CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

A CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM
FOR WOMEN VETERANS TRANSITIONING INTO CIVILIAN EMPLOYMENT

A project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Counseling, Career Counseling

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ABSTRACT

A CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR WOMEN VETERANS TRANSITIONING INTO CIVILIAN EMPLOYMENT

By

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Master of Science in Counseling, Career Counseling

Due to the inherent differences between the military and the civilian sphere, many women veterans find their transitioning process challenging, even difficult, especially when it comes to obtaining adequate civilian employment. Since a large number of women veterans enlisted at a young age, they lack civilian work experience and have limited knowledge of current employment trends. Furthermore, having spent years in the service, female veterans often miss the comfort of structure and camaraderie, fundamental characteristics of all military branches, and they feel lost and marginalized without a civilian support system on which they could rely on for guidance while they try to reinvent themselves as “ordinary” citizens. The proposed program was designed to address the career needs of this unique population. To fully understand the career challenges many women veterans face during their transition from military service to civilian life, their most serious hurdles and concerns will be discussed in detail, along with several career theories chosen to serve as framework for the proposed program. Moreover, an evaluation of several existing programs will be provided as well, to shed light on what’s been done and what still needs to be addressed to better serve this population. The program sessions and all additional materials, including assessments,
assignments and handouts, are described in detail and copies of them are included in the appendices.
Chapter 1
The Problem

Introduction.

Many veterans, especially younger veterans, face challenges finding a job or immediately pursuing a career when leaving the military. These include a lack of nonmilitary work experience; translating their military skills and experience to civilian employment opportunities; and difficulty maintaining their composure and self-control during the work day due to normal readjustment after exposure to combat or to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Women veterans report feeling isolated from their civilian friends and commonly express the need for peer support from other veterans, especially women veterans who can understand and relate to their military experiences. Accessing such support from their sister veterans is difficult given their numbers; many more men share the experience of being a veteran (Foster & Vince, 2009). While there are numerous programs assisting veterans transitioning from military to civilian life, only few offer assistance with finding mentors and building professional relationships with fellow veterans to counteract feelings of isolation and loneliness they may experience in their new environment. The program to be introduced on the following pages remedies this issue and through its mentorship component will offer participants the opportunity to nurture partnerships with fellow veterans.

Statement of the problem.

The numbers of women serving in the U.S. Military have been increasing rapidly
in the last 20 years. While in 1973 only 1.6 percent of active duty personnel were female, by the year 2005 the percentage was close to 15. By 2008, 20 percent of the Air Force, 15 percent of the Navy and the Army were female. The U.S. Marine Corps was the only branch that had significantly fewer women among their ranks, totaling only six percent of their active duty personnel (Kelty, Kleykamp, & Segal, 2010). In turn, this staggering increase in female active duty personnel in the U.S. Military led to a dramatic expansion in the numbers of female U.S. veterans. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the population of women veterans has increased from 1.1 million in 1980 to 1.8 million in 2010 and is projected to continue increasing.

While there are a myriad of programs created to assist veterans during their transition from active duty to civilian life, many still find the process of reintegration into society rather challenging. In addition, most government programs were created to assist male veterans; therefore, women vets often find their needs overlooked. One of the key elements of successfully transitioning into civilian life is finding suitable employment upon leaving the military (Ruh, Spicer, & Vaughan, 2009). This may seem simple, since military training and service is known to enhance the competencies of soldiers in various areas of knowledge. One might assume that such training gives recipients a clear advantage upon entering the civilian job market. While this may be the case for some veterans, many women veterans still find it difficult to secure employment in the civilian sector. As reflected on above, these difficulties could be attributed to various issues, such as lack of nonmilitary work experience, having trouble translating military skills and experiences to equivalent civilian competencies and so on (Foster, 2010). Whatever the case, without suitable income, women veterans cannot support
themselves and their families, nor can they become productive members of society.

Also, many female veterans who were unable to secure employment experienced periods of homelessness. Statistics show that veterans account for 25 percent of the U.S. homeless population (Foster, 2010). Furthermore, because employed women veterans tend to earn less than their male counterparts, they are even more prone to experience homelessness. In fact 14 percent of female veterans experience homelessness compared to 10 percent of male vets. Moreover, women veterans are four times more likely than their civilian counterparts to become homeless (Foster, 2010).

In addition, women veterans often have dependants to support upon exiting the military. While in service, childcare, healthcare and housing are provided (Kelty, Kleykamp, & Segal, 2010), but once exiting the military these needs have to be paid for by the individual. Although many female veterans qualify for various benefits, these services are often unknown or inaccessible to them. According to a report commissioned by the California Research Bureau, many women veterans are unaware of the benefits, services, and resources available to them upon exiting the military. Additionally, the report suggests that the existing services are unable to meet the needs of veterans because of limited resources and access (Foster, 2010).

Due to the reasons discussed above, research demonstrates that it is imperative for women veterans to secure satisfactory employment upon exiting the military. These women served their country with dignity and humility; the time has come to repay them for their exceptional contribution by making their transition to civilian existence joyful rather than traumatic.
**Importance of the problem.**

Given the steady increase of the women veterans’ population, it is crucial to provide services that support their transition from active duty to civilian life. Since one of the decisive factors of making a successful transition is to obtain suitable civilian employment, there is a great need for programs that assist veterans in their job search and career development process. Despite the myriad of existing programs offering employment and training services to veterans, the unemployment rate among veterans, especially among female veterans, is still significant.

According to a report published in December 2001 by the Women’s Research & Education Institute (WREI), in 1999 women veterans’ unemployment rate (4.6 percent) was higher in comparison with that of male veterans (3.1 percent) and both male (3.6 percent) and female (3.1 percent) non-veterans (Manning, O’Farrell, Stone, & Wight, 2001). According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, as of February 2011 the unemployment rate for women veterans was 8.7 percent, which means that it practically doubled in the past decade. Furthermore, in 2011 women veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan were more likely to be unemployed than not only non-military women, but also female veterans of earlier wars such as the Gulf War, the Korean and Vietnam wars (Thiruvengadam, 2011). These facts alone would validate the need for creating new programs to help women veterans in their quest to gain suitable civilian employment.

However, there is another indicator of how important this issue really is--the government’s financial commitment to provide these services for U.S veterans. According to the report published by the Women’s Research and Education Institute
(WREI) (Manning et al., 2001), providing employment services to veterans is the responsibility of the Department of Labor Veterans and Training Service (DOL VETS). Based on the official budget request available on the Department of Labor’s (DOL) website, the DOL VETS’ budget for the year 2010 was over 255 million dollars, which was divided among six different programs: Jobs for Vets (67 percent), Federal Management (14 percent), Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (10 percent), Veterans’ Workforce Investment Program (4 percent) and the National Veterans’ Training Institute (1 percent). Moreover, based on information available on the official website of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the VA’s budget for the year 2010 was a large sum of $112.8 billion. These numbers indicate not only the importance of the problem, but also the magnitude of the issues contributing to the problem.

Considering all of the funding available to vets, women vets require special attention. A potential reason for higher unemployment rates among women veterans might be that the existing assistance programs were created mainly for male veterans in transition. Thus these programs often lack the ability to address gender specific concerns of female veteran job seekers (Thiruvengadam, 2011).

**General characteristics of women veterans.**

There a multitude of characteristics defining the women veteran population. However, some qualities are more relevant than others when it comes to employability. For the purpose of this paper, I will focus on three major characteristics: age, marital status, and educational level. According to the report titled “Profile of Veterans: 2009” (2011) issued by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, in 2009 there were 1,486,500 women
veterans, accounting for 8.1 percent of the entire veteran population. This percentage is likely to increase in the upcoming years as more women enter the U.S. military. The following statistical information on age distribution, marital status, and educational level among female veterans was taken from the same report.

**Age distribution.**

In general, women veterans tend to be younger than their male counterparts. In 2009, the median age for male veterans was 64, while the average age for women veterans was only 49, well below the civilian retirement age. There was no difference between the median ages of female veterans in comparison with the female non-veteran population. Furthermore, in 2007, approximately 50 percent of female active duty personnel were between the ages of 17 and 24 (Kelty, Kleykamp, & Segal, 2010). This information suggests that a significant percentage of women veterans enlisted at a fairly young age, prior to acquiring considerable civilian work experience.

**Marital status.**

Based on the data published in the 2009 veterans’ profile report, 67.7 percent of male veterans were married compared to only 47.4 percent of women veterans. There was a significant difference in the divorce rate as well. While only 13.9 percent of male veterans were divorced, the divorce rate among women veterans was 23.3 percent. Furthermore, women veterans were more likely to be divorced than non-veteran women (12.1 percent). Marital status can have a significant impact on the veterans’ socioeconomic situation, which in turn can affect their transition success. Divorced women veterans have to carry the cost of living, healthcare and housing alone, so for them is more crucial to obtain suitable employment than for their married counterparts.
Educational level.

In 2009, the educational level of women veterans was higher than their male counterparts. For example, 47.5 percent of women veterans had completed some college in comparison with only 35.4 percent of male veterans. Furthermore, 38 percent of women veterans between the ages of 17 and 24 were enrolled in college, while only 27.7 percent of male veterans in the same age bracket were taking courses in a higher education institution. Educational attainment is a significant component of an individual’s social and economic status. Furthermore, one’s education can affect his/her life choices, employment opportunities, and prospective income level.

In addition to these major characteristics, women veterans have unique life experiences due to their military service. Many women veterans suffer from chronic pain and other health conditions such as traumatic brain injuries due to being exposed to combat conditions. Also, women veterans are more likely to develop mental health conditions, such as depression or PTSD and their symptoms tend to be more severe and longer-lasting than for male veterans (Foster, 2009). In addition, many women veterans, an estimated 20 to 48 percent, have been sexually assaulted and an estimated 80 percent experienced sexual harassment while serving in the military (Foster, 2009).

Consequences of the problem.

Women veterans who struggle with securing suitable civilian employment upon exiting the military encounter significant emotional, financial, and existential consequences. Female veterans tend to face unique challenges due to their gender. One of these challenges, echoed by many female veterans, would be the lack of respect and recognition for their service by the civilian population. Women veterans, especially the
younger ones, frequently encounter disbelief when revealing their military past. The lack of acknowledgement for their service often makes them feel invisible and therefore causing transitioning into civilian life even more stressful (Foster, 2010). Furthermore, 15 percent of women veterans struggle with mental health problems such as anxiety and depression. In addition, research indicates that mood disorders, especially anxiety and depression, are also very common among the unemployed (Guindon & Smith, 2002). Moreover, an estimated 20 to 48 percent of women veterans experienced military sexual trauma, which increases the likelihood of mental health problems such as PTSD, anxiety and depression by threefold (Foster, 2010). These emotional conditions often have a negative impact on self-esteem making it very difficult for women veterans to secure and maintain a job. Yet if they do not obtain suitable employment, their self-efficacy may diminish even further.

Finding a well-paying job can also be very challenging for female veterans. Civilian positions often pay significantly less than what women veterans earned while serving in the military. To compound difficulties, many civilian employers refuse to recognize neither their veteran status nor their job skills gained on active military duty (Foster, 2010). Also, while in the military, women veterans enjoyed job security, benefits, and a highly regulated promotional structure. Moreover, childcare, housing, and healthcare costs were also covered by the military (Kelty, Kleykamp, & Segal, 2010). In the civilian world the situation is quite different. While women veterans qualify for the same benefits as their male counterparts, they are less likely to utilize them for various reasons. In some cases, women veterans were unaware of their benefits; in other cases they were unable to access them. The window of opportunity to access some of the
health benefits, including mental health benefits, is limited to two years from the date of exiting the military, yet the symptoms of some of the mental health conditions may not manifest themselves during that timeframe (Savitsky, Illingworth, & DuLaney, 2009). Furthermore, women veterans often chose not to utilize their health benefits, because they did not feel safe and respected by VA healthcare providers and staff. Therefore a large percentage of women veterans opted to use private healthcare providers, which can get expensive due to the multitude of health problems they face (Foster, 2010). Thus securing suitable employment is extremely important, because it would enable women veterans to pay for expenses formerly covered by the military.

Another such expense is housing, which can be rather costly. While many veterans own their homes, others, especially the younger generation of veterans tend to rent and often pay as much as 50 percent of their income toward housing costs (Foster, 2010). Sadly this circumstance makes veterans in general, and especially women veterans who are likely to earn less than male vets, be financially vulnerable and more likely than non-veterans to experience homelessness. In fact, more than 25 percent of the homeless are veterans. Furthermore, women veterans are more likely to experience homelessness than their male counterparts due to gender-specific circumstances such as having dependants or an increased likelihood of suffering from severe PTSD and other debilitating mental health conditions (Foster, 2010). By finding adequate civilian employment women veterans could escape this grim situation.

Almost 50 percent of the active duty personnel in all the branches of the U.S. military are between the ages of 17 and 24. In addition, women typically leave the military at a younger age than their male counterparts, creating a fairly young women
veteran population (Kelty, Kleykamp, & Segal, 2010). Because women veterans joined the military so young, their transition into adulthood took place mainly while serving. Therefore, for many female veterans forging a civilian identity can be quite difficult. Also, the military’s exceedingly masculine culture fails to recognize feminine qualities and characteristics, further deepening the identity crises in some female veterans (Kelty, Kleykamp, & Segal, 2010). When women veterans transition into civilian life, they are not only often unsure about how to function as a civilian, but also as a woman. Their military persona and the characteristics associated with it may not be valued in a civilian society, causing a gender-specific identity crisis in female veterans (Baechtold & Sawal, 2009). This gender-specific identity crisis can cause serious self-esteem issues, which may result in a lack of motivation to look for employment and can also distort women veterans’ view of suitable career options.

While exiting the military is voluntary for most women veterans, their experience can be compared to that of a job loss. In the civilian sector, when people lose their jobs, they often experience feelings of shame, rejection, isolation, confusion, and despair. Some people begin to doubt themselves, while other experience depression (Guindon & Smith, 2002). In women veterans these feelings can be amplified by the fact that they have limited work experience in the civilian sector and are unclear on how to translate their military skills and qualifications into civilian job requirements (Foster, 2010). Also, when finding work takes longer than anticipated, which due to today’s dire economic situation is quite common (Guindon & Smith, 2002); job seekers can experience frustration, apathy and burnout. In some cases, the stress resulting from
unemployment can reach such high levels that it prevents the job seeker from conducting a successful job search campaign (Guindon & Smith, 2002). Women veterans face unique challenges and have different needs when it comes to finding civilian employment. Programs created to serve this specific population must cater to these needs in order to be effective and useful.

**Limitations of project.**

Upon exiting the military, women veterans encounter a multitude of issues. As discussed above, transitioning into civilian life can be very challenging for female veterans, because many of them suffer from serious mental health conditions, struggle with self-esteem and identity crises, and experience difficult financial situations. This project is not designed to address or treat the various mental health conditions some women veterans may be suffering from due to their military experiences. In fact, this program is designed for women veterans who either have no debilitating mental health concerns or sought treatment for their mental health concerns prior to enrolling in this program.

Also, this program was not created to improve self-esteem or to resolve participants’ identity crises. However, because of the self-assessment component of the program, upon completion participants may have gained a deeper understanding of their personality, values, and strengths, which can result in an increase in self-esteem and a clearer self-image. When people meet their job search needs and reach their goal, they may experience an increase in self-esteem, and ultimately will be able to move past the emotional scars of unemployment and toward a happier, productive life (Guindon & Smith, 2002). Furthermore, while the program can accommodate participants with
diverse, ethnic, socioeconomic and educational backgrounds and a wide age distribution, it is aimed at women veterans who exited the military voluntarily in the last five years and who are actively searching for employment.

Even though the program’s main goal is to teach participants how to launch an effective job search campaign through learning how to identify career goals and develop sensible plans of action, there is no guarantee that all participants will be successful in attaining employment upon completing this program. In other words, this is not a job placement service, where participants will be offered employment based on their qualifications or performance during the program.

**Definition of technical terms.**

For the purpose of this project, the following technical terms used are:

Civilian: “[a.] a person whose primary occupation is civil or nonmilitary” (Collins English Dictionary, n.d.).

Mentor: “[1.] a wise or trusted adviser or guide [or counselor, and so on]” (Collins English Dictionary, n.d.).

Transition: “[1.] change or passage from one state or stage to another” (Collins English Dictionary, n.d.).

Unemployed: “[4.] . . . people who do not have jobs” (Dictionary.com Unabridged, n.d.) whether or not they are able to work.

Unemployment: “[1.] the state of being unemployed, especially involuntarily” (Dictionary.com Unabridged, n.d.).

Veteran: former member of the Armed Forces (Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 1993, p. 1315)
Woman veteran: former female member of the Armed Forces.

Summary

In addition to what has been discussed thus far, the literature review, which will be presented in the following chapter, will provide more information and substantial evidence that supports the need for this program. Furthermore, the next chapter will include a brief overview of some of the existing programs already available to the target population. Moreover, career theories and strategies that are relevant and applicable to this population will be identified and explained.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

General introduction.

The literature review will provide a general overview of the major issues and concerns affecting women veterans in regards to securing employment upon exiting the military. In order to understand the unique circumstances experienced by female veterans, the literature review will cover the following three major difficulties concerning women veterans: mental health issues, high divorce rates, and homelessness. The reason for reviewing the literature pertaining to these three topics is that all of them can be a cause or a consequence of women veterans having difficulties finding adequate civilian employment. Furthermore, without examining and understanding the complexity of the female veteran experience, creating effective programs and services for this population would be almost impossible.

Furthermore, the literature review will shed light on women’s experiences while serving in the military to give a broader context to the issues women veterans seem to struggle with during their transition to civilian life. Serving in the military exposed women to situations and experiences they would have never encountered if they had not enlisted. Moreover, the military is known to be very structured, male-dominated and governed by its own laws and regulations. For better or worse, spending years in service usually leaves an everlasting imprint on former servicemen and women. As the literature will show, women seem to be more impacted by their experience in the military than their male counterparts.
Also, the literature review will include an overview of some existing programs serving women veterans in transition. To show the wide range of the services already in place to assist this population with readjusting to civilian life, the programs were selected from both the public and the private sector. While the assistance programs that serve large numbers of veterans are usually created and sponsored by the government, more private organizations, mostly non-profit, have started to provide a variety of much needed services for veterans at local levels. These programs are much smaller in scale, operate on tight budget and often are unable to extend services to all who may need support. As this literature review will illustrate assistance programs that support women veterans in transition are still in high demand and not as easily available or accessible as they should be to those who really need such programs. Therefore, new programs and services such as the weekend workshop designed to assist women veterans in finding suitable civilian employment proposed in the forthcoming chapters remain needed.

**Summary of general career development.**

“Life-span theory, as it applies to career development, concerns the growing and changing ways that an individual deals with career issues over his or her entire life span” (Sharf, 2006, p. 143). Donald Super’s Life-Span Life Space Theory will supply the theoretical backdrop to the career development issues and concerns faced by women veterans during their transition from military service to civilian life. Super’s approach accounts for peoples’ evolving processes; that is they are continuously changing as they take on different life roles, traversing various experiences and life stages.

There are six key life roles in Super’s theory: child, student (also referred to as studying), worker (working), citizen (community service), homemaker (home and
family), and leisurite (leisure activities) (Sharf, 2006). Also, Super believed that people have skills, talents and knowledge, which they have acquired through their life roles. These attributes can amount to various degrees of success in different occupations.

In addition, in his career development model, Super surmised that readiness for career-decision making requires the following: a) sense of autonomy, time of future perspective, and self-esteem, b) work salience, c) career maturity, and d) the search for a good match of interests, values and aptitudes with those characterizing a field of work and other life career roles (Super, 1983). Furthermore, he contended that choosing a profession is a form of self-expression, because people tend to base career decisions on their view of self. Moreover, when selecting an occupation, people seek career satisfaction and strive toward finding employment that will make them feel valued and fulfilled.

For many women veterans, military service may have been similar to a vocational calling. They devoted themselves to the service to a degree that only few civilians experience in their career context. Thus, for many female veterans the challenge often is not finding employment but finding employment that provides them with the same level of career satisfaction as their experiences in the military did.

In Super’s Life-Span Life-Space theory, as described by Sharf (2006), the six major life roles identified above give context to the following basic stages of career development: growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance and disengagement. Furthermore, these five stages encompass three substages. For the growth stage Super identified the following substages: curiosity, fantasy and interest. The exploration stage comprises the substages: crystallization, specification and implementation. For the
establishment stage the substages are: stabilizing, consolidating, and advancing. Next is
the maintenance stage constituting of the substages: holding, updating, and innovating.
The last one is the disengagement stage, which includes these substages: deceleration,
retirement planning, and retirement living. While some of the stages and substages are
likely to occur at a certain age, Super emphasized that these stages may be recycled or
experienced more than once during a life time (Sharf, 2006).

Before examining Super’s five major life-space stages, Sharf (2006) provides an
explanation of role salience, which is an important key concept in Super’s theory. Sharf
describes role salience as an indicator of the importance level individuals assign to
different life roles throughout their lifetime. According to Sharf (2006), Super believed
that all life roles with the exception of the child role will fluctuate in importance to
individuals at different points in their lifetimes. Furthermore, Super stated that a
person’s commitment, participation and values expectations regarding these roles reflect
their level of salience.

Super’s life stages and its substages are the essential building blocks of his
Life- Span Theory. While these stages can recur or gain significance numerous times
during one’s lifetime, Super did assign a life stage in which stages are most likely to
occur (Sharf, 2006).

The Growth stage occurs between birth and the age 14, during which curiosity
propels exploration, information gathering, and the development of interests. The three
substages, curiosity, fantasy and interest, illustrate these activities well. According to
Sharf (2006), Super believed that during this stage the individual’s self-concept starts
to form. Self-concept is usually based on how people view themselves, and their
circumstances (Sharf, 2006).

The Exploration stage typically occurs between the ages of 15 and 25 and is comprised of the substages: crystallizing, specifying and implementing. During the crystallizing stage, people gain clarity of what they want to do, and start to identify their skills, interests and work values. In the specifying stage, individuals sort through different career possibilities and begin to make decisions on which path to take. During implementation, individuals start to craft a plan of action that will enable them to reach their career goals (Sharf, 2006).

According to Super, this is one of the most critical stages of a person’s career, because it can be a difficult transition depending on the state of the economy and the person’s preparedness for the world of work at the time of entry. Super points out that the unemployment rate for young workers is often double than that of older, more experienced workers (Super, 1978). Fear of unemployment or inadequate knowledge about the world of work might be a significant factor in young women’s decision to enlist in the military right after graduating from high school. Moreover, many women veterans may go through the exploration stage all over again upon their exit from the military, facing the same uncertainties as they did when they enlisted.

The Establishment stage generally happens between the ages of 25 and 45 and its substages are: stabilizing, consolidating, and advancing. During the stabilizing stage, individuals are focused on settling into a new employment, perfecting the skills required of them and building up their confidence as well as their comfort level regarding their chosen field. In the consolidation stage, individuals start to feel confident that they can do their job well and want their superiors to recognize their abilities and to entrust them
with more responsibilities. In the advancing stage, individuals focus on being promoted to a higher position with more responsibilities and higher pay (Sharf, 2006).

The Maintenance stage usually takes place between the ages of 45 and 65 and its three substages are: holding, updating, and innovating. During this stage the individual is focused on preserving his/her work status rather than pursuing advancement. The holding stage describes the individual’s effort to keep the position he/she achieved through the years of hard work. The updating stage refers to all the formal and informal activities a person engages in to retain his/her career knowledge and skills. The innovating stage encompasses a person’s activities and efforts to offer valuable contribution to his/her field. This may require learning new skills (Sharf, 2006).

The Disengagement stage is the last one in Super’s Life Span Theory. It is comprised of the following substages: decelerating, retirement planning and retirement living. In the decelerating stage, individuals focus on decreasing their work responsibilities. During the retirement planning stage, individuals begin to examine their activity levels, their financial situations, and other aspects of their lives that may affect their retirement. Retirement living usually occurs after the age of 60. People exit the work force and begin to focus on home and family, leisure activities and community service (Sharf, 2006).

In addition to developing these five major life stages, Super was interested in the career development of women. According to Sharf (2006), in 1957 Super proposed the following seven career patterns for women:

- Stable homemaking (marrying fairly young, staying home and raising a family);
- Conventional (entering work after high school or college, but leaving the
work force to raise a family);

- Stable Working (working continuously throughout their lives);
- Double-Track (combining career and homemaking roles throughout their lives);
- Interrupted (working prior to having a family, leaving to raise their children, and returning once the children are adults);
- Unstable (dropping out and returning to the work force repeatedly);
- Multiple-trial (working at various unrelated jobs, but never establishing a career).

More than three decades later, in 1990, Super recognized that due to the many societal changes the career patterns for women have changed significantly (Sharf, 2006). For example, women veterans’ experiences hardly fit any of the aforementioned patterns. Given the fact that generally they enlist shortly after high school and often leave the military in their twenties and early thirties, the traditional model of women in the workforce does not coincide with the experiences of women veterans.

Furthermore, Super (1980) argued that people play a variety of roles throughout their lives. Over time, people have multiple roles consecutively or simultaneously. Trying to fulfill numerous roles concurrently can be confusing and difficult to do. Therefore, for some people taking on a new role may significantly impact their already existing roles (Super, 1980). For example, when a woman becomes a mother, she may choose to stop working or change her employment status to accommodate her new responsibility. This might be especially true for women veterans, who chose to exit the military once they become parents.
Furthermore, Super’s idea of recycling his five major life stages, which include growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance and disengagement (excluding the growth stage which takes place during childhood) are clearly reflected in the career development of women veterans. After leaving the military, many women veterans find themselves returning to the exploration stage and trying to figure out what directions their personal and professional lives should take. Therefore using Super’s Life Span theory as the theoretical backdrop to understand the unique career development issues women veterans face is appropriate.

**Summary of literature.**

The following literature review will focus on illustrating the main issues women veterans seem to struggle with upon exiting the military. Attention will be given to mental health issues, high divorce rates, and homelessness since these appear to be prevalent among female veterans and can have significant impact on their ability to find adequate employment in the civilian workforce. While these are the main topics covered in the literature, another factor that may have a substantial influence on women veterans’ employability, namely their level of education, will be addressed as well. To have a deeper understanding of this unique population and their situation, the literature review will also include information on women’s acceptance within the military. Moreover, the literature review will cover information about the current economic climate and employment market conditions faced by female veterans seeking jobs after leaving military service.

Due to their unique life experiences, women veterans face distinctive career issues. Spending years in a structured environment such as the military, which clearly
outlines professional expectations, advancement opportunities and requirements and also provides a lot of essential services needed for a comfortable living at no or minimum cost, seems to have altered many women veterans’ perception of self in both a personal and professional context. Therefore, a significant number of female veterans struggle with identifying their values, interests, skills, and strengths in order to succeed in finding civilian employment. In addition, because of their extensive military service, many women veterans have limited civilian work experiences coupled with limited knowledge about the civilian labor market. Therefore, they often find it very difficult to identify reasonable career goals for themselves.

Lastly, the literature review will look at existing programs already serving the women veteran community. To illustrate the wide range of programs assisting veterans during their transition to civilian life the programs were selected from both the public and the private sector.

**Women veterans’ mental health conditions.**

Due to the changing nature of the wars fought in Iraq and Afghanistan, women serving in the different branches of the U.S. military are exposed to situations and taking part in missions that have long-lasting impact on their mental health. Women veterans are twice as likely as their male counterparts to report various mental health conditions, such as depression and anxiety. Furthermore, the majority of military women, 80 percent, and an increasing number of women veterans, an estimated 48 percent, reported experiencing military sexual trauma (MST), which includes sexual assault and sexual harassment (Foster, 2010). In an Issue Report published in 2009, Erin Mulhall stated that in 2008, nearly 3,000 sexual assaults were reported by military personnel, which
presented a nine percent increase from the year prior. However, even more alarming is the fact that the actual numbers of such incidents are most likely much higher, since an estimated 50 percent of these assaults remain unreported. The victims are often subordinates of the assailants, which creates a culture of fear and mistrust, preventing them from reporting the incident (Mulhall, 2009). According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, experiencing MST can have serious emotional consequences. Victims of MST report feelings of depression, anger, confusion, as well as having trouble sleeping, concentrating, paying attention, and memorizing. Furthermore, MST seems to have a greater negative impact on readjustment to civilian life than having sustained physical injuries or being exposed to traumatic events such as death of fellow service members (Katz, Bloor, Cojucar, & Draper, 2007).

Another wide-spread mental health condition that appears to be common among female veterans is post-traumatic stress disorder, often referred to as PTSD. PTSD is an anxiety disorder affecting those who have experienced extreme trauma. Researchers found that current and former female service personnel who have experienced MST are three times more likely to be diagnosed with PTSD as women who did not experience MST (Foster, 2010). PTSD can have a negative impact on the sufferers’ social and emotional development as well as on their ability to learn and to remember (Dryden-Edwards, & Stöppler, 2013).

Not only are MST and PTSD mental health difficulties women veterans are increasingly experiencing, but also traumatic brain injuries (TBI). As a result of their exposure to combat conditions, the number of women veterans who suffer from TBI is increasing. Traumatic brain injuries are typically caused by blast injuries, explosions and
have enduring physical and mental health consequences. Individuals with TBIs can experience limited use of arms and legs, changes in speech and language use, loss of cognitive abilities and serious emotional problems. Moreover, changes in brain function can have a negative impact on the survivors’ personal and professional lives (What are the Effects of TBI, 2006).

While a growing number of veterans, men and women, are seeking services for mental health issues, there are still many veterans who refrain from getting treatment for fear of stigmatization. In addition, women veterans often deny having problems because they do not want to be labeled weak or are expected by friends and family to be healthy. Upon exiting the military, most women veterans expect to resume their lives without delay. Thus, many female veterans may not be willing to follow a potentially lengthy treatment for their existing mental health conditions (Katz, Bloor, Cojucar, & Draper, 2007). By not addressing their mental health issues, women veterans may jeopardize their chances of finding and keeping a job. That is, mental health concerns can interfere with job maintenance, because of difficulty learning new skills, sustaining quality job performance over lengthy periods of time and also because it can affect relationships with superiors and coworkers.

**Divorce rate among women veterans.**

Marital status is an important component that can have serious impact on women veterans’ transition experiences. Although current divorce rates among active-duty military personnel are not considerably higher than the national divorce rate, when the data is broken down by gender a significant difference between female and male service members emerges. The divorce rate among female active duty personnel is three
times higher than among male service members (Mulhall, 2009). Although this data reflects only the divorce rate among active-duty service members, hypotheses can be made that the numbers of divorced female veterans are higher than that of divorced male veterans. According to another report, in 2008, 16 percent of Post 9/11 women veterans were separated, divorced, or widowed in comparison with only seven percent of nonveteran women (Holder, 2010).

Furthermore, the causes behind the growing numbers of failed military marriages are not known. In a report published in 2010, Foster wrote that since women tend to be the primary caregivers, military deployments often cause a great deal of stress within the family unit. Traumatic experiences, temporary or permanent injuries can further impair women veterans’ ability to resume their caregiver role upon exiting the military (Foster, 2010). According to another study, traumatic experiences, especially the ones sexual in nature (MST’s) can have a negative impact on the victims’ views of own sexuality and their comfort level regarding sexual intimacy (Ghahramanlou-Holloway, Cox, Fritz, & George, 2011). This issue can cause marital discontent and if concern remains untreated, these difficulties may ultimately lead to divorce.

Having dependents at the time of exiting the military can pose another challenge to transitioning women veterans. Almost 75 percent of married military personnel have children, although active duty female personnel are less likely to have dependents than male service personnel. Despite the fact that fewer women have children while serving, due to the higher divorce rates of military women, the likelihood of being a single parent is also higher. In fact 13 percent of military women are single parents, compared to only six percent of their male counterparts (Kelty, Kleycamp, & Segal, 2010). Based on these
numbers it is safe to contend that the numbers of single parents among women veterans are higher than among male vets.

The marital status of women veterans with dependents at the time of their transition to civilian life can be a decisive factor when making career choices. Beyond the fact that these circumstances can amplify the urgency to find civilian employment, but they can also complicate the job search process. In addition to higher divorce rates and likelihood of single parenting, increased risk of homelessness is a concern for women veterans.

**Homelessness among women veterans.**

Based on data published in 2010, an approximately 154,000 veterans are homeless nationwide. These numbers can double if the veterans experiencing temporary homelessness are included (Foster, 2010). While most veterans own their homes or have no difficulties covering their housing costs, there are veterans, in low-income brackets, who are renters and spend more than 50 percent of their monthly earnings on rent. Women veterans seem to be the fastest growing faction of the homeless population. In fact, they are four times more likely than civilian women to experience homelessness (Foster, 2010). In general, women veterans tend to have lower incomes than their male counterparts, and have more difficulties securing civilian employment that match their military income level. These factors seem to position women veterans at high risk for homelessness (Mulhall, 2009). In comparison to male homeless veterans, female homeless veterans were younger, less likely to have a job and more likely to suffer from a mental health condition or a debilitating addiction (Gamache, Rosenheck, & Tessler, 2003).
In addition, female homeless veterans are more likely than their male counterparts to have severe mental health conditions, including MST. Approximately 40 percent of female homeless veterans reported being victims of sexual assault by a fellow serviceman (Mulhall, 2009). Since the numbers of women serving in the military is increasing, the numbers of women veterans will most likely increase as well. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) acknowledged the fact that the programs and services available to women veterans cannot accommodate this growing population. There are only about a dozen housing facilities catering exclusively to female veterans nationwide and only 60 percent of the existing shelters can accommodate women. Moreover, fewer than five percent of the housing programs currently serving veterans are addressing the needs of the female veteran population (Mulhall, 2009).

After being discharged from the military, many women veterans are unaware of the services and programs available to them. Some of these programs are aimed at helping veterans find affordable housing, employment, or opportunities to further their education. At times, the lack of awareness results in homelessness, which is often paired with addiction problems (Hillard, 2010). If women veterans succeed in securing adequate employment in the civilian sector, they would be able to cover housing expenses and would be less likely to become homeless. Next the topic of educational level of women veterans will be addressed, since education seems to have a great impact on women veterans’ success to find employment in the civilian sector.

**Educational level of women veterans.**

According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the educational level of veterans has shifted with increased educational attainment in the last decade. From
2000 to 2009, there was a notable increase in the numbers of veterans holding Bachelor’s Degrees. Moreover, between the years 2000 and 2009, the percentage of veterans with advanced degrees was consistently higher than that of non-veterans and kept increasing each year. Also, women veterans were more likely than male veterans and non-veteran women to have completed some college. A higher percentage of female veterans (21%) have Bachelor’s Degrees than male veterans (18.1%) and non-veteran women (18.2%). Since 2004, the percentage of women veterans (11%) with advanced degrees has increased dramatically compared to female non-veterans (8.8%) (Profile of Veterans: 2009, 2011). Having a college degree seemed to have a major impact on how women veterans prepared for their transition to civilian life. According to a survey conducted in 2007 by the Business and Professional Women’s (BPW) Foundation (Untapped Talent, 2008), female veterans with college degrees were more likely than their less educated counterparts to begin their job search prior to exiting the military. Furthermore, the college-educated women veterans were able to find civilian employment faster than non-college educated vets (in six months compared to nine months) and they also reported higher levels of job satisfaction. The BPW Foundation’s survey also indicated that college-educated female veterans were more likely to view their military experiences as an asset during their job search. Furthermore, they were more likely to report finding employers who appreciated their military backgrounds and valued their military training.

Despite the encouraging statistics regarding the educational level of women veterans, many still experience difficulties securing civilian employment after leaving the military. Even though 88 percent of military jobs can be directly matched with civilian
positions (Untapped Talent, 2008) female veterans often find it difficult to translate their military skills and competencies successfully into civilian employment. Furthermore, many potential employers do not recognize their veteran status and underestimate their ability to handle a job (Foster, 2010).

Experts tend to agree that while many women veterans have the education and experience to perform well and even excel in civilian positions, due to their unique circumstances, namely acquiring these experiences through military service, they have to be persistent and creative in order to “sell” themselves to civilian employers (Banning, 2011).

Another hurdle women veterans in transition must tackle is the daunting task of translating their military experiences into civilian credentials. This procedure requires a thorough understanding of not only their military training and skills, but also of their equivalence in the civilian workforce. Sometimes employers deny women veterans positions because they appear overqualified for positions for which are applying. In other instances, they lack professional certifications, usually offered only in the civilian sector that would support the necessary job skills (Thiruvengadam, 2011). Thus presenting their military experiences in a way that speaks the language of civilian employers can make the difference between getting hired and being turned down. To gain a better understanding of the qualifications women veterans acquire through their military service, the roles that women play in today’s U.S. military will be analyzed next.

Women in the U.S. military.

The role of women in the military has been changing rapidly and continuously since the start of the All-Volunteer Force in 1973 (Holder, 2010). Women tend to enlist at a
young age, and leave the military sooner than their male counterparts.

In 2007, about 50 percent of the U.S. military was between the ages of 17 and 24 and the largest military women cohort was between the ages of 20 and 24 (Kelty, Kleykamp, & Segal, 2010). During their service, women have access to over 90 percent of the occupations in the Army, the Navy, and the Marine Corps. In the Air Force, this percentage jumps to 99 percent, excluding women from only a handful of positions. Having these opportunities available to them, more female military personnel decide to build their character in the military. Nearly 12 percent of senior enlisted personnel and officers in three major branches, Army, Navy, and the Air Force, are women. In the Marine Corps, this percentage is significantly lower at about three percent (Kelty, Kleykamp, & Segal, 2010).

Although women seem to be accepted as equals to men in the military, there are signs that despite their remarkable contribution, they are still viewed as “outsiders” by many of their fellow servicemen and some military officials. Numerous military women report being stigmatized, verbally and physically attacked and sexually assaulted by fellow servicemen (Murdock, Bradley, Mather, Klein, Turner, & Yano, 2006). These harrowing experiences are believed to be the main reason behind women leaving the military sooner than men. Furthermore, military women often feel that they need to prove themselves continuously and still have fewer opportunities for advancement or other forms of recognition (Kelty, Kleykamp, & Segal, 2010).

For many active service personnel joining the military seems to be a transition between high school and higher education or the civilian labor force. In a sense, the military provides a fair and more stable work environment than the civilian sector, with
less uncertainty and a much clearer pay and benefit structure. Furthermore, the military ends to pay men, women, racial and ethnic minorities with more equivalency than the public sector (Kelty, Kleykamp, & Segal, 2010). In addition to being an “equal opportunity employer,” the military offers professional development opportunities through training, affordable educational options, and leadership experiences.

Moreover, the military is known to absorb housing, childcare, and healthcare costs for active duty personnel (Kelty, Kleykamp, & Segal, 2010). All these factors will have an influence on women’s military experiences as well as on their views of civilian life and their place in it.

**Current economic climate and labor market conditions.**

In order to have a better understanding of the situation faced by transitioning women veterans to civilian existence, the present economic climate and the prevailing labor market conditions require evaluation. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, in March 2011 the overall unemployment rate in the United States was 8.8 percent. Furthermore, for the same month the unemployment rate for women 16 years and older was 8.3 percent, while for women veterans it was reported at 9.9 percent. These statistics become even more disturbing once they are broken down by the duration of unemployment. According to information accessible on the U.S. Department of Labor’s website, in March 2011, 60.1 percent of the unemployed population was out of a job for 15 weeks or longer. The next highest group, 45.5 percent, was unemployed for 27 weeks or longer. This information clearly illustrates how difficult finding employment in today’s unstable economy and volatile job market is. In 2009, the average length of unemployment exceeded six months for the first time since 1948 (Peck, 2010).
While unemployment seems to plague people from all walks of life, certain segments of the population, men, young adults and racial and ethnic minority groups, are more affected than others. Whereas a large portion of the job loss is contributed to the recession, many jobs were lost to the seemingly permanent shift in the U.S. economy. Some industries, like the finance and the construction industry, suffered such great losses that are unlikely to recover to their original glory. Most manufacturing jobs are shipped overseas, and the banking industry just started to stabilize, but not yet reached a comfort level to relax lending standards to small businesses. Unemployment is so widespread that it has lost most of the stigma associated with it (Peck, 2010).

Since the hardest hit industries, finance, construction, manufacturing, were mostly male dominated, 75 percent of the jobs lost were held by men. Women, mostly working in service industries such as education and healthcare, did not suffer such great losses. The recession seemed to have accelerated the expansion of the service sector and the shrinking of the manufacturing sector (Peck, 2010).

Women veterans who spent the last five years or more serving in the military might not be aware of these profound changes in the U.S. economy. Furthermore, the relatively stable military environment has likely sheltered them from these volatile economic times, so they may find themselves ill prepared for the currently highly competitive job market. Also, depending on the extent of women veterans’ networking abilities, making educated career decisions for themselves may be difficult as they need to obtain relevant job market information. Obtaining accurate information regarding labor force within the geographical area of their interest is extremely important for female veterans entering the unfamiliar civilian job market. Every state
in the U.S. collects and reports labor market information. Some states are better than others at making these reports available to job seekers (Fichtner, Kauder, & Krepcio, 2009). Nonetheless, women veterans seeking employment in the civilian sector would benefit greatly from better understanding the economic situation and the local workforce in the geographical area they intend to live. Although women veterans may face a variety of career related issues upon leaving the military, some of these concerns seem to carry more significance than others when it comes to successful reintegration to civilian society.

**Career issues of women veterans.**

The four major career issues facing women veterans in transition are: lack of self- awareness in a civilian context, limited knowledge of the civilian job market, inadequate civilian work experience paired with the inability to “sell” their military experiences and skills to potential employers, and lack of experience identifying reasonable career goals for themselves. The literature will supply evidence on how these issues hinder women veterans’ efforts to successfully integrate into civilian life and find suitable employment.

**Lack of self-awareness in a civilian context.**

Military service seems to have a significant impact on young people’s transition into adulthood. Since almost 50 percent of the U.S. military is between the ages of 17 and 24; therefore young military men and women may forge their adult identity while serving (Kelty, Kleykamp, & Segal, 2010). Furthermore, due to the exceedingly masculine culture of the military the coming of age for military women can get even more complex. The military is known for failing to recognize the value of many feminine
characteristics and qualities, which often leads to psychological and/or physical abuse against women service personnel (Kelty, Kleykamp, & Segal, 2010). Women in the military often feel pressured to suppress certain gender characteristics to avoid appearing weak or incompetent (Herbert, 1998). Melissa Herbert (1998) stated that “The military continues to see femininity as something to be denied or, at the very least, controlled” (p. 45). Therefore, when female soldiers leave the military, many experience serious difficulties with redefining themselves not only as civilians but also as women (Baechtold & Sawal, 2009). Many transitions demand role change, which in return will determine the impact the transition will have on a person. One will have an easier time adapting to the “new” role if it is perceived as a positive change (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006).

In addition to having to rediscover their gender identity, many women veterans have to forge a new professional persona as well. Although most women veterans leave the military voluntarily, research shows that many of them report feelings of loss, isolation and alienation (Katz, Bloor, Cojucar, & Draper, 2007). These feelings coincide with emotions reported by people who experienced involuntary job loss. Furthermore, when identity is linked to people’s employment, the feelings of loss are even stronger, because people like that determine their self-worth based on what they do as professionals (Guindon & Smith, 2002). Hence, perhaps as women veterans’ exit from the military similar feelings as of those in a job loss are evoked.

Adding to the complexity of the situation is the fact that these women are transitioning into civilian society, which is quite different from the military. Many civilians are very ignorant and insensitive towards veterans, which often translates to
those in the military as a lack of respect and recognition for their military service (Foster & Vince, 2009). Encountering this kind of attitude can have a negative impact on veterans’ self-esteem and sense of belonging. Furthermore, the military is built on values such as loyalty, duty, respect, selfless-service, honor, integrity, and personal courage, which may not be highly respected within the civilian society. Encountering a lack of support, which ignores military core values, could further amplify veterans’ feelings of alienation. In fact, a growing disconnect between military values and the values of the American society at large seems to be developing (Frazier, 2006). According to Frazier, Edgar H. Schein, a leading expert on organizational socialization, when individuals enter a new culture, they do it either because their values match those of the culture, or they are willing to accept the values that govern that culture (Frazier, 2006). According to Schein’s theory, women veterans are in transition, because they are leaving the military’s value system and encounter the daunting task of conforming to a new set of values, those of the civilian society in order to gain acceptance. In the midst of all these changes, women veterans may find it very difficult to identify their own personal and career values.

Spending years in military service is likely to have had an impact on women veterans’ skills and interests. Because of the unique aspects of a military work environment, the frequent relocations and lengthy deployments, the limited interaction with civilians due to living on or near military bases and being provided basic living necessities (such as housing) by the military, women veterans may experience difficulties in developing and nurturing interests unrelated to the military (Savitsky, Illingworth, & DuLaney, 2009). Thus, women veterans’ personal and professional
identities seem to be highly connected with their military service. Once they leave the
military, many of these women feel as they are “stripped” of their identity, and may need
time to figure out who they truly are in a civilian context.

**Limited knowledge of the civilian job market.**

The military, compared to the volatile civilian job market of today, seems to have
provided women veterans with a sense of job security, few civilian employers can
replicate. Also, during the years these women veterans have spent in service, the civilian
job market has traversed through major changes. The unemployment rate has reached
double digits and there are no signs of significant improvements in the near future (Peck,
2010). Also, the unemployment rate is not the only major issue in today’s economy.
Chief industries such as construction, finance, and manufacturing, all suffered extensive
job losses and are unlikely to recapture their former market share. These transformations
seem to have altered the civilian job market forever or at least for years to come (Peck,
2010).

Because of the relative stability of military life, lengthy deployments, and limited
exposure to civilian job market conditions, women veterans may be stymied once they
leave the service. According to a research conducted in 2007 by the Business and
Professional Women Foundation (Untapped Talent, 2008), only 48.8 percent of the over
1,600 participating women veterans began to look for a job while still in the military.
These women may have gotten a “reality check” just in time to adjust their job search
strategies to current labor market conditions, but the remaining 51.7 percent who only
started their job search after leaving the military, the shock might have been much harder
to overcome. Furthermore, the research uncovered, that those women veterans who
started looking for employment early were more likely to report that they felt prepared for the civilian job market. Additionally, 93 percent of the women veterans surveyed stated that they did not join or use any women’s network, veterans’ organization, or professional associations to help with their job search.

In addition, the report showed that 75 percent of the women veterans surveyed mainly utilized online resources to gather information and acquire knowledge about the civilian job market. These women used the Internet to learn about various job search skills such as resume writing, networking, and professional interviewing practices. In fact they preferred the Internet to most of the traditional job search strategies such as using personal contacts, family or veteran networks, general or veteran-focused job search services and the Transition Assistance Program (TAP).

As mentioned above, women veterans tend to obtain most of their job search related information from online resources, and forgo the option to utilize their personal networks and resources available to them through local civilian or veterans services organizations, they could likely have a limited and probably somewhat skewed knowledge of the civilian job market. In addition, women veterans who enlisted right after high school gained all their work experience while serving and they may find it difficult to transfer their skills and qualifications to the civilian job market.

**Inadequate civilian work experience.**

Most women veterans joined the military at a young age, many shortly after finishing high school (Kelty, Kleykamp, & Segal, 2010). Therefore, the bulk of their work experiences are related to military service. While most military occupations (88 percent) have equivalence in the civilian labor market (Untapped Talent, 2008), service
related work experience seems to escape civilian employers. According to a report issued by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (March, 2011), 46.6 percent of women veterans worked in management, professional and related occupations, 14.5 percent in service occupations, and 23.1 percent in office and administrative support occupations. Despite these numbers, many women veterans relate having difficulties “selling” their military skills to civilian employers. Furthermore, many employers fail to recognize their veteran status and/or give full credit for their military work experiences (Foster, & Vince, 2009). Some women veterans, like Christa Fazio who left the Navy in 2006, experience a different problem: being overqualified and underestimated due to a lack of civilian professional qualifications, such as professional certifications. After months of trying, many female veterans become discouraged with their job search and settle for temporary or part-time solutions just to meet their financial burdens (Thiruvengadam, 2011).

Although most women veterans were likely to work in military occupations that have a close match in the civilian labor market, many others were given assignments that do not have a civilian equivalence. An increasing number of servicewomen hold occupations that are specific to military operations, such as weapons specialists, and their numbers are steadily increasing. While in 1990 only 19 percent of servicewomen held military occupations, by 2008 that proportion had doubled to 40 percent (Holder, 2010). Because of the changing nature of the current wars, these numbers could climb even higher. Once these servicewomen leave the military they will likely have difficulties transferring their skills sets to civilian employment. In addition, women veterans may have a hard time adjusting to the “normalcy” of a civilian job. After having spent months in a war zone, often being in life-or-death situations, finding meaning in a civilian
employment can be quite challenging at the onset. This feeling of detachment can manifest as lack of interest in their work assignments, which can ultimately affect their job performance in a negative way (Slone & Friedman, 2008).

The research project conducted in 2007 by the Business and Professional Women Foundation (Untapped Talent, 2008) reported a rather interesting discovery about women veterans in transition. Researchers found that women veterans who thought highly of their skill levels were more likely to feel successful in their transition, more satisfied with their civilian jobs, and more likely to feel accepted by their employers and colleagues. Furthermore, women veterans with highly valued skills sets were more likely to find jobs, which they deemed fulfilling, challenging, and important. This research is critical to consider with this population as results could support women veterans’ beliefs regarding successful employment in the civilian labor market may impact outcomes. That is, those female veterans able to display high levels of confidence when interacting with prospective employers, may have increased chances of being hired. Increasing these self-beliefs could be a point of intervention with women veterans.

**Lack of experience identifying reasonable career goals.**

While the three career issues discussed in detail above can have a negative impact on women veterans’ ability to identify reasonable career goals for themselves upon exiting the military, there are other issues that exacerbate this situation. As Christa Fazio, a Navy veteran postulated: “In the military you get taken care of in so many ways that you forget how to do things for yourself” (Thiruvengadam, 2011). Despite the fact that the military is the only major organization that can legally discriminate in employment options based on gender, it is also an institution that allows women to work
in occupations traditionally held by men. Alternatively, the military’s racially unbiased culture contributed to reductions in racial desegregation and to lower differentiation of educational gaps between various racial and ethnic groups and also genders (Kelty, Kleykamp, & Segal, 2010). Although these are remarkable achievements, enjoying such “utopian” work environment for long periods of time can distort women veterans’ expectations regarding their career possibilities in the civilian labor force.

Also, many women veterans seem to view enlisting as their last major career decision. The military has a transparent promotional system, paired with fair pay based on rank and length of service with benefits covering basic material needs such as housing and healthcare costs (Kelty, Kleykamp, & Segal, 2010). Therefore, women veterans could manage their “military careers” more effectively than their civilian counterparts whom are building careers in a volatile labor market.

Moreover, the extent to which the military provides for its service members reduces the level of control they may have over their affairs, which lessens the need for decision-making on both personal and professional levels. To ensure mission preparedness, the military closely monitors its service men and women, concerning itself with personal matters such as mental and physical health issues, addiction problems and marital conflict (Savitsky, Illingworth, & DuLaney, 2009). For servicewomen, living on military bases, having access to free healthcare, childcare, and education, eliminated many of the common decision-making scenarios non-military women are faced with every day. For example, which healthcare provider is cheaper or better? Which school district or childcare provider is more desirable? Civilian women, especially if they are the head of the household, make personal and professional
decisions on an ongoing basis, because their circumstances require them to do so.
However, it seems that for servicewomen, many decisions have been made for them by
the military. Therefore, many women veterans, who spent years in military service, may
find it difficult to resume their decision-making responsibilities once they leave the
Armed Forces.

**Existing employment services for target population.**

There are numerous programs assisting veterans transitioning from military
service to a civilian life. Most of these services are created and operated by the various
branches of the military or federal and local governmental departments. These programs
offer veterans services in many different areas. Some were created to provide
healthcare, others to assist with housing, financial, educational and employment
services. This section will focus on programs and services providing employment
assistance to veterans.

In addition, there are an increasing number of employment services that were
created for veterans by local, non-governmental organizations, to address the growing
needs of this population. However, many of these programs are limited in scope, serve
only a specific section of the veteran community, or are constrained by inadequate
financial resources. As aforementioned, the female veteran population is not only
growing steadily, but female veterans also present new sets of issues, often not
addressed by services that were created mainly with the male veteran population in
mind. To provide a more balanced review of the services currently available to veterans,
the programs to be discussed here were chosen from both the public and the private
sector.
Transition Assistance Program (TAP).

All branches of the military must provide a transition assistance program for its servicemen and women separating from the military or retiring from active duty. There are four departments, Department of Defense (DOD), Transportation (DOT), Labor (DOL) and Veterans Affairs (VA) working together supervising TAPs offered by each military branch. While the military branches have substantial creative control over the design of their programs, they must offer pre-separation counseling and transition assistance workshops to facilitate service members’ adjustment to civilian life (Bascetta, & General Accounting Office, 2002). The pre-separation counseling portion of the program must be offered to all service members no later than 90 days prior to their actual separation date and should provide information pertaining to all the benefits and services these exiting service men and women will be entitled to once leaving the military. These include but are not limited to educational, vocational, rehabilitation and health benefits.

Before leaving the military, service members are required to complete a pre-separation counseling checklist, indicating that they have received information on existing benefits and services and specify the services they intend to utilize. Transition assistance workshops, usually three-day sessions focusing on resume writing and job search strategies, are part of the services offered to separating service members but they must express interest in order to participate (Bascetta et al., 2002). Many separating services members choose not to partake in transition assistance workshops, passing up the opportunity to receive essential information that could help them secure employment in the civilian labor market. In 2001, only 54.5% of all separating
service members attended a transition assistance workshop, with the U.S. Army reporting the lowest attendance rate of only 33%, which is especially disappointing since the Army is the largest military branch (Clemens & Milsom, 2008). Therefore, before the effectiveness of the transition assistance programs are investigated, officials may have to examine the reasons behind the unsatisfactory participation rates across all military branches.

Furthermore, due to the fact that each military branch has substantial influence over the design of its TAP, the content and even the delivery of this service can vary widely from one military branch to another. This discrepancy can influence not only the participation rate but also the effectiveness of the program. Based on the notion that service members have diverse military experiences in the various branches of the military, each branch aims to design its program to best serve the needs of their soldiers. For example, the Army offers supplementary individual counseling as well as interactive job training since a large percentage of its separating soldiers served in combat-related positions in which they have gained skills that have limited transferability to civilian occupations (Bascetta et al., 2002).

As mentioned above, there are differences in the way the various military branches deliver their transition assistance programs to separating or retiring service members. The Coast Guard uses contractors who are trained jointly with their in-house transition assistance coordinators to work together on helping service members find suitable civilian employment once they leave the service. In addition, while some military branches will offer these services in the format of individual counseling others will provide them in a group-counseling format. The location in which the programs take
place varies. In some cases, the sessions were held in buildings that belonged to religious organizations while in others sessions took place in educational facilities. Class sizes also differed, sometimes surpassing the recommended maximum of 50 (Bascetta et al., 2002). Moreover, in some instances there were differences in the transition assistance programs offered for separating and for retiring military personnel.

While it seems that TAP services are customized extensively by each military branch, the transition assistance available to service members with disabilities are more cohesive across the branches. To address their unique challenges, there are additional services available to disabled service members planning to seek civilian employment. Because of the many laws and regulations protecting soldiers with disabilities, transition services for this particular group were kept more uniform (Bascetta et al., 2002).

Another decisive factor in utilizing TAP by separating service members is accessibility. In many instances, service members are unable to participate due to geographical constraints. To resolve these situations, service members are offered an adapted version of the program that may not be as comprehensive as the original, or the mode of delivery will be changed to fit the unique circumstances of the soldiers. However, accessibility can be compromised by other factors as well. In the Armed Forces the military mission is top priority, so in many cases soldiers find it challenging to find time to participate in transition assistance workshops or other pre-separation services (Bascetta et al., 2002). Moreover, if military supervisors have a negative attitude towards transition assistance services, they will be less likely to accommodate the soldiers’ desires to participate in such activities (Bascetta et al., 2002).
There is very limited data on the effectiveness of TAP. Due to the lack of information on participants’ success rate in finding civilian employment upon separation from the military and to the complexity of the programs available through the various branches of the military, knowing with certainty whether taking part in TAP will surely improve one’s chances in finding suitable civilian employment and becoming a well-adjusted member of society is unclear. Moreover, although some of the military branches, like the U.S. Coast Guard, hires contractors from the civilian sector to deliver its transition assistance services, other branches use their own personnel, which imply that the workshops are created and presented by people who have limited knowledge of civilian life and labor force. Furthermore, none of the services included in TAP are created directly for women veterans, who may face different issues and challenges than their male counterparts once leaving the military. In addition to the TAP program, community-based, non-profit organizations exist to assist veterans.

**Swords to Plowshares.**

A community-based, non-profit organization located in San Francisco, California, Swords to Plowshares, offers a variety of services for veterans in need of assistance. Among others, the organization provides employment and job training services mainly for veterans living in the San Francisco Bay Area. Since its foundation in 1974, the organization has grown steadily, expanding not only the array of services they provide, but also the scope of these services. The employment and job training assistance they have been offering has expanded significantly over the years as well. In 2009, the organization provided job counseling, skill enhancing workshops and job
training to 250 veterans and successfully placed another 175 in jobs. The previous year, the organization hosted their first ever career fair, with 20 employers participating. The fair was attended by over 150 veterans (Annual Report, 2009).

In addition, the organization collaborated with local community colleges and vocational training facilities and developed certificate training programs in occupations that were in high demand. Aside from expanding their own services, the organization also emphasized building productive working relationships with local employment service providers such as Career One-Stops and various state departments already serving veterans (Annual Report, 2009).

In order to address the unique needs of women veterans, in 2008 the organization hired a Women Veteran Coordinator, whose responsibilities include assisting returning female veterans with a wide array of issues and also to advocate on their behalf at national level. Furthermore, to generate awareness of women veterans’ issues, in 2009 the organization hosted an innovative art exhibit, “Shout! Art by Women Veterans,” that provided a space for women veterans to find their voice through the all-transcending language of art (Annual Report, 2009).

In 2009, the Swords to Plowshares spent a little over $850,000 to fund employment and job training services. This amount constituted roughly 11% of their budget. Approximately 67% of their total funding derives from government sources. The remaining 33% is generated through fees, corporate and private donations, events and investments (Annual Report, 2009). Since the organization is largely dependent on government sponsorship, the current federal and state budget problems can have a negative impact on the organization’s financial situation and sustainability, which could
result a significant reduction in existing services. Aside from a potentially unstable financial standing, the organization’s main focus is not the provision of employment and job training services; therefore the effort and time spent on developing and offering quality assistance in this realm may not be sufficient. Moreover, although the leaders of the organization made the first step towards recognizing the need for gender-specific assistance by having a Women Veteran Coordinator on board, they have failed to use this important discovery in the design and implementation of their employment and job training services. There is no indication that these services are in any way accommodating the special needs and challenges women veterans face when looking for civilian employment. Some veterans exit the military with the clear career goal of becoming a teacher. The program to be discussed next was designed to assist veterans interested in finding employment in the field of education.

**Troops to Teachers (TTT).**

This federal program was created in 1994 to help former military personnel interested in pursuing a career in education to obtain the necessary qualifications to become K through 12 teachers in the U.S. public education system. The program is structured as follows: the national office records all applications and manages program funding, while the state offices handle certification, licensure and employment issues (Troops to Teachers, 2013). Military service members who hold a Bachelor’s Degree or higher educational degree automatically qualify for teaching credential programs. Furthermore, service members who did not formally complete a college degree but have the equivalent of one year college and minimum of six years work experience in a vocational or technical field qualify to begin a teaching credential program as well
TTT also provides participants with financial assistance and partial salary subsidies to help qualified schools hire these newly qualified former military personnel. In order to take part in the program and to qualify for financial assistance, applicants must agree to obtain the necessary teaching credentials within two years after leaving the military and also once attaining their credentials they are required to work for five consecutive years in school districts that serve low-income students and receive federal Chapter 1 grants for compensatory education programs under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Taylor & ERIC Clearinghouse on Teaching and Teacher Education, 1994).

Since its foundation in 1994, over 6,000 former service members had taken part in this program. Recently TTT followed up with over 800 school principals who hired former military personnel from this program and the feedback collected was overwhelmingly positive. According to this survey, over 75% of teachers hired through TTT were rated “above average or higher” on their performance by their principals. Also, schools report a higher retention rate among former military personnel in comparison with teachers who just finished college. The demand for teachers is especially high in rural areas and inner-city schools. Furthermore, there are more positions available to math, science and special education teachers (Powers, 2011).

While this is clearly an employment assistance program, it is very limited in scope. Only service members interested in a teaching career would benefit from this service, excluding all others seeking different career paths. Also, the conditions of the program may be unacceptable for many potential applicants, further limiting the
number of service men and women eligible to take part in it. While teaching generally is an appealing profession to women, female veterans, especially the ones with children, may find it hard to accept a five-year commitment to teach in rural or inner city school districts. For some, filling these positions would require uprooting their families and interrupting the lives of their loved ones, a step they may not be willing to take. Moreover, the program does not seem to have a built-in support system for participants after the completion of the program.

**Joining Forces for Women Veterans Mentorship Program (JFWVMP).**

After recognizing women veterans’ need for on-going support during their transition to civilian life, the Business and Professional Women’s Foundation (BPW) launched a mentorship program that connects female veterans with working women, employers, local communities, government or private agencies that can provide assistance after their separation from the military. The program is still in its early stages, but its goal is to recruit 10,000 mentors by the end of 2012, the year this program will be launched in total. The long-term goal of the project is even more ambitious, with plans to build over 100,000 mentoring relationships, through recruitment of mentors from all walks of life (Joining Forces for Women Veterans Mentorship Program [JFWVMP], 2013).

Based on the description of the program, mentors will have the role of coaches, guides and supporters, helping women veterans find financially sound and meaningful employment. The goal is to enlist mentors who through their own experiences, current positions, and contacts are able to provide guidance to female service members leaving the military and reentering the civilian workforce (JFWVMP, 2013).
Since the program is still in the developmental stage, not all operational procedures are in place yet. Program creators at BPW intend to collaborate with U.S. Chamber of Commerce on building partnerships with employer stakeholders to encourage and support the training of mentors and to offer professional incentives for both mentors and mentees. Furthermore, corporate sponsors will be responsible for helping mentees find suitable employment or advance in their chosen profession. Moreover, program creators intend to join forces with companies and organizations already assisting veterans to develop new ways or augment existing services to cater directly to the women veteran population. BPW intends to serve as an example to other companies and organizations and plans to use its extensive network to recruit mentors for this important project (official website).

Because the program is not operational at this time, it is difficult to evaluate its effectiveness. However, benefits of mentorship as well as the need to address women veterans’ issues on a more personal level and in a proactive manner were acknowledged by the program’s creators. This program has the potential of fostering long-lasting, supportive relationships among professional women from all walks of life and women veterans and the possibility of growing into a far-reaching and mobilizing force in any community. As discussed earlier, the women veteran population is expected to grow steadily in the foreseeable future, and government agencies are unable to accommodate their unique needs. Therefore, the private sector and community-based organizations will always be needed to provide services and develop innovative, but most of all effective ways to help women veterans successfully reintegrate into society they spent years defending.
Target issues of proposed program.

The proposed program is designed to help participants gain self-awareness, understanding of the civilian employment market and skills needed to conduct a successful job search. Through the completion of various assessments, women veterans will have the opportunity to discover their talents, interests, skills, and career values and then use this information to identify occupations in which they could find success and personal fulfillment. Based on statistics and needs discussed above, many women veterans enlisted in the military at a young age, often without a delineated career path. Furthermore, the rigid structure of the military may have further limited career choices and prevented them from exploring their options for a more fully realized career potential. Once female veterans have a better understanding of who they are, what they like and what they are capable of accomplishing, they may find themselves better equipped to make career decisions. Then through various presentations and activities, participants will expand their knowledge of the civilian labor and employment market. Having spent years in a structured, highly hierarchal, and easily predictable work environment, navigating the volatile, ever-changing civilian labor and employment market can be a very intimidating task for transitioning women veterans. Aside from providing a “safe” work environment, the military also provided housing, health care, educational benefits, and a social structure, which further isolated these women from the civilian population. Also, while on active duty, many of these female veterans may have been deployed to remote locations for extended time periods, or relocated within the US several times during their service. These and other circumstances left these former service women with limited or outdated knowledge of the civilian labor market and also
with a weak personal network they can count on for support and guidance. Then again, women veterans also learned how to adjust to the “unknown”. The lengthy deployments to various locations nationwide and abroad, has taught women veterans to adapt quickly to change. Flexibility is a quality that will aid women veterans during their transition and also can be viewed as an asset by employers.

The proposed program builds on the strengths of the participants and offers to teach them how to conduct online research to find relevant career and employment information, and introduces them to other women veterans who will act as mentors and can become the first “building block” of a professional network. Aside from meeting successful women veterans and learning to locate vital career information, the proposed program includes presentations, assignments, and activities that will teach participants valuable skills that can help them land their desired job. The ultimate goal of this proposed program is to equip participants with knowledge and tools that will help them identify and reach their career goals.

**Additional theoretical approaches.**

Donald Super’s Life-Span Theory serves as the theoretical backdrop to the career development issues and concerns of women veterans transitioning to civilian life. Furthermore, two additional career theories can serve as foundations to aid veterans as they traverse the challenges unique to this population upon exiting the military – trait and factor theory and social cognitive career theory.

*Trait and factor theory.*

The foundation of the trait and factor theory originates from Frank Parsons who
published a book on vocational guidance in 1909. Parsons believed that by identifying a person’s characteristics (traits), and the characteristics of a job or occupation (factors), and then finding the correlation between the two will result in successful career selection.

This theory has three important steps that a person making career decisions have to follow. The first one is to gain self-understanding through the evaluation of one’s aptitudes, achievements, interests, values and personality. This step often involves completion of various assessments, developed to measure and analyze the above listed aspects of an individual. The second step is obtaining knowledge about the world of work, which involves extensive research, data gathering, and analyzing. There are a wide range of resources, books, journals, websites, and other methods that can be utilized to gather information. Career counselors can assist in the process, by identifying leads and sources and sharing knowledge gained through personal and professional experiences. Step three is integrating information about the self and the world of work, which is the culmination of the process, enabling the individual to choose a fulfilling career path.

Research shows that there are differences between men and women in terms of abilities, achievements, interests, personality, and career values. However, as long as these differences are recognized, women can reap the benefits of this process and use these three steps effectively in their career development process (Sharf, 2006). To provide women veterans with the knowledge they need to make career decisions, the proposed program covers all three steps outlined by the trait and factor theory.

*Social cognitive career theory.*

With Albert Bandura’s social cognitive theory (1977) as its theoretical base, the social cognitive career theory (SCCT) emphasizes the importance of self-efficacy, a
concept describing how people perceive their own ability to perform certain tasks and actions in order to achieve their goals. In turn, this theory examines the impact of self-efficacy on peoples’ career choices. Lent, Brown and Hackett (1994) expanded on Bandura’s ideas and construct of self-efficacy to create a complex career theory, with three main cognitive concepts at its base: self-efficacy outcome expectation, and goal selection. According to them, these three core concepts have a decisive effect on peoples’ career decisions. Moreover, the founders of SCCT recognized the impact gender and cultural diversity may have on people’s career decisions, thus increasing counselors’ awareness of the variables that were often ignored before and their influence erroneously minimized (Sharf, 2006).

Self-efficacy, as explained above, is how people assess their ability to plan and carry out actions in order to reach their goals. When people believe in themselves, meaning they have high sense of self-efficacy, they are more likely to persevere when tasks become difficult. However, self-efficacy is a set of beliefs, which is in constant flux to accommodate various situations and contexts. Thus the role of contextual factors, set of conditions unique to every situation, have to be evaluated as well. For instance, many women veterans may have had high sense of self-efficacy while in the military, but it did not remain high once they left the service. Consequently, women veterans may experience doubt in their ability to find civilian employment and successfully transition to the civilian sphere.

Outcome expectations are the process in which people attempt to predict the probability of an outcome. In other words, people try to project the results of their actions. A person’s sense of self-efficacy may strongly influence his/her outcome
expectation. That is, women veterans may settle for an employment option that is far below their capabilities or stay on a job that is both financially and professionally inadequate.

Goal selection is the process in which people set goals to provide direction for their actions. Goals supposed to be self-motivating, offering a sense of satisfaction when they are reached. However, women veterans struggling with low sense of self-efficacy may find attaining their career goals too challenging or outright impossible and choose to settle, risking feeling unhappy and undeserving. Self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goal setting are interrelated and believed to affect one another in various ways (Sharf, 2006).

Since SCCT recognizes the impact gender and cultural differences have on career decisions, the creators designed a theory that provides insights when counseling female clients. Research indicates that women seem to allot more importance to self-efficacy beliefs than their abilities, interests, and values when making career choices. Furthermore, researchers found that women tend to allow gender stereotypes shape their career decisions (Sharf, 2006). These results are extremely important when working with women veterans. Since the military is a predominantly male environment, women veterans may have a different outlook on historically non-traditional female occupations, therefore not conforming to career stereotypes that still exist in the civilian sector. However, spending years in a male dominated “work place” may have had significant impact on how women veterans view their own femininity and personal worth, thus potentially decreasing their self-efficacy, outcome expectations and goal setting.

**Summary of theoretical approaches.**
The three theories detailed in this chapter, Super’s Lifespan, Trait and Factor, and Social Cognitive Career Theory, serve as the theoretical backdrop and offer a logical justification for the proposed career program explained in great detail in chapters three and four. The elements of the proposed program were developed in response to these theories. The self-assessment portion of the program corresponds with Super’s Exploration stage as well as with the gaining self-understanding step found in the trait and factor theory. Since the “byproduct” of self-awareness is often self-acceptance and an increase in self-confidence, this piece of the program may result in a higher sense of self-efficacy, a main component of the social cognitive career theory.

The remaining components of the proposed program align with the various steps, stages, and main concepts of these three theoretical approaches. The activities and presentations that teach participants how to obtain and use relevant labor and employment market information reflects on the second step in the trait and factor theory, while the goal setting technique echoes the third basic concept of the social cognitive career theory.

**Specific interventions.**

The proposed career workshop will be a great addition to the existing transition programs currently serving the veteran community especially because of its gender-specific approach. There are very few services that recognize and address the unique needs of a growing female veteran population. While male and female veterans share many characteristics and tend to face similar difficulties upon leaving the military, they also seem to differ from one another significantly enough to validate the need for gender specific resources.
This three-day career workshop will provide participants much needed services in a nurturing and supportive environment, with an added bonus of cultivating mentoring relationships among women veterans. The program will be available to former female service members who exited the military in the last five years and who are actively searching for employment. Because of the diversity of the women veteran population, it is anticipated that participants’ age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and educational background may vary. Therefore, the assessments and materials used in this program were selected with careful consideration. Participants will work with experienced career counselors as well as female veteran mentors who have successfully transitioned to civilian life in the past 10 years and built fulfilling careers in their selected occupations. Combining the professional expertise of the career counselors with the personal experiences of veteran mentors offers a unique and more comprehensive approach to addressing the needs of female veterans in transition.

The six sessions of the workshop are designed to aid participants in their quest for civilian employment through self-assessment by acquiring knowledge about the civilian employment market and gaining skills in identifying, locating, and applying for suitable positions. The workshop does not guarantee immediate employment, but it will teach participants techniques that will maximize their potential to be successful in their job search. Furthermore, through the involvement of women veteran mentors, the workshop aspires to build long lasting supportive relationships between participants and their mentors and to promote the importance of networking and mutual assistance. The assessments utilized in this workshop, the Self-Directed Search (Holland, 1994), Vista Life/Career Cards (Severson, 2006), and Strengths Finder 2.0 (Rath, 2007), will assist
participants with discovering their career interests, values and strengths. This information then can be used to identify occupations in which participants can attain success and personal fulfillment. In addition, participants will use web-based resources such as O*Net Online and the Bureau of Labor Statistics website to research various professions, industry trends and employment outlook. Participants will learn about SMART goal setting strategies, job searching, resume writing, and interviewing skills through group activities, presentations, and homework assignments. SMART goals are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely. Furthermore, career counselors and women veteran mentors will meet individually with each participant to discuss personal issues and concerns and provide guidance and support. The overall format of the workshop corroborates Super’s Lifespan theory as well as the Trait and Factor, and the Social Cognitive Career Theory as indicated above.

Creating a gender-specific career workshop will address a long overlooked need for providing women veterans with resources that address their unique circumstances in an easily accessible way. This workshop would appeal to a wide range of female veterans for its original design and imaginative approach that can bring about immediate results while scaffolding the building blocks of a women veteran network, a resource to be used long after the workshop ends.

**Summary.**

Chapter three will review in detail the theoretical principles on which this career workshop was built upon. Furthermore, the chapter will provide comprehensive information on participant eligibility, process of enrollment, career counselors’ and mentors’ qualifications criteria, implemented procedures, and in-depth description of the
assessments utilized.
Chapter 3

Procedure

Logic of the program.

Even with the countless programs assisting military veterans transitioning from active duty to civilian life, there are still a large number of veterans who struggle with reinventing themselves as “ordinary” citizens. Furthermore, many of the existing programs do not take into consideration the unique challenges faced by women as veterans. Also, numerous programs offering career services to transitioning veterans are created and run by military professionals with limited civilian experience, which often results in providing veterans with outdated information and insufficient guidance on how to succeed in the civilian workforce. The following program is designed to rectify this oversight and to combine military experiences with career counseling expertise to bring best practices to serve women veterans’ needs.

This program is designed as a three-day weekend workshop and its purpose is to help participants find suitable employment. Participants will learn to identify career goals and develop action plans to achieve these goals in a timely manner. Participants will complete the following four steps:

- Self Assessment (exploration of values, skills, interests);
- Career exploration;
- Identifying professional goals and objectives; and
- Developing a detailed action plan and a time table
This program is aimed at women veterans who exited the military in the last 5 years and who are actively searching for employment. Participants’ age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and educational background may vary, thus the assessments and materials used in this program have been selected accordingly. Participants will be guided by trained career counselors as well as female veteran mentors who have gone through the transition in the past 10 years and found success in their civilian occupations.

The career counselors involved with this program ideally would have a Master’s degree in career counseling and a minimum of 1-5 years work experience in the field. The women veterans serving as mentors have to provide proof of military background and of voluntary exit within the last 10 years and must be at their current job for two or more years.

The program will consist of the following: administering of assessments, presentations, group discussions, individual counseling sessions, and homework projects. The assessments will provide participants with an in-depth understanding of themselves in relation to the world of work. The presentations will be aimed at educating participants about the process of goal setting, job searching techniques, conducting successful job interviews, and creating powerful resumes/cover letters.

Group discussions will cover topics that are relevant to all participants and will provide a platform to share ideas or concerns. Individual sessions will provide each participant with the opportunity to discuss their unique situation and to seek answers or support to issues they may be reluctant to share in the larger group. The homework assignments will be designed to test the level of understanding of the topics covered that day and to
facilitate the creation of a feasible action plan.

**Theoretical approach.**

This program’s theoretical foundation comes from Holland’s Theory of Types for its systematic approach to integrating personality and occupational possibilities. According to Donald Sharf, “It is John Holland’s view that career choice and career adjustment represents an extension of a person’s personality. People express themselves, their interests and values through their work choices and experiences” (Sharf, 2006, p. 90). Therefore, when individuals become more self-aware, they also gain the ability to make sound career choices and are more likely to enjoy their work and become successful at what they do.

Holland identified six types: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional (as cited in Sharf, 2006). He uses types to categorize individuals and environments, noting that both individuals and environments are likely to be a combination of types. Furthermore, he believed that the greater the compatibility between an individuals’ personality and their work environment the more likely they will find success. Also, Holland argued that the closer the first two letters of an individual’s typology code is to one another on the Holland’s hexagon (consistency), the easier it will be for the individual to make career decisions (Sharf, 2006).

**Necessary materials.**

**Assessments.**

- Self-Directed Search (Assessment Booklet, the Occupational Finder)

  (Copyright © 1994 by Psychological Assessment Resources (PAR), Inc.)
• Vista Life/Career Cards (Copyright © 2006 by Cathy Severson, M.S.)

• Strengths Finder 2.0 (Copyright © 2007, The Gallup Organization)

Web-based resources.

• O*Net Online (http://www.onetonline.org/)

This database allows people to conduct in-depth research of various careers and occupations. In addition to being a great research tool, this website also offers useful career exploration tips. Furthermore, the database is comprehensive, user-friendly, and continuously updated to reflect the latest changes and trends in the world of work.

• Bureau of Labor Statistics website (http://bls.gov)

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) is responsible for collecting, processing and analyzing economic information and disseminating their findings to the public. In addition to reporting useful information the BLS website helps users conduct career exploration by researching various professions, industry trends and employment outlook. The site’s visitors also receive access to the Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH), which is a comprehensive database of thousands of occupations. The OOH provides readers with detailed information on a wide range of professions.

Hand-outs.

• Detailed agenda for every session (Appendixes: B, C, D, E, F, G)

• Who Am I? (Summary sheet for organizing assessments results) (Appendix I)

• My Top 5 Occupations (Homework assignment) (Appendix J)

• List of Online Job Search Engines and Career Exploration Sites (Appendix K)
• “Ask Me!” (Informational interviews) (Appendix L)
• SMART Goal Setting (to help participants define and set attainable goals) (Appendix M)
• “Where Do I Want To Be This Time Next Year?” (Homework assignment) (Appendix N)
• Resume/Cover Letter Packet (Appendix O)
• Nailing That Interview (do’s and don’ts of interviewing) (Appendix P)
• Workshop Evaluation Survey (Appendix Q)

Description of assessments.

Self-Directed Search (Holland, 1994) is one of the most widely used assessments in the world. The assessment was selected because it is straight forward, easy to complete and upon completion provides the taker with occupational possibilities. Therefore, it has a high degree of face validity and with reliability and validity. For example, test - retest reliability coefficients range from .78 to .98 for a two to four week interval sample ($n = 25$) and from .87 to .96 for a two to four month interval sample ($n = 24$).

Furthermore, the assessment can be used effectively with groups that have members with diverse age distribution and educational backgrounds. Participants sort through 66 activities and label them L (would like to do), or D (would dislike doing), 66 competencies and label them Y (yes, can do well) or N (never performed or performed poorly), and 84 occupations labeling them Y (interested, appealing) or N (not interested, dislike doing). Furthermore, participants rate themselves on six abilities (i.e., mechanical, scientific, artistic, teaching, sales, and clerical) and six skills (i.e., manual, math, musical, understanding of others, managerial, and office) on a scale from Low (represented by the
numbers 1, 2, 3), average (represented by the numbers 4, 5, 6) and high (represented by the number 7). Upon completing these items, participants are asked to transfer their results onto a summary sheet, which will yield their three-letter code. Once the Summary Code is tallied, participants begin exploring occupations in The Occupation Finder (Holland, 1996) that closely match their code.

**The Vista Life/Career Card Sort** (Severson, 2006) helps participants identify their values, interests, skills and traits. This knowledge will provide participants with information they need to identify professional goals and select an occupation that fits well with these goals and also their personality. The rules and terminology of the assessment is very simple and straightforward, with a high degree of face validity but no measured reliability. There are four decks of cards (for Values, Interests, Skills, and Traits). Each deck consists of 75 color-coded cards. Participants will sort through each deck individually and record the results on a summary sheet. Color-coded highlighters are also provided, but their use is optional. The traits and values section explore personality, while the skills and interests section is aimed at finding out which activities participants enjoy doing. The colors are linked to the Holland types (Yellow/Realistic, Orange/Investigative, Pink/Artistic, Purple/Social, Blue/Enterprising, and Green/Conventional), thus this card sort can provide additional information to augment the Self-Directed Search described earlier. The sorting process is as follows: participants will sort through all four decks (one deck at the time) and keep working until they identified their top ten values, traits, skills, and interests. These findings are recorded on a pyramid summary sheet. Once these entries are counted and tallied, they will yield a three-letter code based on the Holland personality types. Participants may be interested to
observe if this card sort will produce the same code as the Self-Directed Search. Values will receive heightened attention, since this assessment was introduced mainly for its values component. Participants will be asked to explain with their own words what their top ten values mean to them.

**Strengths Finder 2.0** (Rath, 2007) is an online assessment, created by a group of researchers working at The Gallup Organization. The purpose of the assessment is to identify individuals’ talents that have risen to the level of strengths. The creators of this assessment contend that if people could shift their focus from working on improving their weaknesses to developing their talents into strengths, they could increase their potential for personal and professional growth and success. The assessment is administered online and participants receive a detailed report of their results. Furthermore, the assessment is accompanied by a book written by Tom Rath (2007), explains the reasoning behind the development of this assessment, directions for taking the assessment and a detailed description of the 34 strength themes including ideas for action for each theme.

**Necessary procedures for implementation.**

This program is designed for women veterans who exited the military in the last five years and are actively looking for employment. It is a three-day program, consisting of one three-hour session (before noon) and one four-hour session (after noon) each day with 10 minutes breaks during the sessions and a one-hour lunch break between sessions. On the first day, the morning session (before noon) is one hour longer (four hours in total) to accommodate the administration of the assessments. The program is designed
to serve a maximum of 12 participants at any given time. The delivery of this program requires three career counselors and three-to-six women veteran volunteers who will act as mentors. The qualifications of the career counselors and women veteran volunteers were detailed above.

Potential participants will be recruited through existing veteran agencies, unemployment offices, various local organizations servicing veterans and online, through contacting various organizations already serving the veteran community. Participants will fill out an application form that is aimed at collecting information on their personal/professional/military background and write a short essay indicating why they want to take part in the program and what are they hoping to learn. Furthermore, participants will be asked to provide a copy of their civilian resumes and a list of their top ten occupational interests. This information will be used by program coordinators to recruit women veteran volunteers who work in occupations that are a close match to the participants’ professional aspirations.

This program can be delivered in any group room that can accommodate a maximum of 20 participants. In addition, three smaller rooms/offices are needed to conduct the individual counseling sessions in as well as computers with Internet access (one for each participant) for administering online assessments.

The program consists of six sessions, three lasting three hours and three lasting four hours, including 10 minutes breaks. These sessions will be delivered during the course of three days and participants will have homework assignments to complete for the next day. While most of the activities and lectures will take place in a group setting, each participant will have the opportunity to meet one-on-one with a counselor.
for 15 minutes each day. These sessions are included in the daily schedule and provide participants with an opportunity to discuss issues and concerns they do not feel comfortable sharing with the group.

Furthermore, career counselors will be required to hold office hours during the first two days of the program in case participants need additional support or homework guidance. Women veteran volunteers will only get involved on the second day of the program. They will act as mentors, advisors, supporters until the end of the program or beyond if they desire to do so. The mentors will have proper training and/or formal experience in mentorship and will be required to read and sign a document detailing rules of confidentiality pertaining to this program. Once participants complete the program they will be given a voucher to be used for a free 90 minutes counseling session with any of the career counselors delivering the program and also any of the women veteran mentors taking part in this project. The voucher must be used within 30 days from the completion of the program. If participants show interest in further counseling sessions, it will be up to the discretion of the counselors to take them on as clients.

**Summary.**

The goal of this program is to help women veterans find meaningful and adequate civilian employment upon exiting from the military. Beyond that, through the completion of the various assessments incorporated into this program, participants will most likely learn about themselves. The aim of this program is to increase self-awareness, which can lead to self-acceptance and ultimately to an increased level of self-efficacy. Further, while self-confidence should be viewed as a “side product” of this program, if an increased global feeling of adequacy indeed happens, women veterans will have a better
chance finding their place in the civilian society and become a well-adjusted, productive and content member of their community.

The following chapter will provide a detailed description of the six sessions that comprise this three-day weekend workshop. The descriptions include the goals and learning objectives for each session.
Chapter 4
The Program

Session 1: Self-Assessment Part I, Friday, 9.00 AM to 1.00

PM Goals for Session 1

• Through various assessments, participants will gain self-awareness and develop the ability to identify their interests, skills, and values in relation to the world of work.

Behavioral Objectives

• Participants will complete the Self-Directed Search (Holland, 1994) and as a result they will be able to identify their top three RIASEC themes.

• After completing the Vista Life Career Cards sort (Severson, 2006), participants will be able to identify their top 10 traits, skills, interests and values. The results will yield a three-letter code, which is based on the Holland personality types.

Handouts for Session 1

• Detailed agenda for the session (Appendix A)

• Who am I? (Summary sheet for the organization of assessments results) (Appendix I)

Resources

• Self-Directed-Search Assessment Booklet (Holland, 1994) and The Occupational Finder (Holland, 1996) for each participant

• Vista Life/Career Cards and the Pyramid Profile sheet; one set for each participant
• Pens, pencils, colored markers for each participant
• Individual desks and chairs for every participant

Timeline for Session 1

9.00 AM to 10.00 AM: “Meet and greet.”

• Welcoming participants, distributing name tags, sign-in sheet, and detailed outline of the daily agenda. Participants will be provided with a personal folder that contains a detailed description of the workshop, short biographical information on the career counselors leading the sessions, all handouts used during the workshop organized by session numbers they will be used in, and blank sheets of papers for note taking (15 minutes).

• Round-table discussion, where participants and career counselors introduce themselves and establish group norms and procedures. Topics such as confidentiality, attendance, and individual responsibility will be discussed in detail (30 minutes).

Sample questions to be used:

a) What are your career goals?

b) When did you leave the military?

c) How long have you been actively looking for employment?

d) Who would like to share their transition journey with the group?

e) What aspects of this transition do you find most challenging?

f) What are some of the methods that you have used in your job search?

g) What do you think are the main reasons you have not found employment?
i) How comfortable are you with discussing personal information with the group?

- Participants will be asked to write a brief explanation of why they signed up for the workshop and list at least three goals they hope to achieve by the end of the workshop. The concept of SMART goals will be introduced so the concept can be used for the goal development portion of the exercise. Counselors will collect these writings (15 minutes).

**10.00 AM to 10.50 AM: Administering the Self-Directed-Search Assessment.**

- Distribution of assessment packet, overview of the directions, answering questions (5 minutes).

- Administer the assessment (25 minutes): The assessment was selected because it provides participants with occupational possibilities that reflect their interests and competencies. The Self-Directed Search (SDS) (Holland, 1994) Form R has five parts that participants have to complete: Daydreams, Activities, Competencies, Occupations, and Self-Estimates. In the Daydreams section, participants will be asked to list occupations that they have been fantasizing about and also those they have discussed with others. Participants will be instructed to start their list with their most recent choice and work their way backwards to occupations they have considered in the past. Then, participants will use The Occupational Finder (Holland, 1996) to locate the three-letter code for each of their dream occupations. In the Activities section, participants will go through 66 activities and indicate which ones they like or dislike doing. In the
Competencies section, participants will sort through another set of 66 activities and indicate which one they can do well, and which ones they have never performed or perform poorly. In the Occupations section, participants will sort through 84 occupations and indicate whether they are interested or not in each one. In the Self-Estimates section, participants will be asked to rate themselves on 12 traits and give the most accurate estimation they possibly can on how confident they are about these skills and abilities. After completing all five sections, participants will summarize their results, which will yield a three-letter code.

• Interpretation of the assessment (20 minutes): The counselor administering the assessment will explain to participants the significance of their summary code. Participants will learn that their summary code, also referred to as Holland code (named after the creator of the SDS, John Holland), is based on Holland’s Theory of Types in which Holland categorized people and work environments into six types: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional. Furthermore, the counselor will describe in detail each of the six types, the significance of the Holland Hexagon (which illustrates the relationship among the six types) and explain how knowing the Holland code can help participants make better career decisions.

• Results will be transferred onto the “Who am I” summary sheet (Handout #2). Then participants will use The Occupational Finder (Holland, 1996) to identify their top five occupations of interest.

10.50 AM to 11.00 AM: Break.
11.00 AM to 1.00 PM: Administering the Vista Life/Career Cards card sort
(Severson, 2006).

- Distribution of the cards and the Pyramid Profile Sheet to each participant and
  providing a brief overview of the assessment procedures; answering
  participants’ questions (5 minutes).
- Administer the assessment (90 minutes)
  - Participants will be asked to sort through all four decks of cards (one deck
    at the time). There are 75 cards in each of the following four categories:
    Traits, Skills, Interests, and Values. Participants will be asked to start with
    the cards in the Traits category.
  - Step One: Participants will be asked to place the three dark blue cards
    (Describes Me the Most, Describes Me Somewhat, Does Not Describe
    Me) horizontally on a table. Mix up the remaining cards and place each
    one in any of the three rows identified above. Participants will be
    instructed to go through the cards instinctively, rather than pondering over
    their decisions in order to capture an “uncensored” view of their true self.
  - Step Two: When participants finished sorting the cards, they will be
    instructed to keep only the “Describes Me The Most” pile and remove the
    other two piles (these cards will no longer be used).
  - Step Three: From the remaining cards, participants will be asked to select
    their top 10.
  - Step Four: Participants will be asked to arrange their top 10 traits in order
    of importance, placing the most important one on top and placing the rest
    in a pyramid shape.
- Step five: Participants will transfer these cards onto the Pyramid Profile Sheet’s Traits section. Once participants transferred their top 10 traits cards onto the profile sheet, they will be asked to add up the cards by colors and enter the numbers in the column to the right.

- Then participants will be asked to sort through the Skills cards. Participants will be instructed to place the three dark blue cards (Most Proficient, Somewhat Proficient, and Not Proficient) horizontally on their desks. Mix the remaining cards and sort them into the three piles identified above. Participants will be asked to go through the cards as quickly as possible. Once the initial sorting is done, participants will be asked to keep only the “Most Proficient” pile and remove the other two (no longer needed).

- Participants will repeat steps three through five as described above.

- Participants will continue with the sorting of the Interests cards. After placing the three dark blue cards (Enjoy Most, Enjoy Somewhat, and Do Not Enjoy) horizontally on their desks, participants will mix the remaining cards and place each of them in one of the three piles identified above.

- When participants are done with the initial sort, they will be asked to keep the “Most Enjoy” pile and remove the other two (no longer needed).
- Participants will repeat steps three through five as described in the Traits section.

- Then participants will move onto the Values cards. After placing the three dark blue cards (Most Important, Somewhat Important, and Not Important) horizontally on their desks, participants will mix up the remaining cards and sort them into the three piles identified above.

- After finishing the initial sort, participants will be asked to keep only the cards in the “Most Important” pile and remove the rest (no longer needed).

- Participants will repeat steps three through five as described in the Traits section.

- After completing the card sort, the results will be transferred over to the Pyramid Profile Sheet as well as on their “Who am I” summary page. Once these entries are counted and tallied, they will yield a three-letter code based on the Holland personality types.

- Interpretation of the assessment as a group (25 minutes): The lead counselor will initiate a group discussion of the results. In order to facilitate the understanding of the results, the counselor will be asking questions such as:

  a) How do you feel about these results?
b) What was it like to go through this assessment?

c) Which section was the most challenging to complete and why?

d) What have you learned about yourself by doing this assessment?

e) Have you discovered any patterns or themes?

f) How can this information help you make career decisions?

g) Are your current career aspirations reflected in any way?

h) Would you recommend this assessment to others and why?

1.00 PM to 2.00 PM: Lunch Break.
Session 2: Self-Assessment Part II, Friday, 2.00 PM to 6.00 PM

Goal for Session 2

- Through various assessments, participants will gain self-awareness and develop the ability to identify their interests, skills, and values in relation to the world of work.

Behavioral Objectives

- After taking the Strengths Finder 2.0 (Rath, 2007), participants will be able to identify their top five strengths and will be asked to give concrete examples of how they have been using these strengths in their personal or professional lives.
- Upon completion, participants will read Section 1 of their report and identify at least one skill they possess for each of their top five strengths.

Handouts for Session 2

- Detailed agenda for the session (Appendix C)
- My Top 5 Occupations (Homework assignment) (Appendix J)

Resources

- Computers with online access for each participant.
- Printer (connected to all the computers used in this session).
- Three individual offices to accommodate one-on-one sessions.

Timeline for Session 2

2.00 PM to 3.00 PM: Completion of the Strengths Finder 2.0 (Rath, 2007) online.
- Assigning participants to computers with Internet access, locating the assessment website and giving a brief overview on how to complete the
assessment. Counselors will answer questions or help with technical difficulties if needed (10 minutes).

- Lead counselor will provide a brief overview of the assessment as described in Tom Rath’s Strengthsfinder 2.0 (Rath, 2007) (10 minutes). The purpose of the assessment is to help participants identify their talents that have risen to the level of strengths. This assessment is designed to measure talent, because talent is considered to be one of the “basic ingredients” of a true strength. The assessment was not intended to measure knowledge or skills, because although these are important, they can be acquired over time. There are a total of 34 strength themes included in the book. All 34 strengths are defined in detail, illustrated with examples, and supplemented with ideas for action and tactics to be used when working with people possessing these strengths.

- Completion of the assessment (20 minutes). Participants will take the assessment and print out their personal report.

- Upon completion, participants will record their results on the “Who am I” summary sheet and read the awareness section (#1) of their report (15 minutes).

- Then participants will identify at least one skill they possess for each of their top five strengths and indicate how they have been using them in their daily lives (5 minutes).

**3.00 PM to 3.50 PM: Group discussion.**

- Participants will share their thoughts and feelings about their assessment results.

  Each participant will be given a chance to share (50 minutes).
Questions to consider:

a) How do you feel about the results?

b) Were you surprised by any of your five strengths?

c) How are you planning to employ your strengths in your job search process?

d) What skills or activities reflect your top five strengths the best?

e) Will this information be useful to you in finding a job? How so?

f) By taking this assessment what have you learned about yourself that you
did not know or were unaware of?

g) How potential employers would benefit from some or all of your strengths?

3.50 PM to 4.00 PM: Break.

- Participants will sing-up for 15-minute individual sessions with the career
counselor of their choice on a first-come-first-serve-basis.

4.00 PM to 5.00 PM: One-on-one counseling sessions.

- Participants will meet individually with a counselor to discuss their assessment
results and ask questions (60 minutes).

5.00 PM to 6.00 PM: Closing thoughts and homework assignment discussion.

- Participants will share feelings, observations, and comments on the day’s
activities. Counselors will provide brief overview of the day’s sessions and
share their observations regarding assessments and other activities (45
minutes).

- Discussion of the homework assignment “My top 5 occupations.” Counselors
will give detailed directions on how to complete the homework and answer
participants’ questions (15 minutes).
6.00 PM to 7.00 PM: Career counselors are available for questions and clarifications from the group.
Session 3: Career Exploration, Saturday 9.00 AM to 12.00 PM

Goal for Session 3

• Participants will learn how to use online job search engines, career exploration sites, and informational interviews to explore existing employment opportunities.

Behavioral Objectives

• Participants will use several online job search engines to find a minimum of five suitable job openings in their field of interest.

• Participants will learn how to conduct informational interviews through the following steps:
  1) Identification of potential interviewees.
  2) Initiating contact and scheduling a meeting with potential interview subject.
  3) Preparing relevant questions to capture desired information.
  4) Conducting an interview in a timely fashion.
  5) Following up with the interviewee after the meeting.

Handouts for Session 3

Detailed agenda for the session (Appendix D)

“List of Online Job Search Engines and Career Exploration Sites” (Appendix K)

“Ask me!” (Informational interviews) (Appendix L)

Resources

Computers with Internet access for each participant.

Printer (connected to all the computers used in the session).

Timeline for Session 3
9.00 AM to 9.30 AM: Morning greetings and group process.

Participants will be encouraged to share thoughts on first day’s events (25 minutes).

Questions to be considered:

a) Thus far, what were the most surprising discoveries you have made about yourself?

b) How do you think the self-assessment process can help you in your job search?

c) Do you feel different about yourself? How so?

d) How do you feel about discussing personal experiences with group members?

e) Which activities did you find most useful to you?

The detailed agenda for the session will be handed out (5 minutes).

9.30 AM to 10.00 AM: Homework review.

Participants will discuss the homework assignment “My Top 5 Occupations” with the group (30 minutes).

10.00 AM to 10.50 AM: Conducting online job searches.

The “List of Online Job Search Engines and Career Exploration Sites” will be passed out. Participants will be given a chance to ask questions and make comments (10 minutes).

Participants will be assigned to computers with Internet access. They will locate and browse various career exploration websites provided to them on the
handout, to research the top five occupations they have identified in their homework. Participants will have to find answers to the following questions for all five occupations: 1) how much education or training is required; 2) what is the job outlook; and 3) what is the salary range. By using various job search engines, participants will then generate a minimum of two employment ads for each of their five occupations. Participants will compile this information in a Word document. The counselors will collect these reports (40 minutes).

**10.50 AM to 11.00 AM: Break.**

**11.00 AM to 12.00 PM: Introduction to informational interviews.**

Counselors will disseminate the “Ask me!” handout and deliver a short presentation about the informational interviewing process. Participants will learn what informational interviews are, and how they should be conducted to maximize their benefit. The facilitator will explain how to find subjects, make contact, and schedule an interview. Furthermore, they will be provided with sample questions and information on the appropriate conduct before, during, and after the interview. After the presentation, participants will have the opportunity to ask questions (20 minutes).

Then participants will be asked to name three potential interviewee subjects and indicate how they would establish contact. Furthermore, participants will have to come up with five questions for each interviewee and explain why they chose those particular questions. All group members will be given a chance to participate and feedbacks and comments will be welcomed (40 minutes).

**12.00 PM to 1.00 PM: Lunch break.**
Session 4: “Help is on the way,” Saturday 1.00 PM to 5.00 PM

Goal for Session 4

Participants will learn to identify their own goals, develop objectives and to use their military background to their advantage in the job search process.

Behavioral Objectives

- Participants will meet a group of women veterans who achieved success in their civilian professional lives. From these testimonials, participants will identify a minimum of four strategies on how these veterans had used their military experiences to build a successful career.

- Participants will identify one occupational and one personal goal they intend to accomplish in the near future.

Handouts for Session 4

- Detailed agenda for the session (Appendix E)
- SMART Goal Setting handout (Appendix M)
- “Where do I want to be this time next year?” (Homework assignment) (Appendix N)

Resources

- Desks and chairs for each participant.

- Three individual offices to accommodate one-on-one sessions.

Timeline for Session 4

1.00 PM to 2.00 PM: Meeting the Women Veterans.

- Participants will be introduced to a group of women veterans (3-5) from various professional backgrounds who achieved success in their field. They
will relate their stories, talk about their successes and tribulations. Participants will have a chance to ask questions (50 minutes).

2.00 PM to 3.50 PM: Individual sessions with women veteran mentors.

- Participants will sign-up for individual sessions with a woman veteran on a first come first served basis (5 minutes).
- Participants will have a 15-minute individual session with a woman veteran mentor.

Participants will be encouraged to use the informational interviewing techniques they had learned earlier to gather information (60 minutes).

- After their individual sessions, participants will rejoin the group to share their thoughts and feelings, and what they have learned during this process (45 minutes).

Questions to be considered:

a) How important was it for you to talk to someone who went through this process before?

b) How prepared did you feel during the interview?

c) What would you do differently if you could do it again?

d) What have you learned from your mentor that you want to incorporate into your job search strategy?

3.50 PM to 4.00 PM: Break.

4.00 PM to 5.00 PM: SMART Goal Setting Lecture.

- Career counselors will present a lecture about SMART goal setting.

Participants will receive a handout detailing this useful technique. Participants
will have a chance to ask questions at the end (25 minutes).

• Using the SMART goal setting model, participants will be asked to identify one professional and one personal goal they intend to accomplish in the near future and share it with the group. Furthermore, they will be instructed to identify at least three actions (objectives) they will need to take in order to accomplish these goals in a timely fashion. Everyone will be given a chance to participate and also will be encouraged to comment on their group members’ input (30 minutes).

• “Where do I want to be this time next year?” homework assignment will be handed out and explained (5 minutes).

5.00 PM to 6.00 PM: Career counselors and women veterans will be available for additional questions.
Session 5: Putting the puzzle together, Sunday 9.00 AM to 12.00 PM

Goal for Session 5

- Participants will develop a job search plan for the upcoming month.

Behavioral Objectives

- With the help of counselors and women veterans, participants will create a step-by-step job search plan using all the tools they had learned. This plan will include one professional goal, five objectives, and a timeline.

Handouts for Session 5

- Detailed agenda for the session (Appendix F)

Resources

- Computers with Internet access for every participant.
- Printer (connected to all computers used in the session).
- Desks and chairs for each participant.
- Three offices to accommodate individual counseling sessions.

Timeline for Session 5

9.00 AM to 9.30 AM: Homework review.

Detailed agenda for the session is passed out (5 minutes)

Participants will discuss the “Where do I want to be this time next year?” homework assignment with their group members, counselors and veteran mentors (20 minutes).

Participants will be asked to pair up with the counselor and the woman veteran mentor they have worked with prior for individual counseling sessions (5 minutes).
9.30 AM to 11.30 AM: Individual sessions with counselors/veterans.

- For 30 minutes, participants will work with their career counselor and woman veteran mentor on creating a job search plan for the upcoming month (120 minutes).

11.30 AM to 12.00 PM: Group discussion.

- After the individual sessions, participants will rejoin the group to discuss the planning process. Everyone will get a chance to share their experiences (30 minutes).

- Questions to be considered:

  a) What was it like to develop a job search plan?
  b) How did you incorporate the information you learned in this workshop in your plan?
  c) What did you find most helpful during your planning process?
  d) How confident are you about your action plan? Can it be accomplished in a timely manner?
  e) Which aspects of the planning process did you find most challenging?

12.00 PM to 1.00 PM: Lunch with counselors and veterans

(networking opportunity).
Session 6: Putting the puzzle together, Sunday 1.00 PM to 5.00 PM

Goal for Session 6

Participants will learn how to write a powerful resume and cover letter and how to present themselves during a professional interview.

Behavioral Objectives

● Participants will learn the steps of writing a resume and cover letter and demonstrate these skills by crafting one of each document at the end of this session.

● Through practice, participants will acquire professional interviewing skills, which they will demonstrate during mock interview sessions and their performances will be evaluated by counselors and fellow group members.

Handouts for Session 6

● Detailed agenda for the session (Appendix G)

● Resume/Cover Letter Packet (Appendix O)

● Nailing That Interview (do’s and don’ts of interviewing) (Appendix P)

● Workshop Evaluation Survey (Appendix Q)

Resources

● Computer with Internet access for each participant.

● Printer (connected to all computers used in the session).

10.00 AM to 10.50 AM: Conducting online job searches. Timeline for Session 6

1.00 PM to 2.50 PM: How to craft a winning resume and cover letter.
• Participants will receive the Resume/Cover Letter Packet, which gives detailed instructions on how to create these documents. The packet also contains two samples for each document (5 minutes).

• Participants will be assigned to a computer and asked to locate a position ad relevant to the preferences; then adjust their resume and cover letter to target that position (45 minutes).

• Participants will convene in a group and share their drafts of both documents for comments and feedback (15 minutes).

• Then participants will take turns discussing each document and with the guidance of counselors they will make the necessary improvements (45 minutes).

2.50 PM to 3.00 PM: Break.

3.00 PM to 4.30 PM: Successful Job Interviews.

• Counselors will deliver a presentation on the professional interviewing process. The “Nailing That Interview” handout will be distributed beforehand (20 minutes).

• Then participants will be given five minutes to mentally prepare for a short mock interview session with a counselor (5 minutes).

• Each participant will practice interviewing skills with a counselor for 10 minutes (40 minutes).

• Counselors will provide feedback on participants’ interviewing skills (25 minutes).
4.30 PM to 5.30 PM: Closing thoughts.

- Participants will be asked to share their thoughts and feelings about the workshop. They will be encouraged to give concrete examples of the things they found most useful and also talk about the issues left unexplored (30 minutes).

- Counselors will share their observations and comments regarding group participation and members’ involvement (20 minutes).

- Participants will complete the Boot Camp Evaluation Survey (10 minutes).

- Counselors will hand back all written correspondence completed by participants over the course of the workshop with detailed comments and observations attached. Then counselors will thank participants for their involvement and bring the workshop to a close. Furthermore, participants will be offered a free 90 minutes follow-up session with any of the counselors and woman veteran mentors taking part in the workshop. These sessions will have to be completed within 30 days from the end date of the workshop.

5.30 PM to 6.00 PM: Career counselors will be available for additional questions, comments.
Chapter 5

Project Evaluation

Introduction

In this chapter the content, structure, format, and goals of the suggested career program will be closely examined. Furthermore, the overall efficiency of the proposed program will be reviewed as well. A team of three evaluators was formed and each member of this team was provided with chapters three and four of the project, along with a list of seven evaluation questions (Appendix 5) to review. The members were instructed to read all materials provided to them and answer the evaluation questions honestly and truthfully. Their comments and recommendations will be summarized and presented here.

Furthermore, a short introduction of each evaluation team member will be provided, focusing on the educational backgrounds and professional experiences of all three evaluators. This team was assembled based on their in-depth knowledge of counseling as well as their professional experiences working with women and women veterans respectively.

Project evaluation team

Evaluator #1 is a career counselor at USC School of Social Work. She has over five years of counseling experience in both educational and corporate settings. Currently she provides counseling services to MSW (Masters in Social Work) graduate students, while developing new and improving existing workshops, programs aimed at assisting her clients attain employment upon graduation. She holds a Masters in Social
Work degree from University of California, Berkeley, and a Certificate in Human Resources from Cornell University.

Evaluator #2 is a professor and department chair at California State University, Northridge and the on-campus faculty liaison to student veterans. Moreover, she is an accomplished researcher with numerous publications, one of which was examining the challenges student veterans with PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) face upon returning to educational institutions. She received her Ph.D. in Social Work, from University of Southern California and holds a Master’s degree in Social Work from Columbia University. Her research interests include improving the mental and physical health of student veterans.

Evaluator #3 is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT) in Santa Monica, California, who specializes in bereavement counseling. She has over 20 years of experience counseling clients, mostly women, who have gone through personal losses and faced serious emotional and mental challenges in their lives. She obtained her Masters of Arts in Clinical Psychology at California State University Dominguez Hills and has been practicing ever since. She worked in various settings, ranging from non-profit organizations and hospitals to private practice. Throughout her professional career she has counseled veterans and family members of veterans and developed a special interest in therapies that involve creativity and spirituality.

**Summary of findings from evaluators**

The following section summarizes the responses of the three field evaluators to the seven questions supplied by the author of this program.

1. *From your perspective, what is the overall quality of the program?*
Evaluator #1 thought that the overall quality of the program is great and that there is a need for it given the growing number of returning veterans. Furthermore, she stressed the fact that for many veterans transitioning back to civilian life and re-orienting themselves can be quite challenging and she feels that this program would be beneficial to them during this process. Lastly, she expressed her belief that this program could help returning veterans identify their skills and provide assistance with translating those skills to civilian career options.

Evaluator #2 believed that the program had a lot of value for female veterans looking for long-term employment. Also she felt that participating in this program would help women veterans find careers that are a good fit for them, which may result in professional contentment.

Evaluator #3 was impressed by the quality of the program and felt that the details and logistics were well thought out and the explanation of procedures were clear and comprehensive. In addition, she believed that the exercises and discussion questions were thought provoking and would stimulate personal growth.

2. To what degree do you believe that this program would provide support for this population?

Evaluator #1 commented that the program would provide support to women veterans especially through the involvement of former veterans as mentors. She thought that the veteran experience is so unique in some respects that having mentors who understand it fully adds a great value to the program and can be critical to its success.

Evaluator #2 felt that the program has the potential to provide tremendous
amount of support for this population.

Evaluator #3 believed that this program would provide a high degree of support for women veterans transitioning to civilian life. She praised the program’s capacity to offer structure, direction, education, and emotional support through the mentorship component. Furthermore, she thought that participants would learn new skills and gain valuable self-knowledge. In her opinion, the program addresses the many steps of a job search process and offers assistance with all of them.

3. To what degree are the assessments appropriate for the population?

Evaluator #1 felt that the assessments incorporated in the program are suitable for the target population. She expressed concerns about the short time frame in which these assessments would be administered. In her opinion, taking self-assessments like these can be emotionally draining as they help individuals discover and understand themselves better. Moreover, she felt that in order for participants to create a workable and efficient career plan, they need more time to process the information acquired through the assessments. Her suggestion was to administer only two assessments in person and if possible let the participants take the Self-Directed Search at home, before the first day of the seminar.

Evaluator #2 has no experience with using these assessments in a professional setting. However, after reviewing them she reported that they seem to be appropriate for the target population.

Evaluator #3 also has limited exposure to career assessments; therefore, she reviewed them thoroughly and weighted her comments accordingly. She believed that the Self-Directed Search appears to be a well-rounded instrument, incorporating
daydreams alongside actual life experiences, which will aid participants in their quest for self-discovery. Furthermore, she thought that the group discussion questions proposed in this section would help participants normalize and integrate the knowledge they have gained from taking these assessments.

4. To what degree are the exercises and activities used in this program appropriate for this population?

Evaluator #1 felt that overall the exercises and activities are appropriate for this population. However, she thought that there is too much time allocated for group discussion. Furthermore, she suggested that some of the questions proposed in this section could be asked as part of the evaluation survey at the end of the seminar. Sometimes asking too specific questions in a group setting can make some participants uncomfortable (Example: How confident are you about your action plan?). She recommended asking more general, open-ended questions that would create more of a discussion (Example: What did you find most helpful?). In addition, she felt that the resume development and the interviewing portion of the program have not been given enough attention. She believed that having an understanding of how to craft a powerful resume and how to ace a job interview is key to landing a job in today’s market. She pointed out that it is important to consider the participants length of service in the military and the time elapsed since they created a resume for the civilian job market.

Evaluator #2 felt that the activities and exercises incorporated in this program are appropriate for this population. She believed that participants will gain new skills through these activities, which they can use repeatedly as they change jobs or careers in
the future.

Evaluator #3 thought that the activities and exercises included in this program would be appropriate for any population seeking jobs, including women veterans. She believed that using women veterans, who successfully transitioned into civilian life as mentors, adds great value to the program. In her opinion, the mentors can provide inspiration and encouragement as well as emotional support to program participants. She especially liked the fact that each participant will have individual sessions with her mentors as well as career counselors.

5. How appropriate is the format of this program for this population?

Evaluator #1 commented earlier that she felt that the program contains too many assessments. She suggested that time spent on resume development and interviewing skills rather than group discussions would be of benefit to participants.

Evaluator #2 felt that the format of the program is suitable for the target population. She thought that the consistency of having a group of women veterans spend this amount of time together will allow them to develop trust for one another and a sense of mutual support and belonging.

Evaluator #3 thought that the format of the program is excellent for this population. In her opinion, the three-day timeline contains many opportunities for discussions, mentoring and counseling, in addition to skill building activities and dispensing of practical and useful information. She added that while the program is intensive it seems to offer a balance due to the variety of activities incorporated. Furthermore, she mentioned that women veterans would appreciate the structure the program provides and potentially enjoy the self-motivation aspect of it.
6. Please indicate any reservations you might have for this program.

Evaluator #1 shared her reservations and suggestions as part of her answers to previous questions. She did not offer additional comments at this time.

Evaluator #2 did not share any reservations regarding the program. She did not include suggestions or comments in her review.

Evaluator #3 thought that some participants might face disappointment if or when they fail to find adequate employment due to the state of the economy and the scarcity of employment in the civilian labor market. She added that while the program does not guarantee success, participants may feel like a waste of time if their job search process does not come to fruition.

7. What suggestions would you have to help improve the program?

Evaluator #1 believed that the registration process should include a brief survey or questionnaire to gauge what participants are most interested in and use this information to decide how to allocate time to cover various topics throughout the program. Also, she felt that the seminar days are too long, especially since it is a three-day event. Also, she suggested starting the “meet and greet” breakfast on the first day at 8:30 am and the program at 9:00 am. This would provide for a great icebreaker and would allow participants to increase comfort with one another and bond.

Evaluator #2 suggested thinking each section of the program through thoroughly, and being somewhat flexible regarding the schedule. She remained convinced that the program offers great value for women veterans seeking employment in the civilian labor market.

Evaluator #3 suggested adding a few questions to the discussion sections to
increase participants’ awareness of particular strengths, skills, and knowledge they have acquired during their military service, which can be transferred into the civilian job market. Furthermore, she suggested maintaining some level of relationship with program graduates beyond the time of the seminar, at least until they find satisfactory employment.

**Conclusion**

Through their thoughtful suggestions and recommendations, the field evaluators have made significant contribution to the success of this program. All of their comments and propositions will be evaluated and the following modifications will be made to the program.

1. A brief questionnaire will be developed and included in the program’s application process to determine participants’ interest and motivation for taking part in the program.

2. The first day’s agenda will be slightly modified, moving the meet and great breakfast activity to 8.30 am. The program will formally start at 9:00 am.

3. Additional questions will be developed and added to already existing group discussion topics, to assist women veterans in recognizing the value in the strengths, skills, and knowledge they have acquired through their military service.

4. To maintain contact with participants after the completion of the program, an online alumni forum will be instated, which can help women veterans stay in touch with their career counselors, their mentors and one another. As more and more women veterans graduate the program, this network will keep
growing and increasing in significance.

These changes will improve the efficiency of the program and provide program coordinators with tools to gain a better understanding of participants’ background and current situation as well as a platform to keep them engaged and monitor their progress.
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Appendix A: Application Form

APPLICATION FORM

PERSONAL INFORMATION  DATE OF APPLICATION: _____________

Name:

Last                  First                  Middle

Address:

Street (Apt)          City                   State     Zip

Alternate Address:

Street                City                   State     Zip

Contact Information:

(____)________________(____)________________

Home Telephone        Mobile Telephone      Email

Date of Birth: __________________________

Month       Day       Year

Relationship Status (Please circle one):

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<th>Single</th>
<th>Married</th>
<th>Divorced</th>
<th>Widowed</th>
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1. How did you learn about our program?

______________________________________________________________________

2. Why are you interested our program?

______________________________________________________________________

3. Do you need special accommodation during the program? Please specify:

______________________________________________________________________
**EDUCATION**

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<th>Institution (Name and location)</th>
<th>Degree/Certification Earned</th>
<th>Graduation Year</th>
<th>Major/Subject of Study</th>
<th>GPA</th>
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**MILITARY EXPERIENCE**

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**INJURIES/MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS**

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<th>Date of injury/Start date of condition</th>
<th>Treatment received</th>
<th>Limitations due to injury or condition</th>
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**PREVIOUS WORK EXPERIENCE** *(Please begin list with most recent)*

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Job responsibilities, tasks performed and reason for leaving (if applicable):

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Job responsibilities, tasks performed and reason for leaving (if applicable):

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List your top three career interests in order of preference:

1. _____________________________________________________________

2. _____________________________________________________________

3. _____________________________________________________________

List three career-related goals you plan to accomplish in the next 6-12 months:

1. _____________________________________________________________

2. _____________________________________________________________

3. _____________________________________________________________

List two personal goals you plan to accomplish in the next 6-12 months:

1. _____________________________________________________________

2. _____________________________________________________________
Appendix B: Agenda for Session 1, Friday (MM/DD/YYYY)

9.00 AM to 10.00 AM: “Meet and greet.”
- Welcoming participants, distributing name tags, sign-in sheet and the daily agenda.
- Distribution of participants’ personal folder to use throughout the workshop.
  - Round-table discussion: personal introductions of participants and counselors.
- Establishing group norms and procedures (confidentiality, attendance, and so forth)

10.00 AM to 10.50 AM: Administering the Self-Directed-Search Assessment.
- Distribution of the assessment packet and brief overview of the directions.
- Completion of assessment and recording results on the “Who am I” summary sheet.
- In-class activity: Selecting 3-5 occupations of interest from The Occupational Finder.

10.50 AM to 11.00 AM: Break.

11.00 AM to 12.00 PM: Administering the Vista Life/Career Cards card sort.
- Distribution of the cards and the Pyramid Profile Sheet.
- Brief overview of the card sorting process and transferring results onto the profile sheet.
- Completion of the card sort and recording results on the profile sheet as well as on the “Who am I” summary sheet.
- Composing a reflection statement on both assessments’ results.

12.00 PM to 1.00 PM: Lunch Break.
Appendix C: Agenda for Session 2, Friday (MM/DD/YYYY)

1.00 PM to 2.00 PM: Completion of the Strengths Finder 2.0 online.
   - Brief overview of the assessment.
   - Completion of the assessment and printing out personal reports.
   - Recording results on the “Who am I” summary sheet and reading the awareness section (#1) of the report.
   - Writing a brief summary on thoughts and feelings about the results.

2.00 PM to 2.45 PM: Group discussion of the results.
   - Sharing reactions to each assessment and the results.

2.45 PM to 3.00 PM: Break
   - Sign-up for 15-minute individual sessions with the career counselor of choice on a first-come-first-served-basis.

3.00 PM to 4.00 PM: One-on-one counseling sessions.
   - 15-minute one-on-one sessions with a career counselor to discuss assessment results and ask questions.

4.00 PM to 5.00 PM: Closing thoughts and homework assignment discussion.
   - Sharing feelings, observations, and comments on the day’s activities.
   - Discussion of the homework assignment “My top 5 occupations.”

5.00 PM to 6.00 PM: Career counselors are available for questions and clarifications from the group.
Appendix D: Agenda for Session 3, Saturday (MM/DD/YYYY)

9.00 AM to 9.30 AM: Morning greetings and group process.
   • Discussion of first day’s events.
   • Handing out the detailed agenda for the session.

9.30 AM to 10.00 AM: Homework review.
   • Discussion of the homework assignment “My top 5 occupations.”

10.00 AM to 10.50 AM: Online job search engines and career exploration sites.
   • Handing out the “List of Online Job Search Engines and Career Exploration Sites.”
   • In-class activity: Researching the occupations identified in the homework on the career exploration websites.
   • Writing short summary of the information found on the websites.

10.50 AM to 11.00 AM: Break.

11.00 AM to 12.00 PM: Introduction to informational interviews.
   • Handing out the “Ask me!” handout on informational interviewing.
   • In-class activity: Selection of three potential interviewees and creating a plan to establish contact. Compiling a list of five questions to ask from potential interviewees.
   • Group discussion on informational interviewing.

12.00 PM to 1.00 PM: Lunch break.
Appendix E: Agenda for Session 4, Saturday (MM/DD/YYYY)

1.00 PM to 2.00 PM: Meeting the Women Veterans.
  - Introduction of the women veteran mentors.
  - Discussion regarding professional backgrounds, military past, transitioning stories.

2.00 PM to 3.50 PM: Individual sessions with women veteran mentors.
  - Signing-up for individual sessions with women veterans on first come first served basis.
  - 15-minute one-on-one sessions with women veterans.
  - Writing a short summary on individual sessions. To be collected by career counselors.
  - Group discussion of the interviewing experiences.

3.50 PM to 4.00 PM: Break.

4.00 PM to 5.00 PM: SMART Goal setting method.
  - Presenting the SMART Goals Setting to the group and passing out the relevant handout.
  - Group discussion of the importance of goal setting.
  - In-class activity: Identifying a professional goal using the SMART goal setting model and creating a 3-5 step action plan on how to reach the goal.
  - Group discussion of the exercise. Written work to be collected by the counselors.
  - Discussion of “Where do I want to be this time next year?” homework assignment.

5.00 PM to 6.00 PM: Career counselors and women veterans will be available for additional questions.
Appendix F: Agenda for Session 5, Sunday (MM/DD/YYYY)

9.00 AM to 9.30 AM: Homework review.
• Handing out detailed agenda for the session.
• Group discussion of the homework assignment “Where do I want to be this time next year?”
• Signing up for individual counseling sessions with counselors and woman veterans on a first-come-first-served-basis.

9.30 AM to 11.30 AM: Individual sessions with counselors/veterans.
• 30-minute sessions with career counselors and woman veterans to work on a job search plan for the upcoming month. The plan must include one main goal, five objectives, and a timeline.

11.30 AM to 12.00 PM: Group discussion.
• Sharing thoughts and feelings about the individual sessions with the group.

12.00 PM to 1.00 PM: Lunch with the counselors and veterans (networking opportunity)
Appendix G: Agenda for Session 5, Sunday (MM/DD/YYYY)

1.00 PM to 2.50 PM: How to craft a winning resume and cover letter.
   - Dissemination of the Resume/Cover Letter Packet.
   - In-class activity: Online search for a desirable employment advertisement and crafting a resume and a cover letter for it.
   - Sharing the drafts of the documents with the group for comments and suggestions.
   - Group discussion of the creative process and receiving feedback from counselors.

2.50 PM to 3.00 PM: Break.

3.00 PM to 4.30 PM: Successful Job Interviews.
   - Presentation based on the “Nailing that interview” handout distributed beforehand.
   - Five-minute preparation time for a short mock interview session with counselor.
   - In-Class activity: Practicing interviewing skills with a counselor for 10 minutes.
   - Counselors’ feedback on interviewing skills.

4.30 PM to 5.30 PM: Closing thoughts.
   - Sharing thoughts and feelings about the workshop. (Providing concrete examples of most useful topics and giving examples of issues left unexplored).
   - Counselors’ feedback on group participation and group process.
   - Filling out the Boot Camp Evaluation Survey.
   - Handing back all written correspondence completed over the course of the workshop with detailed comments and observations attached.
   - Closing statements.

5.00 PM to 6.00 PM: Career counselors will be available for additional questions, comments.
Appendix H: Confidentiality Agreement (to be signed and submitted with Application form)

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

PLEASE READ, SIGN AND ATTACH THIS FORM TO YOUR APPLICATION

Confidentiality means that all participants of the program share the responsibility to safeguard information obtained during all program-related activities. Participants, career counselors, and mentors are equally obligated to protect information acquired through group activities, homework assignments and private counseling sessions and to refrain from disclosing data pertaining to anyone involved with the program.

All identifying information about you is kept confidential, except as mandated by law. In certain situations, counseling professionals are required by law to reveal information obtained during counseling sessions to other persons or agencies without your consent. In such situations, the counselors are not required to inform you of these actions. Please read carefully the following exceptions to confidentiality:

- Confidentiality does not apply to cases of suspected abuse/neglect of children or the elderly.
- Confidentiality does not apply to cases of potential harm to self or others.
- A counseling professional may disclose confidential information in proceedings brought by a client against a professional.
- Confidentiality does not apply to cases involving criminal proceedings, except communications by a person voluntarily involved in a substance abuse program.
• Confidentiality may not apply in cases involving legal proceedings affecting the parent-child relationship.

I have read and accept this agreement:

__________________________________________  
Participant/Counselor/Mentor (Circle one) Signature  Date

__________________________________________  
Participant/Counselor/Mentor (Circle one) Signature  Date
Appendix I: “Who Am I?” Result Summary Sheet

1. Self-Directed Search (Holland Code):
2. Vista Card Sort (Holland Code):

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<th>Top 10 Traits:</th>
<th>Top 10 Skills:</th>
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3. Strengths Finder 2.0:

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<th>Skills (relating to the themes)</th>
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4. Additional Comments and Observations:
Appendix J: My Top Five Occupations

• List your top five occupational choices and describe how prepared you think you are for each of these occupations.

• Discuss what steps you may need to take (and your willingness to do so) in order to get qualified for each of these positions (i.e. education, skills, experience, etc).

• Explain how your assessments results influenced your decision-making process.

• E-mail your homework to the career counselor you have met with earlier in the day by 9.00 PM.
Appendix K: List of Online Job Search Engines and Career Exploration Sites

General Job Search Engines:
- Indeed.com (http://www.indeed.com/)
- Monster.com (http://www.monster.com/)
- Careerbuilder.com (http://www.careerbuilder.com/)
- Jobstar.org (http://jobstar.org/index.php)
- Jobs.com (http://jobs.com/)
- Careers.com (http://www.careers.com/)
- Jobsearch.com (http://www.jobsearch.com/)

Career Exploration Sites:
- O*NET Online (http://www.onetonline.org/)
  - Occupational Outlook Handbook (http://bls.gov/oco/)
Appendix L: “Ask Me!” (How to Conduct Informational Interviews) What is an Informational Interview?

- An **Informational Interview** is an information-gathering meeting that you set up with a professional working in your field of interest to learn more about the industry, the profession, the company, and the position your interviewee holds in the organization.

- An **Informational Interview** is also a research tool, because it helps you obtain first-hand information about the profession of your choice.

- Furthermore, it is an effective networking tool because it can help you establish contacts with people already employed in the field of your interest.

**How do I find people to interview?**

- There are many ways to find working professionals willing to share their experiences. The easiest way might be to ask someone you already know, or try to establish contact through friends or relatives.

- However, if you are ready for a challenge, you should conduct a search of your own. The Internet is the best way to get started. Once you decide on the occupation, you are most interested in looking for a company or a business that may employ people in that field. Also, you can call your city’s Chamber of Commerce for suggestions.

**What is the appropriate way of making contact?**

- You may call your potential interviewee directly or if he/she has a secretary, or an assistant, it might be best if you establish contact through them.
• An alternative option is to send an e-mail in which you introduce yourself, briefly explain the reason you are contacting him/her and ask permission to call in person.

**Once I set up an informational interview, what is my next step?**

• You should start preparing your questions. Keep in mind that you will have limited time, about 30 minutes, so prioritize!

**What sort of questions should I be asking?**

• What is your job like? Please tell me about a typical workday.

• What prior work experiences led you to this position?

• How much experience did you have when you applied for the job?

• What do you like about your job?

• Do you find your work satisfying?

• What is your academic background?

• Did your degree prepare you well for this position?

• What advice would you give someone considering your line of work?

• What skills and competencies should someone have who is interested in working in your field?

• Do you consider this position your dream job? Why or why not?

*Remember, these are sample questions, you may omit some and add others to find out the information that YOU are looking for. Also, I suggest researching the company/organization your interviewee is working at prior to the informational interview to understand the context of his/her answers.*
Is there anything else I should know regarding Informational Interviews?

- Informational Interviews should be treated as any other professional interview. You must be punctual, prepared, dressed professionally, and conduct the interview in a timely manner.
- Do not ask your interviewee for a job! That is not the purpose of your meeting.
- After the interview, send a Thank You card to your interviewee to show your appreciation.
Appendix M: SMART Goal Setting

“If you don’t know where you are going, you will probably end up somewhere else.”

Lawrence J. Peter

SMART Goal Setting is a technique that can help you reach your goals by guiding you through the proper way of defining them. SMART stands for the following:

S = Specific
M = Measurable
A = Attainable
R = Realistic
T= Timely

The importance of “S”

- Your goal has to be clear and important to you. You must feel motivated and determined to reach it. By using strong action verbs you set the tone of your journey. When you begin formulating your goal answer these questions:

  a. What do I want to achieve?
  b. Why do I want to achieve it (reasons, purpose, benefits of achieve your goal)?
  c. What am I willing to give up for this goal?
  d. How hard and for how long am I willing to work towards this goal?
  e. How will I know that I have reached my goal?

The importance of “M”

- If your goal cannot be measured you cannot be sure you have accomplished it.

You must find a way to quantify your progress as well as your goal. To stay on track you may want to specify milestones you could reach while working towards
your goal. Reaching these milestones will help you stay focused, motivated, energized, and aware of your progress.

The importance of “A”

- Your goal must be attainable otherwise you will be tempted to give up. When establishing a goal, you have to keep in mind the resources at your disposal (your abilities, skills, financial resources, and so on). However, you must consider your limitations as well.

The importance of “R”

- To ensure success, your goal has to realistic; in other words “doable.” If your goal stretches too far beyond you capabilities and competences you will fail or give up to avoid failing. However, if you can define a goal that is realistic yet challenging, your motivation will soar, because you will feel energized and inspired by the possibility of success.

The importance of “T”

- Set a timeframe for your goal. Identifying an end date will keep you focused and engaged. Your time frame must be realistic and attainable otherwise it will become a stressor rather than a motivator. Not having an end date creates uncertainty about the entire process. Furthermore, with no end in sight you will find it difficult to stay energized and committed to attaining your goal. A deadline not only offers closure, but can also serve as motivation when things get tough and complicated. It will become your beacon.
Appendix N: “Where Do I Want To Be This Time Next Year?”

- Using the SMART goal setting method, define a professional goal that you want to achieve within the next 12 months. Please make sure that your goal meets all five (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Timely) criteria outlined by the SMART goal setting method.
- Provide a brief explanation how your goal meets each of the five criteria.
- Create 3-5 milestones (objectives if you will) that will help measure your progress. Please remember, that these milestones have to meet the five criteria of SMART goal setting as well in order to be useful to you.
- Create a visual image of your journey (For example: create a time-line, draw your vision, make a photo montage, or a clipboard, etc).
Appendix O: Resume/Cover Letter Packet (6.2)

Resume writing 101

Resumes are created to showcase our professional accomplishments to prospective employers. Therefore, resumes must convey the following information:

- Professional experience
- Educational achievements
- Skills, Abilities, Expertise

There are several types of resumes. The two most commonly used types are:

- Chronological (in which professional experiences are listed in reverse chronological order, starting with the most recent one).
- Functional (in which skills and experience is highlighted rather than the positions held in the past).

Some people opt to combine these two types, by creating a “skills” section located on the top portion of the (first, if there are more than one) page followed by the chronological list of previous employments.

Since crafting a resume is a creative process, you must decide which type of resume would exhibit your professional accomplishments best and choose that format.

Once you have decided on a format it is time to start compiling the information you want to incorporate into your resume. To make sure nothing is left out, you should make a list of the type of information you are planning to include. In other words, you should start creating sections such as:

- Contact information
- Objective or Summary line
• Work History
• Educational Information
• Skills
• Additional Information

Once you have collected all the information needed, it is time to start writing. Here are some basic tips on composing a winning resume:

1. The contact information section should contain your name, postal address, e-mail address (make sure is not “too” personal), and at least one phone number.

2. Having an Objective or Summary line is optional but if you decide to include one, make them relevant and informative (otherwise they just waste space) and tailor them every time to the position you are applying for.

3. Your work history should be organized in reverse chronological order starting with your most recent position. Every entry should include your job title, company name, and location, dates of employment (month and year for both start and end dates) and responsibilities and achievements (in bullet point or paragraph format). When listing your responsibilities and professional accomplishments, use strong action verbs, qualifiers and quantifiers that speak of the contributions you have made to the companies you have worked for. Prospective employers love to see how well you have done your job and what they can expect of you.

4. In your education section list all the academic institutions you had attended and the degrees, certifications and awards you had obtained. If you possess a college degree, there is no need for you to include your high school
information.

5. In your skills section include language skills (consider indicating the level of fluency to avoid misunderstandings), computer and technical skills as well as some soft skills if the position is clearly asking for them (for example: communication, organizational, managerial skills).

6. The last section on your resume can be titled in several ways. Here are some options:
   • Volunteer Experiences
   • Community Involvement
   • Hobbies and Interests
   • Awards

To choose the most fitting title, you may consider what you intend to include in this section. There is one rule however: to maximize the benefit of this section, you should consider including activities that are somehow related to the position you are applying for. For example: if you are applying for a management position, you may want to mention activities that require you to use supervision and leadership skills such as coaching a sports team, or leading a book club. In any case, you must think before you disclose your affiliation with any organization, because it will speak of who you are and what your personal interests and beliefs might be.

Once you wrote down all the information you want to include in your resume, it is time to start playing around with layouts, margin widths, font styles and sizes (it is strongly
recommended to stay above a 10), but make sure that whatever you decide on at the end it looks professional, easy to read and pleasing to the eye. Do not forget, that the people who will review your resume have been going through hundreds if not thousands of documents as part of their job and they are more interested in your professional qualifications than your creative vein (except if you are applying for graphic designer or other artistic positions). Also, proof read your document several times because as we all know the spell checking software does not catch every mistake. For current positions, you may use present tense when describing your responsibilities but for previous jobs, you should use past tense. Keep your punctuation consistent throughout the resume.

Verify your job titles, employment dates, company information to be sure that everything is correctly reported. When you think you have fixed everything, ask your friends and relatives to read it.

You are not done quite yet… To stay ahead of others in the job hunting game, be prepared to tailor your resume to EVERY employment opportunity you are applying for. This practice is called creating a TARGETED RESUME and it means that you will alter parts of your resume to showcase the skills and experiences that particular employer is looking for. To know what changes to make, read the job description and use it as a guideline. A well-tailored resume will highlight how compatible you are for the position.

**Cover letter writing 101**

There is no longer consensus among career experts on the necessity of a cover letter. Some believe that cover letters are a thing of the past, because nobody takes the time to read them anymore, while others think that if it’s a good one it can land you an interview. So whose side are you on? Relax, there is no right or wrong answer to this question and since many employers still request that you send one here is “the formula” to all cover letters:
Date

Hiring manager’s name

Hiring manager’s job title (if known)

Company’s name

Company’s address

Dear Mr/Ms. Hiring Manager:

**First Paragraph:** Include an attention-grabbing sentence about why you are writing (state the position you are applying for and where you found out about it) and emphasize your interest in the company.

**Second Paragraph:** Briefly describe your qualifications, including recent job titles, and provide concrete examples of outstanding professional achievements if any.

**Third Paragraph:** Showcase the skills and abilities that make you the best possible candidate for the position and a great asset for the organization as a whole.

**Fourth Paragraph:** Exemplify how interested you are in the position by asking for an interview, proposing a time to meet or talk over the phone, offering to provide additional information, and finally be sure to thank the employer for the time and consideration.

Sincerely,

**Your Name**

If you can, use your resume contact’s information section as a letter head for your cover letter to give it more style and to keep it consistent with your resume format.
Resume
Sample #1  
Jane Doe
405 Third Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90024, (310) 825-4321, JaneDoe@yahoo.com

OBJECTIVE: To obtain an office manager position in the healthcare industry.

EXPERIENCE

Office
Assistant
Smith Medical Network, Santa Monica, California  
September 2012 – Present

• Managed scheduling systems to maximize patient satisfaction and office efficiency.
• Supervised a staff of seven employees.
• Organized and updated files, medical charts, and records.

Program Coordinator
Healthy Living Project, Reseda, CA  
March 2010 – August 2012

• Provided leadership, guidance and supervision to a team of 25 teachers and volunteers.
• Trained 15 new volunteers to teach elementary school children about proper nutrition.
• Wrote, compiled, and edited a twenty-page manual for training volunteers.
• Expanded the program to include five additional elementary schools.

Office Assistant
THOMAS Health Corporation, Sherman Oaks, CA  
June 2007 – August 2010

• Provided clerical support for several health clinics and rehabilitation facilities.
• Scheduled appointments; updated medical files and ordered laboratory services.
• Maintained adequate office, medical and marketing supplies by coordinating bi-weekly supply orders.

EDUCATION:
California State University, Northridge  
Bachelor of Science, Management  
June 2009

SKILLS:
Proficient in Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, and Access. Fluent in Spanish.
Resume
Sample # 2  Sally M. Sample

1001 Lincoln Street, Los Angeles, CA, (213) 555–1234, sallysample@yahoo.com

Summary of Qualifications
• Six years experience in retail management, specializing in purchasing and floor
display design.
• Utilized strong oral and written communication skills in a variety of
professional settings.
• Enthusiastic, dedicated to provide excellent customer service.

Education
MA in Speech Communications
2009  Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO

BA in Anthropology
2005  Arkansas State University, Jonesboro, AR

Professional Experience
Assistant Office Manager
2006-2009
Department of Speech Communications, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO

Managed departmental supplies budget, oversaw office purchasing and
inventory, overhauled department-wide filing system, supervised part-time staff.

Intern
2005-2006
Sharkey’s Community Grocery Corporate Headquarters, Washington, DC

Assisted company publicist with writing press releases, designing weekly
advertisements, and managing customer databases. Developed research methods for
determining
customer preference for shopping hours.

Assistant Night Manager
2002-2005
Sharkey’s Community Grocery, Jonesboro, AR

Purchased, stocked and maintained dairy and ice cream sections, oversaw point
of purchase display construction, scheduled twenty part-time employees.

Skills

Special Skills: Thorough knowledge of MMORPG and single-player gaming
systems. Language Skills: Conversational Spanish.
Cover Letter Sample # 1

James Doe
101 Martha Street #106
Los Angeles, CA 91108
(213) 737-7075, JamesDoe@yahoo.com

May 27, 2013

Mr./Ms. HR
Human Resources Manager
California Medical Group
8800 Wilshire Boulevard, 10th Floor
Beverly Hills, CA 90210

Dear Mr./Ms. Hiring Manager:

I am applying for the Human Resources Coordinator position posted on Monster.com. I am very excited about the prospect of working for California Medical Group because I am passionate about providing high quality yet affordable healthcare to everyone.

As the office assistant in the Human Resources department at Intercom Inc., I acquired excellent written and verbal communication skills as well as superior conflict resolution abilities. This knowledge, combined with my computer expertise (in Windows, Excel, and PowerPoint) allows me to work well and efficiently in a fast-paced office environment. Additionally, I possess strong organizational and time management skills and I am an accomplished public speaker.

I look forward to meeting with you to discuss how my qualifications can meet the needs of your organization. Please contact me at your earliest convenience. I can be reached at (213) 737-7075 or JamesDoe@yahoo.com. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

James Doe

Enclosure:

Resume
Cover Letter Sample # 2

Joe Johnson
123 Fourth Street
Dana Point, CA 92651
714-555-0432, joejohnson@yahoo.com

March 1, 2013

David Davidson
Section Manager
Hewlett-Packard Company
11222 West Adams Drive
San Diego, CA 92717

Dear Mr. Davidson:

I am writing to you regarding the control systems engineer position advertised on HotJobs.com. For the past few years I have been impressed by the high quality products and services your company is known for. Since I value creativity, innovation and excellence it would be a great honor to be a part of your company’s engineering team.

Currently, I am a laboratory engineer at High Technologies Inc. Last month, I learned that your company is launching a new project: applying microcomputers in automatic control systems. I am extremely interested in the fields of control systems and computers, and I have been involved in three projects focusing on microcomputer applications. Due to these experiences, I believe that I can make an excellent contribution to your new project.

Please refer to my enclosed resume for additional information about previous projects and relevant skills and qualifications. I look forward to meeting with you to discuss how my professional experiences could be utilized in your new project. If you have any questions do not hesitate to contact me at any time at 714-555-0432 or at joejohnson@yahoo.com. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ray Johnson

Enclosure:

Resume
Appendix P: Nailing That Interview

Here are the 5 Stages of the Interviewing Process:

1. Preparation
   - Before the interview, learn as much about the company as you can. Locate their website, look at their products and services, and also get a feel of the company’s values and culture to determine whether it would be a good fit if the position is offered.
   - Practice your interviewing skills. Download sample questions from the Internet and ask friends or family members to help you practice.
   - Try on the outfit you are planning to wear for the interview days in advance in case you need to make adjustments. Ask friends and family for feedback.
   - Arrange and confirm the time for your interview. When you set the time, take into consideration the distance, the traffic situation, and all other external circumstances that may prevent you from arriving on time. Save the contact person’s number on your cell phone in case an unexpected event occurs and you have to reschedule the meeting.
   - Do not be late. In fact, try to arrive early.
   - Prepare questions for the interviewers.

2. Introduction
   - Memorize the name(s) of your interviewer(s).
   - Display confidence by having a firm handshake, smiling, and keeping eye contact while talking. Be prepared for small talk.
3. **The Interview**

- Listen to the questions carefully and ask for clarifications when you need it.
- Stay calm and composed; do not let your nerves interfere with your ability to focus.
- Give specific examples, but be brief and concise.

4. **Ask Your Own Questions**

- Now is your turn to find out what you need to know in order to make a well-informed decision for yourself about this employment opportunity. Use the list of questions you have prepared beforehand.
- Take notes and write down the names and the positions of the people you meet during the interviewing process.
- Show interest, excitement, and genuine enthusiasm about the possibility of working there.

5. **The Final Stage**

- Thank the interviewers for their time and consideration and let them know how interested you are in the position.
- Make sure they have your contact information, copy of your resume and cover letter.
- Within a week, follow up with a phone call and a thank you note for all your interviewers.
Appendix Q: Workshop Evaluation Survey

Workshop Name: ____________________________________________

Training Location: ____________________________________________

Participant Name (optional): __________________________________

Date: ______________________

INSTRUCTIONS
Please circle your response to the items. Rate aspects of the workshop on a 1 to 5 scale:
1 = “Strongly disagree,” or the lowest, most negative impression
2 = “Disagree”
3 = “Neither agree nor disagree,” or an adequate impression
4 = “Agree”
5 = “Strongly agree,” or the highest, most positive impression

Choose N/A if the item is not appropriate or not applicable to this workshop. Your feedback is sincerely appreciated. Thank you.

____________________________________________________________

WORKSHOP CONTENT (Circle your response to each item)
1= Strongly Disagree; 2= Disagree; 3= Neither Agree nor Disagree; 4= Agree; 5=
Strongly Agree;
N/A= Not applicable

1. The content of the workshop was informative.
   1  2  3  4  5  N/A

2. In this workshop I learned valuable skills and useful information.
   1  2  3  4  5  N/A

3. The workshop enhanced my knowledge and understanding of this subject matter.
   1  2  3  4  5  N/A

WORKSHOP DESIGN (Circle your response to each item)

4. The workshop objectives were clear to me.
   1  2  3  4  5  N/A

5. The workshop activities were educational and relevant to the topic.
   1  2  3  4  5  N/A

6. The activities in this workshop helped me learn new skills and gave me sufficient
   practice.
   1  2  3  4  5  N/A
7. The difficulty level of the workshop was appropriate.
   1 2 3 4 5 N/A

8. The pace of this workshop was appropriate.
   1 2 3 4 5 N/A

WORKSHOP FACILITATOR (Circle your response to each item)

9. The workshop facilitators were well prepared and knowledgeable about the topics covered.
   - Facilitator 1 Facilitator 2 Facilitator 3
     1 2 3 4 5 N/A 1 2 3 4 5 N/A 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

10. The facilitators were helpful and approachable.
    - Facilitator 1 Facilitator 2 Facilitator 3
      1 2 3 4 5 N/A 1 2 3 4 5 N/A 1 2 3 4 5 N/A

WORKSHOP RESULTS (Circle your response to each item)

11. I accomplished the goals of this workshop.
    1 2 3 4 5 N/A

12. I will be able to use what I learned in this workshop.
    1 2 3 4 5 N/A

13. The workshop was a good way for me to learn this content.
    1 2 3 4 5 N/A

SUGGESTIONS FROM PARTICIPANTS

14. How would you improve this workshop? (Check all that apply)

___ Provide more information on the topics covered before the workshop.
___ Reduce the content covered in the workshop.
___ Increase the content covered in the workshop.
___ Update the content covered in the workshop.
___ Improve the instructional methods.
___ Make the workshop activities more interesting.
___ Improve the structure of the workshop.
___ Slow down the pace of the workshop.
___ Speed up the pace of the workshop.
15. What other improvements would you recommend?


16. What did you find least helpful about this workshop?


17. What did you find most helpful about this workshop?


18. Would you recommend this workshop to others? (Please explain your answer)


THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR COMPLETING THIS SURVEY!