychological disorders can occur from the stress of veterans' failure to provide for their family and demonstrate responsibility (Caplan, Vinokur, Price, & Van Ryn, 1989; Zhan, Wang, Liu, & Shultz, 2009).

Toward a Definition of Meaningful Employment

The relevant concept of meaningful employment can be elusive, because meaning is dependent on the perception of the individual veteran. A review of available literature was conducted using search engines in the University of Central Florida library, Google Scholar, Google and a review of numerous books. The search used the keywords *self-esteem*, *veterans*, and *employment*. The review did not uncover any studies that specifically focused on the impact of meaningful employment on self-esteem as an element of veteran reintegration into society. However, 16 studies were found that examined the relationship of self-esteem and employment status (employment, unemployment, or job satisfaction).

This literature review examines the 16 studies that investigated the relationship between employment and self-esteem (Alavi & Askaripur, 2003; Bachman & O'Malley, 1977; Frost & Clayson, 1991; Galambos, Barker & Krahn, 2006; Grimm-Thomas & Perry-Jenkins, 1994; Hartley, 1980; Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2008; Linn, Sandifer, & Stein, 1985; Orth, Robins & Widaman, 2012; Pettersson, 2012; Scroggins, 2008; Shahani, Dipboye & Phillips, 1990; Shamir, 1986; Tharenou & Harker, 1982; Winefield & Tiggemann, 1990; Winefield, Tiggemann & Winefield, 1991). Table 1 presents a synopsis of the 16 studies within this literature review. Intrinsic job factors such as job environment, work autonomy, and working relationships have a greater impact than external factors such as social class and occupational standing. However,

external factors can have a strong indirect impact when they affect the overall atmosphere of the job site (Brockner, 1988).

Table 1. Literature Review Article Comparisons

Article	Sample information	Independent & dependent variables	Study design	Measurement instrument	Outcome
Winefield, Tiggemann 1990	<p>Initial Sample: 3130 students (10th, 11th, & 12th grades)</p> <p>Final sample: 568 adults. Respondents had to be in the workforce in last two years of the study. No students.</p> <p>Sample was randomly selected from 12 Australian high schools.</p>	<p>Independent Variable: Employment</p> <p>Dependent Variable: Self-Esteem (significant positive relationship)</p>	<p>Longitudinal</p> <p>3 assessments each one year apart.</p>	<p>Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965)</p> <p>Nowicki-Strickland Internal-External Locus of Control Scale (Nowicki & Duke, 1974)</p> <p>7-Item negative mood scale (Tiggemann & Winefield, 1984)</p>	<p>Employment increases self-esteem</p>
Winefield, Tiggemann, & Winefield, 1991	<p>Initial Sample: 3130 students (10th, 11th, & 12th grades)</p> <p>Final sample: 554 adults. No students.</p> <p>Mean age: 22.6 yrs.</p> <p>Sample randomly selected from 12 Australian high schools.</p>	<p>Independent Variable: Employment</p> <p>Dependent Variable: Self-Esteem (significant positive relationship)</p>	<p>Longitudinal</p> <p>6 assessments, First 5 assessments were 1 year apart.</p> <p>The 6th assessment was 3 years after the 5th assessment.</p>	<p>Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965)</p> <p>Nowicki-Strickland Internal-External Locus of Control Scale (Nowicki & Duke, 1974)</p> <p>16 item scale for measuring Job Satisfaction (Warr, Cook & Wall, 1979)</p>	<p>Employment increases self-esteem</p>

Article	Sample information	Independent & dependent variables	Study design	Measurement instrument	Outcome
Shahani, Dipboye & Phillips, 1990	<p>Sample: 1,726 government employees.</p> <p>Women: 76%. White: 42% Black: 18% Hispanic: 37% College Grad: 43%</p> <p>Age range 18 to over 50. No mean age reported.</p>	<p>Independent Variable: Employment (with dimensions of: rewards; participation in decisions; recognition; clear work structure)</p> <p>Dependent Variable: Self-Esteem (significant positive relationship)</p>	Cross-sectional	<p>Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965)</p> <p>Organizational Commitment Scale (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979)</p> <p>Job Descriptive Index (JDI) (Smith, Kendall & Hulin, 1969)</p>	Employment Increases Self-Esteem
Grimm-Thomas, & Perry-Jenkins, 1994	<p>Sample: 59 dual earner families.</p> <p>Fathers, mothers and children in each family were in the study.</p> <p>Mothers and children interviewed to assist determination of father's parenting style, categorized lax to controlling.</p>	<p>Independent Variable: Employment with dimensions of: autonomy; clarity; positive environment; support; and positive peer relations</p> <p>Dependent Variable: Self-Esteem (significant positive relationship)</p>	Cross-sectional	<p>Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965)</p> <p>Work Environment Scale (Moos, 1981)</p> <p>Child's Report of Parental Behavior Inventory (CRPBI) (Schaefer, 1965)</p>	Employment increases self-esteem

Article	Sample information	Independent & dependent variables	Study design	Measurement instrument	Outcome
Bachman, & O'Malley, 1977	Initial sample: 2,213 10 th grade boys from 87 public schools in 1966. Final sample: 1608 young adults (no students)	Independent Variable: Higher status Employment Status determined by Duncan Status Score. Dependent Variable: Self-Esteem (significant positive relationship)	Longitudinal 4 assessments. First 3 annually. The 4 th was 5 years after assessment 3.	Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) Duncan Status Score (Duncan, 1981) for occupational status	Higher status employment increases self-esteem
Tharenou, Harker, 1982	Sample: 166 electrical apprentices spread over the 4 years of apprenticeship. Age range 15 to 22, median age 17.4. This was the first full-time job for 162 participants. Median education 11.8 years ranging from 9 th grade to 2 nd year of college.	Independent Variable: Employment with dimensions: level of responsibility; complexity; performance and satisfaction. Dependent Variable: Self-Esteem (significant positive relationship)	Cross-sectional	Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (Fitts, 1965) Job Diagnostic Survey (Hackman & Oldham 1974) Sense of Competence Scale (Wagner & Morse 1975) Central Life Interest Questionnaire (Dubin, 1956)	Employment increases self-esteem Controlled for defensiveness, central life interests, and growth need strength.

Article	Sample information	Independent & dependent variables	Study design	Measurement instrument	Outcome
Scroggins, 2008	<p>Sample: 208 participants employed in 7 organizations.</p> <p>117 women; 91 men.</p> <p>Mean age 34.9 yrs.</p> <p>Range current position: 1 month to 31 years; mean of current position 3.7 years.</p>	<p>Independent Variable: Self-Esteem</p> <p>Dependent Variable: Meaningful Employment (significant positive relationship)</p>	Cross-sectional	<p>Scroggins' self-report questionnaire (Scroggins, 2003)</p> <p>Engagement in Meaningful Work Scale (EMWS), (Treadgold, 1999)</p> <p>Affective Organizational Commitment Scale (Allen & Meyer, 1990)</p> <p>Job Satisfaction Survey (Spector, 1985)</p>	<p>Individuals perceive their work as meaningful when their job tasks enhance their self-esteem, decreasing intentions to leave.</p> <p>Note: since the job tasks enhance self-esteem, in essence the job is meaningful employment.</p> <p>Therefore, meaningful employment increases self-esteem.</p>
Pettersson, 2012	<p>Convenience sample of 64 unemployed participants</p> <p>31 females; 33 males registered at a job center in East Midlands, England.</p>	<p>Independent Variable: Unemployment</p> <p>Dependent Variable: Self-Esteem (positive relationship)</p>	Cross-sectional	Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965)	Unemployment reduces self-esteem

Article	Sample information	Independent & dependent variables	Study design	Measurement instrument	Outcome
Galambos, Barker, & Krahn, 2006	<p>Initial sample: 983 H.S. Seniors in 6 High Schools in a large western Canadian city.</p> <p>Initial mean age of 18.2 years.</p> <p>Assessments over 7 years</p> <p>Final sample size: 384</p>	<p>Independent Variable: Unemployment</p> <p>Dependent Variable: Self-Esteem (significant positive relationship)</p>	<p>Longitudinal</p> <p>5 assessments over 7 years.</p> <p>First 3 were one year apart.</p> <p>The 4th was 2 years after assessment 3;</p> <p>The 5th was 3 years after assessment 4.</p>	<p>Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965)</p> <p>Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D) (Radloff, 1977)</p>	Unemployment reduces self-esteem
Alavi, & Askaripur, 2003	<p>Sample: 274 Iranians randomly selected from a population of 620 in 18 organizations and general government offices</p>	<p>Independent Variable: Self-Esteem</p> <p>Dependent Variable: Job Satisfaction (significant positive relationship)</p>	Cross-sectional	<p>Izanc Questionnaire to assess the degree of self-esteem</p> <p>Robbins' Job Satisfaction Questionnaire</p> <p>Note: The Izanc and Robbins' Questionnaires are not referenced in the article.</p>	Self-esteem increases job satisfaction

Article	Sample information	Independent & dependent variables	Study design	Measurement instrument	Outcome
Orth, Robins, & Widaman, 2012	<p>Initial sample: 1,824 participants</p> <p>Final sample: 1,227 participants</p> <p>Members of 3 generations of families. 57% female.</p> <p>Randomly selected members of a California health Organization.</p> <p>Age range: 16 to 97</p>	<p>Independent Variable: Self-Esteem</p> <p>Dependent Variable: Job Satisfaction (significant positive relationship) and Depression (significant negative relationship)</p>	<p>Longitudinal</p> <p>7 assessments, 1st and 2nd assessments were 14 years apart.</p> <p>Assessments 2 through 7 were 3 years apart.</p> <p>Assessments in 1971, 1985, 1988, 1991, 1994, 1997 and 2000.</p>	<p>Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965)</p> <p>One single question for Job Satisfaction: "How satisfied would you say you are with your main job?"</p> <p>LSG (no explanation for "LSG" abbreviation)</p> <p>Affect Balance Scale (Bradburn, 1969)</p> <p>CES-D (Radloff, 1977) For depression</p>	<p>As self-esteem increases job satisfaction increases and depression decreases.</p>
Kammeyer-Mueller, Judge, & Piccolo, 2008	<p>Initial sample: 12,686 participants</p> <p>Final sample: 1,765 participants.</p> <p>Data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979.</p> <p>Full-time employed participants who were at least 18 at the first assessment</p>	<p>Independent Variable: Self-Esteem</p> <p>Dependent Variable: Job Satisfaction (significant positive relationship) Self-Esteem (significant positive relationship)</p>	<p>Longitudinal</p> <p>2 assessments 7 years apart.</p> <p>Participants assessed in 1980 and 1987.</p>	<p>Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965)</p> <p>The Socioeconomic Index (Duncan, 1981)</p> <p>Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (Military.com, n.d.)</p>	<p>As self-esteem increases job satisfaction increases;</p> <p>Employment has a positive relation with self-esteem.</p> <p>Controlled for education, income, age, gender, and race.</p>

Article	Sample information	Independent & dependent variables	Study design	Measurement instrument	Outcome
Shamir, 1986	<p>Initial Sample: 432 Israeli adults, (age range 27-47 with a mean age 34) possessing university degrees, (BA, MA & PhD)</p> <p>Before 1st assessment in May 1983, 261 were reemployed.</p> <p>Final Sample: 298 participants; 243 employed and 55 unemployed.</p>	<p>Independent Variable: Unemployment</p> <p>Dependent Variable: Self-Esteem</p>	<p>Cross-sectional</p> <p>Two assessments 6 months apart</p>	<p>Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965)</p> <p>Depression Adjective Check List (DACL) (Lubin, 1965)</p>	<p>No relationship between self-esteem and unemployment.</p>
Hartley, 1980	<p>Initial sample: 151 participants</p> <p>64 employed managers from 3 companies. Mean age 43.2 years.</p> <p>87 unemployed managers.</p> <p>Mean age 43.4 years.</p> <p>Median length of unemployment: 16.5 weeks, with a range of 1-129 wks.</p>	<p>Independent Variable: Unemployment</p> <p>Dependent Variable: Self-Esteem</p>	<p>Cross-sectional</p> <p>2 assessments. 6-10 week interval between assessments.</p> <p>Final sample: 151 participants</p>	<p>Q-Sort Questionnaire</p>	<p>No relationship between unemployment and self-esteem</p> <p>However, unemployed managers who attended management classes (while unemployed) showed a significant increase in self-esteem</p>

Article	Sample information	Independent & dependent variables	Study design	Measurement instrument	Outcome
Linn, Sandifer & Stein 1985	Initial sample: 60 male veterans. Age range: 35 to 60 years old. Mean age 49 Two groups of 30. One group unemployed veteran males. The second group employed veteran males.	Independent Variable: Unemployment Dependent Variable: Health care use & Self-Esteem This study did not consider meaningful employment. It only compared unemployed veterans to employed veterans.	Longitudinal 5 year length. Assessments every 6 months.	Holmes and Rahe Social Readjustment Rating Scale that the participant self-rated 43 life stressing events. The study does not state which instrument was used to measure self-esteem.	No relationship between unemployment and self-esteem
Frost & Clayson, 1991	Initial sample: 562 Blue collar workers male (90.4%), white (94.1%), age range 27 to 42. Two groups: Employed group: 321; mean age 41.7. Unemployed group 241 unemployed, mean age 32.9 years.	Independent Variable: Unemployment Dependent Variable: Self-Esteem	Longitudinal Two assessments one year apart. Final sample: 562 participants	A simplified Osgood semantic differential Scale (Lawson, 1978) Holmes & Rahe Stress-Related Life Events Scale (Holmes & Rahe, 1967) Locus of Control Scale (Rotter, 1966)	No relationship between unemployment and self-esteem However, there was a significant relationship between length of employment prior to layoff and global self-esteem.

Employment in this study refers to meaningful employment that nurtures pride and satisfaction. Obtaining meaningful employment is a positive uplifting event that will increase the veteran's self-confidence and self-esteem. Employment demonstrates the individual's ability to assume responsibilities that are valued by our society (Grimm-Thomas & Perry-Jenkins, 1994; Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2008; Kay, 2013).

As stated, defining meaningful employment is dependent on the personal perceptions of the individual. Conceptually, meaningful employment is work that satisfies the individual's view of his ideal self or a job that will enable him to develop into his ideal. The foundation that nurtures this job satisfaction is the perception that the work and its contribution to society is valued. The opportunity for personal growth is an important element of meaningful employment. No one wants to be stuck in a stagnant job that is not meaningful. Finally, although most researchers do not consider financial compensation in the definition of meaningful work, an individual may want to be compensated in an amount that is comparable to his perceived contribution to the organization (Scroggins, 2008; Steger, Dik, & Duffy, 2012).

Meaningful employment is individual centric. The key to all these concepts and definitions is the perception by the individual. A job one individual may consider meaningful might be perceived by another individual as low and minimally adequate. Therefore, the basis of the measurement of meaningful employment is the value and satisfaction the veteran derives from employment. Compensation may not be a consideration. It is possible the veteran may find meaningful employment in a volunteer job that provides no financial compensation.

Self-report is the most common method of measuring job satisfaction, and the two components of a job are the specific and global aspects. The names are descriptive of the aspect covered. The specific aspect is the individual's satisfaction with the specific characteristics of

the job. Those characteristics encompass the working environment, coworkers, equity, supervisors, and any other specific issues that directly impact the duties of the job. The global aspect is the individual's perception of the job overall. The global aspect covers the contribution to the worker's meaning in life, personal growth, and perception that he is performing a worthwhile job. The specific aspect has tremendous influence on the perceived global aspect of the employment, and the global aspect provides the best perception of meaningfulness. Therefore, if a reliable instrument is used to measure the global aspect, a good evaluation of the employee's perception of meaningfulness of the employment will be determined (Steger et al., 2012). This study has shown that the veterans in this study who have meaningful employment balanced the specific and global aspects of employment in their definition of meaningful employment.

Researchers have studied the problem of low self-esteem and have identified employment as one possible predictor of this problem. While the literature provides some support for this relationship, the findings are not entirely consistent. Some researchers have not found a significant relationship, and those who have found a relationship do not identify a consistent directionality of variables. This section reviews 16 studies and categorizes them within the following framework of results: 1. Nine studies reported employment increases personal self-esteem; 2. Three studies reported self-esteem increases job satisfaction or performance; 3. Four studies reported there is no relationship between employment (or unemployment) and self-esteem. Unfortunately, only one of these 16 studies examined a male veteran population (Linn et al., 1985).

Studies of Government Programs That Integrate Employment Into Veteran Reintegration

The Supported Employment Program (SEP)

Pogoda, Cramer, Rosenheck, and Resnick (2011) conducted a qualitative study of the Supported Employment Program (SEP), asserting that “the President’s New Freedom Commission on Mental Health recommended that mental health systems transform to become more patient centered and recovery oriented” (p. 1289). This federal commission cited employment as an element of recovery for individuals with serious mental illness. As a result, Veterans Affairs created the Supported Employment Program. This program is based on the foundation that a veteran with mental health challenges who is receiving therapy from the VA will benefit if employment is an element of the therapy, and employment will facilitate and possibly speed up the veteran’s successful reintegration into society. Therefore, the VA contracted with employment specialists to provide training to veterans with mental health issues if their clinician recommended employment as part of their therapy.

Pogoda et al. (2011) examined the implementation of the supported employment program in six medical centers in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). By obtaining employment, the veteran demonstrates personal responsibility and reintegration progress, and by so doing potentially enhances the psychological interventions being provided by the VA. SEP should not be confused with the VA’s compensated work therapy (CWT) vocational rehabilitation program. CWT is an in-house program wherein veterans are provided with VA non-competitive jobs. The supported employment program involves veterans’ undergoing mental health treatment and obtaining employment in civilian organizations. There are documented, evidence-based practices to implement a program such as the supported employment program, but training,

leadership involvement, and resources are necessary for them to be successful. If any one of these three major areas is lacking, the program's effectiveness can be greatly diminished.

The VA implemented the supported employment program at 21 sites in 2004. Additional resources were allocated for staff, technical support, and program reviews (not evaluations) based on current VA resources. However, for budget purposes some VA clinics simply reallocated people and resources from other areas. This is a unique paradigm to implement an employment program within a VA mental-health recovery program. These veterans are not just given jobs. They are competing in the local community for employment. The program added contracted job training classes to the therapy program. VA staff and leadership were expected to recognize that there was therapeutic value in vocational assistance for challenged veterans, because the preparation process and ultimate job obtainment required investment on the part of the veteran and staff. It would boost the self-esteem and feelings of "I can do this" in the veteran. The employment piece was not intended as an add-on event but rather as a nested essential element of the therapy and successful reintegration back into society.

Pogoda et al. (2011) conducted a limited qualitative study that did not seek to evaluate the effectiveness of the supported employment program but instead was just trying to identify issues that impeded implementation. To obtain cooperation the researchers had to try to convince VA staff that their purpose was truly to improve the program and not reduce personnel. Six VA medical centers (VAMCs) from four regional areas were evaluated. VA leadership, program staff, and clinicians were interviewed with a follow-up a year later. However, the researchers did not interview any of the veterans who participated in the Support Employment Program. Nine major barriers were identified as shortfalls in the VA staff's recognizing employment as a therapeutic element by itself and as a synergetic effect for the other elements of

reintegration. The nine barriers cut across three major themes: poor leadership support, staff ignorance, and resource shortfalls (Pogoda et al., 2011).

1. In many cases the VA staff did not support the program. They believed the veterans did not need employment since most of them drew a pension. Staff was basically looking at the employment from an economic viewpoint. They were judging the individual veteran's financial needs rather than the therapeutic value of employment.

2. Staff members (not therapists) thought veterans with mental illness couldn't obtain or maintain competitive employment. Staff made judgments concerning the mental stability of patients and their ability to handle the pressures of the workplace despite clinician referrals. Once again employment was not seen as a therapeutic portion of the program.

3. Some of the staff felt that veterans with substance abuse should not be given employment opportunities. They often prejudged and determined veterans did not deserve to be allowed to compete for employment if there was a chance of relapse. Sometimes staff arbitrarily added requirements on veterans such as successful completion of rehabilitation program benchmarks. Even though this requirement may appear reasonable, it was not the intention of the Supported Employment Program to disqualify a veteran with psychiatric symptoms or substance dependency. Employment was supposed to be an integral part of the therapy, not a reward by itself.

4. The staff did not understand the link between the treatment plan and employment program. Without seeing the therapeutic value of the employment program, clinicians focused on symptoms. Clinicians resorted to the medical model because they were trained and comfortable with it. Clinicians in many cases did not value the employment professionals who

were contracted to teach job skills such as interviewing, resume preparation, and dressing for success.

5. There was a lack of knowledge of both the goals and proper implementation of the program. Implementation in some VAMCs occurred before the Supported Employment Program was briefed to the clinicians and staff and before they trained for their responsibilities. This hindered early implementation, and misinformation created clinician distrust that, in-turn, reduced referrals.

6. Leadership didn't satisfactorily support the program. In many cases, senior leaders just didn't get involved at all. They shirked their responsibilities and placed the onus on lower management levels.

7. In many cases there was poor integration of this new employment training piece with the existing and ongoing psychological intervention. Limited space, unmanageable caseloads, time restrictions, and convoluted role requirements between clinicians and contracted employment specialists were just a few of the major logistical shortfalls. Clinicians were not fully aware of the employment program requirements and the effects on their therapeutic procedures.

8. Some staff perceived the program as a new trend that wouldn't last long. The lack of leadership involvement, resource limitations, poor training, clinicians' mistrust, and program misinformation just confirmed staff's perception of the futility of the program.

9. The employment program was given low resource priority. The program was not given the emphasis that the traditional medical interventions received. Budget restrictions and lack of integration with treatment plans created stumbling blocks that were difficult to overcome.

The Pogoda et al. (2011) qualitative study identified issues with the implementation of the program, but just as we see in so many government program evaluations, it did not really determine whether the program was having a positive impact on veteran reintegration or self-esteem. Additionally, most of the findings were probably not a surprise to the VA leadership. The real challenge is how the leaders enact policies to overcome these barriers and recognize the importance of meaningful employment on the psychological well-being and self-esteem of veterans.

The Transition Assistance Program (TAP)

Another government program that focuses on the value of employment to the veteran is the Transition Assistance Program (TAP). Many individuals join the military for the educational benefits and with hopes of learning a skill that will enable them to be successful when returning to civilian life (Segal & Segal, 2004). Unfortunately, however, many returning service members have difficulty finding employment (Foster & Vince, 2009; Savych, Klerman & Loughran, 2008). Despite the goal of learning transferable skills, too many service members are unsuccessful in that goal. Skills acquired by service members while serving tend to transfer into civilian employment to a much lower degree than those acquired from non-military schools and educational resources. Further, even when a service member has received training targeted to relevant fields, he often finds that the training received does not enable him to use his skills outside a military setting or to show sufficient proficiency for employment in civilian settings (De Lorenzo, 2005). Overall, unemployment rates for veterans are typically higher than those for non-veterans (Savych et al., 2008; U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017).

TAP is a contracted service run by the Department of Defense, Department of Labor, and the Department of Veterans Affairs. The purpose of the program is to aid reintegration (specifically employment obtainment) by teaching service members resume writing, how to conduct interviews, and methods to locate available jobs through such resources as internet searches, networking, and other strategies. Even though the program was created in 1991, the effectiveness of the program has never been evaluated (Silva, 2011). The service members are still in the military service when they go through TAP, so they are not veterans at that time.

Silva (2011) conducted a quantitative study that evaluated TAP data collected in August of 2007 via telephone or in-person interviews from veterans from all 50 states in some 57,000 households. A Veteran's Supplement Questionnaire (a self-report instrument) was sent to each veteran. In the end 1,477 questionnaires were received from veterans who separated from the military after 1991. From the program's start until the year 2000, attendance in the TAP program increased, then declined.

The longer a person served in the military, the more likely he would attend a TAP workshop. Further, it was noted that disabled veterans had a high level of attendance while those who had not been in combat zones had a low attendance. In the end the study could not find any statistical significance to the TAP program. The TAP workshops did not demonstrate any contribution to employment success (Silva, 2011).

The Troops to Teacher (TTT) Program

The Troops to Teacher (TTT) program is another employment program that recognizes the importance of employment to veteran reintegration and the benefits an individual who has lived the military values can provide to society as a private citizen. TTT is a grant program

managed by the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES). The program was created in 1994 through a partnership between the Department of Defense and the Department of Education (Feistritz, 2005). The National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2000 assigned the responsibility and funding to the U.S. Department of Education with operational control to the Department of Defense. Grants of up to \$ 5,000 are paid to veterans for certification expenses, with additional bonuses of up to \$10,000 if a veteran accepts a position in a school categorized as a troubled school (DANTES, 2015).

Robertson (2013) conducted a quantitative study with veterans who were reintegrating back into society to be teachers and who participated in the Troops to Teachers program. Unfortunately, the purpose of the study (once again) was not to determine its effectiveness but instead to provide career counselors with information. The study attempted to determine whether there is a positive correlation between the life satisfaction of veterans who became teachers and “five career transition factors (readiness, confidence, control, perceived support, and decision independence)” (p. 28). It did not address self-esteem. The study did not compare veterans who participated in the program with veterans who did not. It is unfortunate the government did not contract an independent study to determine the effectiveness of the Troops to Teachers program or its impact on the self-esteem of veterans.

Studies That Suggest Employment Directly Impacts Self-Esteem

Seven studies supported the assertion that employment positively impacts self-esteem in American workers (Bachman & O'Malley, 1977; Grimm-Thomas & Perry-Jenkins, 1994; Scroggins, 2008; Shahani et al., 1990; Tharenou & Harker, 1982; Winefield & Tiggemann, 1990; and Winefield et al., 1991). Two studies reported a relationship between unemployment

and self-esteem (Galambos et al., 2006; Pettersson, 2012). None of these studies examined a veteran population. Veterans are going through a psychological as well as economic adjustment just by the nature of the drastic environmental conditions and cultural changes they may face. All nine studies used Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale except for one cross-sectional study (Tharenou & Harker, 1982). There are four longitudinal studies (Bachman & O'Malley, 1977; Galambos et al., 2006; Winefield & Tiggemann, 1990; Winefield et al., 1991) and five cross-sectional studies (Grimm-Thomas & Perry-Jenkins, 1994; Scroggins, 2008; Shahani et al., 1990; Tharenou & Harker, 1982; Pettersson, 2012).

The Bachman and O'Malley (1977) longitudinal analysis is the only study that stated that employment has a causal effect on self-esteem. The samples used in five of the studies were young adults 26 or younger; some were still in high school at the beginning of the study (Bachman & O'Malley, 1977; Galambos et al., 2006; Tharenou & Harker, 1982; Winefield & Tiggemann, 1990; Winefield et al., 1991). The two studies that used older age samples employed specific dimensions with employment as the independent variable (Grimm-Thomas & Perry-Jenkins, 1994; Shahani et al., 1990). The Tharenou and Harker (1982) cross-sectional study was the only study that did not use Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale. Instead they used the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (Fitts, 1965). They found global self-esteem for younger workers is impacted most by job status and for older workers most by mastering job complexity. This is a distinction in the way the different age groups assess employment. The younger worker values the job based on the status society assigns to it and the older worker values the job based on the challenges and skills required.

An interesting possible confounding factor for unemployed individuals is age. Even though young workers are also seeking work identity, they may not experience as much

psychological distress as older workers experience with unemployment. This may be because their perception of future employment opportunities mitigates the stress (Winefield & Tiggemann, 1990). The results of both the Galambos et al. (2006) and Pettersson (2012) studies are that unemployment (independent variable) had a negative impact on self-esteem (dependent variable). Galambos et al. (2006) reported a significant relationship. On the other hand, Pettersson (2012) used only a convenience sample, published histograms, and reported her personal interpretation, but she did not include data in enough detail to verify her findings. Therefore, even though unemployment versus employment was the independent variable in these two studies, both studies purport to support the impact of employment on self-esteem. In contrast, the present study examined the impact of meaningful employment (not just a job) on self-esteem in male veterans.

Self-Esteem Increases Job Satisfaction

A few researchers have identified a relationship between these two concepts but in the reverse direction, specifically the effect of self-esteem on job satisfaction. One cross-sectional (Alavi & Askaripur, 2003) and two longitudinal (Orth et al., 2012; Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2008) studies support this relationship. All three studies used mature-age samples but did not focus on veterans. Alavi and Askaripur (2003) used a sample of Iranians and was the only study in this category that did not use Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (1965). Instead they used an unknown measure, the Izanc Questionnaire, and did not report its reliability or validity.

The Orth et al. (2012) study employed a few interesting nuances. They randomly selected participants from members of a California health organization. The study did not report the veteran makeup of the participants. In addition to the original participants, relatives from

three other generations were recruited. So, this study covered an age range of 16-97 years old in four generations comprising children, parents, grandparents, and great grandparents. They examined self-esteem in seven assessments over 29 years (1971-2000). Through growth curve analysis they determined that self-esteem grows from the teenage years to about age 50, then diminishes in the senior years. They asked only one question to assess job satisfaction: “How satisfied would you say you are with your main job?” However, they did use Rosenberg’s scale (1965) to measure self-esteem. Through cross-lagged regression analyses, with self-esteem as the time-varying covariate, they determined that self-esteem impacts depression and job satisfaction but has no impact on employment status (Orth et al., 2012). The present study used the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965) to examine the impact of meaningful employment on self-esteem in male veterans.

The Relationship Between Unemployment and Self-Esteem

Four studies in this review found no relationship between the two variables of unemployment and self-esteem (Frost & Clayson, 1991; Hartley, 1980; Linn et al., 1985; Shamir, 1986). Only one of these studies (Linn et al., 1985) examined this relationship in male veterans. Two studies were longitudinal (Frost & Clayson, 1991; Linn et al., 1985) and two were cross-sectional (Hartley, 1980; Shamir, 1986). All four studies used a mature sample, with mean ages 34-43, but only Shamir (1986) used Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem Scale (1965). The self-esteem measuring instruments used by Frost and Clayson (1991), Hartley (1980), and Linn et al. (1985) may be the reason they did not find a relationship. The Frost and Clayson (1991) study used a self-made questionnaire. The Hartley (1980) study used a Q sort, and the Linn et al. (1985) study used the Holmes and Rahe Social Readjustment Rating Scale. None of these three studies

reported validity or reliability of the instruments used. The present veteran study used the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965) to examine the impact of meaningful employment (not just a job) on self-esteem in male veterans.

The cross-sectional Shamir (1986) study examined the impact of unemployment on self-esteem in older (age 27-47, mean 34 years old), highly educated Israeli citizens with prior work experience. This is an age group that changes jobs multiple times during a career. Sixty percent of the beginning sample of 432 unemployed participants were re-employed in fewer than 90 days from the beginning of the study. All participants possessed college degrees (BA, MA, or PhD). The study does not report whether any participants were veterans, although since Israel has universal military service, it can be surmised that at least some of the subjects must have had some military service. Self-esteem and unemployment are in the model as the study attempts to predict depression, morale, and anxiety. Shamir was primarily looking at the relationship between self-esteem and depression. The study examined participants twice with a six-month interval between the assessments. The hypothesis was that an individual's self-esteem has no relationship with unemployment. The study considered the reason for the job loss (voluntary or involuntary) and the length of unemployment. When the study was conducted the unemployment rate in Israel was less than 5% and most individuals found employment within a few months after job loss. The mean unemployment length for the participants was 5.5 months. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem (RSE) Scale was used, and internal consistency was high with a Cronbach alpha of .86. Among the studies that used Rosenberg's Self-Esteem (RSE) Scale, Shamir's was the only one not to find a relationship between employment status and self-esteem.

Although the Shamir (1986) study concluded there was no relationship between employment status and self-esteem, it did find that self-esteem moderates the relationship

between employment and depression. Individuals with high self-esteem were less affected by unemployment than individuals with low self-esteem. If an individual has high self-esteem, there is not a strong link between employment and depression, so the unemployment will not change his level of depression. Additionally, individuals with high self-esteem were less likely to settle for employment that did not meet their salary demands. However, if the participant had low self-esteem there was a very strong link between employment status and depression, and the unemployment substantially increased the individual's depression level.

Shamir (1986) found that depression and employment status are related, but not self-esteem and employment status. Most participants believed they would find new employment because of the low national unemployment rate and their innate abilities. The short duration of this cross-sectional study, coupled with the employment experience, educational levels, and the positive attitude most participants possessed, creates suspicion concerning the finding of no relationship between employment status and self-esteem. The participants' confidence of future employment may have been a confounding factor that moderated the relationship between depression and unemployment. This may also be the reason Shamir (1986) found self-esteem should be viewed as "a relatively stable personality variable" (p. 70).

The Shamir (1986) study highlights the importance of monitoring for depression. Otherwise the results may reveal that self-esteem is related to unemployment when in fact self-esteem became a proxy for depression. It may also depend on the measure of self-esteem, whether some of the dependent variables overlap with depression. The researcher may think he is measuring self-esteem, when he is capturing some levels of depression. Depression may be a more powerful predictor of self-esteem than even unemployment. The Shamir (1986) cross-sectional study found no relationship between unemployment and self-esteem, but instead self-

esteem was a moderating variable as the study attempted to predict depression, morale, and anxiety. The present veteran study required the male veteran to be currently employed as a criterion to be a study participant. The veteran was considered self-sufficient by the fact he could maintain employment, even if he self-reported he had depression or PTSD issues.

The Hartley (1980) cross-sectional study examined two measurements with a short six-to-ten week interval between the measurements. The study participants were the same for both measurements, but six-to-ten weeks may not have been a long enough to show a decrease in self-esteem during unemployment. Another moderating factor is that 47 of the 87 unemployed participants attended management training courses between measurements. The study reports that the participants who attended the training experienced a significant increase in self-esteem, while the participants who did not attend experienced no change in self-esteem. There was no control reported for this training.

The Hartley (1980) study measured self-esteem with a Q-sort questionnaire based on Carl Rogers' (1951) client-centered therapy. The Q-sort questionnaire was not shown and there was no reported internal consistency, validity, or reliability. The unemployed participant group was selected from applicants for management skills training courses specifically for unemployed managers. There is no mention of veteran participants. Just the fact that the selected participant managers were voluntarily actively seeking advanced training to make themselves more competitive in the job market may reflect that they were more resistant to decreases in self-esteem and not true representatives of the total population.

The Hartley (1980) study used a Pearson product-moment correlation between the self-esteem scores. The Pearson correlation is not considered robust and can be misinterpreted if there are outliers. The study reported that six unemployed participants began the study with low

self-esteem, four possessed high self-esteem, and sixteen participants possessed defensively high self-esteem or intermittent reduced self-esteem. This amounted to 29.8% of the unemployed candidates who may be outliers who could have impacted the Pearson product-moment correlation analysis. The study reported that many approaches and analyses were conducted, but only the Pearson correlation was specifically reported. The absence of the Q-sort questionnaire and information concerning what other statistical analyses were used creates suspicion regarding the study results. The Hartley (1980) study did not use the Rosenberg (1965) Self-Esteem Scale, which limits the generalizability of the Hartley results to other studies. The present study used the Rosenberg (1965) Self-Esteem Scale when it examined the relationship of meaningful employment and self-esteem in the male veteran.

The Frost and Clayson (1991) study examined self-esteem in relation to stress-related life events and the perceived locus of control an individual possesses. The study participants were blue-collar workers from one local union in Iowa. The study states a systematic random sampling procedure was used but does not describe the procedure except to say “each group varied in its sampling ratio due to its size” (p. 1406). One thousand questionnaires were mailed to employed workers and another thousand to unemployed workers. The final participant number was 241 unemployed and 321 employed. There was no mention of veterans in the study. Ninety percent were males, 94% were Caucasian, 87% married, and 67% were between the ages of 27 and 42 years old. The study explained the questionnaire but did not show it and did not report its internal consistency, validity, or reliability. The explanation of the questionnaire is involved, stating there were four sections: background information, a self-esteem scale with an evaluation dimension of self, a locus of control scale, and a stress scale in relation to changing life events.

A Chi-square analysis was conducted that compared the unemployed group to the employed participant group responses (Frost & Clayson, 1991). Chi-square is relatively easy to conduct but assumes random sampling and does not report the strength of the variable relationships. The random sampling within this study is questionable. The fact the study created its own questionnaire when there are valid measurement instruments available is another source of suspicion. This study does not clearly explain the participant selection, data analysis, or credibility of the measurement instrument. To help address these concerns, the present study examined a male veteran population and used the Rosenberg (1965) Self-Esteem Scale to examine the relationship of meaningful employment and self-esteem.

The Linn et al. (1985) study is a longitudinal study that lasted five years with veteran participant measurements taken every six months. The study examined the psychological and physical effects of unemployment on somatization, obsessive-compulsiveness, depression, interpersonal sensitivity, anxiety, life satisfaction, self-esteem, and locus of control in male veterans. The question for analysis was whether job loss adversely affected psychological functioning and caused increased medical services use. The study used multivariate analysis of covariance. The researchers examined statistically significant mean differences in the dependent variables between two male veteran study groups. One study group was employed the entire study time (five years); the other study group was unemployed the entire study time. The study reported only the use of the Holmes and Rahe (1967) Social Readjustment Rating Scale in the study.

The Holmes and Rahe (1967) scale is a self-rating scale that individuals complete by scoring 43 stressful life events. The score obtained from the scale is used to predict the likelihood of an illness occurring. The Holmes and Rahe (1967) scale is not used to measure

self-esteem. The study stated that the psychological variables were measured by other reliable and valid scales, but they did not list those scales, so it is impossible to determine the reliability and validity of the scale used to measure self-esteem. Additionally, this study was not looking at meaningful employment. They were looking only at employment versus unemployment. A veteran in the employed study group may have been in an unsatisfying job that provided limited meaning to his life.

The Linn et al. (1985) study found no relationship between unemployment and self-esteem in the male veteran. Instead, the level of support from family and friends the veteran received after becoming unemployed moderated the level of self-esteem the veteran possessed and maintained. The study did find there was an increased use of medical services by unemployed male veterans. The male veteran participants were selected from another study population that was used in a Veterans Affairs (VA) study that examined the effect of environmental stress on immune function and the development of disease. The Linn et al. (1985) study may have found an increased use of medical services because the unemployed male veterans may have had VA medical benefits that allowed them to use medical services at no cost to themselves. The present study examined the relationship of meaningful employment and self-esteem in male veterans using the Rosenberg (1965) Self-Esteem Scale.

Literature That Examines the Military Culture

Two articles found in the literature discussed the unique characteristics of the military culture. Cooper, Caddick, Godier, Cooper, and Fossey (2016) examined the transition of U.K. military personnel back into civilian life using the Bourdieu theory. The Bourdieu theory describes three components of reintegration: habitus, field, and capital. Habitus is the

unconscious perceptions developed from previous experiences from multiple life roles. Fields are environments in which various life roles exist. Capital is the benefit attained from a life role. These three components impact the way individuals perceive their environment, how they adapt to a life role, and how they develop competence within that role. The article begins by describing the socialization of civilians into the military. The process is so engrained that when the individual transitions back into society, the military cultural norms are not easily disregarded.

The Bourdieu theory as outlined by Cooper et al. (2016) has similar concepts to the identity theory that is used in this study of the impact of meaningful employment on the self-esteem of male veterans. The individual unconsciously develops perceptions of what the role requires in order to be mastered. This development mirrors the identification of role requirements that occur early in a life identity in the identity theory. The individual develops cultural capital that encompasses the specific characteristics of role. Examples of cultural capital are pay grades and certifications within the role. The individual also develops symbolic capital that entails how society values the role and how the individual perceives his standing in the community. Cultural capital aligns with the specific aspects of the role, and symbolic capital aligns with the global aspects. The veteran goes through a cultural self-evaluation where he develops perceptions of his acquired skills within the role compared to the skill level he believes someone of his experience and knowledge should have. This self-evaluation is the same as the verification process in identity theory. The veteran is developing positive or negative feelings about himself based on how he is progressing in the role. The Bourdieu theory describes a discord that can occur when a major clash occurs between the military identity characteristics and norms required in the new civilian role. Within identity theory this clash creates a negative verification process. The two theories are describing a holistic process that veterans go through

starting with role acquisition, progressing into competency development, and finalizing with personal perceptions of success (Burke & Stets, 2009; Cooper et al., 2016; Stryker, 1980).

Castro and Kintzle (2013) described a needs assessment that was developed from a questionnaire distributed to over 700 veterans living in the state of California. The assessment covered veteran reintegration issues such as employment, financial challenges, affordable housing, homelessness, physical health, psychological well-being, medical care barriers, alcohol consumption, PTSD, depression, and sexual trauma. Participants were categorized by the character of their discharge and then further as post 9/11 or pre 9/11 veterans. “Seventy-five percent of the pre-9/11 veterans and 67% of post-9/11 veterans received an honorable discharge” (p. 15) Straight percentages were reported. For example, “Over 67% of pre-9/11 and 81% of post-9/11 veterans did not have a job when they left the military, with nearly one-third of post-9/11 veterans taking more than six months off before getting a job” (p. 48). There are no variable relationships reported; however, the percentages reflect employment challenges that exist with veterans going through the reintegration process. It strictly reports the percentage of veterans who fall into a measured category from the questionnaire. There is no validity or reliability reported for the questionnaire. The article further describes the military transition theory. The theory comprises three major areas: approaching transition, managing transition, and assessing transition. Within the approaching transition are cultural factors, transition components, and personal situation aspects. Managing the transactions involves adjustment factors, social support, and resources. Assessing transition is the evaluation of outcomes that cover work, family, health, and community support.

Approach Motivation

The study in this dissertation used the identity theory because in the researcher's judgment it is better organized and describes a verification process that is more logical and understandable than the tenets of the Bourdieu theory or military transition theory. Another consideration is this study examined only the relationship of meaningful employment and self-esteem in male veterans. The Bourdieu theory and military transition theory are examining the entire reintegration process.

The major gap identified in the literature is that no studies were found that examined the relationship meaningful employment can have on a veteran's self-esteem. An individual who is going through employment transition in these difficult economic times may experience a reduction in personal self-esteem and an increase in depression. This is particularly true if the individual perceives his period of unemployment as excessive with no future prospects. Just the stress of going through the transition and the unknown and possible questioning of personal skills and worthiness can cause an identity crisis.

There must also be a clear definition and valid measurement of the constructs. Most of the reviewed studies did not sufficiently define the self-esteem construct. Global self-esteem can be a complex construct to interpret since it can be a personality trait, an identity role characteristic, or a bidirectional variable in a research study. Meaningful employment is also a challenge to define. As seen in the reviewed studies, there were no standardized dimensions that ensured that the different studies were actually measuring the same construct of employment.

Another important item to note is the variety of options for specifying this relationship and the possible complexities of this relationship. Self-esteem can produce a moderating or mediating effect, and it can be an independent or dependent variable. In fact, Kammeyer-

Mueller et al. (2008) acknowledged and examined self-esteem as both a dependent and independent variable. This dual nature complicates causality interpretations. Fifty percent of the 16 reviewed studies were cross-sectional studies. The Bachman and O'Malley (1977) longitudinal study is the only reviewed study out of 16 that even used the word "causal."

Each participant in this veteran study was asked to self-report whether he had depression, PTSD, or both. Fourteen of the participant male veterans reported they had depression and three participants reported having PTSD, but one of the criteria for a veteran to be in this study was that he had to be currently employed. For the purposes of this study the veteran was considered self-sufficient, even if he had depression or PTSD, by the fact that he could maintain employment. Dummy variables were used to input the veteran responses to PTSD and depression into an SPSS database (IBM Corp, 2012). Depression did have a statistical significance with the two research instruments used in this study. However, PTSD did not have a statistical significance. This connection will be explained in further detail in Chapter 4.

As this review has shown, the results for the relationship of employment and self-esteem are not consistent; however, there are legitimate concerns regarding the measurements and designs of the studies that did not support the significance of the relationship. Even though two of these studies are longitudinal designs, neither used the Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (1965) (Frost & Clayson, 1991; Linn et al., 1985). The correlation between employment and self-esteem is not a relationship where the results are consistent regardless of measure, study design, or population. Clearly, population, measurement tool, and study design have an important impact on the results. Ten of the 16 studies in this review used Rosenberg's Self-Esteem (RSE) Scale. Ninety percent of the studies that used the RSE scale found a positive correlation between some facet of employment (employment, unemployment, or job-satisfaction) and self-esteem.

This study used the Rosenberg scale to examine the relationship of meaningful employment and self-esteem in male veterans.

In conclusion, this literature review found only one study that had a male veteran population that examined the relationship of unemployment (not meaningful employment) and self-esteem. If there were veterans in any of the other 15 studies, they were not identified as such. Veterans are a special population, who, as products of their military training and experience (60% of the veterans also experienced combat), have unique skills to offer society. This study examined the relationship of meaningful employment (not just a job) to self-esteem with a male veteran population. Since the Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (1965) is the gold standard, this study used this scale to measure global self-esteem.

This study, however, examined only self-sufficient males who were currently employed, in order to eliminate gender-related differences that may be outside the scope of this study. Over 90% of all veterans are males (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2016), and male veterans commit suicide three times more often than female veterans (Zarembo, 2015). Additionally, this study had a sample size of only 30, and the number of female veterans who may have been recruited in this size sample would have most likely been too small to appropriately address any gender-related discrepancies.

Research Questions

Based on the theory and the existing literature in the area, this study addressed two research questions as the guiding hypothesis. The focus of this dissertation was to explore the association between meaningful employment and self-esteem in male veterans. The first research question directly addresses how the veteran defines meaningful employment. The

second research question relates meaningful employment to self-esteem. It is expected that meaningful employment will positively affect the veteran's self-esteem. This led to the generation of the guiding hypothesis.

Research Questions:

1. What is the definition of meaningful employment for male veterans?
2. Does meaningful employment affect male veterans' self-esteem?

Guiding Hypothesis:

If a veteran reports his employment experience is meaningful, then he will also report higher levels of self-esteem.

This study explored the above research questions by examining 30 male veterans at various stages of work-force experience. To be included in this study the veteran had to be currently employed. The focus of the study explored whether the veteran perceived his employment status as meaningful and whether there is a relationship between this meaningful employment and his self-esteem.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To evaluate the impact of meaningful employment on the self-esteem of male veterans, two instruments with measured reliability and validity were used in addition to an interview. The instruments are discussed in detail in this chapter. This chapter will cover the populations of interest, the sampling methods, the study sample, the instruments utilized, and the data analytic methods employed in this study. The focus of the study explored how male veterans define meaningful employment and how finding meaningful employment affects male veterans' self-esteem.

This exploratory study used a mixed-methods design with interviews as the primary focus. This descriptive and explorative study examined the gap left by previous studies not having sufficiently emphasized the importance of meaningful employment as a major element of reintegration that influences self-esteem of male veterans. Many studies have included employment with other factors that together create a positive situation for the veteran to reintegrate into civilian life after military service. Most of those studies explored employment as part of a triad with mental well-being and personal relationships. The present study examined the direct impact of meaningful employment on self-esteem in male veterans.

Procedures and Data Collection

Approval for the study was obtained from the University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board before the start of this study (UCF-SBE-17-12856). A copy of the IRB approval

letter can be found in Appendix D. The researcher contacted the two major veteran organizations (the Osceola County Veterans Council and Museum of Military History) in Osceola County. The researcher received permission from the organizational leaders to recruit veteran participants from their organizations. Participation was voluntary, and the participants were made aware that all responses would be handled confidentially. In the consent process, participants were made aware of the purpose of the study. They were informed that they could stop participating in the interview at any point.

Each participant was assigned a code number that was used on all documents associated with that participant. All information was de-identified. Only the principal researcher had access to the code key. Since the researcher could identify the participants and did the coding, all information would be coded and examined in a group format to ensure confidentiality.

Each study participant completed two research instruments: the Work and Meaning Inventory (WAMI) and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965). The research instruments were completed before the interview was conducted. The interview guide (Appendix E) was used to gather information from the 30 participant male veterans to further highlight the relationship between self-esteem and meaningful employment. The interviews provided each male veteran an open forum to voice any concerns, questions, or additional information that related to his situation, perceptions of employment, or effects on self-esteem. The meetings with the participants were conducted in locations that were private and quiet, namely private offices in office buildings, libraries, and veteran facilities. The participant meetings lasted approximately 30 minutes. During the first 10 minutes the participants completed the research instruments. The interviews required approximately 20 minutes. The interviews provided a contextual foundation

for the quantitative piece of the study. See Appendix E for the interview guide that contains the questions.

The researcher used both closed- and open-ended questions. The closed-ended questions were used to determine the demographics of military service, the branch of service, age, race, civilian education level, and number of years the veteran served in the military. The open-ended questions addressed the research questions and the possible presence of PTSD and depression symptoms that may have impacted self-esteem. The symptomology of depression and PTSD were included since these are diagnosed in many combat veterans, and the presence of either one of these conditions may have influenced the results if the veteran did not have his emotions under control. The veteran study participants self-reported whether they had PTSD or depression. The open-ended questions used in the interview were designed to stimulate open dialogue that allowed the veteran to express his feelings in his own comfortable manner. The interviews were recorded with the veteran's permission and then transcribed. The questions along with the administration of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965) (good validity ranging .77 to .88; Nugent & Thomas, 1993) were designed to detect the presence of other influences on the veteran's level of global self-esteem.

Population of Interest

The population of interest is related directly to male veterans in the United States. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (2016) profile of veterans, there were an estimated 17,790,975 number of male veterans with a median age of 64 in 2014. See Table 2 for a breakdown of the demographics.

Table 2. Veteran Demographics in 2014

Descriptor	Values
Number of male veterans	17,790,975
Age (years)	
Median	64
Range	17–85+
Ethnicity (%)	
White non-Hispanic	79.4
Nonwhite non-Hispanic	14.2
Hispanic	6.4
Education (%)	
High school or less	37.4
College	52.1
Advanced degrees	10.6

Study Sample

To evaluate the research questions, a convenience purposive sample of 30 male veterans was recruited. As part of the interview process the interviewer asked each veteran participant about demographics, military experience, PTSD, and depression. This information is reflected in Table 3 below and Table 5 and Table 6 in Chapter 4. In order to qualify for the study, the male veteran had to be employed and self-report that he was released from active duty under conditions other than dishonorable. According to Title 30 of the federal regulations a veteran is an individual who has been discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable. The 30 employed veteran study participants were interviewed between March 9, 2017, and June 22, 2017. The two major veteran organizations in Osceola County were contacted for participants: the Osceola County Veterans Council (OCVC) and the Museum of Military

History. In addition, the OCVC has members in the Saint Cloud Veterans of Foreign Wars, Saint Cloud American Legion, Kissimmee American Legion, and Kissimmee Veterans of Foreign Wars. The organizational leaders of the two major agencies were contacted by the researcher. Invitation flyers (Appendix A) were provided to the organizational leaders to be given to interested male veterans. The Museum of Military History issued a public service announcement to museum members.

Table 3. Demographics

	Number			
Race				
Caucasian	19			
Black	2			
Hispanic	8			
Asian	1			
Military				
Army	20			
Navy	2			
Marine Corps	8			
Education				
High school	4			
Some college	13*			
BA degree	8			
MA or higher	5			
	Mean	Median	Range	SD
Age	37.4	33.5	22-61	11.95
Years in military	6.7	5.5	2-28	4.99
Years out of military	9.4	6.0	0.5-37	9.77

*5 study participants in the some college category had Associate of Arts Degrees

The demographics of race, military service, education, age, number of years in military service, and number of years out of military service are depicted in Table 3 for the 30 veteran study participants.

Research Instruments

The Work and Meaning Inventory (WAMI)

The researcher used the interview as the primary source to determine whether the veteran perceives his current employment as meaningful. The Work and Meaning Inventory (see Appendix B for a copy of the scale), was administered to triangulate the information received in the interview concerning the meaningfulness of the employment as perceived by the participant male veteran. The Work and Meaning Inventory is a 10-item scale with good reliability and internal consistency ranging from .82 to .93 (Steger et al., 2012).

Meaningfulness is derived from the employee's perception of the job's greater good to society and contribution to creating meaning in the individual's life. The WAMI has short statements that the respondent answers with a number 1 thru 5, 1 being "absolutely untrue" and 5 being "absolutely true." Examples of the statements are "I have found a meaningful career," "I view my work as contributing to my personal growth," and "the work I do serves a greater purpose." The range of scores for the WAMI is 10 to 50. A score less than 30 indicates employment that is not meaningful (M. Steger, personal communication, July 20, 2017). Higher scores are associated with positive perceptions of meaningfulness in employment. The WAMI can be used in research and educational capacities without restrictions (Steger et al., 2012). See Table 4 for synopsis of the WAMI (reliability, validity, and measurement features).

Table 4. Measurement Instruments

	Authors	Reliability internal consistency	Convergent validity	Population	Measurement features
<u>Meaningful employment</u>					
The Work and Meaning Inventory (WAMI) 10 items	M. Steger, B. Dik & R. Duffy	Alpha = .93 (Steger, Dik & Duffy, 2012).	Not reported	Heterogeneous	Measures meaningfulness of a job
<u>Self-Esteem</u>					
Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE) 10 items	M. Rosenberg	Alpha = .88 Test-retest correlation .82 (Robinson et al., 1991).	.65 correlation with confidence .72 correlation with the Lerner Self-esteem scale. (Robinson et al., 1991)	Heterogeneous, including veterans	Widely used Major criticism: Likert Scale assumes perfect correlation of the construct score and the measured trait. The standard for new scales

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem (RSE) Scale (see Appendix C for a copy of the scale) is a simple 10-item scale created by Morris Rosenberg (1965). This unidimensional scale is a four-point Likert scale on a range from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The scale has been researched and analyzed by numerous researchers over the years. It has good reliability with

internal consistency ranging from .77 to .88 and good test–retest correlation ranging from .82 to .85. The scale is best administered during an interview and has been used with multiple ethnic groups (Nugent & Thomas, 1993; Robinson et al., 1991).

The major criticism against the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE) is that it is a Likert scale. Likert scales are widely used scales that ask for responses to questions that have been sequenced so the respondent will not sense any relation of one question to another. The assumption is that the correlation of the construct score and the actual trait being measured is 1.0. It assumes perfect correlation with no measurement error, which would be very rare. However, even with this criticism the RSE is a commonly used instrument that is often held as a standard for new scales (Marsh & Scales, 2010; Nugent & Thomas, 1993; Robinson et al., 1991; Rosenberg, 1965). The range of scores for the RSE is 0 to 30. A score below 15 indicates low self-esteem (Rosenberg's self-esteem scale, n.d.). Higher scores are associated with higher levels of self-esteem. For the purposes of this study a score of 15 or higher is considered the average-range of self-esteem. See Table 4 for a synopsis of the RSE (reliability, validity, and measurement features).

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between self-esteem and meaningful employment for male veterans and to define what a male veteran considers meaningful employment.

During the interviews participants were asked if they had PTSD or depression. Three participants self-reported they had PTSD. Fourteen participants self-reported they had depression. Depression and PTSD compared to their RSE score category (average-range self-esteem or low-range self-esteem) is depicted in Table 5. Depression and PTSD compared to how the veteran answered the question “is your current employment meaningful?” during the interviews is depicted in Table 6.

Table 5. RSE Score and Depression and PTSD

	*Average-range self-esteem RSE 15 or above (Quantitative)	Low-range self-esteem RSE below 15 (Quantitative)	Total
Number of study participants	22	8	30
Depression	8	6	14
PTSD	2	1	3

* Note: Scale uses the term “normal range.” For the present study, scores of 15 and above are designated “average range.”

Table 6. Meaningful Employment and Depression and PTSD

	Meaningfully employed (Qualitative)	Not meaningfully employed (Qualitative)	Total
Number of study participants	18	12	30
Depression	5	9	14
PTSD	2	1	3

This study used a mixed-methods approach, with interviews providing the primary data source for analysis and surveys allowing for support and clarification of the interviews. Themes related to meaningful employment and self-esteem were compiled by identifying keywords and topics from the data. This study was conducted with no pre-determined themes or codes. The researcher performed all the coding to ensure consistency. During the interviews the researcher gave the participants a general definition of meaningful employment. Meaningful employment is a job that provides satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment. It does not have to be a paying job. It provides meaning in your life. The researcher then asked each participant in question 5 to describe what he considered to be meaningful employment. One participant responded “a job that I see myself serving a greater purpose. Not just for money. A purpose of doing what is right and serving others.” Some examples of other words used in response to this question were benefits, pay, helping others, pride, gratification, service to others, fun, fulfilling, and workplace appreciation. From the responses to this question 48 initial codes were developed from the actual words used by the male veterans. Saturation occurred at the 20th participant. No new data emerged from the interviews from that point on. Fourteen sub-codes created by combining initial codes were labeled with a title that described the meaning of the original segments of text. Some examples of the sub-codes were recognition, future, service to others, compensation,

benefits, challenging, pride, affirmation, and personal satisfaction. This combination reduced the data to a manageable number of relevant categories that addressed the research questions. The researcher created a final iteration of two codes that further combined the 14 sub-codes. The two final codes were “personally fulfilling” and “positive work environment” (Creswell, 2015; Rubin & Babbie, 2014; Saldana, 2013).

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and Work and Meaning Inventory were the two instruments used to triangulate the data obtained in the interviews. The quantitative data from the demographic section of the questionnaire and instrument scores (Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and Work and Meaning Inventory) were input into an SPSS data base (IBM Corp, 2012). The researcher examined demographics and presented correlations. Data were used to explore relationships between the demographics and the scores on the scales. The correlation table (Table 7) depicts the relationships between military services and self-esteem; age and self-esteem; race and self-esteem; civilian education and self-esteem; and number of years in the military and self-esteem. The instruments and the interviews were coded so that the survey instruments could be related back to the qualitative data gathered from the interviews to help better explain the responses to the interviews as well as apply a more quantitative response to measuring the relevant variables. The results of the survey instruments for each participant were not examined until after the interview was conducted for that participant.

Table 7. Variable Correlation Coefficients

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Age	1.00	.141	.800*	.276	.172	.152	.000	.238	-.058	.279	-.120
2. Years in service		1.00	-.217	.164	.183	-.226	.095	.031	-.285	.170	-.062
3. Years out of service			1.00	.144	.015	.236	-.008	.052	-.006	.225	.027
4. WAMI score				1.00	.895*	.113	-.263	.296	.110	.807*	-.454*
5. RSE Score					1.00	.032	-.263	.156	-.039	.801*	-.496*
6.Race						1.00	-.098	.217	.023	-.056	.157
7. Service: Army/Navy/Marine Corps							1.00	.063	-.236	-.144	-.047
8. Education: High school or college								1.00	.149	.183	-.120
8. PTSD Question (Y/N)									1.00	.045	.134
10. Meaningful employment: (Y/N)										1.00	-.464*
11. Depression question											1.00

* $p < .05$

Data Screening and Cleaning

Prior to analysis, the data were screened and cleaned to ensure proper statistical analysis. The responses were reviewed by the researcher for consistency. The data from the interviews were examined and categorized through coding that began directly with the words used by study participants. The researcher conducted a content analysis on the information collected from interviews and identified information themes and developed codes using an inductive framework (Creswell, 2015). Quantitative data from the instruments and selective qualitative data from the interviews were input into SPSS (IBM Corp, 2012) to create the correlation table (Table 7). The qualitative data encompassed veteran participant responses to PTSD and depression and whether he currently had meaningful employment. Dummy variables were used to input qualitative data into SPSS (IBM Corp, 2012).

Correlations Between Demographics and Dependent and Independent Variables.

Two independent variables showed a statistically significant correlation: the age of the study participants and years out of the military service. The correlation coefficient is .800 and the significance is .000. Both are independent variables and their significant correlation is logical. As the length of time the veteran has been out of the military increases, the veteran's age increases correspondingly. Table 8 is a reduced correlation table that depicts only variables that have a significant correlation. A correlation with a significance value less than .05 is a significant correlation.

Table 8. Significant Correlations

	RSE Score (Quant.)		WAMI Score (Quant.)		Meaningful employment question (Qual.)		Depression question (Qual.)	
	Corr. coeff.	Sig.	Corr. coeff.	Sig.	Corr. coeff.	Sig.	Corr. coeff.	Sig.
Rosenberg Self-Esteem (RSE) Scale Score	1.00	—	.895	.000	.801	.000	-.496	.005
The Work and Meaning Inventory (WAMI) Score			1.00	—	.807	.000	-.454	.012
Meaningful employment question					1.00	—	-.464	.010
Depression question							1.00	—

There were significant correlations among the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE) score and the Work and Meaning Inventory (WAMI) score; the RSE score and the meaningful employment question; the RSE score and the depression question; the WAMI score and the meaningful employment question; the WAMI score and the depression question; and the meaningful employment question and the depression question. There were no statistical significant correlations among the variables of age, race, PTSD, civilian education, military service component, enlisted or officer service level, or number of years in the military.

Research Questions Analysis

Research Question 1

First Research Question: What is the definition of meaningful employment for male veterans?

Quantitative Analysis

The WAMI has three sub-scales: the “Positive Meaning” score, the “Meaning-Making through Work” score, and the “Greater Good Motivations” score.

The Positive Meaning scale reflects the degree to which people find their work to hold personal meaning, significance, or purpose.... The Meaning-Making through Work score reflects the fact that work is often a source of broader meaning in life for people, helping them to make sense of their life experience.... The Greater Good Motivations score reflects the degree to which people see that their effort at work makes a positive contribution and benefits others or society. (Steger, 2011)

All eight of the participants who scored below 15, which is the low-range of self-esteem on the RSE (Rosenberg’s self-esteem scale, n.d.), also stated during the interviews on the yes or no question “is your current employment meaningful?” that they did not currently have a meaningful job. Only 4 of the 22 participants who scored in the average range for self-esteem on the RSE stated they do not currently have a meaningful job.

Table 9 depicts the WAMI Sub Scales by mean scores within RSE categories of low-range self-esteem or average-range self-esteem.

Table 9. Scales Mean Scores and RSE Categories

	*Average-range self-esteem RSE Score 15 or above (Quantitative)	Low-range self-esteem RSE Score below 15 (Quantitative)	Total
Number of study participants	22	8	30
Scale (highest score)			
RSE (30)	25.18	12.87	21.90
WAMI (50)	40.54	23.50	36.00
WAMI Sub-Scale			
Positive Meaning (20)	16.14	9.25	14.30
WAMI Sub-Scale			
Meaning-making through work (15)	11.77	6.50	10.37
WAMI Sub-Scale			
Greater good motivations (15)	12.64	7.75	11.33

* Note: Scale uses the term “normal range.” For the present study, scores of 15 and above are designated “average range.”

Qualitative Analysis

During the interviews the participants stated that their primary requirements for employment to be meaningful fall into two major areas: personally fulfilling (global aspects) and a positive work environment (specific aspects). Personally fulfilling encompasses service to others. A positive work environment encompasses benefits, performance recognition, a job that has a future, a job that permits a work life balance, proper compensation, work that challenges the worker's skills, and a job the worker's family is proud he is doing. The personally fulfilling area aligns with the WAMI sub-scale "Greater Good Motivations." The positive work environment aligns with the WAMI sub-scale "Positive Meaning."

The meaning making through work subscale on the WAMI is determined from three questions on the WAMI. Question 2. I view my work as contributing to my personal growth. Question 7. My work helps me better understand myself. Question 9. My work helps me make sense of the world around me. (Steger et al., 2012, p. 9)

The average-range self-esteem group of participants had a mean score higher (11.77) than the low-range self-esteem group (6.5) on the meaning-making through work WAMI subscale. The mean score for the entire sample of 30 study participants is 10.37. So, it appears the participants who scored in the low-range of self-esteem on the RSE put more emphasis on the specific elements of the employment such as benefits and pay, whereas the participants who scored in the average-range of self-esteem balanced the specific and global aspects of employment. However, there were no interview questions to corroborate this assertion in the meaning-making through work WAMI subscale.

Table 10 depicts the WAMI mean scores, WAMI sub-scale scores, and RSE mean scores broken down by two groups. Group 1 is composed of veteran study participants who stated

during the interview that they have meaningful employment; Group 2 is composed of participants who stated they do not currently have meaningful employment. An examination of the group of participants who stated their employment is not meaningful compared with the group of participants who stated their employment is meaningful reflects differences in the means of their scores on the WAMI sub-scales. Eight of the 12 who stated they did not currently have meaningful employment were the eight who in Table 9 scored below 15 on the RSE. The not meaningful employment group had a mean score of 9.25 on the “Positive Meaning” score, a mean score of 6.92 on the “Meaning-Making through Work” score, and a mean score of 8.25 on the “Greater Good Motivations” scale. The group with meaningful employment had a mean score of 17.66 on the “Positive Meaning” score, a mean score of 12.66 on the “Meaning-Making through Work” score, and a mean score of 13.39 on the “Greater Good Motivations” scale. Overall, the total WAMI mean score for the group that does not have a meaningful job is 24.42, and the WAMI mean score for the group that has a meaningful job is 43.72. A WAMI score below 30 indicates employment that is not meaningful (Steger et al., 2012).

Table 10. Scales Mean Scores and Meaningful Employment Question

	Meaningful employment (Qualitative)	Not meaningful employment (Qualitative)	Total
Number of study participants	18	12	30
Scale (highest score)			
RSE (30)	26.61	14.83	21.90
WAMI (50)	43.72	24.42	36.00
WAMI Sub-Scale			
Positive Meaning (20)	17.66	9.25	14.30
WAMI Sub-Scale			
Meaning-making through work (15)	12.66	6.92	10.37
WAMI Sub-Scale			
Greater good motivations (15)	13.39	8.25	11.33

Mixed-Methods Comparison

The positive work environment that veterans described during the interviews aligns with the WAMI sub-scale positive meaning. The positive meaning mean score for all 30 participants was 14.3. The veterans who stated they do not have meaningful employment had a mean score of 9.25, and the veterans who stated they have meaningful employment had a mean score of 17.66.

The personally fulfilling traits that the veterans described during the interviews align with the WAMI sub-scale greater-good motivations. The greater-good motivations mean score of the entire sample was 11.33. The mean score of the veterans who stated they do not have meaningful employment was 8.25, and the mean score of the veterans who stated they have meaningful employment was 13.39.

Research Question 2

Second Research Question: Does meaningful employment affect male veterans' self-esteem?

Quantitative Analysis: Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale

Table 9 depicts the RSE mean scores categorized for the two groups. Group 1 is composed of 22 veteran study participants who fall into the average range of self-esteem. The average range of self-esteem is a score of 15 to 30 on the RSE. The mean RSE score for Group 1 is 25.18. The mean WAMI score for Group 1 is 40.54. Group 2 is composed of 8 participants who fall into the low self-esteem range. The low self-esteem range is a score below 15 on the RSE (Rosenberg's self-esteem scale, n.d.). The mean WAMI score of the eight participants who fall into the low-range self-esteem is 23.50. A score below 30 indicates employment that is not meaningful (Steger et al., 2012). The mean RSE score for Group 2 is 12.87.

Table 10 depicts the RSE mean scores and WAMI mean scores for the two groups broken down by their response concerning whether their current employment is meaningful. An examination of RSE and WAMI scores when the study participants are regrouped by how they answered the meaningful employment question during the interviews reflects the group who perceive their current employment is meaningful to have a higher RSE mean score (26.61) compared to the mean score (14.83) of the group who stated their employment is not meaningful. As already shown in Table 8, the correlation between the meaningful employment question and the WAMI score is .807 and is statistically significant (less than .05), so it was predictable that the WAMI mean score would be higher for the study participants who perceive their employment to be meaningful (43.72) and lower for the participants who do not perceive their employment as meaningful (24.42). The correlation between the Work and Meaning Inventory

(WAMI) and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE) is .895 and statistically significant as shown in Table 8.

Qualitative Analysis

The interview information failed to adequately capture the levels of self-esteem of the veteran participants. The male participant veterans were reluctant to verbalize low levels of self-esteem. All 30 participants stated they felt good about themselves. Even those who scored in the low-range of self-esteem on the RSE verbally expressed a positive outlook about themselves; however, they were more open to reflecting lower levels of self-esteem on the RSE. The veteran participants were also open during the interviews about the perceived meaningfulness of their employment.

Mixed-Methods Comparison

Table 11 reflects “positive work environment” and “personally fulfilling” categories (qualitative data) from the interviews and the WAMI sub-scale mean scores for “positive meaning” and “greater good motivations” sub-scales (quantitative data) compared to the low-range self-esteem group and the average-range self-esteem group. Any participant who scored less than 15 on the RSE is in the low-range self-esteem group (Rosenberg’s self-esteem scale, n.d.). The qualitative data reflect that the veteran participants put more weight on traits that support a positive work environment (70%) compared to personally fulfilling traits (56.7%). Positive work environment encompasses financial compensation, benefits, performance recognition, and job enjoyment. The personally fulfilling category comprises the traits of service to others and having a positive impact on society. The low-range self-esteem group of study

participants put more emphasis on a positive work environment (87.5%) compared to the average-range self-esteem group (63.6%). The low-range self-esteem group put less emphasis on personally fulfilling (37.5%) compared to the average-range self-esteem group (63.6%).

The WAMI sub-scale scores support these differences in categories. The difference between the positive meaning subscale and the greater good subscale is slightly greater for the low-range veterans. So there is a slightly larger gap between global and specific job requirements. However, the gap is not as evident in the subscales as it is in the interview qualitative information. The positive meaning scores align with the positive work environment. The greater good motivations scores align with the personally fulfilling category. Overall, the average-range group balanced the specific and global aspects in their definition of meaningful employment.

Table 11. WAMI Subscales Compared to Interview Data

	*Average-range self-esteem RSE Score 15 or above (Quantitative)	Low-range self-esteem RSE Score below 15 (Quantitative)	Total
Number of study participants	22	8	30
Interview category			
Positive work environment (Qualitative)	14 (63.6%)	7 (87.5%)	21 (70%)
Personally fulfilling (Qualitative)	14 (63.6%)	3 (37.5%)	17 (56.7%)
WAMI sub-scale			
Positive meaning	16.14	9.25	14.30
Greater good motivations	12.64	7.75	11.33

* Note: Scale uses the term “normal range.” For the present study, scores of 15 and above are designated “average range.”

Many of the veteran participants stated that meaningful employment had traits that are classified in both the positive work environment and personally fulfilling category. For this reason, the sum of the two areas is greater than the number of participants in the self-esteem category. Even though financial compensation falls under a positive work environment, it should be noted that 3 of the 8 veterans (37.9%) in the low-range self-esteem category stated that financial compensation was required. Only 3 of the 22 veteran participants (13.6%) in the average-range self-esteem category stated that financial compensation was a trait. The personally fulfilling area aligns with the WAMI sub-scale “Greater Good Motivations.” The positive work environment aligns with the WAMI sub-scale “Positive Meaning.”

Findings Summary

The guiding hypothesis for this study is, if a veteran reports his employment experience is meaningful, then he will also report higher levels of self-esteem. This study supports the guiding hypothesis. As shown in Table 8, the correlation of the Work and Meaning Inventory (WAMI) and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem (RSE) scores is .895 and is statistically significant (less than .05). A score lower than 15 on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem (RSE) Scale indicates low-range self-esteem (Rosenberg’s self-esteem scale, n.d.). In Table 9 it is shown the eight participant veterans who scored in the low-range self-esteem group had a mean RSE score of 12.87 compared to the twenty-two participants in the average range who have a mean score of 25.18. The highest score someone can receive on the RSE is 30. All eight of the participants who scored in the low-range self-esteem group stated during the interviews that their current employment is not meaningful.

Table 10 shows that during the interviews twelve participants reported their employment experience is not meaningful and eighteen participants reported their employment is meaningful. As shown in Table 8, the correlation of the yes or no question during the interview “is your current employment meaningful?” and the RSE scores is .801 and is statistically significant. The RSE mean score of the 12 participants who stated during the interview that they currently do not have meaningful jobs is 14.83. The RSE mean score of the 18 participants who stated during the interview that they do currently have a meaningful job is 26.61.

Four of the twelve participants who stated they did not have a meaningful job on the yes or no question in their interviews, were contrary to the expectations of the study. They scored in the average range of self-esteem on the RSE. Even with these four participants the mean score of the participant group who stated they do not have meaningful employment is 55.7% lower than the participant group that stated they do currently have meaningful employment. These are the only four of the 30 total study participants who did not meet the expectations of the study. The researcher does not specifically know why these four participants are outliers. However, two participants of the four scored within two points of reflecting a self-esteem in the low range on the RSE: One participant scored 15 and the other 16. The score of 15 is an arbitrary score that previous researchers used. An individual can possess elements of low self-esteem even if they score above 15 on the RSE. Four out of 30 participants is a low number (13.3%) who are contrary to the study hypothesize. This leads the researcher to believe there may be other factors impacting their global self-esteem that are outside the variables in this study. The researcher still believes the hypothesis is true and has no explanation why they scored contrary to the expectations of the study. Self-esteem is fluid and other areas of an individual's life can impact self-esteem. The Identity Theory used as the theoretical foundation for this study postulates that a person has multiple identities that impact the individual's self-perception. Not everyone places the employment identity as their primary identity.

It must be noted that depression had a statistically significant correlation (less than .05) with the RSE score. Nine (75%) of the 12 participants who stated during the interviews they did not have a meaningful job also stated they had depression. Only five (27.8%) of 18 participants who stated during the interviews they have a meaningful job stated they have depression. Six (75%) of the eight participants who scored in the low range on the RSE (below 15) reported they

had depression. Eight (36.4%) of the 22 participants who scored within the average range on the RSE reported they have depression.

All 30 study participants stated they had positive family and friend support. All 30 participants stated their time in the military was meaningful employment. Fourteen participants stated there was no change in family and friend relationships when they obtained meaningful employment (all participants reported they had meaningful employment at one time, even if their current employment is non-meaningful). However, 11 of the 16 (68.75%) veterans who reported positive changes when they had meaningful employment stated the changes were within themselves: their attitude, self-esteem, disposition, and confidence. The outcome of not having meaningful employment may have psychological effects that permeate into other areas of the veteran's life.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

Discussion

In the relevant literature, only one study was found that examined a male veteran population, and that study examined the relationship of unemployment (not necessarily meaningful employment) and self-esteem. The present study expands this concept further to better define successful employment and the importance of adding meaningful employment as a measure of success. This study examined an all-male veteran sample and the veterans' relationship with meaningful employment (not just a job) and self-esteem. Further light is shed on the challenges male veterans face to successfully reintegrate into civilian life. Clearly, employment alone is not enough, since failure to obtain employment that is meaningful may cause further confusion about self-worth. This study has shown a relationship between meaningful employment and self-esteem in a sample of male veterans.

This exploratory study has shown that, within limitations, there is a hierarchy of needs established by employment requirements. All the male study participant veterans were employed. Ten of the twelve veterans (83.3%) who did not have meaningful employment expressed basic requirement needs of a positive work environment such as benefits and pay (specific aspects). Twelve of the eighteen veterans (66.7%) with meaningful employment expressed higher-level requirements that encompassed personally fulfilling traits such as service to others and positive impacts on society (global aspects). This finding illustrates a hierarchy of

needs that may change as lower-level needs are met. The significant correlation between the RSE and WAMI scores (.895) supports this hierarchy.

Nine of the twelve veterans (75%) who stated they do not currently have meaningful employment reported depression. Depression could be a moderating variable affecting the strength of the correlation between the variables of employment and self-esteem. Five of the eighteen veteran participants (27.8%) who have meaningful employment and reported they have depression stated that the effects of their depression were minor or non-existent at this time. It may be deduced that having meaningful employment partially counteracted the ill effects of depression. This conclusion supports the identity theory's assertion that when an identity created by a major life role becomes strong it can override other less-important role identities, and former role identities may be disregarded or even forgotten (Stryker, 1980; Burke & Stets, 2009).

Depression may be the result of a victim-role identity that the meaningful-work-environment identity overshadows. This supposition does not claim that meaningful employment is a magic fix or placebo for all mental health challenges. It simply illustrates that the impact of meaningful employment may affect other areas and identities in the veteran's life. Just as identity theory postulates that identity salience is how the veteran conducts himself in a specific environment and he creates a salient hierarchy of multiple identities created in his various life roles, the veteran functions within a hierarchy of personality traits that may embody life stressors from multiple identities. The veteran may develop an identity that is a conglomeration of the traits from those multiple identities (Burke & Stets, 2009; Stryker, 1980). These traits certainly include, but are not limited by, their military service identity traits. Within each life role the veteran goes through a verification process during which he perceives that his competence in a role improves until he is at the level he considers appropriate for his time and experience in that

role. A veteran goes through this verification process even if the role is of reduced value to him, such as may be the case with employment that is non-meaningful.

Employment has two components: specific and global. The specific aspect is the individual's satisfaction with his abilities to perform the requirements of the employment. The global aspect encompasses the individual's overall perception concerning the employment. The global aspect covers the contributions to the individual's meaning in life, personal growth, and overall perception that he is performing a worthwhile job (Steger, Dik & Duffy, 2012). An individual can possess the skill set that promotes a positive specific aspect of self-esteem that he is able to perform the job at an outstanding level of performance. However, if the global aspects diminish the meaningfulness of the employment, the individual may have low global self-esteem. This is the reason Morris Rosenberg believed it was more important to measure global self-esteem (Rosenberg et al., 1995).

Nine of the twelve veteran participants who stated they did not have meaningful employment also stated they performed the duties of their employment in a superior manner. The remaining three indicated they were proficient in their employment. None of them expressed a lack of ability or substandard performance in their employment. One veteran participant who works in a major grocery chain stated he performed his employment duties in an outstanding manner. He had worked at this organization over 10 years and believed he was more competent in all areas of his position than any of his fellow employees. However, he perceived the position as mediocre, unfulfilling, boring, and non-meaningful. This example provides evidence that skill competency within a job does not necessarily equate to perceived meaningfulness or employment that will promote a positive global self-esteem.

There is a significant correlation between the RSE and WAMI scores. The eight veterans who scored in the low range on the RSE (8 of the 12 participants who reported they do not have meaningful employment) scored low on the WAMI. The fact they experienced a positive verification process in their non-meaningful employment did not appear to moderate the relationship between the independent variable of employment and the dependent variable of self-esteem.

Verification does not appear to be a moderating variable for veterans when the employment is non-meaningful. This fact may be attributable to the military attitude they acquired while serving. They are taught to do all tasks to the best of their abilities, even when a task appears mundane. However, this study has not shown whether failure to achieve positive verification in meaningful employment will negatively impact self-esteem. Will a negative verification process become a moderating variable in the relationship between meaningful employment and self-esteem of the individual? For example, what if a veteran obtains his meaningful employment as an electrician, but over a lengthy period that exceeds two years he still has not achieved a rudimentary level of proficiency that is expected of a journeyman electrician. If he perceives he is not meeting normal expectations, will his self-esteem be negatively affected? Will the veteran begin to doubt his abilities to ever achieve the requirements of this role? As the veteran perceives he is not meeting expected proficiency, he is experiencing a negative verification process. He is not achieving the ideal self that he desires to attain in this role. This negative verification process will most likely moderate the relationship of the meaningful employment as an electrician and the veteran's self-esteem. The veteran's self-esteem may be reduced. However, this study did not examine the impact of a negative verification process with meaningful employment on the self-esteem of a veteran.

The nuance of this study is that it examined the impact of meaningful employment on the self-esteem of an all-veteran sample and investigated the factors that a veteran considers important for employment to be meaningful. This study did not address certain other issues in any depth: personal relationship effect, employment strategy, and perceived meaningfulness of military service. All the participants stated they considered their military service as meaningful employment. Three of the eight veterans who have low-range self-esteem (RSE score below 15) had no strategy for finding meaningful employment compared to only two of the other 22 veterans who have self-esteem in the average range but had no strategy. Their self-confidence, attitude, and temperament were affected by the increased self-esteem derived from meaningful employment. Sixteen of the 30 participants stated their personal relationships changed when they had meaningful employment, but eleven clarified that the change was within themselves: their attitude, self-esteem, disposition, and confidence.

These are patriotic Americans who do not blame society for their inability to find meaningful employment. They accept responsibility for their circumstances. They just do not understand why they have not been able to obtain meaningful employment. None of the twelve veterans who stated they did not have meaningful employment were on unemployment or government aid. They accepted employment that they considered non-meaningful so they could support their families. Two of the 12 veterans who stated they did not have meaningful employment have reapplied to the military and a third veteran started attending college with the plan to apply for a commission as a lieutenant in the Army.

These veterans remain positive in their outlook for the future. However, there may be a limit to this positive outlook. Male veterans commit suicide at a rate three times higher than female veterans (Zaremba, 2015). Delaney found a relationship between unemployment and

suicide (2014). Other studies found a relationship between self-esteem and suicide (Bhar, Ghahramanlou-Holloway, Brown, & Beck, 2008; Mruk, 1995; Suicide Prevention & Support Network, 2015). Addressing the meaningful employment challenges that veterans face may have a positive reduction on the instances of depression and the suicide rate of veterans.

Implications

This study, focused on male veterans who have not been specifically examined in previous studies, sought to discover correlations between meaningful employment and positive identity or positive self-esteem. The theoretical foundation of this study is identity theory, which postulates that identity comprises unique characteristics that an individual exhibits in the different roles of his life. Everyone has numerous roles, each with its own identity, meanings, expectations, acceptable behaviors, and required competence. Role identities influence everyday life and create the standards for self-appraisal of one's performance (Burke & Stets, 2009; Jasso, 2002; Stets, 2006; Stryker, 1980; Stryker & Burke, 2000).

Self-esteem is an essential element of identity theory. In the relationship of meaningful employment and self-esteem, the workplace is the environment in which the identity role exists. The individual strives to internalize the meaning and behavioral characteristics of his perceived ideal model for that role. As he becomes more proficient and experiences more successes, he perceives a verification within himself concerning his proficiency in this role. This verification is key to an individual's self-esteem, as he develops a positive identity from role competencies in his meaningful employment that in turn impact his self-esteem (Stets & Burke, 2000; Swann & Buhrmester, 2012).

This study shows a relationship between meaningful employment and self-esteem in male veterans. It may be inferred that if a veteran obtains meaningful employment and develops a positive identity that is a product of meaningful employment, his self-esteem will increase. It can also be inferred that failure to find meaningful employment may cause confusion about self-worth.

Conceptually, meaningful employment is work that satisfies the individual's view of his model self or a job that will enable him to develop into his ideal (Scroggins, 2008; Steger et al., 2012). Previous studies examined employment or unemployment, but no studies were found that examined meaningful employment. Through the interview process, this study has shown that the foundation that nurtures positive self-esteem is built when male veterans perceive that their employment is personally fulfilling within a positive work environment.

All the veterans in this study were employed. When defining the traits that make employment meaningful, veterans with low-range self-esteem who did not have meaningful employment emphasized the positive work environment traits that encompassed compensation, benefits, and positive relationships among workers (specific aspects). Veterans who had meaningful employment balanced the specific and global aspects. Global aspects encompass personally fulfilling traits such as service to others and positive benefits to society (global aspects).

This study adds to the literature that supports a relationship between employment and self-esteem. However, this study took this concept further by examining the impact of meaningful employment on male veterans' self-esteem. Veterans are going through psychological as well as economic adjustments just by the nature of the drastic environmental conditions and cultural changes they may face.

This study considered depression and found a statistically significant correlation between depression and the RSE score (-.496); between depression and the WAMI score (-.454); and depression and the meaningful employment question (-.464). There is also a statistically significant correlation between the RSE score and the WAMI score (.895). Five of the 18 participants who stated in the interviews they currently have meaningful employment reported depression. Nine of the twelve participants who stated they currently do not have meaningful employment reported depression. The statistically significant correlation between depression and the dependent variables may indicate that levels of depression are moderating the relationship between employment and self-esteem within the group of veterans who currently do not have meaningful employment.

It is helpful to remember that reintegration is a holistic process that involves many factors. This study has examined only the relationship of meaningful employment and self-esteem in male veterans. This focus is in contrast to the work of Castro and Kintzle (2013), who described a needs assessment that examined the reintegration process in totality by covering the factors of employment (not meaningful employment), financial challenges, affordable housing, homelessness, physical and psychological health, medical care barriers, alcohol consumption, PTSD, depression, and sexual trauma.

Limitations and Future Studies

This study substantiates the assumption that meaningful employment impacts male veterans' self-esteem. Both the qualitative and quantitative pieces of this study support this postulate. However, this study has limitations. The interview questions did not clearly address self-esteem variations. The researcher relied on the RSE to reflect the range of self-esteem levels

within the study participants. The male participants appeared hesitant to verbally reflect their self-esteem if it was at the lower level. They were more open when completing the RSE.

Generalizability is limited because of the nature of this mixed-methods design. The sample is small and not randomly selected, being a non-probability convenience sample. The specific nature of each veteran participant's military experience and subsequent civilian training and work paths also impacts generalizability. Future studies are warranted that have a larger sample and random selection of study participants. Male veterans are looking for meaningful jobs that embrace service to others and provide a future path that includes suitable compensation, benefits, and pride in achievement.

This study limited its examination to the relationship of meaningful employment and self-esteem in male veterans. Numerous other factors affect successful reintegration. Future studies should examine employment preparation prior to military discharge, the financial challenges that unemployed veterans face, the availability of affordable housing for veterans, and veteran homelessness. Imperative areas to examine in future studies are the physical and psychological health challenges that veterans face and the associated barriers to receiving medical care. Veteran self-medication with alcohol and drugs, PTSD, depression, and sexual trauma are all factors future studies should examine in this relationship between meaningful employment and self-esteem.

No previous studies reported the number of veterans without meaningful employment who committed suicide, nor for that matter did they relate those veterans' employment status at all (Eisen et al., 2013; Magruder et al., 2013). Future research should examine whether the self-esteem developed from meaningful employment carries over to other areas of a veteran's life and

whether a relationship between meaningful employment and suicide ideation exists that can impact the estimated 18–22 veteran suicides that occur each day (Kemp & Bossarte, 2012).

This study showed a relationship between meaningful employment and self-esteem in male veterans. There are over 1.5 million female veterans (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2016) and it remains unclear whether the relationship of the independent variable of meaningful employment and the dependent variable of self-esteem is the same for female veterans. How does depression impact this variable relationship in female veterans? In general females emphasize acceptance and rejection compared to males who emphasize success and failure in life events (Mruk, 1995). Does this difference in perception of self-esteem events by females impact the relationship between self-esteem and meaningful employment differently or does it only impact the initial selection of the meaningful employment? Female veterans should be included in future studies to address the presence or absence of gender differences in this variable relationship.

Future studies should examine the motivation of veterans concerning why they joined the military and why they separated from the military. Do these factors impact self-esteem? Other factors such as the veteran's age when entering the military, the time period the veteran served, and the number of years the veteran has been out of the military should be controlled for in future studies of veteran self-esteem. In this study only one of the nine participants over the age of forty scored in the low-range of self-esteem on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. No participant who served over ten years and only one participant who has been out of military more than twelve years scored in the low-range of self-esteem.

Future studies should examine the impact of a personal support system to the veteran and its impact on self-esteem. In this study the researcher asked a yes or no question concerning family and friend support. All thirty of the participants stated they had a good support system.

Other issues not addressed by this study are the impact of a negative verification process with meaningful employment on the self-esteem of veterans, personal relationship effects, employment strategies, and perceived meaningfulness of military service. All of these would be appropriate areas for future research.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, fertile ground has been broken in establishing the need for meaningful employment. The Department of Veterans Affairs should invest additional resources toward employment training that supports veterans' obtaining meaningful employment. The researcher understands the VA considers employment a military transition responsibility augmented by college training through the veterans' education program. However, many veterans do not know what they do not know. They do not understand their capabilities or know what resources are available if college is not the correct path for them. The VA can expand its counseling programs to include employment advice. Veteran centers provide excellent initiatives that establish a foundation to facilitate further employment counseling and teach resource availability. They also provide satellite locations away from VA hospital facilities, reducing the appearance of psychological issues. The VA should expand the mission, services, and resources of the veteran centers. This is an important element of reintegration, and resources devoted to obtaining meaningful employment may positively impact the resources currently

being devoted to veterans who are being treated for other psychological maladjustments and perhaps reduce the need for additional resources.

The researcher is not disparaging the superior work the VA is doing. There are veterans who have psychological challenges that will require VA treatment their entire lives. The point of this recommendation is that some veterans in distress will benefit from the self-esteem–boosting power of finding meaningful employment and more easily reintegrate as a positive member of society.

APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT INVITATION FLYER

Subject: Male Veterans Wanted to Participate in One Hour Interview

Purpose of the study: The researcher is completing his dissertation research and we want to learn more about your feelings related to adjustment to civilian life. The purpose of the study is to examine the relationship of meaningful employment and self-esteem.

Criteria: The male veteran must be employed. It does not have to be a paying job. It may be unpaid work.

Participants: All participants are male veteran volunteers with honorable or medical discharges.

You are invited to participate in this research study if you meet the criteria listed above. If you volunteer and are accepted as a participant, there is a 30 minute meeting between each participant and the PhD student. The PhD student is the researcher.

If you want to volunteer contact Gary Grimes, phone number xxx-xxx-xxxx.

Thank you

Gary Grimes

PhD student, UCF

APPENDIX B: THE WORK AND MEANING INVENTORY (WAMI)

Work can mean a lot of different things to different people. The following items ask about how you see the role of work in your own life. Please honestly indicate how true each statement is for you and your work.

			Neither		
	Absolutely	Mostly	True nor	Mostly	Absolutely
	Untrue	Untrue	Untrue	True	True
1. I have found a meaningful career	1	2	3	4	5
2. I view my work as contributing to my personal growth.	1	2	3	4	5
3. My work really makes no difference to the world.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I understand how my work contributes to my life's meaning.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I have a good sense of what makes my job meaningful.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I know my work makes a positive difference in the world.	1	2	3	4	5
7. My work helps me better understand myself.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I have discovered work that has a satisfying purpose.	1	2	3	4	5
9. My work helps me make sense of the world around me.	1	2	3	4	5
10. The work I do serves a greater purpose.	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX C: ROSENBERG SELF-ESTEEM SCALE

Description of Measure: A 10-item scale that measures global self-worth by measuring both positive and negative feelings about the self. All items are answered using a 4-point Likert scale format ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

RSE Instructions: Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement.

1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

2. At times I think I am no good at all.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

6. I certainly feel useless at times.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

7. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

APPENDIX D: IRB APPROVAL



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board
Office of Research & Commercialization

12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501

Orlando, Florida 32826-3246

Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276
www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html

Approval of Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1
FWA00000351, IRB00001138**

To: **Gary R. Grimes**

Date: **March 09, 2017**

Dear Researcher:

On 03/09/2017 the IRB approved the following human participant research until 03/08/2018 inclusive:

Type of Review: UCF Initial Review Submission Form
Project Title: The Impact of Meaningful Employment on the Self-Esteem of a Veteran
Investigator: Gary R. Grimes
IRB Number: SBE-17-12856
Funding Agency:
Grant Title:
Research ID: N/A

The scientific merit of the research was considered during the IRB review. The Continuing Review Application must be submitted 30days prior to the expiration date for studies that were previously expedited, and 60 days prior to the expiration date for research that was previously reviewed at a convened meeting. Do not make changes to the study (i.e., protocol, methodology, consent form, personnel, site, etc.) before obtaining IRB approval. A Modification Form **cannot** be used to extend the approval period of a study. All forms may be completed and submitted online at <https://iris.research.ucf.edu>.

If continuing review approval is not granted before the expiration date of 03/08/2018, approval of this research expires on that date. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

Use of the approved, stamped consent document(s) is required. The new form supersedes all previous versions, which are now invalid for further use. Only approved investigators (or other approved key study personnel) may solicit consent for research participation. Participants or their representatives must receive a copy of the consent form(s).

All data, including signed consent forms if applicable, must be retained and secured per protocol for a minimum of five years (six if HIPAA applies) past the completion of this research. Any links to the identification of participants should be maintained and secured per protocol. Additional requirements may be imposed by your funding agency, your department, or other entities. Access to data is limited to authorized individuals listed as key study personnel.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the [Investigator Manual](#).

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kamille Chaparro" followed by a horizontal line.

Signature applied by Kamille Chaparro on 03/09/2017 10:54:38 AM EST

IRB Coordinator

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. General

The interview will be conducted after the participant completes the Work and Meaning Inventory and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. The questions are open-ended purposely so the participant has the opportunity to completely express his opinion.

2. Questionnaires

The two questionnaires (The Work and Meaning Inventory and Rosenberg (1965) Self-Esteem Scale) are administered.

3. The interview

Affiliation Demographic Information:

Military Service: Army Navy Air Force Marines Coast Guard

Officer Warrant Officer Enlisted

Age: Race:

Civilian Education Level:

Number of years in the Military:

How long have you been out of the military service?

Open-Ended Questions

Before I ask you any questions I want to inform you that you do not need to tell me any more about your personal situation or medical condition than you feel comfortable telling me.

1. Have you ever had Post Traumatic Syndrome Disorder (PTSD)? Yes No
2. Have you had depression? Yes No
If the veteran answers yes to either PTSD or depression, he will be asked:

-Do you believe it interferes with your employment?

-Do you ever have feelings of helplessness and hopefulness?

- Have your sleeping habits changed?

- Do you have flashbacks of a traumatic event that occurred in your life?

3. Do you have positive family support in your life?

4. Do you have positive support from friends?

Meaningful employment is a job that provides satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment. It does not have to be a paying job. It provides meaning in your life.

5. Describe what you consider to be meaningful employment.

6. Have you ever had a job that you considered meaningful employment? (this job can be before or after military service)

7. Is your current employment meaningful?

8. When looking for employment what was your strategy to find meaningful employment?

Self-esteem is the positive or negative feelings you have about yourself.

9. Describe how meaningful employment affects your view of yourself.

10. Describe how your job shapes or defines your sense of self-identity.

11. Has your job made you feel better about yourself?

12. Did you experience a change in your family and friend relationships after you obtained meaningful employment?

13. Do you have a positive attitude about yourself.

4. Interview Transcript

Hello my name is Gary Grimes. I am a PhD student at the University of Central Florida. I am conducting a research study on the impact of meaningful employment on self-esteem in a veteran. First I want to thank you for your service. I also want to thank you for volunteering for this study.

We will be together for about 30 minutes. During the first portion of our time together you will fill out two standardized questionnaires. The first questionnaire is the Work and Meaning Inventory (WAMI). It is used to measure your satisfaction with your employment. The second questionnaire is the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE) to measure your overall level of self-esteem.

During the second portion of our time together, I will ask you a series of questions concerning your family and work life. You will be able to completely discuss your answers. They are not simply yes or no questions. You do not need to tell me any more about your personal situation or medical condition than you feel comfortable telling me. Before we start do you have any questions?

6. Conclusion: At the end of the interview the researcher will say: I want to thank you again for your time. If you are interested, I will notify you of the findings of the study. Thank you

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