The Relationships Between Volunteering, Life Satisfaction and Reintegration of Military
Retirees: A Quantitative Study
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Dedication

To my husband, for his endless and unwavering support, encouragement, and confidence in me.

To my children, for their patience and understanding during all those times I was in class.

And to my parents, for always showing me that I can accomplish whatever I set my mind to.

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between volunteering and the military to civilian reintegration process for retired service members. A non-experimental cross sectional design was used with an *n* of 72. An online survey was utilized to collect data and included demographic information as well as the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985) and Military-Civilian Adjustment and Reintegration Measure (Romaniuk & Kidd, 2018). The results have important implications for social work practice, policy, and future research. The findings suggest that volunteering in a formal setting can play a role in easing the reintegration struggles of retired service members and can inform policy initiatives to improve their reintegration experiences. Future research is needed to further explore the relationship between volunteering and military to civilian reintegration.

Keywords: life satisfaction, reintegration, volunteering

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The committee for this doctoral dissertation proposal consisted of:

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Section One: Proposal Overview

Introduction

The study examines the relationship between volunteering and life satisfaction after military retirement and the relationship between military reintegration and life satisfaction following military retirement. The study looked at the differences between formal and informal volunteering and examined the impact age of retirement has on life satisfaction. This study utilized a non-experimental cross-sectional. Data was collected through anonymous online surveys and was analyzed using regression analysis through Stata.

The following principles of the NASW Codes of Ethics are relevant to the research: service and the importance of human relationships (NASW Code of Ethics, 2017). The principle of service aims for social workers to "elevate service to others above self-interest" (NASW Code of Ethics, 2017, p. 5). Service members promote the principle of service through their dedication and service in protecting their country. Additionally, volunteering connects to this principle as volunteers give their time with no financial gain in service of others. The principle of the importance of human relationships is also relevant to this study as military retirees seek to build meaningful relationships following separation from military service and "social workers seek to strengthen relationships among people" (NASE Code of Ethics, 2017, p. 6). The NASW Code of Ethics play a significant role in guiding social workers to prioritize service to others and the importance of building strong human relationships. These ethical principles are particularly relevant in the context of military retirees seeking to reintegrate into civilian life.

Theoretical Framework

This study utilizes theoretical frameworks founded on theories of sociology, life satisfaction, and volunteer work. Emile Durkheim discusses the theory of social solidarity which

highlights the importance of social connections and interactions (Thorlindsson & Berngurg, 2004). Durkheim connects his theory to war and suggests that the need for social solidarity is high among military members. This study also utilizes multiple discrepancies theory, a bottom-up life satisfaction theory (Michalos, 1985). Developed by Alex C. Michalos, multiple discrepancies theory posits that life satisfaction is understood as the perceived discrepancies between what one wants and what one has. This study uses the multiple discrepancies theory to understand the decreased life satisfaction retired military members often experience due to the sudden loss of what they had in the military: purpose, community, and identity (Romaniuk & Kidd, 2018). Theories of volunteer work suggest that strong feelings of connection, purpose, and community can be found through volunteering (Hustinx, et al., 2010). These impacts of volunteering identify similarly to the feelings of solidarity and meaning found in the military community. Each of the above mentioned theories contribute to the theoretical framework utilized in this study.

Methodology

A non-experimental cross-sectional design was used. The study population are military retirees with a minimum of twenty years of Active Duty service through one or more of the Department of Defense military branches. Participants are retired for at least six months to allow for the participants to fully separate from the military and reintegrate into the civilian population. The study used a sample of 150 military retirees. Participants were recruited through the social media platforms Facebook and Reddit. Data was collected through an anonymous online survey to include the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) and the Military-Civilian Adjustment and Reintegration Measure (M-CARM) (see Appendix A). The SWLS is available publicly and

permission was granted by the developer of the M-CARM to use the M-CARM in the study (see Appendix C). Data was analyzed using regression analysis in RStudio.

Importance of Study

The all-volunteer force of today's military created a unique culture where service members often feel themselves to be different than and separated from the larger civilian population (Goldich, 2011). Service members live in military communities on military bases and can have little to no interaction with their civilian counterparts. This chasm is further encouraged through the rigorous military training that supports the unit and the mission over the individual (Goldich, 2011). The military culture and lifestyle provide the servicemembers with a purpose and identity, with a community and mission that excludes civilian society. When service members retire from the military after at least twenty years of service, many struggle to reintegrate into the civilian society they left behind years before (Romaniuk & Kidd, 2018) and these struggles are often correlated with mental health struggles and overall life satisfaction (Orazem, 2017). Further, with the financial security of a retirement pension, retirees may not feel the need or motivation to seek employment and find meaning and purpose through a second career.

Programs and policies such as the Transition Assistance Program (Department of Defense, 2019), the Faster Care for Veterans Act of 2016 (PL 114-286), and the No Veterans Crisis Line Call Should Go Unanswered Act (PL 114-247) seek to care for service members, few focus on easing the integration into the civilian world following military separation. Additionally, there is a gap in research as well as policies regarding the unique experiences of military retirees. This study is informative to the care of military retirees through exploring the use of volunteer work as a possible method to ease the reintegration struggles of military retirees.

This study looks at the relationship between volunteering and life satisfaction and provides information regarding the relationship between life satisfaction and reintegration. This study also considers if age of retirement has an impact on overall life satisfaction. The results of this study can help inform practice and policy regarding care for military retirees. The next section will provide an in-depth discussion of the study problem.

Section Two: Study Problem

Overview and Statement of the Problem

The unique struggles faced by military retirees in the United States are often overlooked despite the significant challenges they face when separating from service. According to the U.S. Department of Defense 2021 report, there are 2,158,012 military retirees in the United States. With a minimum of twenty years needed to achieve this milestone approximately only seventeen percent of the United States military reaches retirement. This small number represents a population that faces unique struggles as they prepare to separate from service and the only community, purpose, and identity they've known for at least twenty years. While literature discusses the challenges of military veterans, the unique struggles of military retirees is often overlooked. While veterans and retirees are not often differentiated between, each term defines a distinctive population.

Terms and Definitions

The term "veteran" refers to any individual "who served in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable" (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2019, p. 1). Veterans account for nine percent of the population (NASW, 2021There is no minimum required number of years to be considered a veteran, and veterans receive the G.I. Bill and access to all Veterans Affairs (VA) facilities. Retirees, or retired service members, refers to any individual who served in the active military for a minimum of 20 years or was medically retired (United States Department of Defense, 2019). According to the Department of Defense (2019) military retirees include service members with a minimum of twenty years of active service or medical retirement. Military retirees receive benefits in the form of a pension, medical benefits, and base access after service

is completed. In 2018 alone, 32,154 Active-Duty service members retired from military service (United States Department of Defense, 2019). For the purpose of this study, military retirees includes only those who have served a minimum of twenty years.

Study Problem

This study explores the transition and reintegration experience of military retirees as they leave the military and reenter civilian society. For many retirees, the military is the only professional life they have known and the only community they are involved with. With a minimum of 20 years of service, many military members and their families cannot fathom a career outside of the military, a community not comprised of military members and their families, and a lifestyle that does not include frequent moves and long periods of separations (O'Neal et al., 2016). These service members leave the military with more years of exposure to the military culture than veterans as well as the financial benefits of healthcare and pension. In many ways the retired military community differs greatly from the veteran population. Within the community of military retirees, the age of the retirees and the circumstances surrounding their retirement can further impact their reintegration experiences.

The military culture as it stands today is a world unto itself, a society of its own with a philosophy unique to the environment. While in the military, service members are taught they are no longer an "I" but an integral part of a whole. This philosophy inspires the qualities of loyalty, integrity, and discipline necessary for the completion of the mission and the overall success of the mission. This way of thinking serves as a foundation for the strongly cemented trust service members have in one another and is the basis for the close bond forged between service members. Retirees often struggle to reconcile the society they have come to know with the society they are returning to upon separation from the military (Pease, Billera, & Gerard, 2015).

Retirees endeavor to bring with them the sense of purpose and self-worth they developed in the military, to retain their sense of identity, and rebuild their community.

The focus on the mission and the team lends way to deeply forged relationships and strong bonds. Leaving that insular community and entering the now unfamiliar civilian society may be a daunting task. Service members often find themselves returning to a society that moved on without them, a society they were not part of while they changed and experienced a new world. Without the mission and identity of the military, without the community of fellow service members, many retirees struggle to find satisfaction in post-military life (Mitchell et al., 2020; Orazem et al., 2017; O'Neal et al., 2020; Conforte et al., 2017; Romaniuk & Kidd, 2018). The decrease in life satisfaction often experienced by military retirees may lead to further mental health struggles and increased PTSD symptoms (Romaniuk & Kidd, 2018).

Trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder often follow service members home, yet it was only recently, during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, that the United States began to try to understand the phenomena of the many symptoms experienced by troops. The literature discusses the high levels of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) often associated with this transition and the various aspects of a veteran's life that is affected by this shift. In a study of 244 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, "more than half reporting identity disruption had more severe PTSD symptoms, lower life satisfaction, and more reintegration difficulties…" (Mitchell, Frazier, & Sayer, 2020, p. 2161). Additional research relates similar findings regarding the correlation between decreased life satisfaction, reintegration struggles, and PTSD symptoms. (Romaniuk & Kidd, 2018).

History of Problem

The United States Military was founded on the doctrine of preparation for war, yet war itself was an infrequent occurrence. From 1815 until 1989, the job of the military during peacetime was not to be ready for war instantaneously, but to create a force that would provide military expertise should the need arise (Goldich, 2011). Most service members served only a few years and, during their time in service, remained a civilian at heart without fully integrating into a military society. As the United States transitioned to an all-volunteer force, a tremendous shift in military culture was observed. During this time, the military shifted to a state of constant readiness leading to frequent deployments when they had previously been nonexistent. The all-volunteer approach created a feeling of superiority among service members, a feeling that they are different from and unable to relate to civilian society and those who do not serve (Goldich, 2011). Service members were now living in an insular environment on military bases for long periods of time, bases that are similar to small cities with grocery stores, post offices, schools, and other amenities leaving little necessity for service members and their families to interact with civilian communities. Hierarchy and obedience were internalized from the first day of service, and all training emphasized "organizational and collective effectiveness, discipline and commitment rather than individual rights, prerogatives, and liberties" (p. 62) further highlighting the chasm between military culture and civilian society (Goldich, 2011).

In today's military, close bonds are often formed between and among fellow service members, and a camaraderie is developed as a means of survival. Returning from service and transitioning into civilian life can be difficult. Over fifty percent of veterans returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom describe this transition as a "real struggle" (Pease, Billera, & Gerard, 2015). Operation Enduring Freedom began in 2001 in

response to the attacks of September 11, 2001 and ended in 2014 (Naval History and Heritage Command, 2020). When it was discovered that Iraq was in breach of a resolution, Operation Iraqi Freedom was authorized in 2003 and lasted through 2011 (Naval History and Heritage Command, 2020). Service members returning from these wars returned forever changed (Pease, Billera, & Gerard, 2015). The transition from military to civilian life may be a challenging process, particularly for those who have experienced the camaraderie and close bonds formed during their military service. Recognizing the unique needs of returning service members and providing them with the necessary support and resources is imperative in easing their transition experiences.

Relevance to Social Work

The connection between volunteering and social work dates to the early beginnings of social work. Social work as a field was built on the aspects of individual casework, social administration, and social action, areas led by groups of charities and volunteers. (Katz, 1996). Leaders in social reform, "Josephine Shaw Lowell, spokeswoman for the organized charities, and Jane Addams, leader and philosopher of the settlement house movement in America, emphasized sacrifice and human fellowship…" (Trattner, p. 166). These were women who, together with their respective organizations, gave their time to the betterment of society and benefit of others. It is from such volunteer organizations that the field of social work was founded and continues to promote the values of social welfare.

Social work adheres to the values of service and the importance of human relationships (NASW, 2021). For twenty or more years, military members provided a service to their country and its people. They dedicated years of their life to ensure freedom for all. Following service, many social workers work to provide service for these military members. Social workers also

recognize the importance of relationships and the struggle many service members experience

when they seek to find meaning and purpose in their post-military relationship. Social workers

provide care and services for veterans in both the civilian and military environments. Social

workers provide clinical treatment, housing assistance, government assistance, employment, and

advocacy (Veterans Affairs, 2021). When advocating for those experiencing homelessness,

social workers advocate for the veteran population, which comprises 13 percent of the homeless

population though veterans only make up nine percent of the general population (NASW, 2021).

Palliative care is another setting strongly advocated for by social workers. Social workers in this

field may encounter veterans as well, as one in four individuals who are in palliative care in the

United States is a veteran (NASW, 2021). Social workers in various settings may often work

with service members or their families while in service or following separation from the military.

Current Status of Problem

As the number of current servicemembers continues to rise, it is crucial to address the

unique challenges that retirees face when reintegrating into civilian life, including mental health

struggles and a decrease in overall life satisfaction. According to the International Institute for

Strategic Studies, there are 5,137,860 current servicemembers. Of these servicemembers,

approximately seventeen percent will one day be retirees and may struggle with reintegration

after leaving military service (Department of Defense, 2021). Some of these challenges discussed

in the literature include loss of identity, purpose, and community (Romaniuk & Kidd, 2018).

These challenges are often associated with mental health struggles and a decrease in overall life

satisfaction (Orazem, 2017). A study conducted by RAND for Military Healthy Policy found that

less than half of the veterans returning home in need of mental health services receive any

treatment, a concern that could be attributed to the lack of sufficient staff and long waitlists at

VA medical centers (Reisman, 2016). By recognizing and addressing the challenges faced by military retirees, social workers can work towards providing them with the support and resources necessary to successfully reintegrate into civilian life and improve their overall well-being.

Relevance to Policy

Prior to separation, the military provides the Transition Assistance Program (TAP), a mandatory training that aims to make service members aware of all programs and benefits available to them following separation. TAP is a five-part program spread out over a minimum of twelve months. The program is divided into initial counseling, pre-separation briefing, DoD Transition Day, specialized career training tracks, and the TAP capstone. The curriculum taught at TAP includes building resiliency and translating military skills to the civilian world (Department of Defense, 2019). While this program provides valuable information for all service members, it is provided before service members leave the military and enter the civilian world, before they experience the struggles and difficulties of reintegration.

There are numerous policies addressing care and services for military members and veterans following separation of service, yet the statistics represent a population that is not receiving adequate or sufficient care, a population whose needs are not being met (Reisman, 2016). Existing policies, such as the Faster Care for Veterans Act of 2016 (PL 114-286), seek to ensure immediate care for all veterans in need following service. Another policy, No Veterans Crisis Line Call Should Go Unanswered Act (PL 114-247), addresses this need by implementing additional regulations for a phone line for veterans which seeks to ensure that veterans can easily access to help.

An important aspect of care for veterans is ensuring they feel connected to their communities and to feel that they are not alone. A proposed bill H.R. 3405 seeks to designate a

week as "Battle Buddy Check Week" to develop outreach programs and encourage veterans to do wellness checks on their fellow veterans. This proposed bill would allow veterans to maintain contact with a fellow soldier yet does not provide the support for soldiers as they attempt to enter the world of civilians once again. Although the Battle Buddy program instills a deep bond between and among soldiers, it does not easily translate into civilian life. The bill utilizes a micro system approach to ensure that veterans have a support system, however, this intervention does not encourage the reintegration into civilian society, which could add to the challenges of reintegration (Pease, Billera, & Gerard, 2015). Additionally, the strong focus on the micro system and immediate supports, where a veteran is partnered with another veteran, does not leave much room for treatment on the macro level. This policy emphasizes the insular world of military service members and can serve to further highlight the divide between service members and civilians rather than encourage veterans and retired service members to acclimate and integrate into the civilian world they are now a part of. Policies addressing this gap would be beneficial to the care and treatment of the veterans struggling with reintegration following service.

Conclusion

Military service is a unique experience that provides service members with a community, a purpose, and an identity. Leaving the military and returning to the civilian population is often a difficult transition for many service members. Immediately upon leaving the military, retirees no longer have the purpose, community, and the self-identity they found in the military. While existing policies aim to address this struggle, the focus on the microsystems of these veterans limits the care available to retirees and does little to address the reintegration experience of service members. The existing programs that are currently in place do not adequately provide

service members with the preparation necessary upon separation as they do not follow the

service member into civilian life but stop upon retirement. Volunteering and community

involvement may provide veterans with the opportunity to regain the sense of purpose,

community, and identity (Binder, 2015). The next section will present a review of existing

literature.

Section Three: Literature Review

Introduction

More than half a million of American military troops serving over the past thirteen years return home with post-traumatic stress disorder (Reisman, 2016). In addition to the struggles of PTSD, returning from service and transitioning into civilian life can be difficult. In the military, servicemembers have been filled with passion and purpose; they were given a mission, a duty, and they had a responsibility to their country. Their reentry into civilian society may be fraught with friction and tension as veterans relearn what it means to live among civilians once again. For many veterans, separating from the military and reentering civilian society means leaving behind their identity as a U.S. troop, their mission in serving their country, and their community of fellow service members. Service members are suddenly thrown into a society that may not understand what they faced. Their families and friends, their microsystems, did not live through what they did, did not experience the same shift in cultural norms and rules, and the services and supports provided by their macrosystem are often found wanting (Reisman, 2015). These struggles often result in a decrease in overall life satisfaction (Romaniuk & Kidd, 2018). A proposed method for reducing reintegration struggles and increasing life satisfaction upon separation from the military is community engagement through volunteer work.

Volunteer work has long been studied to identify, understand, and assess the impact it has on volunteers. There is a significant amount of research which identifies the benefits and advantages of volunteering, and a correlation has been determined between volunteering and overall wellbeing and life satisfaction (Binder, 2015). This section will review the literature that discusses and analyzes the meaning of military culture and reintegration and the benefits of volunteer work.

Methodology

A systematic literature review was conducted utilizing the following databases: Academic Search Complete, APA PsycArticles, Academic Search Complete, Eric, and ScienceDirect. The following search terms were used: military culture; (retired soldier OR veteran) AND (transition* OR reintegrate* OR adjust* OR adapt*); service member reintegration, PTSD AND volunteer OR military; volunteer* impact; and (military OR veteran) AND (culture OR loss OR belong* OR identity). These databases generated a combined 539 results. Results were narrowed down by limiting articles to those that were peer-reviewed, published no earlier than 2010, and written in English. Dissertations were not included in the literature review. When limited research was found surrounding volunteering within the military or veteran community, the search was expanded to include the following terms: (volunteer* OR community service) AND (impact* OR benefit*) and volunteer* AND life satisfaction OR wellbeing. These search terms yielded 416 results. Results were narrowed down with the same limitations as the original search. Of the articles found, results were narrowed down to those directly related to the topic discussed in this study.

The literature review discusses 21 peer-reviewed international articles across numerous designs and methodologies and includes several case studies and one systemic review of literature. Study samples consist of both military and civilian populations. Many articles discuss military culture and reintegration as well as the benefits of volunteering within a community, yet limited research was found regarding the benefits of volunteer work specifically within the military and veteran populations.

Findings

After a comprehensive and thorough analysis of the selected articles, several themes and subthemes emerged:

1. Military culture and reintegration into civilian society

    a. Military identity and loss of identity upon reintegration

    b. Mission to serve and loss of this purpose upon reintegration

    c. Community and loss of the fellowship it provides upon reintegration

2. Benefits of volunteer work

    a. Developing identity through volunteering

    b. Finding purpose through volunteering

    c. Social involvement through volunteering

Military Culture and Reintegration into Civilian Society

The military culture is one of mission and community; the military is a society that inspires a desire for a purposeful and meaningful life. The focus on mission impacts all aspects of a service member's life including their sense of purpose and identity. The mission comes first in the military, and all actions and reactions of service members are directed towards fulfilling this goal. Therefore, trust and dependence on one's unit is of utmost importance, and a strong and almost impenetrable community is formed. From the first moment, military training is designed to encourage conformity and hierarchy and discourage individuality (Romaniuk & Kidd, 2018). The military culture extends beyond the service member and impacts the military family as a unit due to various circumstances unique to the military culture such as deployments, frequent moves, and long periods of separation. The role of rank, too, affects the military family

as social connections and supports are tied into rank (O'Neal et al., 2020). The impact culture has on the family further strengthens the differences between military and civilian cultures.

The unique aspects of military culture can create challenges for individuals as they attempt to adjust to civilian life outside of the military community. Cole (2015) conducted a case study analysis and discusses the various aspects of military culture as it relates to language, hierarchy, regulations, expectations, and sacrifice the military encourages. The participant in this study is a nine-year-old student with a deployed parent. The participant expressed difficulty adjusting to the off-base civilian school he is currently attending, and Cole identified a few aspects of military culture that proves unique: language, hierarchy, rules and regulations, self-expectations, and self-sacrifice (2015). The complete and total immersion in the military culture is a multidimensional transition typically compared to the numerous facets of an iceberg (Cole, 2015). The military language stands at the tip of the iceberg; the terminology used in the military is a clear and visible indication of the military culture (Cole, 2015). Recruits are immediately taught to speak in third person, referring to themselves as "the recruit" and their officers by either title or "sir". The language used in military settings incorporates acronyms, phrases, and words unknown in civilian culture. An additional layer of the discernable tip of the iceberg is the system of hierarchy deeply embedded in military culture. The idea of ranks was put into place to ensure order and efficient task completion.

> However, an important consideration in such order is the human element, which reflects elements of trust and confidence…the structure of seniors and subordinates forms a chain with each individual linked to one another. When trust and confidence is weak or broken, the chain is broken to the detriment of good order and discipline. Both ceremonial acts of discipline, such as shoe shining,

salutes, uniforms, as well as functional discipline where service members follow

the rules and orders of commanders are deeply embedded within the military

culture.

(Redmand et al., 2015)

Hierarchy and rank are an integral aspect of the military and is responsible for assuring order in

the army (Cole, 2015). Just below the tip of the iceberg, an underlying aspect of the military yet

no less important, is the idea of rules and regulations, and the expectations that come hand-in-

hand with the regimented environment.

Each day is planned to the last minute; each mission is strategically determined to the last

detail and must be executed in full accordance with military protocol (Cole, 2015). The military

prioritizes discipline and hierarchy and emphasizes the unit over the individual. Personal identity

is of no consequence in the military and is particularly discouraged. Service members are taught

they are no longer an "I" but an integral part of a whole. This philosophy inspires the qualities of

loyalty, integrity, discipline, and duty necessary for the completion of the mission and the overall

success of the military (Cole, 2015). This way of thinking serves as a foundation for the strongly

cemented trust soldiers have in one another and is the basis for the close bond forged between

soldiers. Soldiers build a community founded on military values and combat experiences, a

community that is shaped by the horrors of war and the shared understanding of the traumatic

realities soldiers live. Soldiers rally in solidarity as their worlds are shaken again and again. Yet,

upon reentry into the civilian world, these identities are of seemingly no consequence. The

community they built during their time in service was fragmented as those who left service

moved all over the world while others remained in service. Orazem, et al. find similar results in

their 2017 study. The military's emphasis on discipline and hierarchy encourages service

members to prioritize the unit over the individual, resulting in a community founded on shared military values and experiences. This bond is often difficult to replicate in civilian life and may lead to a sense of fragmentation upon reentry into the civilian world.

The struggles of veterans during reintegration can have a significant impact on their mental and physical well-being. The gap between military and civilian culture can be particularly challenging, as veterans may feel disconnected from society and struggle to find a sense of belonging. Orazem et al. (2017), conducted a thematic analysis of excerpts written by Afghanistan and Iraq war veterans regarding their reintegration experiences. Taken from a larger sample, 404 participants wrote a sample text of their experiences, and 100 of these texts were randomly selected for analysis. Female veterans comprised a larger percentage of the initial sample to ensure their representation. Participants were asked to write for twenty minutes at four different instances regarding their experiences reintegrating and readjusting to civilian culture upon separation from the military. The findings, in line with Cole (2015) suggests that, in contrast to the regimented regulations, goals, directions, and day-to-day life in the military, civilian life often felt "chaotic and, for some, overwhelming" (Orazem et al., 2017, p. 7). Furthermore, many participants share the qualities of disciple, hard work and accountability, and teamwork as ones emphasized in the military. In contrast, many participants felt "civilians seemed…relatively undisciplined, selfish, and focused on materialistic and trivial concerns (Orazem et al., 2017, p. 8). The differences between these two cultures emphasized the gap in understanding between them and serves to foster an 'us vs them' mindset (Romaniuk & Kidd, 2018). The findings highlight the need for greater support and resources for service members during the reintegration process. It is imperative for civilians to recognize and understand the unique challenges faced by service members as they transition back to civilian life, and work to

bridge the gap between military and civilian culture to foster a greater sense of understanding and inclusivity.

The experiences of military members during and after their service demonstrate a significant cultural gap between military and civilian life which impacts their sense of identity, purpose, and community and can lead to an 'us vs them' mentality, affecting their mental and physical well-being. Romaniuk and Kidd (2018) reviewed eighteen internationally conducted studies spanning the United States, United Kingdom, Sweden, and Africa. These studies, comprised of a cumulative 266 participants, included qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods designs. The theme of military culture and an 'us vs them' mentality was present throughout all studies. Participants described the military culture as one that "provided participants with 'clarity' and direction" while "civilian culture was described as less structured and less supportive" (Romaniuk & Kidd, 2018, p. 63). Many participants expressed the belief that civilian relationships are unable to be as close or as deep as military relationships. Throughout the studies discussed above, several subthemes emerged as specific attributes of military culture and how they are impacted upon separation from the military. These characteristics include identity, purpose, and community.

Military Identity and Loss of Identity Upon Reintegration

Military service requires sacrifice and dedication to the mission and puts a burden of expectations on service members. The mission first mentality leaves little to no room for personal aspirations, desires, or intentions and, out of the necessity to adapt, comprises the sum total of the service member's identity. Rank structure, too, is deeply embedded within one's identity, and it changes one's perception of themselves as well as others' perceptions of them. Veterans reintegrating into civilian culture are at an increased risk for mental health struggles

including, but not limited to, PTSD, depression, and suicide. A contributing factor to their increased risk is the transition to a new culture and identity (Waldhauser et al., 2021). Romaniuk and Kidd (2018) found similar results, and participants in this study shared specific narratives of their military identity and how they experienced identity crises upon separation from the military. The participants described their military identities as "competent, motivated, efficient, creative, dedicate, passionate, mission driven, focused…task-oriented, and assertive" (Romaniuk & Kidd, 2018, p. 68).

The transition back into civilian culture may be difficult and filled with internal struggle as service members formed new identities in the military. One participant noted that the military "changes you completely, the person you were as a civilian, you are no longer that person" (Romaniuk & Kidd, 2018, p. 68). This is in line with the findings of Conforte et al. whose results found that participants struggled with reconciling their military identities within the civilian world upon reintegration (2017). Without the military identity, many participants admitted to not knowing who they are and struggling to leave their military identity behind and not take it with them into the civilian world.

Deployments are a frequent occurrence in the military, yet deployment frequency and length did not appear to significantly impact the feelings of identity disruption in a study of 244 Afghanistan and Iraq war veterans (Mitchell et al., 2020). Of the participants, 49 percent indicated at least one instance of identity disruption. Some participants, 27 percent, expressed feelings of disconnect between past, present, and future selves. Of these participants, 14 percent of responses shared a negative assessment of the new identity. Age did appear to have an association with identity disruption, and those who indicated identity disruption were, on average, slightly younger than those who did not. Overall, participants who shared instances of

identity disruption had lower life satisfaction, higher levels of PTSD symptoms, and more reintegration difficulties (Mitchell et al., 2020).

Service members' identities are created based on the comprehensive experience of military service and considers all aspects of service. In a study of 52 veterans, 83 percent of participants indicated that their military experiences are a significant part of their identity (McCaslin et al., 2021). The immediate loss of this identity may result in a loss of sense of self. A qualitative study comprised of 12 Canadian Armed Forces veterans looked at the reintegration experiences of veterans participating in a Canadian program for veterans called Purpose After Service through Sport (PASS). Participants of this program reported feeling social connections with fellow participants due to a shared identity as military veterans. Values, morals, and personal characteristics were understood and recognized by fellow veterans, and language and mannerisms did not need to be altered, something most participants felt would not be the case in a civilian setting (Waldhauser et al., 2021). The support of those with similar identities and identity crises proved beneficial in the overall reintegration experiences of these veterans.

Identity and mental health are common themes throughout the reviewed literature. Existing literature explores whether there is an association between loss of identity and mental health struggles among veterans upon reintegration into the civilian population. Orazem et al.'s findings state that, although they were not specifically asked about identity, nearly two thirds of the participants expressed identity adjustment as a struggle during the reintegration process. These findings suggest a connection between identity and mental health, one that encourages a deeper look and further research (2017). Moreover, identity crises are associated with poorer psychosocial outcomes and mental health struggles including more difficult reintegration, increased PTSD symptoms, and lower life satisfaction. (Mitchell et al., 2020).

Mission to Serve and Loss of Purpose Upon Reintegration

The military has a clear mission of defending and protecting the United States. Each branch of the military has a specific mission that contributes to the overall mission of the United States military. The United States Army mission statement reads: "To deploy, fight, and win our Nation's wars by providing ready, prompt, and sustained land dominance by Army forces across the full spectrum as part of the Joint Force." (army.mil). The mission of the United States Navy is to "maintain, train and equip combat-ready naval forces capable of winning wars, deterring aggression and maintain freedom of the seas." (marines.mil). The United States Marine Corps' missions is to "analyze, develop, and direct the Marine Corps' energy strategy in order to optimize expeditionary capabilities across al warfighting functions." (marines.mil) The mission of the United States Air Force is "To fly, fight, and win…airpower anytime, anywhere." (af.mil). The mission of the United States Space Force states that "The USSF is responsible organizing, training, and equipping Guardians to conduct global space operations that enhance the way our joint and coalition forces fight, while also offering decision makers military options to achieve national objectives." (spaceforce.mil). Those who serve in the military have the task of completing this mission and ensuring the continued safety of this country and her citizens. This tremendous mission requires sacrifice, dedication, and loyalty, leaving no room for anything else for service members. Upon both enlistment and commission, all service members swear to support and defend the United States, an oath they are held accountable to by the military and themselves. This single-minded dedication the mission often fills service members with purpose (Romaniuk & Kidd, 2018). When service members separate from the military, they instantly lose this purpose and are often left struggling and searching for meaning in their lives without the oath, without everything they've known, to uphold.

Many veterans share that military service filled them with purpose, allowing them to feel they were part of something greater than themselves. Veterans reported feeling accomplished, successful, and empowered, some even relying on the strict military structure to provide them with purpose. Upon separation from the military, many veterans reported a loss in purpose and meaning. For some, this loss in purpose resulted in a similar loss in motivation (Romaniuk & Kidd, 2018).

While in the military, service members have the tremendous responsibility, not only to the mission, but to protect and defend one another from harm. McCaslin et al. (2021) completed a study with a sample of 52 military veterans. Participants were asked to complete a self-report survey and participate in semi-structured focus groups. This study found that 71 percent of participants indicated a strong agreement with the importance of being competent and accountable in one's work. These findings imply the strong work ethic and dedication that is expected in the military. In Orazem et al.,'s qualitative study, many veterans shared feeling a lessened sense of purpose and meaning in their civilian lives (2017). One participant shared, "I miss the sense of purpose…we made a difference. There is no resuming civilian life after that." (Orazem et al., 2017, p. 8). This echoes findings from a similar study which found that, of the 244 participants, 27 percent indicated a loss of purpose when reintegrating into the civilian world. For many of these veterans, leaving the military had them doubting the meaning of their work and lives in the civilian context (Mitchell et al., 2020).

Community and the Loss of Fellowship it Provides Upon Reintegration

Community supports has been associated with the management of stress and difficulties in one's life (O'Neal et al., 2020). Within the military population, community plays a pivotal role in providing support to families struggling with the unique difficulties and challenges associated

with the military lifestyle. Frequent moves mean that each family is constantly moving, and neighborhoods, classes, and colleagues are continuously shifting and changing, leaving community more difficult to attain for service members as well as their families. O'Neal et al., used the Community Connections Index to ascertain participants' experiences with reintegration into both formal and informal networks and community systems and the Air Force Community Needs Survey for military specific questions (2016). Additional surveys were used to measure relationships, depression, anxiety, and self-efficacy. The sample comprised of 266 active-duty military families and assessed the community relationships with both civilian and military communities. The results found that community connections were relevant only to the civilian partner and not to the service member. Military community connections, specifically, were found to be relevant to both the civilian spouse and service member (O'Neal et al. 2016). Another study, looking at the relationships between military community supports, child psychosocial adjustment, and parent psychosocial adjustment, reiterate the findings of the importance of the military community.

Conforte et al. used anonymous online surveys completed by parents to assess the relationships between military community supports and parent and child psychosocial adjustment (2017). The study sample comprised of 157 military parents of children between the ages of two and 18. The researchers developed a new measure called the Community Assessment of Military Perceived Supports (CAMPS). This measure was testing using both qualitative and quantitative methods to ensure reliability. The results of this study indicated that more military community support was associated with less parent and child psychosocial struggles. Within the military population, rank further dictates one's micro community, neighbors, and socioeconomic status. O'Neal et al. (2016) studied the psychosocial well-being of service members and their partners,

and the study factors in military related transitions and rank, two considerations unique to the military population.

While the previously discussed studies focused on two types of communities, military and civilian, there are several subcommunities within the general military community. O'Neal et al. (2020) found that military community supports come in two forms: formal unit support and informal support from other families and service members. The focus and dedication to the mission expected from the service member infiltrates all aspects of the service member's life, including their family life. Leaders and commanders are expected to ensure and provide support to the service member in all aspects of their life, personal and professional, as it is all intertwined in the member's service. In this study, participants were asked if supports, both formal and informal, were felt. Results were noted using four-point scale where one was never and four was always, and the mean score for formal supports from leaders was 2.17. The mean score for supports from fellow service members was 2.11. These findings indicate the value and benefits participants felt was received from both formal and informal supports.

Benefits of Volunteer Work

The correlation between volunteer work and mental and physical health and wellbeing has been largely studied over recent years. Research has looked at the association between volunteering and wellbeing and overall life satisfaction for both the induvial volunteering and the general community. In the literature, volunteering has often been defined as "…any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, groups, or organization" (Binder & Freytag, 2013, p. 98). The benefits of volunteering, both intrinsic and extrinsic, may not always be known to the general population, and many may not fully understand these benefits (Lawton et al., 2020). While beneficial to all populations and demographic groups, volunteering has been found

to be associated with significantly stronger wellbeing for those between the ages of 16 to 24 and 55 to 74 as well as those from particularly lower or higher income backgrounds (Lawton et al., 2020). In the study of Lawton et al., volunteering was defined as volunteering that may be "organized formally through groups, clubs, or organizations, or be provided informally, in ways which are typically harder to evaluate." (2020, p. 600).

Overall benefits of volunteering include an improvement in health, socioeconomic opportunities, and social life (Binder, 2015). Binder hypothesizes that volunteering has a strong beneficial impact on those who were less happy at the baseline (2015). Binder used a dataset of 15,000 individuals whose various life aspects were being recorded. Binder used a Likert scale to determine participants' levels of perceived life satisfaction and asked questions to determine the participants' level of involvement in volunteer work. Binder found that those who spend more time volunteering, defined as at least monthly, saw higher levels of overall life satisfaction. However, the results showed the impact of volunteering decreased as life satisfaction increased (2015). These findings suggest that, while volunteering has the potential to increase life satisfaction, the impact may only result in individuals with lower levels of life satisfaction at the baseline measure. It is, therefore, difficult to determine causality (Binder, 2015).

Significant research looks at the relationship between life satisfaction and volunteering among populations that experience chronic illness or injury. As a disability may greatly impact the professional, social, and personal activities, there is a higher risk of loneliness and poverty for this population (Marchesano & Musella, 2020). The researchers hypothesize that volunteering increases life satisfaction for individuals with chronic functional illness (Marchesano & Musella, 2020). This study defines volunteering as "the involvement in unpaid activity to benefit other people" (p. 2), yet it does not define chronic functional illness. The

sample, completed in Italy, comprised of 1,850 individuals with identified long-term chronic

disabilities. The findings of this study indicate a strong positive correlation between active

volunteering and strengthened life satisfaction of those experiencing long-term chronic illness. A

similar study looked at the correlation between volunteering and life satisfaction following a

traumatic brain injury.

Past research indicates lower levels of life satisfaction among individuals following a

traumatic brain injury. Building on this research that indicates a positive correlation between

volunteering and increased life satisfaction, Phillippus et al., (2020) hypothesize that

volunteering would increase life satisfaction following traumatic brain injury. Drawing on a

sample of 667 participants, the researchers found a positive association between volunteering

and increased life satisfaction among participants.

The research reviewed above discusses the correlation between volunteering and overall

life satisfaction. Within overall life satisfaction, extensive research has been done to identify the

specific aspects of life satisfaction that are improved through volunteering. Common themes

found throughout the literature include identity, purpose, and community and social engagement.

Developing Identity Through Volunteering

Identity, often defined as one's sense of self, is a lifetime process that continuously

develops. Instances of disruption, however, can interfere with this process and result in identity

struggles (Mitchell et al., 2020). Major life disruptions or events can impact one's identity and

their relationship with their sense of self (Habermas & Kober, 2015). Disruptive events can be

numerous shifts in life including entering a new lifecycle stage, career change or retirement, or

bereavement (Mitchell et al., 2020). Current research explores the role volunteering plays in the

shaping and development of identity as one undergoes life changes and shifts in role and environment.

Considering the shift in lifecycle stage upon entering retirement age, Chen et al. (2020), seek to understand the experience of older adults volunteering in Shanghai as it relates to their identity. Older adults of retirement age can struggle with the identity loss that occurs upon entering this new stage of life. A qualitative approach was used to understand the participants' experiences of role identities in Shanghai. The study comprised of 40 volunteers aged 60 and above who were actively volunteering at the time of the study. The researchers found several themes present in determining how volunteering impacted participants' identities. Many participants utilized volunteering as a way to redefine their professional identity and considered volunteering to be their next career. Some participants shared they used volunteering as a way to extend their professional identities such as several of the participants who worked as doctors prior to retirement and volunteered at a free clinic following retirement. Various participants volunteered to stay active within their community. While volunteering had overall positive impact for participants, several participants expressed that they felt unappreciated when their volunteering efforts were not felt to be valued. For many of the 40 participants, volunteering had a positive impact, while the experiences for others was more agnostic. Yet, a common theme found throughout all participant responses was the tremendous impact volunteering had on participants' sense of identity.

In addition to individual identity, shared identity can be a valuable benefit of volunteering. While much of the existing research focuses on the individual, Gray and Stevenson use a sample of forty volunteers from the South of England to understand the implications volunteering has on the shared identity developed among volunteers (2020). Semistructured

interviews were utilized, and participant responses were analyzed using thematic analysis. Several themes were found: motivations for volunteering, benefits of volunteering, and management of volunteering challenges. Each theme related to the shared identity and social supports gained through volunteering. Participants identified seeking a feeling of belonging as a motivation for volunteering and expressed finding this sense of belonging as a benefit of volunteering.

A shared sense of identity can shift one's relationships with individuals both within and out of the immediate shared community and shapes the perspective with which one views the world around them (Gray and Stevenson, 2020). This sense of shared identity and perspective is similar to the unique perspective and identity one gains from military service and lose upon separation from service (Orazem et al., 2017).

Finding Purpose Through Volunteering

Research indicates a strong correlation between role identity and purpose (Thoits, 2012). In previous work, Thoits discusses the role social involvement has on overall wellbeing as the identity the involvement provides is one of purpose and meaning (2012). Thoits hypothesizes that the more time one spends volunteering, the stronger the volunteer identity is, which then increases one's feelings of purpose in meaning in life. Using a sample of 458 volunteers from the Mended Hearts organization, Thoits used a mixed methods approach to determine the results of the study. Wellbeing was measured through six variables: psychological distress, happiness, a sense of mastery, life satisfaction, physical health, and self-esteem. Participants were also asked to identify their levels of involvement with volunteering through a survey. Results found a strong positive correlation between identity and purpose, indicating that the more one volunteers, the

stronger their volunteer identity is. This then results in an increase in a sense of purpose and meaning in life.

While volunteering is often associated with higher levels of overall wellbeing and life satisfaction, it may be difficult to determine causality (Binder, 2015). One study suggests that the impact volunteering has on the sense of purpose among emerging adults is dependent on one's motivation for volunteering (Okun & Kim, 2016). Additional factors such as emerging adulthood is often associated with a search for purpose and meaning in life. Research suggests that volunteering serves to foster such purpose and meaning. Okun and Kim discuss two underlying motivations: pleasure-based prosocial motivation (PLBPM) and pressure-based prosocial motivation (PRBPM). A sample of 576 college students was given surveys to assess their sense of purpose and volunteer frequency. This study found that when participants' pleasure-based prosocial motivation is high, there is an association between frequency in volunteering and purpose in life.

For many military members, a sense of purpose is developed through the commitment and dedication to the mission required by the military. When separating from service and suddenly without the mission, service members are often left without the sense of purpose and meaning found in the military (McCaslin et al., 2021). In a study looking to understand why post-9/11 veterans continue to volunteer after completion of military service, a strongly identified theme was a continued sense of purpose (Matthieu et al., 2021). This study comprised of 346 veterans who served during the time of September 11, 2001. The idea of purpose was indicated by 20 percent of participants, and many veterans expressed a desire to feel needed or important similar to how they felt while serving. The theme of purpose was a common one in the

literature, and many studies found a loss of purpose among veterans once they separated from the military.

Social Involvement through Volunteering

Social involvement is a valuable asset that provided support during stressful and challenging circumstances (Gray & Stevenson, 2020; O'Neal et al, 2020) Jiang et al., sought to determine if social engagement is beneficial to overall emotional health within the older adult population experiencing retirement (2019). This study looks specifically at volunteer work as a representation of social engagement and used a sample of 1,591 participants from the Personality and Total Health (PATH) through life study to determine if volunteering, and the social network it provides, is associated with overall life satisfaction. Variables considered were volunteering experience, life satisfaction, size of social network, support from a partner, and demographic information. Results found that more hours of volunteer work were associated with greater life satisfaction. Further, the impact of volunteer work was stronger among those who lost friends during this time than those who developed more friendships (Jiang et al., 2019). The findings of this study indicate that those experiencing recent loss of a social network or community, such as those separating from the military, may benefit from volunteering and the social supports it provides. In a study comprised of 40 participants, volunteering provided a social network and community support that provided participants with the feeling they could rely on their fellow volunteers for support during stressful instances (Gray and Stevenson, 2020).

The above research discusses the value, importance, and impact of community on the comprehensive health in the general population. Military members experience a unique form of community, one with which they live, work, and depend on for a social network. Upon separation from the military, however, that community is lost, and all its strengths and benefits

are lost with it. No longer actively surrounded by fellow military families, many service members and their families may struggle with the sudden loss of military community supports. Matthieu et al. (2021) look at the veteran community to understand what veterans do to retain the military community found while in service. In their study looking at why post 9/11 veterans continue to engage in volunteer work, the central theme of community was found. Of 346 participants, 20 percent indicated community and engagements as a primary reason for volunteering following their military service. Participants indicated a desire to build "a sense of belonging and connection to community" (Matthieu et al., 2021, p. 419). A subtheme found within community was camaraderie; participants hoped to connect and develop relationships with other veterans.

Conclusion

As the above review shows, literature discussing both military service members and volunteering after service is limited. Numerous studies analyze the transition of military reintegration, yet these studies do not differentiate between military veterans and military retirees. What research exist looks at the military community as a whole and does not account for any differences that may occur due to length of service or age upon separation. Further, the research that exists regarding volunteering among veterans focuses on volunteering within a predetermined organization for a specified amount of time. These studies do not account for more general and individualistic forms of volunteering outside of a specific program and does not address the differences of formal and informal volunteering. Research on veterans and volunteering does not address differences in the length and frequency of volunteering, as it focuses on predetermined programs. An additional gap in the literature is the difficulty presented in determining causality of the impact of volunteer work. Many studies indicated the limited ability of determining that the benefits correlated with volunteer work are as a result of volunteering.

Reintegration following military service is often accompanied with struggles in physical and mental health and wellbeing. Post-traumatic stress disorder impacts more than 500,000 of returning military members and, to a greater extent, those who return with physical injury (Reisman, 2016). In addition to these injures and struggles, the shift from military culture to civilian life can be difficult and filled with tension. Specifically, the literature identifies three common themes that are found to be lost and shifted during the transition of reintegration: loss of the identity of a service member, loss of the purpose of the mission, and loss of the military community (Cole, 2015; Orazem et al., 2017; Romaniuk & Kidd, 2018). These losses are correlated with decreased levels of overall life satisfaction among veterans (Mitchell et al., 2020; Orazem et al., 2017; O'Neal et al., 2020; Conforte et al., 2017; Romaniuk & Kidd, 2018).

Volunteering has been found to have many intrinsic and extrinsic benefits (Lawton et al., 2020) that may benefit individuals struggling with a variety of factors including career shift, identity adjustment, change in social network, and lifecycle stages (Habermas & Kober, 2015; Mitchell et al., 2020). Through recent research, a positive correlation between volunteering and overall increased life satisfaction has been determined (Binder, 2015; Lawton et al., 2020; Marchesano & Musella, 2020; Phillippis et al., 2020). Specific advantages of volunteering include sense of identity (Chen et al.2020, Gray & Stevenson, 2020), sense of purpose (Binder, 2015; Matthieu et al., 2021; McCaslin et al., 2021; Okun & Kim, 2016; Thoits, 2012) and community and social engagement (Gray & Stevenson, 2020; Jiang et al., 2019; Matthieu et al., 2021). While these studies analyze the transition of military reintegration and the impacts of volunteering among several populations, there is limited research that assesses the impact of volunteering specifically within the military retirement community. These studies explore volunteering among veterans, yet gaps exist regarding the retired military community. The

research question addressed in this study is: Is volunteering after retirement from the military correlated with increased levels of overall life satisfaction among military retirees? In the next section is discussed the sociological, life satisfaction, and multiple discrepancies theories as its foundational theoretical framework.

Section Four: Theoretical Framework

Introduction

This section discusses the theoretical frameworks used in this study and the application of

these frameworks as it relates to military retirees. These frameworks are rooted in sociological

theories, life satisfaction theories, and theories of volunteer work. Research indicates that

military retirees and veterans report lower levels of overall life satisfaction (Mitchell et al., 2020;

Orazem et al., 2017; O'Neal et al., 2020; Conforte et al., 2017; Romaniuk & Kidd, 2018).

Further, the military community is an all-encompassing environment that impacts and determines

service members' socio-economic status, community, identity, and social norms (McCaslin et al.,

2021).

Sociological Theories

The nineteenth century brought with it classical sociological theories, including those

developed by the theorists and defenders of modernity, Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Emile

Durkheim (Royce, 2015). The works of these sociologists informs the current understanding of

sociological enterprise and the practice of social research (Royce, 2015). Marx held hope in the

rise of modernity and was a forward-looking thinker. Marx's work was directed towards the

increasing modernization of society and looked to what he believed society was becoming rather

than what it was. Unlike Marx, Weber was a proponent of studying social action through

interpretive methods and did not believe that social study can be explained through more general

and less nuanced perspectives (Royce, 2015). Durkheim "applied the sociological method to

make an empirically grounded case in support of industrialization, individualism, intellectualism,

and egalitarianism" (Royce, 2015, p. 12). One of the focuses of Durkheim's theory was social

integration (Allan & Daynes, 2017), the idea that "individual passions are regulated by shared

cultural symbols, individuals are attached to the social collective through rituals and mutually reinforcing gestures, actions are regulated and coordinated by norms as well as legitimated political structures…" (Turner, 1981, p. 385). This concept led to the development of Durkheim's theory of social solidarity (Allan & Daynes, 2017).

Theory of Social Solidarity

In Durkeim's work *The Division of Labour in Society,* he discusses the concept that social order and solidarity is maintained through people acting and thinking alike (Durkheim, 1984). The theory of social solidarity looks at the impact the internalization of social norms has on the individual (Thorlindsson & Berngurg, 2004). Durkheim emphasizes the importance of social links and interactions and suggests that "social integration connects individuals to society by ensuring a high degree of attachment to commonly held values and beliefs" and the "social integration may influence conformity" (Thorlindsson & Berngurg, 2004, p. 272). Durkheim connects his theory of social solidarity to war and suicide. His findings suggest that the importance and necessity of social solidarity is high among military members and rates of suicide are higher during peace than during war times when soldiers understood their connection within the military society (Durkheim et al., 1970). The theory of social solidarity states that the success of a society is dependent on the solidarity and cohesion felt amongst the individuals of the society (Allan & Daynes, 2017; Thorlindsson & Berngurg, 2004). Durkheim further expanded on this concept by dividing solidarity into two categories: organic solidarity and mechanical solidarity.

Organic Solidarity

Organic solidarity stems from the idea of social cohesion and the interdependence between people within a society. The more specialized and intrinsic the work within the societal

setting, the more interdependence is found (Hawkins, 1979). While individuals may have different interests or values, the necessity of interdependence ensures the success and continuation of the society (Schiermer, 2015). Organic solidarity is predominately based on the division of labor and cooperative law. It concerns itself with human interests and interdependency and is rooted in more abstract and secular ideals (Hawkins, 1979).

Mechanical Solidarity

Mechanical solidarity is based on feelings of kinship and shared perspective, or the "conscience collective…which provides a detailed regulation of moral, political, and economic activities…controls the private affairs of each individual" (Hawkins, 1979, p. 156). Mechanical solidarity is built on the foundation of sameness and uniformity and challenges any effort towards individuality and autonomy. Interdependency is of little concern, and its ideals are founded in more religious and transcendental roots. Mechanical solidarity is more commonly found in smaller societies such as tribes.

The idea of a tribal society dates back centuries and can be described as groups of individuals with shared beliefs, customs, and traditions, and a sense of responsibility to one another and the community (Sierra, Badrinarayanan, & Taute, 2016). The current modern society is one that promotes the individual over the community, where one can be richer or poorer than one's neighbor. Contrary to this social norm, tribal communities share all resources equally. Tribal members were responsible for one another, and traitors were ceremoniously punished or excommunicated (Junger, 2016). When men and women join the military, they suddenly find themselves part of a tribal community. Win Stracke, a former gunner in the 62nd Coast Artillery remarked about the military, "For the first time in [our] lives…we were in a tribal sort of situation where we could help each other without fear" (Junger, 2016). Returning to modern

society is a culture shock for these veterans and they struggle to deal with the loss of this sense of community and purpose, and veterans yearn to once again be part of a close-knit tribe as is understood through Durkheim's use of mechanical solidarity.

Life Satisfaction Theories

Subjective well-being is a measure developed by Ed Diener to capture and represent people's experiences of satisfaction with their lives (Diener, 1984). It is a "multidimensional construct whose components involve negative and positive affect and cognitive elements related to the perception of life satisfaction" (Moreira et al., 2021, p. 1724). Diener's understanding of well-being has been used to assess and address the life satisfaction of numerous populations. Life satisfaction theories regarding the roots and causes of subjective well-being are approached through two theoretical perspectives: top-down and bottom-up (Loewe et al., 2014). The top-down approach suggests that specific traits predispose people to have certain levels of satisfaction with their lives. This general life satisfaction is then reflected in specific areas of an individual's life such as satisfaction with one's family or career (Loewe et al., 2014). Bottom-up approaches to life satisfaction take a dissimilar perspective and suggest that one's overall life satisfaction is dependent on one's satisfaction in individual areas of one's life. Bottom-up theories include Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1970), self-concordance model (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999), and multiple discrepancies theory (Michalos, 1985). This study utilized the multiple discrepancies theory as a theoretical framework for the study.

Multiple Discrepancies Theory

Multiple discrepancies theory was developed by Alex C. Michalos in the late 20th century. The idea of discrepancies based net happiness dates back to the stoic philosophy and was further developed over recent decades. This theory has been considered from multiple

perspectives including social comparison theory, equity theories, person-environment theories, and cognitive dissonance theories (Michalos, 1985). The foundation of multiple discrepancies theory suggests that life satisfaction is determined by the perceived discrepancies between what one has and what one wants relative to others. What is deemed to be desired by each individual is determined by what is perceived to be both desirable in one's society. This scale utilizes perceived assumptions regarding levels of satisfaction as well as what is considered desirable. This reliance on presuppositions results in a scale that is subjective and open to critique (Wright, 1985). Michalos (1985) addresses this concern and discusses that these responses relate to reported satisfaction which is also a perceived and subjected concept.

Michalos suggests that overall life satisfaction is impacted by discrepancies in six areas: age, education, self-esteem, sex, ethnicity, and social support. Furthermore, one's actions and choices directly impact one's satisfaction in these areas (Michalos, 1985). When measuring satisfaction in each of the six domains, Michalos used a scale to measure levels of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Satisfaction refers to net satisfaction and dissatisfaction refers to net dissatisfaction. Therefore, when individuals report to be very satisfied or very dissatisfied, it is the net satisfaction or dissatisfaction that is being reported (Michalos, 1985). Based on thorough assessment and testing of this theoretical framework, Michalos (1985) found strong correlation between several domains. Age has been found to be strongly correlated with job satisfaction, one's sex appears to impact marital satisfaction, and high self-esteem is reported to be one of the strongest indicators of subjective well-being. Additionally, numerous studies have reported the importance of social support.

Discrepancy theories, both single and multiple indicator theories, have been of interest to those studying quality of life (Jacob & Brinkerhoff, 1997), Multiple discrepancies theory has

been used across numerous populations in multiple settings on the individual, family, and community levels. Multiple discrepancies theory has also been utilized to understand the gaps between expectations and reality of newly sworn in servicemembers (Jacob & Brinkerhoff, 1997). Servicemembers face unique stressors in their daily life in service that impacts their overall quality of life, and maladaptation to the military environment and its stressors contribute to a decreased overall quality of life (Vojvodic & Dedic, 1027). "Quality of life (QOL) is an essential component of maintain and high state of personnel and unit readiness…improving QOL for servicemembers has been a priority of the U.S. military leadership for years" (Britt et al., 2006, p. 145). Quality of life includes subjective well-being, social relationships, health, and perceived life satisfaction (Vojvodic & Dedic, 2017), concepts considered in multiple discrepancies theory (Michalos, 1985).

Theories of Volunteer Work

Volunteerism has been the foundation for many theories, yet the many definitions and perspectives of volunteerism resulted in a lack of integrated theory. When considering volunteering from the perspective of ecosystems, volunteering can be viewed as a group activity, one that embeds the volunteer into a group or community and "has important effects on the volunteer and the volunteer experience " and volunteering, because of its voluntary, unpaid, and collectively oriented nature, represents a unique type of social bonds distinct from ascribed and more formal social ties and networks (kinship or workplace), and abstract systems of enforced solidarity (welfare state)" (Hustinx, et al., 2010, p. 425, 417). This strong sense of bonds and solidarity can be understood similarly to the feelings of connection and solidarity found within the military community, one that is lost when service members separate from the military and leave this insular community.

Theories in Research

This study utilized the foundation framework of theory of social solidarity and multiple

discrepancies theory. The theory of social solidarity informs the study's perspective of military

culture and its emphasis of the whole over the individual that lends to the strong feelings of

community and purpose among service members, the feelings that are lost upon separating from

service (Orazem et al., 2017; Romaniuk & Kidd, 2018). Multiple discrepancies theory provides

an understanding of the felt discrepancies between what is desired in the military and what is not

present after leaving the service (Orazem et al., 2017; Romaniuk & Kidd, 2018). Weaving these

theories together provides the framework for understanding the military culture and decrease in

life satisfaction that may result when what is attained through the military culture is no longer

present upon separating from the military. The next section will discuss the research question of

the study.

Section Five: The Research Question

This study utilized a non-experimental cross-sectional design and sought to determine the relationship between volunteering and life satisfaction for retired military service members. This section details the research questions and related hypotheses that were addressed in the study. The overall research question of the study is: To what extent does volunteering impact overall life satisfaction for retired military service members? Sub-questions included the study of retirement age and reintegration experience as it relates to overall life satisfaction.

RQ1: To what extent does volunteering impact overall life satisfaction for retired military service members?

SQ1: To what extent does age of retirement impact overall life satisfaction?

H1: Overall life satisfaction increases as volunteering frequency increases.

H1a: Younger retirees experience lower levels of overall life satisfaction.

RQ2: To what extent does the relationship between volunteering and overall life satisfaction differ depending on whether volunteering is formal or informal?

H2: There is no difference between formal and informal volunteering regarding the impact volunteering has on overall life satisfaction.

RQ3: To what extent does reintegration following retirement impact overall life satisfaction?

H3: The more difficult the reintegration experience, the lower the levels of overall life satisfaction are.

This section reviews the research questions that were addressed in the study. The next section will discuss the research design and methodology.

Section Six: Research Methodology

The study utilized a quantitative non-experimental cross-sectional design. A non-experimental cross-sectional design involves collecting data from a sample of participants at a single point in time without manipulating any variables. In this type of design, researchers collect data on multiple variables of interest and analyze them to identify relationships and associations among the variables (Creswell, 2014). Data was collected through self-administered anonymous online surveys. The purpose of the study is to address the life satisfaction of retired United States military service members and determine whether there is a relationship, and to what extent the relationship exists, between volunteering and overall life satisfaction after military retirement. The goal of this study is to fill the gaps in research that relate to the experiences of retired military service members following retirement from the military.

Data and Subjects

A non-probability purposive sampling strategy was used to collect data through self-administered anonymous online surveys. Recruitment was done online through the following social media platforms: Facebook and Reddit. Inclusionary criteria for the study include being retired from the United States Armed Forces after 20 or more years of Active-Duty service through one or more of the Department of Defense military branches to include Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, and Space Force. Participants are retired for a minimum of six months to provide participants time to shift to a post retirement mindset and provide their current experiences as retired service members. The data collected may not be representative of the retired military population as participants are limited to those reached through the above-mentioned social media platforms. While this method allows for recruitment not limited to geographic locations, it has the limitations of reaching only those with internet access and those

who participate in these social media platforms which may not represent the larger population of military retirees. Participants were not limited to specific generations of service or age groups adding the additional limitation of generalizing the results to all age groups.

Measures

The following terms and variables were used and defined in the study: life satisfaction, military retirement, formal and informal volunteering, age of retirement, and reintegration. Life satisfaction is defined as the cognitive evaluation of subjective well-being based on what matters most to the individual (Marchesano & Musella, 2020; Philippus et al., 2020). Military retirement is defined as separating from the military after a minimum of 20 years of Active Duty service in one or more of the Department of Defense military branches (usa.gov, 2022). Volunteering is defined as "an activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group, or organization" (Binder & Freytag, 2012, p. 98). Formal volunteering is defined as volunteering that is coordinated through "groups, clubs or organizations" (p. 600) while informal volunteering is defined as providing individual help that is not coordinated in formal settings (Lawton et al., 2020). The term reintegration is defined as "the dynamic process and outcome of resuming a civilian 'role' following completion of military service" (Romaniuk & Kidd, 2018, p. 60). Age of retirement is defined as the age of the participant when they retired from all military service. Descriptive variables were used to collect data to include age, branch of service, years served, and rank upon retirement. Initial questions were asked to determine eligibility for participation in line with the inclusionary criteria including length of Active Duty service and time since retirement.

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) was developed to measure global life satisfaction (Diener et al., 1985). This scale is a short five question Likert scale with responses

ranging on a scale of one to seven and takes approximately one minute to complete included in

Appendix A (Sousa & Lyubomirsky, 2001). The vague and broad language of the scale allows

respondents to "evaluate their overall life satisfaction subjectively" (Sousa & Lyubomirsky,

2001, p. 8). Scores can be between five and 35 with higher scores representing higher levels of

satisfaction with life. Scores between five and nine are defined as extremely dissatisfied, scores

between 10 and 14 are defined as dissatisfied, scores between 15 and 19 are defined as slightly

dissatisfied, scores between 20 and 24 are defined as slightly satisfied, scores between 25 and 20

are defined as satisfied, and scores between 30 and 35 are defined as extremely satisfied (Diener

et al., 1985). After administering the SWLS to numerous diverse groups, the scale was

determined to have high internal consistency and reliability as well as high convergent validity

(Galanakis et al., 2017; Sachs, 2003; Sousa & Lyubomirsky, 200).

The Military-Civilian Adjustment and Reintegration Measure (M-CARM) is a 21-item

self-administered questionnaire developed to assess the adjustment and reintegration experience

of military service members as they transition out of service and reenter civilian life (included in

Appendix A) (Romaniuk et al., 2020). "The transition out of military service and subsequent

reintegration to civilian life has been established as a period associated with an increased risk of

psychological adjustment difficulties, psychiatric disorders and suicide risk, yet no tool exists to

measure cultural and psychological adjustment following permanent separation from the

military." Romaniuk et al., 2020, p. 1). When scoring the M-CARM, 13 items are reverse-scored,

and scores range from 21 to 105. Higher scores point to better adjustment and reintegration

experiences. Upon evaluation, the M-CARM indicated high internal consistency and good

convergent and divergent validity (Romaniuk et al., 2020).

Procedures

The procedure for this cross-sectional design was the administration of the non-experimental design. A nonexperimental design was selected as there is no manipulation of the independent variable and the sample was not random. Nonexperimental designs are used to measure variables as they occur and do not attempt to manipulate the independent variables (Breakwell, 2012). The cross-sectional design was used as the data was collected by all participants during a single period. Cross-sectional designs collect and analyze data from pre-existing groups one time (Breakwell, 2012).

Data Collection

An anonymous online survey created through Qualtrics was used to collect data. The survey comprised demographic and background questions created by the researcher of the study as well as the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) which is now publicly available (Diener et al., 1985) and the Military-Civilian Adjustment and Reintegration Measure (M-CARM) (see Appendix A for complete survey). Permission to use the M-CARM was granted to the researcher by the creator of the scale (see Appendix C). The survey takes approximately 15 minutes to complete. The beginning of the survey provides a description of the study and its goals as well as confidentiality and consent details. Names and other identifying details including contact information was not collected to ensure participant anonymity. Participants can opt-out of the survey at any time. The researcher received IRB exemption in August 2022 from the WCG IRB. Data collection began in September 2022 and ended in November 2022. A follow-up recruitment post was sent through the same social media platforms after two weeks. This process was continued until an adequate sample was collected. An initial 104 survey responses were collected. The researcher sorted the data and identified survey responses that were incomplete or

missing too many responses and removed the data from the sample. After sorting the data, the researcher had 72 survey responses which were used for data analysis (Little & Rubin, 1989). According to Mertler (2016), a minimum sample size of 60 participants is recommended for a quantitative non-experimental cross-sectional design that uses non-probability purposive sampling. While this study meets the minimum requirement, it may be limited by a relatively small sample size.

Protection of Human Subjects

An introductory statement described the purpose of the study and criteria for eligibility. Participants were then prompted to click the link for the survey. Before beginning the survey, participants were required to consent to participate in the study and acknowledged their right to withdraw participation at any time (see Appendix B). The survey was anonymous and did not collect any names, email addresses, or other identifying information. The researcher applied for and received IRB Exemption to complete the study.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted through Stata. Initial data cleaning was done to identify missing data and determine how to proceed with the missing data if applicable. The data was then recoded to a numeric format in excel and relabeled in Stata. The scales used (SWLS and M-CARM) were totaled to identify the scores of each participant. The M-CARM scale was reverse scored and recoded prior to analysis as determined by the creators of the scale (Romaniuk & Kidd, 2018). Descriptive statistics was utilized to describe the demographic details of the sample and determine if correlations exist between the demographic variables and the independent and dependent variables. In addition, linear regression was used to determine the relationships

between the variables of each research question. Analysis of the data included series of regression analysis was performed using Stata.

To answer the first research question, bivariate regression analysis was used. Frequency of volunteering was used as the independent variable and life satisfaction was used as the dependent variable. Life satisfaction was defined as the total score of SWLS, and Cronbach's alpha was used to determine internal consistency.

To answer the first research subquestion, multivariate regression analysis was used. Frequency of volunteering remains a focal predictor variable. The total score of SWLS remained as the dependent variable. Common covariates such as age, age of retirement, and total number of years served were controlled.

To answer the second research question, bivariate regression analysis was used. Age of participant upon retirement was used as the independent variable and life satisfaction, defined as the total score of the SWLS, was used as the dependent variable.

To answer the third research question, bivariate analysis was used. Life satisfaction, defined as the total score of SWLS, was used as the dependent variable. Military reintegration, defined as the total score of M-CARM, was used as the independent variable. Internal consistency was tested using Cronbach's alpha.

A list of hypothesis and variables are described in Table 6.1 below.

Table 6.1:

Hypothesis	Variable Name	Definition	Level of Measurement	Variable Use	Analysis
Overall life satisfaction increases as volunteering	Life satisfaction	Sum of SWLS	Ordinal	Dependent	Linear regression

frequency increases.	Volunteering (formal or informal)	Never/almost never (1) Once a year or less (2) Several times a year (3) At least once a month (4) At least once a week (5)	Nominal	Independent	
Younger retirees experience lower levels of overall life satisfaction.	Life satisfaction	Sum of SWLS	Ordinal	Dependent	Linear
	Age of retirement	Age of servicemember when they retire from active-duty service	Ratio	Independent	
There is no difference between formal and informal volunteering regarding the impact volunteering has on overall life satisfaction.	Life satisfaction	Sum of SWLS	Ordinal	Dependent	Regression analysis
	Formal volunteering	Never/almost never (1) Once a year or less (2) Several times a year (3) At least once a month (4) At least once a week (5)	Nominal	Independent	
	Informal volunteering	Never/almost never (1) Once a year or less (2) Several times a year (3) At least once a month (4) At least once a week (5)	Nominal	Independent	

The more difficult the reintegration experience, the lower the levels of overall life satisfaction are.	Life satisfaction	Sum of SWLS	Ordinal	Dependent	Linear regression
	Reintegration experience	Sum of M-CARM	Ordinal	Independent	

Ethical Considerations

Before beginning the study, participants were presented with an informed consent statement informing participants of their rights (see Appendix B). As the survey questions ask participants to recall their experiences as a service member, the questionnaire may provoke a triggering event for participants. This was stated before starting the questionnaire, and participants were reminded that they may opt out of the study at any time. This statement includes information regarding confidentiality, retention of data, and the voluntary nature of the survey. This section discussed the methodology that was utilized in the study. The next section discussed the limitations of the study. The study does not pose risk to participants. As the survey is provided online using the internet, it is impossible to guarantee confidentiality provided over the internet. To reduce risk, no identifying information was collected to include names and contact information. The study proposal was submitted to the WCG Institutional Review Board for approval prior to data collection.

Section Seven: Results

This section will discuss the results of the data analysis. The discussion of results will begin with the demographic descriptions of the sample and will continue with the analysis of each hypothesis.

Diagnostics and Missing Data Analysis

As the variables were transferred between Excel and STATA, the data's accuracy was verified for accuracy by comparing 25% of the variables in both programs. It was found that the variables from both programs were the same. The sample size consisted of 104 cases, which were included in the analysis, and 32 participants had missing values across the demographic questions and SWLS and M-CARM scales. To address this issue, a missing value analysis was performed using STATA, and the Little's MCAR test was utilized to determine if the missing data was completely random. The test results showed that there was no identifiable pattern in the missing data ($\chi 2$ = 61.78, df = 55; p = .24) (MCAR; Little & Rubin, 1989; Li, 2013). As a result of this finding, listwise deletion was applied to exclude these cases, reducing the final sample size for regression analysis to 72. This process helped to ensure that the data used in the analysis was of high quality and suitable for regression analysis.

Demographic Description of Sample

A detailed description of the demographics of the sample collected can be found in Table 7.1. The total sample was comprised of 72 military retirees with twenty or more years of Active Duty service. The average age of participants is 52.33 (SD 7.17) with the average age of retirement being 46.39 (SD 6.39). The average number of years served in Active Duty service is 23.38 (SD 3.69). The majority of participants served in the Air Force (n=56; 77.78%). The

remaining participants served in the Army (n=9; 12.5%), the Navy (n=4; 5.56%), and the Marine Corp. (n=3; 4.17%). There was no representation of the Space Force in the sample.

Rank upon retirement was spread over both officer and enlisted ranks. From the enlisted ranks, five participants (6.94%) retired as E-6, thirteen (18.06%) retired as E-7, five (6.94%) retired as E-8, and seven (9.72) retired as E-9. From the officer ranks, four (5.56) participants retired as O-4, twenty-four (33.33%) retired as O-5, and fourteen (19.44%) retired as O-6.

Volunteering frequency differed among participants as well. Of the 72 participants, eleven (15.28%) reported never/almost never, 12 (16.67%) reported once a year or less, twenty-three (31.94%) reported several times a year, fourteen (19.44%) reported at least once a month, nine (12.5%) reported one to three times a week, and three participants (4.17%) reported to volunteering four or more times a week. When asked about the impact Covid-19 had on their respective volunteer work, twenty-three participants (34.33%) stated no impact, twenty (29.85%) reported slight impact, while the remaining twenty-four responses (35.82) indicated a great impact.

Table 7.1

	M (SD)	N (%)
Age	52.33 (7.17)	
Military Branch		
Army		9 (12.5)
Navy		4 (5.56
Marine Corp.		3 (4.17)
Air Force		56 (77.78)
Space Force		0 (0)
Years Served	23.38 (3.69)	
Rank Upon Retirement		
E-6		5 (6.94)
E-7		13 (18.06)
E-8		5 (6.94)
E-9		7 (9.72)

O-4	4 (5.56)
O-5	24 (33.33)
O-6	14 (19.44)
Age Upon Retirement	46.39 (6.39)
Volunteering Frequency	
Never/almost never	11 (15.28)
Once a year or less	12 (16.67)
Several times a year	23 (31.94)
At least once a month	14 (19.44)
One to three times a week	9 (12.5)
Four or more times a week	3 (4.17)
Volunteer Setting	
Coordinated through group or organization	39 (59.09)
Not coordinated through group or organization	8 (12.12)
Both coordinated and not coordinated through group or organization	19 (28.79)
Covid-19 Impact on Volunteering	
Not at all impacted	23 (34.33)
Slightly impacted	20 (29.85)
Greatly impacted	24 (35.82)

Note: Valid percentages are reported in parenthesis

Hypothesis Testing and Analysis

Four hypotheses were tested to answer the four research questions. Prior to testing these hypotheses, the frequencies of the scales used were found and the internal consistencies of each scale was determined. The frequencies for the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) can be found in Table 7.2. The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) had an scale reliability coefficient of 0.9 (Table 7.3) and the Military-Civilian Adjustment and Reintegration Measure (M-CARM) had a scale reliability coefficient of 0.85 (Table 7.5). The frequencies for the M-CARM can be found in Table 7.4.

Table 7.2   Frequencies for Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

	Strongly agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

				nor disagree			
In most ways my life is close to ideal	14 (19.44)	3 (41.67)	17 (23.61)	3 (4.17)	6 (8.33)	2 (2.78)	
The conditions of my life are excellent	21 (29.17)	25 (34.72)	14 (19.44)	3 (4.17)	8 (11.11)	1 (1.39)	
I am satisfied with my life	20 (27.78)	27 (37.5)	13 (18.06)	4 (5.56)	7 (9.72)	1 (1.39)	
So far I have gotten the important things I want in life	25 (34.72)	29 (40.28)	10 (13.89)	2 (2.78)	3 (4.17)	3 (4.17)	
So far I have gotten the important things I want in life	15 (20.83)	23 (31.94)	12 (16.67)	3 (4.17)	11 (15.28)	5 (6.94)	3 (4.17)

Note: Valid percentages are reported in parenthesis

Table 7.3   Internal Consistency of SWLS

Average interitem covariance	1.27
Number of items in the scale	5
Scale reliability coefficient	0.9

Table 7.4   Frequencies for Military-Civilian Adjustment and Reintegration Measure (M-CARM)

	Agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Disagree
I know how to access professional support for my health	63 (88.73)	5 (7.04)	2 (2.82)	1 (1.41)	
Some of my military habits cause problems for me	10 (14.08)	25 (35.21)	10 (14.08)	6 (8.45)	20 (28.17)
I am a flexible person, and I don't mind changing to suit others when required	19 (26.39)	32 (44.44)	8 (11.11)	10 (13.89)	3 (4.17)

I'm angry about the way I was treated during my service	4 (5.56)	17 (23.61)	13 (18.06)	9 (12.5)	29 (40.28)
Outside of the military, I have found people that I connect with through shared interests or beliefs	32 (44.44)	13 (18.06)	12 (16.67)	9 (12.5)	6 (8.33)
Civilians are disrespectful and rude	2 (2.78)	14 (19.44)	16 (22.22)	11 (15.28)	29 (40.28)
I don't think society puts much value on military service and experience	14 (19.44)	21 (29.17)	11 (15.28)	15 (20.83)	11 (15.28)
The military broke me and then kicked me out	1 (1.39)	4 (5.56)	6 (8.33)	6 (8.33)	55 (76.39)
I would never seek health from a mental health professional	3 (4.17)	2 (2.78)	6 (8.33)	12 (16.67)	49 (68.06)
Despite all my experiences in the military, I am under-valued by civilians	10 (13.89)	16 (22.22)	17 (23.61)	6 (8.33)	23 (31.94)
I have interests and hobbies that are enjoyable and meaningful	43 (59.72)	16 (22.22)	2 (2.78)	10 (13.89)	1 (1.39)
I find it difficult to change once I have a set routine	5 (6.94)	21 2(9.17)	15 (20.83)	13 (18.06)	18 (25)
I would ask for help if I needed it	31 (43.06)	28 (38.89)	6 (8.33)	6 (8.33)	1 (1.39)
Civilians seem to be concerned with trivial matters	14 (19.44)	25 (34.72)	15 (20.83)	7 (9.72)	11 (15.28)
I am fulfilled	32 (44.44)	18 (25)	7 (9.72)	11 (15.28)	4 (5.56)
I find it difficult to ask for help if I'm struggling	4 (5.56)	23 (31.94)	12 (16.67)	13 (18.06)	20 (27.78)
I have a lot of regrets about my service	2 (2.78)	12 (16.67)	5 (6.94)	12 (16.67)	41 (56.94)
I am more regimented than flexible	5 (6.94)	16 (22.22)	15 (20.83)	25 (34.72)	11 (15.28)
I have things that give me a sense of achievement, outside of paid employment	36 (50.00)	22 (30.56)	2 (2.78)	9 (12.50)	3 (4.17)
I have a sense of purpose	33 (45.83)	21 (29.17)	6 (8.33)	8 (11.11)	4 (5.56)
I feel I don't belong anywhere	4 (5.56)	21 (29.17)	7 (9.72)	11 (15.28)	29 (40.28)

Note: Valid percentages are reported in parenthesis

Table 7.5   Internal Consistency of Military-Civilian Adjustment and Reintegration Measure (M-CARM)

Average interitem covariance	0.33
Number of items in the scale	21
Scale reliability coefficient	0.85

RQ1: To what extent does volunteering impact overall life satisfaction for retired military service members?

H1: Overall life satisfaction increases as volunteering frequency increases.

SQ1: To what extent does age of retirement impact overall life satisfaction?

H1a: younger retirees experience lower levels of overall life satisfaction.

To answer research question 1, regression analysis was performed with the sum of the SWLS as the dependent variable and volunteering frequency as the independent variable. Regression analysis was used to test subquestion 1 as well with the sum of the SWLS as the dependent variable and age of retirement as the independent variable. These hypotheses were tested while controlling for the common covariates of volunteer frequency, age, age upon retirement, years served, military branch, and volunteer setting. Findings for each variable was not shown to be significant, and the hypotheses were not supported (full results can be found in Table 7.6).

Table 7.6   Table for Regression Analysis of RQ1 and SQ1

SUMSWLS	Coef.	95% CI	β	β 95% CI
Volunteer Frequency	-.42	-1.75, .9	-.09	-.29, .17
Age	.15	-.11, .40	.17	-.1, .44
Age Upon Retirement	-.19	-.57, .19	-.2	-.56, .15
Years Served	.48	-.11, 1.07	.31	.03, .66
Military Branch				
Navy	-1.1	-9.02, 6.81	-.05	-9.02, 6.81
Marine Corp.	2.65	-5.75, 11.04	.1	-5.75, 11.04
Air Force	1.79	-2.67, 6.25	.13	-2.67, 6.25

Volunteer Setting						
Not coordinated through group or organization	4.4	-.39,	9.19	.24	-.39,	9.19
Both coordinated and not coordinated through group or organization	2.71	-.88,	6.31	.2	-.88,	6.31

Multigroup regression analysis was used to answer Research Question 2 and Research Question 3 together.

RQ2: To what extent does the relationship between volunteering and overall life satisfaction differ depending on whether volunteering is formal or informal?

H2: There is no difference between formal and informal volunteering regarding the impact volunteering has on overall life satisfaction.

RQ3: To what extent does reintegration following retirement impact overall life satisfaction?

H3: The more difficult the reintegration experience, the lower the levels of overall life satisfaction are.

Multigroup regression analysis was used to test research questions 2 and 3 together. These hypotheses were tested while controlling for the common covariates of age, age upon retirement, years served, and the sum of the M-CARM. Analysis was done by looking at each volunteer setting. Significance was found between the sum of the M-CARM and volunteering in a formal setting ($p = 0.0$) with the regression analysis showing $\beta = .79$; 95% CI [.24, .43] $p < 0.0$; $R^2 = .66$. The remaining data was not found to be significant (Full results can be found in Table 7.7).

Table 7.7   Table for Multigroup Regression Analysis of RQ2, RQ3 by Volunteer Setting

SUMSWLS	Coef.	95% CI	β	β 95% CI

Coordinated through group or organization				
Volunteer frequency	-.91	-1.96, .14	-.19	-.37, -.0
Age	.0	-.22, .22	.00	-.22, .22
Age upon retirement	-.64	-.42, .29	-.06	-.34, .23
Years served	.16	-.33, .65	.1	-.17, .36
SUMMCARM	.34	.24, .43	.79	.67, .9
Not coordinated through group or organization				
Volunteer frequency	1.1	-9.63, 11.8	.33	-.4, 1.06
Age	-.53	-3.47, 2.42	-.46	-1.04, .11
Age upon retirement	-1.54	-7.55, 4.47	-1.06	-1.94, -.18
Years served	2.01	-1.75, 5.77	1.24	.89, 1.59
SUMMCARM	-.43	-1.76, .91	-1.1	-1.74, -.39
Both coordinated and not coordinated through group or organization				
Volunteer frequency	-.22	-4.11, 3.67	-.04	-.5, .42
Age	.09	-.48,.67	.15	-.49, .79
Age upon retirement	-.19	-.87, .49	-.29	-1.01, .44
Years served	.28	-1.32, 1.87	.2	-.62, 1.02
SUMMCARM	.23	-.23, .69	.4	-.13, .93

Section Eight: Discussion

This section will discuss findings of the study, limitations of the study, and anticipated

contributions in the fields of practice, policy, and research.

Discussion of Findings

In this study four hypotheses were tested to answer three research questions and one

subquestion.

Hypothesis 1: Overall life satisfaction increases as volunteering frequency increases.

There was no significant correlation between life satisfaction and volunteering frequency.

Hypothesis 1a: Younger retirees experience lower levels of overall life satisfaction.

Analysis did not indicate a significant relationship between age of retirement and overall life

satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2: There is no difference between formal and informal volunteering regarding the

impact volunteering has on overall life satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3: The more difficult the reintegration experience, the lower the levels of overall life

satisfaction are.

Hypotheses 1 and 2 were analyzed together. There was no significant difference found between

formal and informal volunteering with one notable exception. Findings were shown to be

significant when looking at the relationship between formal volunteering and M-CARM scores

($p = 0.0$).

While the four hypotheses were not supported, there was significance found between M-

CARM scores and volunteering in a formal setting. This finding suggests that volunteering in a

formal setting is correlated with lower M-CARM scores and easier and smoother military to

civilian reintegration experiences. These findings are of great value in both policy making and

practical applications as well as future research as it highlights the potential of volunteering as an effective method to support military service members during their reintegration process. These results can help form initiatives and shape policy towards improving the reintegrating experiences of retiring and retired military service members and provide them with the resources and support they need to successfully transition to civilian life.

Limitations of the Study

The study has several limitations that may affect its validity and the accuracy of the results. The study collected data through an online survey, limiting its reach to those who can access the internet. The study may, therefore, not accurately represent the entire population. A further limitation of the study is the recruitment method. The survey was distributed through social media platforms, limiting the number of participants that could be reached as individuals who do not use social media did not know about the study. The study relied on self-selected and voluntary participants, which could lead to a biased sample. It is also difficult to determine the response rate as participants were recruited through social media platforms where it is challenging to assess the reach of the survey. Another limitation of the study is the sample size ($n = 72$) and demographic representation. The majority of participants served in the Air Force (77.78%), which may not accurately represent the other military branches. This unequal representation of military branches may limit the generalizability of the findings. An additional limitation of this study is its inability to determine causality. It is, therefore, difficult to ascertain whether the correlation discussed exists or is due to other variables not controlled for in the study. Despite these limitations, the study is still expected to contribute valuable insights and findings to the field of research. The following section will discuss the anticipated contributions of the study.

Anticipated Contributions

The anticipated contributions of the study will significantly impact several areas of social work including practice, policy, and research. This section will detail the anticipated contributions within each context of social work.

Implications for Practice

Social workers may find themselves working with retired service members in various contexts and settings. For a minimum of 20 years of service, military members dedicate all aspects of their lives to serving their country. What job they will do, which state or country they will live in, which neighborhood they are housed in, which individuals will be their colleagues, superiors, or subordinates, when and if they will be present for the joyous and tragic occasions of their families, is all determined by the military. Further, how they speak, how they dress, how they walk, talk, and think is all indoctrinated during the early weeks of training upon joining the military. When leaving the military and reentering civilian life, these service members need to relearn how to be a civilian again, how to talk, act, work, and live in this unfamiliar role. The adjustment period may be a struggle for service members and may result in decreased life satisfaction and mental health struggles (Mitchell, Frazier, & Sayer, 2020; Orazem et al., 2017; Romaniuk & Kidd, 2018). The results of the study inform social work practitioners who work with retired service members of the possibility of the alternative approach of using volunteer work to combat reintegration struggles.

While the hypotheses in this study were not supported, valuable insight can be gained from the significant findings regarding the relationship between reintegration experiences and formal volunteering. Military to civilian reintegration has been shown to be a pivotal and important transition for service members (Orazem et al., 2017; Romaniuk & Kidd, 2018) and the

benefits of volunteering discussed in the literature review (Binder, 2015; Binder & Freytag, 2013; Gray & Stevenson, 2020) as well as the findings of this study speak to the potential benefits of using volunteering as a means of easing the difficulties of this transition.

Implications for Policy

Reintegration of service members into civilian life after serving in the military can be a challenging process for many. The transition from the structured and disciplined environment of the military to the civilian world can be difficult to adjust to, leading to difficulties in finding employment, reestablishing relationships with friends and family, and readjusting to life outside of military service (Mitchell, Frazier, & Sayer, 2020; Orazem et al., 2017; Romaniuk & Kidd, 2018). While existing policies aim to support the connection and community of veterans and retired service members, there are relatively few policies aimed at easing the transition to civilian life. Current policies and programs addressing reintegration of service members exist through the DoD and VA to include:

1. The VA provides a range of health and wellness services, including mental health services, physical rehabilitation, and readjustment counseling (Veterans Affairs, 2021).

2. The DOD provides transition services to active-duty service members, including career counseling and job placement assistance (Department of Defense, 2019).

3. The GI Bill provides education and training opportunities for veterans, including college tuition and vocational training (Department of Defense, 2019).

While these policies and programs provide important support for veterans and retired service members, they do not necessarily address the specific challenges associated with reintegrating into civilian life.

Volunteer work can play an important role in helping retired military service members reintegrate into civilian life. Engaging in volunteer work can provide a sense of purpose and community, which can be especially valuable for service members who may be struggling to find meaning in civilian life after serving in the military. In addition, volunteering can also provide opportunities for skill-building and networking, which can be valuable in finding employment. For example, some organizations, such as Team Rubicon, work specifically with veterans to provide disaster relief services through volunteer work. This type of work provides a unique opportunity for veterans to use their skills and training in a meaningful way, while also contributing to their communities. Additionally, working with other veterans can provide a sense of camaraderie and support, helping to ease the transition to civilian life.

While existing policies aimed at supporting veterans and retired service members are important, there is a clear need for more policies specifically aimed at easing the transition from military to civilian life. Volunteer work has the potential to play an important role in this transition, providing opportunities for service members to engage in meaningful work, build new skills, and connect with their communities (Binder & Freytag, 2013). By incorporating volunteer work into the broader policy framework for supporting the reintegration of service members, social workers can help ensure that these individuals receive the support they need to succeed in civilian life after serving in the military.

Implications for Research

Military veterans and retired service members face unique challenges as they transition from military to civilian life (Binder, 2015; Binder & Freytag, 2013; Gray & Stevenson, 2020). While there is extensive research regarding military veterans, the research focusing specifically on military retirees is limited. This gap in the existing research is particularly pronounced in the

area of volunteer work and its potential benefits for military retirees. This study adds to the limited research in this area and help fill the gap in the existing literature.

The military retiree population is a unique group of individuals with specific experiences, challenges, and needs. Despite the important contributions that military retirees have made to our country, there has been limited research specifically focused on this population. This lack of research limits our understanding of the challenges that military retirees face and the support they need to successfully reintegrate into civilian life.

Volunteer work has the potential to play a significant role in supporting the reintegration of military retirees into civilian life. Research has shown that volunteering can have a positive impact on mental and physical health, provide a sense of purpose and community, and offer opportunities for skill-building and networking. While research on the benefits of volunteer work is extensive, research on volunteer work specifically with military retirees is limited.

This study contributes to the limited research on military retirees and the potential benefits of volunteer work for this population. The study used qualitative and quantitative methods to gather data from military retirees who have engaged in volunteer work. The study examines the impact of volunteer work on the reintegration process and the specific benefits that military retirees have experienced through their volunteer work. The results of this study provide valuable insights into the challenges and needs of military retirees and the role that volunteer work can play in supporting their reintegration into civilian life.

This study helps fill the gap in the existing literature by providing new insights into the experiences of military retirees and the potential benefits of volunteer work for this population. The results of this study are valuable for policymakers, organizations, and individuals working to support military retirees as they transition from military to civilian life. By contributing to the

limited research in this area, this study helps ensure that military retirees receive the support they need to succeed in civilian life after serving in the military.

Conclusion

This study tested four hypotheses to answer three research questions and one subquestion about the relationships between reintegration, volunteering, and life satisfaction in retired military service members. The first hypothesis, which stated that overall life satisfaction increases as volunteering frequency increases, was not supported by the results. The second hypothesis, which stated that there is no difference between formal and informal volunteering regarding the impact on overall life satisfaction, was also not supported. However, a significant relationship was found between formal volunteering and military to civilian reintegration (M-CARM) scores, indicating that volunteering in a formal setting may lead to smoother reintegration experiences.

The study also has several limitations, including a limited sample size and demographic representation, and a reliance on self-selected and voluntary participants. These limitations may affect the validity and accuracy of the results. Despite these limitations, the study still has significant implications for social work practice, policy, and future research. Social workers may use the findings to inform their work with retired service members, promoting volunteering as a means of easing reintegration struggles. The results may also inform policy makers in developing initiatives and policies to improve the reintegration experiences of retired service members. This study's results suggest that volunteering could be a valuable resource in supporting a less stressful transition from military to civilian life. It is an important contribution to the literature on service members' reintegration, and it can serve as a foundation for future research. Further

research can help to deepen our understanding of how volunteering can help to facilitate the

reintegration process and support veterans' well-being.

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Appendix A: Survey

Demographic Questions:

Did you serve a minimum of 20 years of active duty in one or more of the Department of Defense military branches?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Did you retire from active duty service at least six months ago?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

What is your age?

Please provide a short text response.

In which branch of service did you serve? Check all that apply.

- ○ Army
- ○ Navy
- ○ Marine Corp.
- ○ Air Force
- ○ Space Force

How many years did you serve in active duty?

Please provide a short text response.

What was your rank upon retirement?

Please provide a short text response.

At what age did you retire from active duty?

Please provide a short text response.

How often do you engage in volunteer work?

- ○ Never/almost never
- ○ Once a year or less
- ○ Several times a year
- ○ At least once a month
- ○ One to three times a week
- ○ Four or more times a week

In what setting do you volunteer:

- ○ Coordinated through a group or organization
- ○ Not coordinated through a group or organization
- ○ Both coordinate and not coordinated through a group or organization

To what extent was your volunteer work impacted by Covid-19?

- ○ Not at all impacted
- ○ Slightly impacted
- ○ Greatly impacted

In what way was your volunteer work impacted by Covid-19?

Please provide a short text response.

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

Below are five statements tat you may agree or disagree with. Indicate your agreement with each item by circling the appropriate box, from strongly agree, to strongly disagree.

In most ways my life is close to ideal.

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Slightly agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Slightly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

The conditions of my life are excellent.

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Slightly agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Slightly disagree
- ○ Disagree

- ○ Strongly disagree

I am satisfied with my life.

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Slightly agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Slightly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

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

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Slightly agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Slightly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

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

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Slightly agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Slightly disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

Military-Civilian Adjustment & Reintegration Measure (M-CARM)

Please read each statement carefully and indicate how much you agree or disagree. Please consider your responses honestly; there are no right or wrong answers. If you find some of the questions difficult, please give the answer that is true for you most of the time.

I know how to access professional support for my health.

- ○ Disagree
- ○ Slightly Disagree
- ○ Neither Agree or Disagree
- ○ Slightly Agree
- ○ Agree

Some of my military habits cause problems for me.

- ○ Disagree
- ○ Slightly Disagree
- ○ Neither Agree or Disagree
- ○ Slightly Agree
- ○ Agree

I am a flexible person, and I don't mind changing to suit others when required.

- ○ Disagree
- ○ Slightly Disagree
- ○ Neither Agree or Disagree
- ○ Slightly Agree
- ○ Agree

I'm angry about the way I was treated during my service.

- ○ Disagree
- ○ Slightly Disagree
- ○ Neither Agree or Disagree
- ○ Slightly Agree
- ○ Agree

Outside of the military, I have found people that I connect with through shared interests or beliefs.

- ○ Disagree
- ○ Slightly Disagree
- ○ Neither Agree or Disagree
- ○ Slightly Agree
- ○ Agree

Civilians are disrespectful and rude.

- ○ Disagree
- ○ Slightly Disagree
- ○ Neither Agree or Disagree
- ○ Slightly Agree
- ○ Agree

I don't think society puts much value on military service and experience.

- ○ Disagree
- ○ Slightly Disagree
- ○ Neither Agree or Disagree
- ○ Slightly Agree
- ○ Agree

The military broke me and then kicked me out.

- ○ Disagree
- ○ Slightly Disagree
- ○ Neither Agree or Disagree
- ○ Slightly Agree
- ○ Agree

I would never seek help from a mental health professional.

- ○ Disagree
- ○ Slightly Disagree
- ○ Neither Agree or Disagree
- ○ Slightly Agree
- ○ Agree

Despite all my experience in the military, I am under-valued by civilians.

- ○ Disagree
- ○ Slightly Disagree
- ○ Neither Agree or Disagree
- ○ Slightly Agree
- ○ Agree

I have interests and hobbies that are enjoyable or meaningful.

- ○ Disagree

- ○ Slightly Disagree
- ○ Neither Agree or Disagree
- ○ Slightly Agree
- ○ Agree

I find it difficult to change once I have a set routine.

- ○ Disagree
- ○ Slightly Disagree
- ○ Neither Agree or Disagree
- ○ Slightly Agree
- ○ Agree

I would ask for help if I needed it.

- ○ Disagree
- ○ Slightly Disagree
- ○ Neither Agree or Disagree
- ○ Slightly Agree
- ○ Agree

Civilians seem to be concerned with trivial matters.

- ○ Disagree
- ○ Slightly Disagree
- ○ Neither Agree or Disagree
- ○ Slightly Agree
- ○ Agree

I am fulfilled.

- ○ Disagree
- ○ Slightly Disagree
- ○ Neither Agree or Disagree
- ○ Slightly Agree
- ○ Agree

I find it difficult to ask for help if I'm struggling.

- ○ Disagree
- ○ Slightly Disagree

- ○ Neither Agree or Disagree
- ○ Slightly Agree
- ○ Agree

I have a lot of regrets about my service.

- ○ Disagree
- ○ Slightly Disagree
- ○ Neither Agree or Disagree
- ○ Slightly Agree
- ○ Agree

I am more regimented than flexible.

- ○ Disagree
- ○ Slightly Disagree
- ○ Neither Agree or Disagree
- ○ Slightly Agree
- ○ Agree

I have things that give me a sense of achievement, outside of paid employment.

- ○ Disagree
- ○ Slightly Disagree
- ○ Neither Agree or Disagree
- ○ Slightly Agree
- ○ Agree

I have a sense of purpose.

- ○ Disagree
- ○ Slightly Disagree
- ○ Neither Agree or Disagree
- ○ Slightly Agree
- ○ Agree

I feel I don't belong anywhere.

- ○ Disagree
- ○ Slightly Disagree
- ○ Neither Agree or Disagree

- ○ Slightly Agree
- ○ Agree

Appendix B: Statement of Informed Consent

You are invited to participate in a research study about the reintegration experiences of military retirees. The goal of this study is to understand the experiences and life satisfaction of military retirees.

This study takes approximately 15 minutes of your time.

To qualify, participants are:

- Retired from one or more of the Department of Defense military branches to include Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Space Force.

- Retired after a minimum of 20 years of Active Duty service

- Retired for a minimum of 6 months.

Your participation is completely voluntary, anonymous, and confidential. No identifying information was collected, and your individual responses to the survey cannot be traced to you. As the survey questions ask you to recall your overall experiences as a service member, the questionnaire may provoke a triggering event. You may withdraw participation at any point and exit the survey. However, since individual responses are anonymous, your completed data cannot be withdrawn from the study after it has been collected.

The ethics of this research project were reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board commissioned by Yeshiva University. If you believe there has been any infringement of your rights as a research participant, you should contact the IRB at clientservices@wcgirb.com or 855-818-2289.

Thank you for your participation. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the student researcher, Batya Pekar, or the research chair, Dr. Lynn Levy, at the contact information below.

Contact information:

Batya Pekar, MSW

(305) 746-0692

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Appendix C

[EXT] - Gallipoli Medical Research Foundation

Keyser, Julieann <KeyserJ@ramsayhealth.com.au>

Tue 3/29/2022 8:04 AM

To: Batya Frankforter [student] <Batya.Pekar@yu.edu>

External Email

Dear Batya,

Thank you very much for reaching out to use the M-CARM.

I have confirmed with Dr Madeline Romaniuk that she is comfortable for you to use the M-CARM, noting the M-CARM tool has been validated for the Australian Veteran population.

She has requested that any publications, that include the use of the M-CARM be sent to GMRF.VMHI@ramsayhealth.com.au for our records.

Please also keep an eye on our Go Beyond Program – an online learning suite that address needs identified through the M-CARM. The content of this program has been developed by our Clinical Psychologist and has been informed by the Service to Civilian Research.

Kind regards,

Julieann Keyser
TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH MANAGER, Veteran Mental Health

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