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Successful Transition of the Military Service Member to Civilian Life

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
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in

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by

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Dedication

"We keep moving forward, opening new doors, and doing new things, because we're curious and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths." - Walt Disney

Walt Disney's quote was my unofficial mantra throughout my educational journey. From community college to a PhD, I kept moving forward to fulfill my curiosity to understand human behavior. My interest in a graduate degree in psychology is not surprising – in fact, when I started community college I wanted to become a college counselor and although I have a passion for teaching, the part I love most is helping guide young college students to pursue their educational dreams. One professor started this all for me – Jeana Wolfe. She may not know how much she changed my life. Seeing her passion for statistics while raising a family is what allowed me to dream of doing the same. Russ Espinoza, thank you, you saw something special in me during research methods and during my time TAing for you that you thought I would make for a graduate student. Your passion for research methods and the ease to which you share this to students only further led me down the path of going to a PhD program with the hopes of measuring up to you someday. Not without these two and a handful of other people would I have been able to open new doors and do new things to satisfy my curiosity with human behavior.

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my optimistic pessimist; Josh, you are my infinitely positive and understanding friend; and Daniel, I will cherish our time spent complaining after finishing a stats exam during our first year since we were always the first ones done, yay, us! To my CSUF friends, Stephen, Erin, Francesca, and Melinda, my time spent with you all is something I will remember for the rest of my life. Even with the many miles apart, I still feel like I can call any one of you and feel like no time has passed at all. Thank you for playing a vital role in my graduate career.

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very “huggy” family but I hope you will always know that you are the best mom ever and I love you very much! Dad, I know that we can never predict the circumstance in which we find ourselves but without your support and help with the kids it would have been nearly impossible to achieve what I have at UCR. You are always seeking to understand what I am going through and the process of graduate school and sometimes I think you ask only to give me a pat on the back and tell me you are proud of me. I love you. Thank you both for your unyielding support.

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Sharyn and Seth, you are the hardest and easiest parts of my life. All that I have ever accomplished has been for you two. All that I am is because of you two. Your *Dr. Mommy* cannot imagine what her life would be like without the two of you. You both have been so deeply understanding of how important this journey was to me. Your endless curiosity of the world around us has made me a better mother and person.

Without you two I would not be who I am today. My hope is that the two of you continue to grow into the wonderful people you are and never let anyone tell you how to live your dreams. Be curious. Ask questions. Love deeply. And never, ever give up! I love you, Bear and Bud.

Much of my time off is spent dreaming, learning, and growing alongside my family at our happy place and so it seems fitting to complete my graduate career with the following quote:

"If you can dream it, you can do it." - Walt Disney

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Successful Transition of the Military Service Member to Civilian Life

by

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Dr. Daniel J. Ozer, Chairperson

Graduating high school and entering college, the workforce, or the military may all be understood as examples of major life transitions. Such transitions may be experienced in different ways, may be easy or difficult, and may or may not be successful. One life transition infrequently studied is the military-to-civilian transition that service members experience. The current study focused on the transition period service members experience upon reentry to civilian life after they have separated from the service. A successful transition was assessed in two ways: the ease to which the service member adjusted to civilian life and their satisfaction with life immediately after discharge from the military. This study incorporates both positive and negative effects of serving on the service members' perception of the ease and success of their transition to civilian life and their satisfaction with life. Personality traits were assessed to determine if individual differences also predicted success during the transition period and satisfaction with life.

Participants were 595 United States military service members who had separated from the service less than 10 years prior to the time of data collection. The results of the current study indicate that positively experienced deployments, positive discharge training experience, more frequent contact with other veterans, the kind (positive or negative) of situation returned to, and post-traumatic stress symptoms significantly predicted service members perceived ease of adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life. Extraversion and negative emotionality similarly predicted these same outcomes. No significant gender differences were observed. These findings suggest a potential avenue future researchers and policy makers might take to better help service members adjust to civilian life. One avenue may be to create an intervention of a standardized discharge training experience all service members receive when separating from the service. This training should treat adjustment back into civilian life as multifaceted and involve the service member and those individuals who make up their social support system.

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Major life transitions occur for all individuals and can have a lasting impression in peoples' lives. These transitions may include the transition out of the family of origin household to a family of destination or when an individual exits the workforce and enters retirement. Although major life transitions are easily recalled, the ways in which individuals transition and the ease of the transition may greatly affect success or satisfaction with the major life transition. For example, one might experience greater ease, success, and satisfaction with the transition from adolescence to adulthood (Levitt, Silver, & Santos, 2007), from college to work life (Koen, Klehem, & Van Vianen, 2012; Ryan, 2001), to marriage (Cornelius & Sullivan, 2009), to parenthood (Lawrence, Cobb, Rothman, Rothman, & Bradbury, 2008), and to retirement (Pinquart & Schindler, 2007).

Some individuals transition better than others. These individuals may have an easier time transitioning or may have more overall success with major life transitions. There are a multitude of major life transitions that one may experience, and one can handle each of these transitions with relative ease and success. For example, Levitt, Silver, and Santos (2007) evaluated the transition from adolescence to adulthood and found that perceived parental support related to transition success. Additionally, Koen, Klehem and Vianen (2012) found that career adaptability (concern, curiosity, and control) increased in a single day training session with recent college-graduates which suggests that a simple one-day training may be sufficient to aid the ease and success during a major life transition. Lawrence, Cobb, Rothman, Rothman, and Bradbury (2008) identified gender differences between new mothers and fathers throughout their transition to parenthood (reasons for martial decline differed between genders) and that

differences occurred between couples who chose to enter parenthood versus those who did not. It seems that the simple choice of entering a major life transition may relate to the ease and successful navigation of that transition. There are important individual differences and external support systems (perceived parental support, trainings, gender, choice) that relate to ease and/or success with a major life transition.

One population in which all members experience a specific major life transition are military service members. There are over 20 million veterans of the United States military (as of 2014 according to the Census Bureau), yet much of the research regarding service members relates to the negative effects of serving, such as post-traumatic stress. In comparison, little research evaluates how the experience of serving relates to the accompanying life afterwards in a positive direction. The unique transitions military service members experience should be considered major life transitions. Major life transitions of military service members include transitioning into the service from civilian life, transitioning while in the service (e.g. due to deployments), and finally transitioning out of the service and back into civilian life. Each of these transition periods have the potential to occur smoothly or with difficulty. Of interest here is the identification of predictors that lead to an easier and more successful transition of the service member from the military back into civilian life. Specifically, what positive and negative experiences during military service predict an easier and more successful transition to civilian life? Are there are gender differences in which experiences predict an easier and more successful transition to civilian life? Do

certain personality traits play a role in an easier and more successful transition to civilian life?

Transitioning out of military service may be different from other transitions, such as graduating college, due to the intensity of the potential experience while in the service (Doyle & Peterson, 2005). Since military veterans are more likely to find themselves in rather extreme situations than their non-service member counterparts they are an important subpopulation to study (Wintre & Ben-Knaz, 2000). However, the experiences service members have can range from simply belonging to the military reserves or the National Guard where potential for combat exposure is low, to serving in the Army and Marines where the potential for combat exposure is high. Although there are documented differences between those who join the service and those who do not (Elder, Wang, Spence, Adkins, & Brown, 2010) it is less clear how the military experience relates to important life outcomes, for example, ease of adjustment of the service member back into civilian life and current satisfaction with life.

The purpose of the current study is to assess how experiences in the military predict adjustment to civilian life and satisfaction with life. Some potential predictors that may lead to differences in adjustment to civilian life and satisfaction with life include personal growth, military pride, deployments, discharge training, contact with other veterans, risk taking behavior, combat exposure, and post-traumatic stress disorder. The current study is also interested in assessing how these positive and negative experiences service members have in the military may predict ease of adjustment and satisfaction with life differently for male and female veterans.

What follows is a discussion of adjustment to civilian life and satisfaction with life as two important life outcomes for service members transition. In addition, positive and negative experiences that occur while the veteran is in the service that may affect the transition to civilian life will be reviewed. Finally, relevant service member characteristics such as gender followed by a summary of the research questions of the current study will be discussed.

Successful Transition

Successful adjustment from the military to civilian life is defined here as the ease to which the service members view their transition back to civilian life. Although there may be alternative definitions for successful transition of the service member to civilian life (e.g., relationship satisfaction, employment, mental health, etc.) the definition used here mirrors that of Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin's (1985) satisfaction with life. Much like satisfaction with life was conceptualized, the current study was interested in assessing the global perceived ease of transitioning to civilian life. This is a rather novel conceptualization of a successful transition from military to civilian life, therefore, the following section reviews how others have used to define successful transitions of service members such as relationship satisfaction and mental health.

Adjustment to civilian life from the military service is an important outcome to study as it is related to personal growth, relationship satisfaction, and mental and physical health after separation from the service (Knobloch, Ebata, McGlaughlin, & Ogolsky, 2013; Lu, Lovejoy, Karl, & Dobscha, 2013; Riviere, Merrill, Thomas, Wilk, & Bliese, 2012; Tedeschi, 2011). Tedeschi (2011) discussed the importance of

posttraumatic growth (PTG) or the potentially positive personal changes from a traumatic experience for combat service members and their families. Tedeschi states that "resilience and PTG may appear to be negatively related early on in the aftermath of trauma, but positively related after a good deal of time has allowed for processing" (p. 138). This suggests that combat service members may actually experience some form of personal growth from this negative life experience.

In terms of relationships, Riviere, Merrill, Thomas, Wilk, and Bliese (2012) evaluated marital functioning across 5,928 enlisted soldiers (all males and were married) who had deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan between the years of 2003 and 2009. Marital functioning included marital quality, infidelity, and separation/divorce intent. Marital quality declined, and infidelity and separation/divorce intent increased over time. Although married and enlisted female soldiers were not the focus, the authors were able to report that these soldiers reported the highest rate of marital dissolution from 2005 to 2009. This suggests that the experience of belonging to the service alone may affect relationship satisfaction and it may be worse for enlisted, female service members than for enlisted, male service members.

Additionally, Knobloch, Ebata, McGlaughlin, and Ogolsky (2013) evaluated 118 military couples who had recently reunited from a deployment across a 3-month period. Most of the sample had a male service member and a female at-home spouse. Depressive symptoms, relational uncertainty, and interference from partners predicted difficulty during this reintegration period at the dyadic level. However, it was also the case that females, who were the predominately at-home spouse, indicated that

reintegration was more difficult due to interference in their daily lives when the service member returned. One can imagine why this might be the case (i.e. disruption to the spouse's schedule), but less is known about the at-home male spouse or the active duty female spouse.

Mental and physical health have also been used as indicators of a successful adjustment out of the service and back into civilian life. Plagge, Lu, Lovejoy, Karl, and Dobscha (2013) evaluated 30 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans with chronic pain and post-traumatic stress disorder who participated in a biopsychosocial evaluation and up to eight behavioral activation sessions to assess changes in important life outcomes. Results of the intervention included decreases in chronic pain and post-traumatic stress disorder and increases in mental health and quality of life. Although these previous studies indicate the importance of growth, relationships, and mental and physical health in the transition ease and success of service members they lack an integrative assessment in relation to how the service members themselves perceive how easy it was to transition back into civilian life (rather than how difficult or successful the transition was).

Satisfaction with Life

Adjustment to civilian life may not be restricted to the aforementioned constructs but may also be related to global satisfaction with life. Satisfaction with life is concerned with global life satisfaction and is conceptually different than successful adjustment to civilian life (which is defined here as perceived ease with the transition period from the military service back into civilian life). Therefore, it is important to assess both adjustment to civilian life and satisfaction with life as they may be related to one another

but are conceptually different constructs (one evaluates perceived ease whereas the other evaluates perceived satisfaction with life). As discussed below, satisfaction with life is related to combat exposure, post-traumatic stress disorder, and overall adjustment.

Vogt, King, King, Savarese, and Suvak (2004) evaluated general life adjustment (satisfaction with various areas in life along with educational and occupational attainment) of Viet Nam veterans across 3,106 participants (1,632 of which were Viet Nam theater veterans) from a 1990 national survey. War zone exposure predicted post-traumatic stress disorder but did not explain later life satisfaction or attainment. This suggests that positive and negative effects of combat exposure may be independent and that the presence of a negative condition (e.g. PTSD) does not indicate the absence of the other (e.g. life satisfaction). Furthermore, combat exposure predicted general life satisfaction for both males and females but only significantly predicted occupational satisfaction for females. This suggests that there are at least some differences between male and female soldiers' experiences on later life satisfaction, attainment, or adjustment.

Taft, Schumm, Panuzio, and Proctor (2008) aimed to assess the relationship between combat exposure, PTSD, and family adjustment in Desert Storm service members (more recently separated veterans than those who served in Viet Nam). Over 1,500 Desert Storm service members (1,407 of them males) completed assessments immediately after returning from combat and again 18-24 months later. Results were in line with previous work regarding Viet Nam era veterans in that combat exposure was related to higher reports of PTSD which was related to lower family adjustment

(adaptability and cohesion). The specific PTSD symptomology that related to worse family adjustment differed for males (withdrawal/numbing) and females (arousal/lack of control). Furthermore, only for females did combat exposure directly relate to family adjustment after accounting for PTSD, suggesting that gender is an important component for the relationship between combat exposure, PTSD, and family adjustment.

What follows is a discussion of both positive (personal growth, military pride, positive views of deployments, effective discharge training, and contact with other veterans) and negative effects (engagement in risky behavior, combat exposure, and post-traumatic stress disorder) of serving. The goal is to isolate which aspects are most important for an easier and more successful transition to civilian life. Following this, service member characteristics (i.e. personality traits and gender) that may alter the relationship between positive and negative experiences and transition ease and success will be reviewed and finally, an explicit statement of the research questions predicting transition ease and success from experiences and personal characteristics is stated.

Positive Service Experiences

Positive changes such as growing up (maturation), appreciation for life, and increased pride are reported by service members (Maguen, Vogt, King, King, & Litz; 2006). Work utilizing clinical samples of service members suggests that simply having another service member to talk to may help with transition issues by giving the struggling service member a reference group (Graf, Miller, Feist, & Freeman, 2011). Rather than assessing military experiences as a simple addition of external experiences (number of deployments, length of service, etc.) it would be more inclusive to assess the

military experience as a combination of both external and internal experiences (how the service experience helped them to mature, taught them self-confidence, etc.). The following sections will review the experiences (personal growth, contact with other veterans, sense of belonging to a military family, positive effects of deployments, and discharge training) the service member may have while in the military that may play a positive role in successful transition to civilian life.

Personal Growth

Personal growth is a construct of interest as it may relate to post-traumatic growth. Post-traumatic growth can is defined as positive personal changes such as increases in psychological preparedness that result from a struggle within the self to deal with trauma. Post-traumatic growth occurs more so for service members who experienced a traumatic event who do not have high resiliency or effective coping strategies in place (Tedeschi, 2011). However, personal growth, unlike post-traumatic growth, does not require a traumatic experience for growth to occur. Additionally, service members who report viewing their time in the service as a turning point in their lives also report more positive impacts of serving (Elder, Gimbel, & Ivie, 1991). Elder, Gimbel, and Ivie (1991) identified American males born prior to the Depression from different longitudinal studies (Stanford-Terman Longitudinal Study, Oakland Growth Study, and the Berkeley Guidance and Growth samples) to assess military service as a turning point in these males' lives. The males identified in this study served in the military prior to Viet Nam (service years: 1940-1955). A turning point was defined as a dramatic life change that separates two points of time. For those service members who

reported their military service as a major turning point in their lives were more likely to have experienced depression-related hardships before entering the service, were younger upon entry to the service, and gained something (namely occupational opportunities) from serving (combat experience was unrelated to these turning points). These differences in who reports military service as a turning point suggests that although these young males lived during a very difficult time (the Depression) not all of them reported the same effects the military had on their lives (positive, neutral, negative). Therefore, personal growth was used to assess in what ways the service members viewed their time in the service as a turning point and incorporated psychological maturation while serving for those with and without trauma experiences and life preparation due to service experience in relation to a successful transition.

Military Pride

How the service members feel about their time spent in the service in relation to belonging to a group may also play an important role in how they transition to civilian life. For example, if the service member feels that they are part of a military family (i.e. they have a military family made up of friends and colleagues to which they belong) they may be better able to transition as it gives them a greater feeling of pride for serving. This feeling of being part of a military family may also buffer against negative life outcomes upon separation from the service such as post-traumatic stress disorder and depression. Bryan and Heron (2015) evaluated 168 (20 females) active duty service members all who were deployed to the same combat mission to Iraq. These service members completed self-report measures related to depression, post-traumatic stress,

and belonging (measured with the Thwarted Belongingness subscale of the Interpersonal Needs Questionnaire which aims to evaluate respondents' beliefs that they are isolate/disconnected from others) four times over a 12-month period. Depression remained stable across the 12-months and was related to greater post-traumatic stress and lower feelings of belonging at all time points. This suggests that the feeling of belonging, that could include feelings of being part of a military family and pride for their service, may provide some sort of buffer for depression and post-traumatic stress throughout the deployment cycle.

Deployments

One commonality across the vast majority of veterans is deployment. Deployment can occur under a variety of settings, for differing lengths of time, and may activate certain service members' feelings of "duty" to their country. For other veterans, deployment may activate their fear of never seeing their loved ones again. For example, in a review paper by Kgosana and Van Dyk (2011), military members and their families experience unique stressors from the start of the deployment cycle throughout the return that may alter family life. From the stress of traumatic experiences, feeling of helplessness, and fear of being killed to the physical stressors needed to carry out operations and the stress associated with a prolonged absence of the service member on the family left behind it is not surprising that deployments have a wide variety of influence on life outcomes. In fact, effects of deployments on important life outcomes is mixed. There are potential positive and negative effects due to deployments. Newby, McCarroll, Ursana, Fan, Shigemura, and Tucker-Harris (2005) evaluated 951 United

States Army soldiers who were deployed to a peacekeeping mission in Bosnia. The majority of service members reported both positive (77%) and negative (63%) effects of deployments (47% reported both). Positive experiences due to deployment included financial improvement, self-improvement, and time to think. Negative experiences due to deployment included the military chain of command, difficulty being away from home, and decline in intimate relationship satisfaction (although nearly half of the married soldiers also reported an increase in intimate relationship satisfaction). Additionally, there is a link between deployments and an increased risk for developing depression (Knobloch, Ebata, McGlaughlin, & Ogolsky, 2013) and marital relationship deterioration (Riviere, Merrill, Thomas, Wilk, & Bliese, 2012). The effects of deployment are multifaceted and therefore it is imperative to evaluate deployment effects on transition success and other important life outcomes beyond mental health and intimate relationships such as financial stability and physical health.

Discharge Training

Another experience that all service members have but can widely vary is discharge training. Discharge training, referred to by the United States military as the Transition Assistance Program (TAP), generally gives information about employment options, education options, mental and physical health, financial issues, veterans benefits, and relocation assistance. This training occurs within 90 days of separation from the service. Although discharge training is required for all service members before they depart from the military, there is a lack of consistency in discharge training received across and within service branches (DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchell, 2008).

Service members can be given anywhere from a full week-long session with multiple guests that come in to discuss their situation and options, to a brief half-day "workshop" that focuses on career building skills (writing a resume), to handing the service members some pamphlets and asking if they have any questions. Unfortunately, there is limited empirical research on how effective this discharge training is beyond exiting the service and entering higher education and/or work-related return to civilian life. DiRamio, Ackerman, and Mitchell (2008) interviewed 25 student service members/veterans who served during the Iraq of Afghanistan conflicts. Student military members reported three major themes in terms of their transition from a service member to a student: moving in, moving through, moving out. The TAP program fell under the "moving out" theme and the authors suggest that student-veterans may benefit from a "transition coach" who can guide service members down their individualized paths perhaps due to the discrepancies in TAP reported by interviewees. However, Faurer, Rogers-Brodersen, and Bailie (2013) surveyed 350 Army service members and found that 65% reported using services offered by TAP with most of the services utilized (90%) related to writing a resume or cover letter. The results of these two studies indicate that service members are using TAP services for academic (if relevant) and occupational advancement but it is still unclear if this discharge training experience is effective for other areas of the service members lives.

Contact with Other Veterans

Contact with other veterans has been shown to be beneficial for veterans. The self-disclosure literature suggests that talking about sensitive experiences can be helpful

when individuals are attempting to move on and let go of the past (Bowen, Shelley, Helmes, & Landman, 2010). Bowen, Shelley, Helmes, and Landman evaluated the effectiveness of an 8-week group therapy treatment program for 72 male military veterans with symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. Members of the treatment groups were predominantly from the infantry and focused on engaging participants to focus on self-awareness, interpersonal skills, assertiveness training, resilience, and artistic and creative pursuits. Participants were asked to self-disclose about traumatic experiences. Veterans' anxiety and dissociation were assessed at intake, immediately after the 8-week intervention program, and at a 3-month follow-up (self-disclosure levels were assessed by group facilitators during treatment). The intervention was effective: anxiety and dissociation levels were lower at the 3-month follow-up as compared to intake. In terms of self-disclosure, there was no difference in the decreases in anxiety between high and low self-disclosers, however, high-self disclosers had a greater decline in dissociative symptoms at the 3-month follow-up. This suggests that high levels of self-disclosure may be better in the long term by allowing some time for the service member to self-reflect on their experience before sharing it with other service members. It would be interesting to assess if this is evident when engaging in group therapy treatment with civilians as a service member veteran or if this is unique to group therapy with only service member/veteran participants (although the latter seems more expected).

Demers (2011) completed a qualitative study with 45 male Iraq and Afghanistan veterans from California using semi-structured small group interventions from 2006 to

2008. Two themes emerged during these interventions: deploying to war and coming home. Veterans reported needing time and space to reintegrate and a desire to have someone "like them" to talk to. Essentially, veterans who are reintegrating into civilian life are caught between two worlds and Demers suggests providing former service members with veteran support groups, transition groups for families of veterans, and military culture training for mental health practitioners. Furthermore, friends/family members of veterans reported changes in their returning veterans and that their service members suffered from not having someone who they could relate to and talk to about their experiences and perhaps even to discuss their anger over the war, lack of trust in the government, and unmet needs (Graf, Miller, Feist, & Freeman, 2011).

Personal growth, military pride, positive views of deployments, effective discharge training, and contact with other veterans are positive experiences that every service member has the potential to have. Each of these may play a role in how successful the service member views their transition to civilian life. However, there are also potential negative experiences the service member may have that impact how successfully the service members view their transition to civilian life. The following section reviews the negative effects that engagement in risky behaviors, combat exposure, and post-traumatic stress disorder have on service member transition success.

Negative Service Experiences

Risk taking behavior while in the service may affect the transition from military to civilian life through changes in risk taking behavior once separated from the service. Risk taking behavior includes behavior such as illegal substance use, rule-breaking, and

unsafe sex. Military veterans have been compared to both civilians and across time to assess differences and changes in risky behaviors that may relate to more difficulty with adjustment to civilian life and lower satisfaction with life. For example, illegal substance use (e.g. marijuana use) increases after separation form the military (Golub & Bennett, 2014). Additionally, veterans report riskier driving behavior (Sheppard & Earleywine, 2013) and riskier sexual behavior (Goyal, Mattocks, & Sadler, 2012) than their civilian counterparts. Finally, post-traumatic stress disorder is also related to increases in risk taking behavior (Borders, McAndrew, Quigley, & Chandler, 2012).

Risk Taking

Necessary risk taking while in the service may translate to increased risk taking, such as illegal substance use and risky sexual behavior, during and after separation from the service. Thomsen, Stander, McWhorter, Rabenhorst, and Milner (2011) evaluated 2,116 active duty service members of the United States Marine Corps deployment experiences and engagement of risky behaviors before, during, and after deployment. Many service members (73%) reported engaging in risky behaviors (i.e. unprotected sex, dangerous activities, and illegal drug use) at least once during their lifetime. Although this occurred in a U-shaped fashion, post-deployment risky behavior did not rise to nearly as high as risky behavior engagement from life prior to entry to the service. Additionally, more violent combat exposure was related to increased risk-taking behaviors after a deployment (Killgore, Cotting, Thomas, Cox, McGurk, Vo, Castro, & Hoge, 2008). Combat exposure may lead to the development of post-traumatic stress disorder as service members with more combat exposure are up to three times more

likely to report suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms (Smith, Ryan, Wingard, Slymen, Sallis, & Kritz-Silverstein, 2008). Furthermore, Smith and colleagues (2008) also reported that female service members, along with divorced, enlisted, and current smokers/drinkers are at an increased risk for developing symptoms for post-traumatic stress disorder than their counterparts. Those suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder report life disruptions due to flashbacks, emotional numbing, and feeling constantly on guard (United States Department of Veterans Affairs' National Center for PTSD Report, Gradus 2016).

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

As previously stated, post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms include flashbacks, emotional numbing, and feeling constantly on guard to a point that these symptoms disrupt daily living (United States Department of Veterans Affairs' National Center for PTSD Report, Gradus, 2016). Current reports state that most service members do not report suffering from symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (80-90%; United States Department of Veterans Affairs' National Center for PTSD Report, Gradus 2016), however, the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder may not become apparent until some time has passed (Smith, Ryan, Wingard, Slymen, Sallis, & Kritz-Silverstein, 2008). Post-traumatic stress disorder can onset at any time (i.e. while still in the service or years later) and may play a role in service members transition to civilian life.

Post-traumatic stress disorder may affect reports of the military experiences as perceived by the military service member (Taft, Schumm, Panuzio, & Proctor, 2008;

Roemer, Litz, Orsillo, Ehlich, & Friedman, 1998). Treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms can increase satisfaction with life and decrease problems with the transition from military to civilian life (Galoversuski, Blain, Mott, Elwood, & Houle, 2012; Plagge, Lu, Lovejoy, Karl, & Dobscha, 2013). Furthermore, different types of veterans may be more likely to report suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. Females, divorced, and enlisted service members report suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder more frequently as compared to their counterparts (Smith, Ryan, Wingard, Slymen, Sallis, & Kritz-Silverstein, 2008).

However, many service members adjust relatively well once they separate from the service if they do not experience physical or psychological trauma while in the service. Across multiple wars roughly 10-20% of service members are diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder and more recent service members seem to be accessing mental health services at greater rates which may aid in a successful transition (United States Department of Veterans Affairs' National Center for PTSD Report, Gradus, 2016; Hoge, Auchterlonie, & Milliken, 2006). Therefore, it is important to assess both veterans that present with and without symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder when assessing transition to civilian life. Additionally, it is unclear if gender moderates the relationship between mental health and successful adjustment to civilian life in service members.

Although these negative experiences (and the previously discussed positive experiences) may occur and predict successful adjustment and satisfaction with life there may also be differences in how the relationship between experiences and adjustment/satisfaction functions dependent on service member characteristics (i.e.

personality traits and gender). These service member characteristics are discussed in the next section followed by an explicit statement of the research questions.

Service Member Characteristics

Personality traits may predict who joins the military. Jackson, Thoemmes, Jonkmann, Ludtke, and Trautwien (2012) evaluated 1,261 German males who were required to either volunteer for military service or civilian community service across a 6 year time period. Personality traits (specifically the Big Five) were assessed at all timepoints with the German version of the NEO Five-Factor Inventory. Individuals who elected to join the German military were less agreeable, less neurotic, and less open to experience. Furthermore, personality traits may change throughout time in the service. In this sample, those who stayed with the military were less agreeable over time and this was maintained after separation from the military (Jackson, Thoemmes, Jonkmann, Ludtke, & Trautwein, 2012). Therefore, different levels of certain traits may be better for service members than non-service members. It is necessary to include a measure of personality to determine this in relation to situational experiences on adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life.

Another service member characteristic that may moderate these positive and negative experiences in predicting ease of adjustment and/or satisfaction with life is service member gender (Smith, Ryan, Wingard, Slymen, Sallis, & Kritz-Silverstein, 2008). One example of this is that negative effects of post-traumatic stress disorder on family adjustment is different for male and female veterans; males are more impacted by the numbing aspect of post-traumatic stress disorder whereas females are more impacted

by the arousal/lack of control aspects of post-traumatic stress disorder (Taft, Schumm, Panuzio, & Proctor, 2008). Additionally, post-traumatic stress disorder significantly predicted family adjustment after accounting for combat exposure for female veterans but not for male veterans.

Research Questions

There are two general research questions the current study is interested in evaluating regarding both the military experience service members have (positive or negative) and the role personality traits play. Additionally, the impact of gender will be evaluated. The first research question aims to assess experiences military veterans have while in the service and how these experiences may affect their adjustment and satisfaction with life after they are separated from the service. Specifically, how do positive experiences (defined here as personal growth, military pride, positive impact of deployment/s, effective discharge training, and frequent contact with other veterans) and negative experiences (defined here as engagement in risky behavior, combat exposure, post-traumatic stress disorder) predict adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life (RQ1) and does gender moderate these relationships (RQ2)? The next research question aims to assess if personality traits predict ease of adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life distinctly from positive and negative service experiences (RQ3) and whether gender moderates this relationship (RQ4).

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited through an online market research company (ResearchNow) which allows for military veterans who belong to the military service to be targeted. ResearchNow sends out unique survey invitations to their workers that have previously responded to demographic questions indicating the participants military veteran status. If the workers passed the screening questions of "Are you a military veteran?" and "How long have you been discharged from the service?" they were redirected to complete the survey (which was located on Qualtrics). Screener questions were designed to weed out any participants who were erroneously given a link to complete the survey. Only if they answered "yes, I am a military veteran" AND "I have been discharged for less than 10 years" were they allowed to take the full survey. Workers at ResearchNow are paid in points that can be used to purchase gift cards to major companies. Although workers are paid in points the equivalent amount of money was $6.75 paid per participant.

A total of 595 veterans of the United States military completed the survey in its entirety (planned missingness was due to participants inability to respond – for example, questions pertaining to spouses were skipped if the participant did not have a spouse – participants were required to answer all questions before proceeding throughout the survey, however, they had the option of choosing "prefer not to answer"). The majority of participants were male (68.7%) and the average age was 35.85 years old (S = 7.94). Most participants self-identified as European-American (77%), had completed at least

some college (85%; 63.2% graduated college), and earned between $50,000-100,000 a year (46%). Participants were, for the most part, employed full- or part-time (86%) and a quarter of the participants were attending school in some capacity (full- or part-time). Many of the participants were currently married (66%; 61.2% were married while active duty) and had a child while on active duty (55.6%; 21% had at least one child before entering the service. For an exhaustive list of demographic item responses of the participants see Appendix A.

Military Characteristics. The majority of the sample served in the United States Army (40.7%), followed by the United States Navy (18.5%), the United States Air Force (13.4%), the United States Marine Corps (12.9%), and 14.5% served in some other United States military service (see Appendix B). Participants entered the service between 1980 and 2016 (median entry year = 2006) and most of the participants joined after September 11th, 2001 (73.4%). The average length of time in service was 7.71 years (*SD* = 6.09) and participants were deployed, on average, 3.34 times (*SD* = 3.22). The average length of deployment was 1.50 years (*SD* = 1.61) and roughly half (54.3%) were deployed within their last two years of service. Contact with civilians during this specific deployment was relatively frequent (*M* = 3.43, *SD* = .99). Also, if deployed with in the last two years of service, participants reported that this specific deployment was relatively stressful (*M* = 3.56, *SD* = 1.05) and physically distant from non-military friends and family (*M* = 3.50, *SD* = 1.02). Most participants left the military with an honorable (76%) or general (19.8%) discharge and at the time of discharge, most

participants rank was Enlisted (51%), followed by Commissioned Officer (29%) and Warrant Officer (20%).

Many of the participants reported that some (44.5%) or most (32.1%) of their time in the service was spent away from friends and family and 60% of participants served in combat. Just over 28.4% of participants were physically injured while serving (60% of these were obtained during combat) and indicated that the injury sustained while serving had a greater than midpoint impact on their daily functioning (M = 3.26 [SD = 1.04; measured on a one to five scale with higher scores indicating greater item endorsement]). A small majority reported that they did not suffer from any symptom of post-traumatic stress disorder (58%) and half of the participants had used some form of Veterans Administration benefit (50.4%). Participants had been discharged, on average, 4.90 years (SD = 3.15).

Measures

Predictor measures. The predictor measures included items related to personal growth, military pride, deployment experiences, discharge training, frequency of contact with other veterans, and a personality inventory. All items were measured on a one to five Likert-scale with response options ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5) except for frequency of contact with other veterans which used different descriptors such as Never (1) and Very Often (5). Three additional measures were included: situation in which the service member returned to, participation in risky behaviors during their time in the service and since separation from the service, and

post-traumatic stress disorder. For these three measures a checklist approach was utilized in which participants could endorse as many responses as applicable.

***Personal growth measure*.** Personal growth was measured with five items asking participants to indicate how their time in the service helped them mature or grow as an individual (see Appendix C). The five items asked participants to indicate if they agreed or disagreed that their military experience taught them how to work with others, gave them self-confidence, prepared them for a job or career, helped them grow as a person, and helped them get ahead in life. The internal consistency reliability estimate of this measure was .87 (see Table 1 for the correlations among items). Scores used were the average of the participant's item responses.

Military pride measure. Military pride was measured with five items indicating the degree to which they felt pride in belonging to the military (see Appendix D). The five items asked participants to indicate if they agreed or disagreed that they would advise others to join the military, that they felt part of a military family, that they were glad they joined, they enjoyed their time in the service, and they are proud of serving in the military. The internal consistency reliability estimate of this measure was .82 (see Table 2 for the correlations among items). Scores used were the average of the participant's item responses.

***Positive effects of deployment(s) measure*.** Deployment effects were measured with six items to assess positive effects of deployment (see Appendix E). The six items asked participants if they agreed or disagreed that their deployments had a positive impact on their financial situation, their health, their chances for promotion within in the

military, their relationship with their family of origin, their relationship with their spouse/partner (if applicable), and their relationship with their children (if applicable). A total of 171 participants endorsed the 'Not Applicable' response for the items related to spouse and/or children. The internal consistency reliability estimate of this measure was .84 (see Table 3 for the correlations among items). Scores used were the average of the participant's item responses.

Discharge training measure. Discharge training was measured with seven items asking participants to indicate how well their discharge training prepared them to return to civilian life (see Appendix F). The seven items asked participants to indicate if they agreed or disagreed that their discharge training prepared them to return to their family origin, to their spouse/partner (if applicable), to their children (if applicable), as a useful member of society, for financial independence, for pursuing their career, and for pursuing their education. A total of 193 participants endorsed the 'Not Applicable' response for the items related to education, spouse, and/or children. The internal consistency reliability estimate of this measure was .92 (see Table 4 for the correlations among items). Scores used were the average of the participant's responses.

Contact with other veterans measure. Contact with other veterans was measured with nine items to indicate how frequently veterans socialize, either in person or online, with other veterans (see Appendix G). The nine items asked participants to indicate how frequently they socialized with other veterans, volunteered with/for other veterans, attend events for veterans, spend time with other veterans, have a serious conversation with other veterans, contact with other veterans and veteran activities via social media,

how often they read about veterans in the news, and how frequently they use/discuss "perks" of being a veteran. The internal consistency reliability estimate of this measure was .93 (see Table 5 for the correlations among items). Scores used were the averages of the participant's item responses.

Situation returned checklist. To assess the situation in which the service member may have returned to upon separation from the service participants completed a checklist in which the service member could indicate potential situations they returned to (see Appendix J). This checklist consisted of mostly positive situations, such as returning to an acceptable place to live or a job, but also included potentially negative situations, such as financial debt. Additionally, participants were given another category to which they could indicate items not listed as well as the opportunity to explain if/how certain situations could be positive or negative. For example, participants could select the item "I returned to a partner" but this could be construed as positive or negative. Therefore, participants were asked to respond to a follow up question of whether their spouse was supportive upon their return. This allowed for clearer identification of which items were positive situations for some participants and which items were negative situations for other participants upon their return. There was a total of 12 items and up to 10 items could be viewed positively by the participants and up to 4 items could be viewed negatively by the participants. Participants reported roughly three positive situations that they returned to (N = 593, M = 3.37, SD = 2.22; Range = 0-10) and less than one negative situation that they returned to (N = 593, M = .14, SD = .41; Range = 0-4).

Risky behavior since separating checklist. Risky behavior was measured with a checklist in which participants could indicate if they engaged in 15 different risky behaviors prior, during, and since their time in the service not related to their occupation in the service (see Appendix K; only risks taken since separating are included here). The most frequently reported risky behaviors since separating were engaging in extreme recreational activities, texting while driving, and drinking 4 or more alcoholics drink daily. Participants reported engaging in roughly two risky behaviors since separating from the service (N = 563, M = 2.25, SD = 2.49, Range 0-15).

Post-traumatic stress disorder checklist. In addition to the single item asking participants if they suffered from any symptom of post-traumatic stress disorder a checklist listing some common symptoms were used. Participants could endorse up to nine items in the post-traumatic stress disorder checklist (see last set of items of Appendix B). The most frequently endorsed symptoms on the checklist were occurrence of unwanted memories, flashbacks, and dreams. Participants on average reported suffering from roughly four symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (N = 595, M = 4.37, SD = 2.77, Range = 0-9).

Personality assessment. Participants also completed the 60-item BFI-2 personality inventory which measures both the factors and facets of the Big Five (see Appendix L). Big Five traits include Extraversion (α=.68), Agreeableness (α=.73), Conscientiousness (α=.84), Negative Emotionality (α=.80), and Open-Mindedness (α=.67) and were all measured on a 5-point Likert-scale. Each of the Big Five personality traits were measured with 12 items in the BFI-2 and within each of the five

traits 4 of the items attempt to assess the 3 facets that make up each of the five factors. One can use either 5 scores (one for each of the big five traits) or 15 scores (one for each of the facets) for each participant. Extraversion is comprised of sociability, energy level, and assertiveness facets. Agreeableness is comprised of compassion, respectfulness, and trust facets. The facets of conscientiousness include organization, productiveness, and responsibility. Negative emotionality is comprised of anxiety, emotional volatility, and depression facets. The facets of open-mindedness include intellectual curiosity, aesthetic sensitivity, and creative imagination. Due to the low observed reliability estimates for extraversion and open-mindedness some additional investigation was warranted. For both traits, the alpha coefficients for the facets were also low (range = .313 - .465), however, when separating items as positively worded versus negatively worded alpha coefficients reach optimal levels (positive extraversion items = .82, negative extraversion items = .78; positive open-mindedness items = .75, negative open-mindedness items = .77). Both the overall and the separated extraversion and open-mindedness will be tested in the analyses to determine if either are better predictors for either outcome. Scores used were the averages of the participant's item responses.

Outcome Measures. The outcome measures included items related to ease of adjustment and satisfaction with civilian life. All items were measured on a one to five Likert-scale with response options ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5).

***Ease of adjustment measure*.** Ease of adjustment was measured by asking participants to report on their ease of adjustment upon separation from the service with

up to eight items (participants had the opportunity to indicate that the item was not applicable to them – however, averaged scores were calculated by averaging all items in which each participant responded). The eight items asked participants if they agreed or disagreed that adjustment after discharge was easy in relation to overall adjustment, adjustment back into their family of origin, spouse/partner, children, finances, school (education), job, and navigating the VA. A total of 241 participants endorsed the 'Not Applicable' response for the items related to spouse, children, and/or education. The internal consistency reliability estimate of this measure was .90 (see Table 6 for the correlations among items).

***Satisfaction with life scale*.** Lastly, participants completed the five-item global Satisfaction with life scale using a slightly different version of the item prompt (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985; see Appendix I). The item prompt read "At the time I was discharged, I thought that …" followed by the satisfaction with life items. The satisfaction with life scale asks participants to indicate agreement to five statements: in most ways my life was close to my ideal, the conditions of my life were excellent, I was satisfied with life, I have gotten the important things I want in life, if I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing. The internal consistency reliability estimate of this measure was .91 (see Table 7 for the correlations among items). Scores used were the averages of the participant's item responses.

Procedure

Participants were required to accept the terms of the informed consent before continuing the survey. The survey was administered online through Qualtrics and

participants were recruited through an online market research firm, ResearchNow. Participants were compensated with points that they could use to purchase gift cards for popular stores. After accepting the terms of the informed consent participants answered two screener questions (1: indicating veteran status, 2: indicating time since discharge) and could only proceed if they answered "yes" to the first screener question and "less than 10 years" to the second screener question. After passing the screeners, participants answered demographic information questions, military characteristic questions, and questions regarding their time spent in the military (including a post-traumatic stress disorder checklist). Participants then responded to questions regarding their attitudes towards their personal growth while in the military, degree of military pride, attitudes towards their deployments, attitudes towards their discharge training, and how frequently they were in contact with other veterans. Participants were also asked about their ease of adjustment to civilian life and satisfaction with life. Finally, participants were asked to complete checklists regarding what they returned to after separation from the service, engagement with potential risky behaviors, and the BFI-2 personality inventory. The entire survey took an average of 37 minutes to complete. No single participant was missing more than 10% of data, however, there were multiple instances where not all participants chose to or were unable to respond. For example, when asked about how one felt about returning to their children, participants were offered a "not applicable" option if they were qualified to respond to this item and others like it.

Results

Before analyses regarding the research questions were conducted the data was reviewed to assess any sources of missing data. The research firm utilized for the current study, ResearchNow, required participants to complete all items before allowing the participant to move forward. This ensures that there are no missing data points. However, participants could respond with "prefer not to answer" for each item. This item was endorsed by fewer than 1% of participants. These items were excluded in the creation of total scores for each of these participants. Any data deemed missing not at random was due to the participants inability to respond to the item. For example, items referencing children could be answered with "not applicable" if the participant did not have children.

Once the data was reviewed a series of analyses were conducted. To begin, all the predictor and outcome measure means, standard deviations, and scale alphas were reviewed (see Table 8 for all the descriptive information). Most scales were scored as slightly above the midpoint on a one to five point scale (except for negative emotionality) with standard deviations less than one scale point (except for discharge training, *SD = 1.10*). Following this, all the predictor and outcome variables were correlated (see Table 9). Next, regression analyses evaluated if this set of predictor variables significantly predicted both ease of adjustment and satisfaction with civilian life. Finally, path analyses were conducted to assess the relative contribution each of the predictor variables had on the correlated outcomes of ease of adjustment and satisfaction with civilian life.

The first research question aimed to assess what experiences military veterans have while in the service and how these experiences relate to their adjustment and satisfaction with civilian life now that they are separated from the service. Specifically, how do positive experiences and negative experiences predict adjustment to civilian life and satisfaction with life (see Figure 1 for the hypothesized model). To answer this question the averaged scale scores of all the predictor and all the outcome variables were correlated and then two multiple regression analyses were conducted predicting each outcome by the positive and negative experience variables. Most of the predictor variables correlated significantly with the other predictor variables in the expected direction (e.g., positive predictors correlated positively with other positive predictors). All the predictor variables correlated significantly with the outcome variables except for risk-taking behavior and combat exposure (see Table 9). All the significant predictor variables correlated with the outcomes in the expected direction (e.g. negative predictors correlated negatively with the outcome variables) and although risk-taking behavior and combat exposure were not significant they were in the expected direction (except for combat exposure and satisfaction with life) and were retained for the next analysis. Finally, the outcome variables were significantly and positively related to one another (r=.68) but not so strongly to be concerned that they are measuring the same underlying construct.

Before assessing a correlated outcomes path analysis, all the predictors were entered simultaneously into a regression model predicting both outcomes of adjustment to civilian life (R = .76, R^2 = .58, F(10,551) = 76.81, p <.001) and satisfaction with life

(R = .72, R^2 = .52, F(10,551) = 60.71, p <.001; see Tables 10 & 11). Risk-taking behaviors and combat exposure were non-significant predictors of both outcomes, however, they were retained for the path analysis model to ensure that their unique contribution in a correlated outcome model could be assessed. Personal growth and military pride were non-significant predictors of adjustment to civilian life but were also retained for the path analysis model due to their significant bivariate correlations with adjustment to civilian life and their relationship with satisfaction with life.

Test of Hypothesized Model – Military Experience and Adjustment to and Satisfaction with Civilian Life (RQ1)

To assess the research question that positive and negative experiences predict adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life (RQ1) a fully saturated path analysis with the 6 positive military experience variables and the 4 negative military experience variables as predictors of the correlated outcome of adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life was conducted (see Figure 1 for the hypothesized model). The R package *lavaan* was utilized with standardized variables (Rosseel, 2012). All averaged predictor and outcome variables were standardized across the total sample. The path analysis, using maximum likelihood estimation, examining the direct effects of the positive and negative military experience variables on ease of adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life (with the outcome measures correlated) indicated that most of the variables had direct effects on both outcomes. However, combat exposure and risk-taking behavior were not significant predictors of either outcome and personal growth and military pride were not significant predictors of adjustment to civilian life (see Figure 2

& Table 12 for covariances among predictor variables). Nonsignificant relationships between predictor variables (there were 5) and nonsignificant paths were trimmed and resulted in a final model in which both combat exposure and risk-taking behavior were completely removed, and military pride no longer predicted adjustment to civilian life. This model resulted in acceptable fit, $\chi^2(6) = 5.27$, $p = .510$; CFI = 1.00, TLI = 1.00, RMSEA < .001 [0,.050] (see Figure 3 & Table 13 for covariances among predictor variables). The correlation between ease of adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life was removed, to test if it was necessary for acceptable model fit and resulted in significantly worse fit of the model ($\chi^2(7) = 72.57$, $p < .001$; CFI = .97, TLI = .83, RMSEA = .13 [.10,.15]; χ^2 change = 67.30 on 1 degree of freedom).

The accepted path analysis model (see Figure 3) depicts the direct effects of personal growth, positive impact of deployments, perceived effectiveness of discharge training, contact with other veterans, positive situation returned, negative situation returned, and post-traumatic stress disorder on ease of adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life in the expected directions. Additionally, there is a significant direct effect of military pride on satisfaction with life. Ease of adjustment to civilian life and satisfaction with life were significantly correlated and required to achieve acceptable model fit. However, the bivariate correlation between ease of adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life ($r = .681$) was dramatically lower in the final path analysis model ($r = .14$). The accepted path analysis model accounts for a large portion of the correlation among ease of adjustment and satisfaction with civilian life. The predictor

variables accounted for 59.3% of the variance in adjustment to civilian life and 53.9% of the variance in satisfaction with civilian life.

Military Experience Moderated by Gender (RQ2)

Next, the model was assessed to determine if gender moderated how the model fit by constraining all the paths, covariances, intercepts, and residuals to be equal for both male and female veterans (RQ2). This model had acceptable fit to the data, $\chi^2(71) = 165.82$, $p < .001$; CFI = .96, TLI = .95, RMSEA = .067 [.054,.081] (see Figure 4). The result of this model suggests that gender does not moderate the relationship between the military experience predictor variables and ease of adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life outcome variables.

Test of Hypothesized Model with Military Experience and Personality Traits (RQ3)

The second set of research questions aimed to assess if personality traits predict ease of adjustment to satisfaction with civilian life beyond the positive and negative experiences service members have while in the military (see Figure 5 for hypothesized model). Specifically, do personality traits predict adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life beyond the military experience predictor variables of personal growth, positive impact of deployment, perceived effective discharge training, frequent contact with other veterans, positive situation returned, negative situation returned, and post-traumatic stress disorder (and military pride for satisfaction with life only). To answer this question the unit-weighted scale scores of the big five personality trait variables and both outcome variables were correlated and then two multiple regression analyses were

conducted predicting each outcome by the experiences from serving that were significant predictors in the prior model and personality traits.

All the personality trait variables correlated significantly with the other personality trait variables and most of the personality trait variables correlated significantly with the outcome variables except for conscientiousness and open-mindedness with ease of adjustment to civilian life and extraversion negative items and open-mindedness with satisfaction with life (see Table 14). Most of the personality trait variables correlated with the outcomes in the expected direction (e.g. negative predictors correlated negatively with the outcome variables) and although some were not significant all personality trait variables were retained for the next analysis. Additionally, many of the personality trait variables were significantly related to the military experience variables (see Table 15). The fewest observed significant correlations between military experience items and personality traits occurred for agreeableness, conscientiousness, and open-mindedness single score (each had 4 significant correlations with the military experience variables).

Before assessing a correlated outcomes path analysis including both the military experience and personality trait variables two (four total – two for each outcome) multiple regression analyses were conducted: one utilizing a single score for each personality trait and one using positive/negative scale scores for extraversion and open-mindedness. All the single score personality trait variables were entered simultaneously into a multiple regression predicting ease adjustment to civilian life as a second step

after the military experience variables that were significant predictors in the final path analysis model.

The results of the multiple regression predicting ease of adjustment to civilian life from the military experience items (model 1: $R = .77$, $R^2 = .59$, $F(7,585) = 122.053$, $p < .001$) and personality traits single score items (model 2: $R = .78$, $R^2 = .60$, $F(12,580) = 73.18$, $p < .001$) indicated that both military experiences and traits are predictors of ease of adjustment to civilian life (Fchange(5,580) = 2.53, $p = .028$; see Table 16). Utilizing single scores for each of the personality traits, personal growth was no longer a significant predictor of ease of adjustment to civilian life and only negative emotionality was a significant predictor of ease of adjustment to civilian life. A second multiple regression predicting ease of adjustment to civilian life from military experience items (model 1: $R = .77$, $R^2 = .59$, $F(7,585) = 122.053$, $p < .001$) and personality traits with positive/negative items for extraversion and open-mindedness (model 2: $R = .78$, $R^2 = .61$, $F(14,578) = 65.31$, $p < .001$) indicated that both military experiences and traits are predictors of ease of adjustment to civilian life (Fchange(7,578) = 4.072, $p < .001$; see Table 17). Utilizing positive/negative items for extraversion and open-mindedness along with single scores for the remaining personality traits, personal growth was no longer a significant predictor of ease of adjustment to civilian life and only negative emotionality was a significant predictor of ease of adjustment to civilian life.

The results of the multiple regression predicting satisfaction with life from the military experience items (model 1: $R = .74$, $R^2 = .54$, $F(8,584) = 85.74$, $p < .001$) and personality traits single score items (model 2: $R = .77$, $R^2 = .60$, $F(13,579) = 66.035$, p

<.001) indicated that both military experiences and traits are predictors of satisfaction with life (Fchange(5,579) = 16.41, $p < .001$; see Table 18). Utilizing single scores for each of the personality traits, military pride was no longer a significant predictor of satisfaction with life and extraversion and conscientiousness were not significant predictors of satisfaction with life. A second multiple regression predicting satisfaction with life from military experience items (model 1: $R = .74$, $R^2 = .54$, $F(8,584) = 85.74$, p <.001) and personality traits with positive/negative items for extraversion and open-mindedness (model 2: $R = .78$, $R^2 = .60$, $F(15,577) = 57.998$, p <.001) indicated that both military experiences and traits are predictors of satisfaction with life (Fchange(7,577) = 12.63, $p < .001$; see Table 19). Utilizing positive/negative items for extraversion and open-mindedness along with single scores for the remaining personality traits, military pride was no longer a significant predictor of satisfaction with life and extraversion positive, negative emotionality, and open-mindedness positive were significant predictors of satisfaction with life.

Extraversion single score was significantly correlated with adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life, however, it was not a significant predictor of either outcome in the multiple regression analyses. Positive extraversion was significantly correlated with adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life but was only a significant predictor of satisfaction with life. Extraversion negative was significantly correlated with adjustment to civilian life but not with satisfaction with life. Additionally, extraversion negative was not a significant predictor of either outcome in the multiple regression analyses. It may be that extraversion positive is driving the relationship

between the extraversion single score and the outcome variables, therefore, the split variables (positive/negative extraversion) were used in the path analyses that include personality trait variables. However, an additional path analysis was conducted to determine the relative difference in direct effects of the extraversion score (split or single) as well as the relative change in direct effects of the other variables included in the model.

Open-mindedness single score was not significantly correlated with adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life, however, it was a significant predictor of satisfaction with life in the multiple regression analysis. Positive open-mindedness was significantly correlated with adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life but was only a significant predictor of satisfaction with life in the multiple regression analysis. Negative open-mindedness was significantly correlated with adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life but was not a significant predictor for either outcome in the regression analyses. Similar to extraversion, it seems that positive open-mindedness is driving the relationship between the open-mindedness single score and the outcome variables. The split scores (positive/negative open-mindedness) was used in the path analyses that include personality trait variables. However, an additional path analysis was conducted to determine the relative difference in direct effects of the open-mindedness score (split or single) as well as the relative change in direct effects of the other variables included in the model.

To determine if personality traits predict a correlated outcome of ease of adjustment to civilian life and satisfaction with life distinctly from positive and negative

service experiences a path analysis utilizing the final model from the prior set of path analyses in addition to each big five personality traits (split positive/negative for extraversion and open-mindedness) was conducted (RQ3). The path analysis, using maximum likelihood estimation, examining the direct effects of the military experience variables and personality trait variables on a correlated outcome of ease of adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life fit the data well, $\chi^2(6) = 5.75$, $p = .45$; CFI = 1.00, TLI = 1.00, RMSEA < .001 [0,.053] (Table 20 for covariances among predictor variables & Table 21 for direct effect estimates). However, there was room for improvement as many of the personality trait variables did not have significant direct effects on either outcome. With the inclusion of the personality trait variables, personal growth no longer had a significant direct effect on ease of adjustment to civilian life. Nonsignificant paths were trimmed and resulted in a final model in which, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and negative open-mindedness were completely removed (9 covariances among the predictors were also removed to improve model fit). Additionally, personal growth and positive open-mindedness no longer predicted adjustment to civilian life. This model resulted in acceptable fit, $\chi^2(18) = 24.18$, $p = .15$; CFI = .998, TLI = .99, RMSEA = .024 [0,.047] (see Figure 6 & Table 22 for covariances among predictor variables). The correlation between ease of adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life was much lower ($r = .12$) in the final model. The predictor variables accounted for 61.1% of the variance in adjustment to civilian life and 59.4% of the variance in satisfaction with civilian life. The correlation between ease of adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life was removed, to test if it was necessary for acceptable model fit and resulted in

significantly worse fit of the model ($\chi^2(19) = 76.13$, $p < .001$; CFI = .98, TLI = .92, RMSEA = .072 [.055,.089]; χ^2 change = 51.96 on 1 degree of freedom).

The accepted path analysis model (see Figure 6) depict the direct effects of positive impact of deployments, perceived effectiveness of discharge training, contact with other veterans, positive situation returned, negative situation returned, post-traumatic stress disorder, positive extraversion, and negative emotionality on ease of adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life in the expected directions. Extraversion negative had a significant direct effect on ease of adjustment to civilian life. Additionally, there is a significant direct effect of personal growth, military pride, and open-mindedness on satisfaction with life. Ease of adjustment to civilian life and satisfaction with life were significantly correlated and required to achieve acceptable model fit. The bivariate correlation between ease of adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life ($r = .68$) was dramatically lower in the final path analysis model ($r = .12$) which indicates that the accepted path analysis model accounts for a large portion of the correlation among ease of adjustment and satisfaction with civilian life even with the addition of personality trait variables. Next, the model was assessed to determine if gender moderated the relationship between military experiences, personality traits, and ease of adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life.

To determine if using split scores for extraversion and open-mindedness was required an additional path analyses was conducted before moving on to the gender differences analysis. Results of a path analysis utilizing single score variables for each of the big five traits did not fit the data well, $\chi^2(18) = 127.39$, $p < .001$; CFI = .96, TLI =

.85, RMSEA = .10 [.085,.12]. In fact, only adding an indirect path from negative emotionality to ease of adjustment and satisfaction with life through post-traumatic stress disorder allowed for better fit of the model, $\chi^2(17) = 15.77$, $p = .540$; CFI = 1.00, TLI = 1.00, RMSEA < .001 [0,.035]. Therefore, since the single score model did not fit the data well the remaining analyses used the split score variables for extraversion and open-mindedness.

Military Experience and Personality Traits Moderated by Gender (RQ4)

To determine if there was a significant difference in model fit for male and female service members with the inclusion of both military experience and personality trait variables (RQ4) an additional path analyses was conducted constraining all the paths, covariances, intercepts, and residuals to be equal for both male and female veterans (RQ4). This model had acceptable fit to the data, $\chi^2(137) = 306.37$, $p < .001$; CFI = .95, TLI = .94, RMSEA = .065 [.055,.075] (see Figure 7). The result of this model suggests that gender does not moderate the relationship between the military experience predictor variables, the personality trait predictor variables, and adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to assess the relative contributions that the military experience and personality traits have on the important life outcomes of ease of adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life. The exploratory approach used here evaluated the unique experiences service members have on both adjustment and satisfaction with life in a way that assessed more than simply belonging to the service. It

was the goal of this study to incorporate more detailed experiences that could be viewed positively or negatively by the service member rather than a simple collection of military experience characteristics (for example, branch of service, length of service, number of deployments, etc.). This is not to say that these records alone are not an important or interesting area to assess but that including items that only tap into the general experience of serving may be limiting in terms of understanding why and how these experiences relate to service members transitions to civilian life. Additionally, based on prior work that suggests transition periods and successful navigation may differ for males and females the current study aimed to evaluate potential gender differences.

The majority of military experiences correlated with both ease of adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life in the expected directions (risk-taking and combat exposure did not relate to either outcome – although their relationship trended in the expected direction). Additionally, personal growth and military pride were not significant predictors of adjustment to civilian life in the regression analyses. Finally, ease of adjustment to civilian life was significantly correlated with satisfaction with civilian life.

The aim of the first research question was to determine the role that various military experiences play in service members adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life. Adjustment to civilian life was significantly and positively predicted by personal growth, positive impact of deployments, perceived effective discharge training, contact with other veterans, and positive situation the service member returned to. Adjustment to civilian life was significantly and negatively predicted by negative situation the service

member returned to and post-traumatic stress disorder. Satisfaction with life was significantly and positively predicted by personal growth, military pride, positive impact of deployments, perceived effective discharge training, contact with other veterans, and positive situation returned the service member returned to. Satisfaction with life was significantly and negatively predicted by negative situation returned and post-traumatic stress disorder. Furthermore, the relationship between adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life was dampened with the inclusion of the military experience variables. In fact, the military experience variables account for nearly 60% of the variance in adjustment to civilian life and 54% of the variance in satisfaction with life. The accompanying research question (RQ2) aimed to assess if these military experience variables predicted ease of adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life differently for male and female veterans, however, no differences were observed when comparing male veterans and female veterans.

Although the military experience accounts for a large portion of what is occurring with adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life it would be unwise to not account for individual differences as much is known about how these (i.e. personality traits) impact important life outcomes. The second set of research questions (RQ 3 and 4) incorporated the big five personality traits with the military experience variables to predict ease of adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life. There were minor complications with the big five personality measure utilized and a split (positive and negative) variable score was needed when including extraversion and open-mindedness. The majority of personality traits were significantly related to both ease of adjustment

and satisfaction with civilian life. However, conscientiousness and open-mindedness (single score) were not significantly related to ease of adjustment and extraversion negative and open-mindedness (single score) was not significantly related to satisfaction with life. Only negative emotionality was a significant predictor of ease of adjustment to civilian life in the regression model. Satisfaction with life was significantly predicted by extraversion positive, agreeableness, negative emotionality, open-mindedness (single score), and open-mindedness positive at the regression level. With the inclusion of both the military experience and personality traits, over 60% of the variance in adjustment to civilian life and nearly 60% of the variance in satisfaction with life was accounted for. The accompanying research question (RQ4) aimed to assess if these military experience variables predicted ease of adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life differently for male and female veterans, however, no differences were observed when comparing male veterans and female veterans.

The ease in which individuals successfully navigate major life transitions has been well documented in the literature in a variety of transition types: from adolescence to adulthood (Levitt, Silver, & Santos, 2007), from college to work life (Koen, Klehem, & Van Vianen, 2012; Ryan, 2001), to marriage (Cornelius & Sullivan, 2009), to parenthood (Lawrence, Cobb, Rothman, Rothman, & Bradbury, 2008), and to retirement (Pinquart & Schindler, 2007). However, little is known about transitions of one of the largest sub-populations in the United States: military service members. Service members experience specific transitions: from civilian life, transition while in the service, and transitioning out of the service and back into civilian life. These transitions service

members experience are unique because they tend to be rather intense, extreme, and abrupt (Doyle & Peterson, 2005; Wintre & Ben-Knaz, 2000).

Although there are differences between those who join the service and those who do not (Elder, Wang, Spence, Adkins, & Brown, 2010; Jackson, Thoemmes, Jonkmann, Ludtke, & Trautwein, 2012) it was the aim of the current study to assess how the military experience impacts the transition back into civilian life as some service members might experience more ease or success (e.g., personal growth; Tedeschi, 2011) than others (e.g., decrease in marital functioning; Riviere, Merrill, Thomas, Wilk, & Bliese, 2012). The current study supported prior research that service members do report positive experiences from serving (Newby, McCarroll, Ursana, Fan, Shigemura, & Tucker-Harris, 2005) and in comparison, relatively fewer negative effects of serving. Additionally, these experiences predict the transition back into civilian life. However, in terms of negative experiences, the current study found somewhat differing results than prior work, mainly the importance combat exposure has on later life outcomes (Killgore, Cotting, Thomas, Cox, McGurk, Vo, Castro, & Hoge, 2008; Smith, Ryan, Wingard, Slymen, Sallis, & Kritz-Silverstein, 2008). Surprisingly, combat exposure and risk-taking behavior did not significantly predict the ease with which service members transitioned back into civilian life or their satisfaction with life.

Gender differences were not observed in the current study (although both the gender constrained and freed models had relatively acceptable fit) as one would have expected based on prior research suggesting gender differences in the transition period overall (Lawrence, Cobb, Rothman, Rothman, & Bradbury, 2008) and in service

members specifically (Taft, Schumm, Panuzio, & Proctor, 2008; Smith, Ryan, Wingard, Slymen, Sallis, & Kritz-Silverstein, 2008).

In the final model, risk-taking, combat exposure, agreeableness, and conscientiousness did not predict either outcome. This is interesting as prior research shows a direct link between combat experience and negative outcomes (Vogt, King, King, Savarese, & Suvak, 2004; Taft, Schumm, Panuzio, & Proctor, 2008). However, this may not have come to fruition in the current study due to the way in which combat exposure was measured (presence/absence vs. intensity of experience). Additionally, one would assume combat exposure would allow for post-traumatic growth (Tedeschi, 2011) but in the current study only the proxy (personal growth) significantly predicted either outcome. Additionally, only extraversion negative significantly predicted ease of adjustment to civilian life and not satisfaction with life. This suggests that there is more to be learned about what may relate to ease of adjustment that does not relate to satisfaction with life as these seem to be different constructs. In the final model, personal growth, military pride, and open-mindedness to experience significantly predicted satisfaction with life but not ease of adjustment to civilian life. Perhaps satisfaction with life taps into more long-term constructs and adjustment to civilian life involves identification of what is most important in the short-term (i.e. discharge training, deployments). Further research should continue to assess short- vs. long-term outcomes each of these predictors have in relation to service members. Finally, the common predictors of ease of adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life were: positive impact of deployment(s), perceived effective discharge training, contact with other

veterans, positive and negative situation returned, post-traumatic stress disorder, extraversion positive, and negative emotionality. Future research should investigate each of these in further detail to determine which, if any, could be used to create a policy or interventions designed to increase the success with the transition from the military service back into civilian life.

Limitations

The current study is not without its limitations. Perhaps the most concerning limitation is that data collection occurred simultaneously. One can infer a model in which military specific experiences and personality traits predict ease of adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life, but it is by far not the only possible model. A clear example of this in the current study was that when using single score variables to assess personality traits, negative emotionality had direct effects on the outcomes of interest and post-traumatic stress disorder (a different predictor variable). Furthermore, it is quite possible that post-traumatic stress disorder might serve as an intermediary variable between military specific experiences, traits, and important life outcomes of interest.

Another troubling limitation is that military characteristics were not controlled for in the current study. Although the exploratory approach used in this study – assessing a collective positive and negative experience from serving in the military rather than simply using military characteristics to predict ease of adjustment and satisfaction with civilian life – is novel and worth pursing further it may be that these experiences are different for different types of service members. For example, perhaps there are alternative categories one can place service members into that were not tested

here (e.g., pre- vs. post- 9/11, serving immediately following high school graduation for four years and done vs. service members who spend their adult lives in the service and retire with the military).

Data collection occurred entirely online and although participant checks were used throughout it is possible that some participants may not have been truthful. However, this study is the largest and most detailed study regarding the effects of both positive and negative military experiences and personality traits on the transition period from the service back into civilian life in a recently separated from the service sample (less than 10 years) to date. Additionally, most of the veterans served during the same time of war or belonged to the same era. While this is also a strength of the current study – evaluating post-9/11 veterans on a large scale – it also can be viewed as a limitation in that comparing veterans from different war times was not done.

Although the current study incorporated gender differences analyses based on prior work suggesting differences in transition ease and success due to gender the results did not support that claim. One reason for this may be that there were far fewer females in the sample than males and these comparisons may be somewhat under-powered. However, the gender breakdown in the current sample slightly over-sampled female veterans (31.3%) as roughly 15% of current service members are female. Therefore, one would assume that increasing sample size would afford greater confidence in the results.

By adding traits there is a slight increase in explanation and understanding of what related to ease of adjustment to civilian life (1.8% variance accounted for) and a slightly larger increase (5.5% variance accounted for) in satisfaction with life. This is

not to say that traits are irrelevant when accounting for the situation but that perhaps it would be interesting in future research to place the situational variables (i.e. military specific experience variables) in-between personality traits and ease of adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life. This echoes the earlier sentiment in which negative emotionality predicted post-traumatic stress disorder and both outcomes.

Future Directions

Future research should aim to tackle the limitations noted in the current study. For example, one might increase sample size. Increasing the sample size would allow for future researchers to compare multiple groups (e.g., four year and out veterans vs. retired veterans or single-deployment veterans vs. multiple deployment veterans) without a reduction in statistical power. This would also allow for greater confidence in the gender comparison analyses and testing of more complex models in which personality traits predict military specific experiences which in turn predict outcomes of interest related to a successful transition to civilian life.

Additionally, future research should evaluate service members across time to determine the causal relationship with personality traits, military specific experiences, and the transition back into civilian life. Although a more complex study, this could be done using an online format to keep participant burden and researcher burnout down. Gaining access to United States service members prior to entry would be difficult at best, however, future research might begin by assessing recently separated service members (less than 1 year) across multiple time points to being to understand the causal relationship alluded to in the current study.

Future research should focus on creating and changing policy and procedure regarding the transition of service members back to civilian life that amplify the positive experiences of serving while dampening the negative experiences. One way to start is to evaluate which of the predictors significantly predicted both ease of adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life and determine which predictor one might create an intervention around. Prior research suggesting the success with a one-day work training program with college-graduates may help to create a similar program for service members transition out of the military and back into civilian life. Koen, Klehem and Vianen (2012) evaluated a career adaptability resources training to aid career transitions of recently graduated university students which showed promise with a single day training session. Additionally, service members in the current study reported the most variability in perceived effectiveness of discharge training they received. Therefore, an intervention that may be appropriate here is to create a more uniform and wide-spread Transition Assistance Program (TAP) in which all service members received the same program that covers a variety of topics concerning the major life transition these service members are experiencing upon reentry to civilian life.

Conclusion

It was the goal of this study to identify potentially positive and negative military experiences service members have and test the relative contributions these experiences have in understanding the transition of military service members back into civilian life. Additionally, the current study incorporated personality traits to assess the person effects of military service members on the transition back into civilian life. Both positive and

negative experiences, as well as personality traits, significantly predicted both ease of adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life, regardless of gender. Researchers should continue to assess both the person and the situation to better understand the complexity that is a successful transition from military service to civilian life. Additionally, researchers should also incorporate both positive and negative experiences rather than focusing on one or the other because experiences, such as military service, are rarely all positive or all negative and researchers should aim for the bigger picture. In conclusion, perhaps the best thing researchers can do for service members is to help create policy and procedures to better equip service members transition to civilian life.

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Tables

Table 1. *Personal Growth Items*

My military experience…	1	2	3	4	5
1. Taught me how to work with others	1				
2. Gave me self-confidence	0.678	1			
3. Prepared me for a job or career	0.523	0.511	1		
4. Helped me grow and mature as a person	0.623	0.644	0.495	1	
5. Helped me get ahead in life	0.588	0.535	0.626	0.553	1

Note. Alpha = .869, *N* = 595.

Table 2. *Military Pride Items*

	1	2	3	4	5
1. I would advise a young person close to me to join the military	1				
2. I think of myself as someone who is part of a military family	0.499	1			
3. I am glad I served in the military	0.465	0.453	1		
4. I enjoyed the time I served in the military	0.529	0.449	0.593	1	
5. I am proud of serving in the military	0.389	0.46	0.633	0.538	1

Note. Alpha = .823, *N* = 595.

Table 3. *Positive Impact of Deployment/s Items*

The deployments that took me away from home had a positive impact on…	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. My financial situation	1					
2. My heath	0.511	1				
3. My chances for promotion and advancement within the military	0.446	0.444	1			
4. My relationship with my family of origin	0.459	0.583	0.438	1		
5. My relationship with my spouse/partner (if applicable)	0.421	0.627	0.439	0.7	1	
6. My relationship with my child/ren (if applicable)	0.427	0.604	0.406	0.678	0.681	1

Note. Alpha = .843; *N* = 424, 89 participants indicated 'Not Applicable' for items 5 (spouse) and 6 (children). An additional 6 participants indicated 'Not Applicable' for item 5 (spouse) and 76 participants indicated 'Not Applicable' for item 6 (children).

Table 4. *Positive Discharge Training Experience Items*

Pre-discharge training prepared me for…	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Returning to my family of origin	1						
2. Being a useful member of society	0.653	1					
3. Financial independence and stability	0.656	0.722	1				
4. Pursuing a career	0.621	0.692	0.714	1			
5. Pursuing my education (if applicable)	0.59	0.569	0.618	0.622	1		
6. Returning to my partner/spouse (if applicable)	0.592	0.612	0.586	0.59	0.536	1	
7. Returning to my child/ren (if applicable)	0.604	0.601	0.643	0.592	0.561	0.741	1

Note. Alpha = .920; *N* = 402, 28 participants indicated 'Not Applicable' for items 5 (education), 6 (spouse), and 7 (children). A single participant endorsed 'Not Applicable' to items 5 (education) and 6 (spouse). Four participants endorsed 'Not Applicable' to items 5 (education) and 7 (children). A total of 97 participants indicated 'Not Applicable' for items 6 (spouse) and 7 (children). An additional 13 participants indicated 'Not Applicable' to item 5 (education), 9 participants indicated 'Not Applicable' to item 6 (spouse), and 41 participants indicated 'Not Applicable' to item 7 (children).

Table 5. *Contact with Other Veterans Items*

How frequently do you?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Socialize with other veterans	1								
2. Volunteer for veterans or with other veterans	0.66	1							
3. Attend events geared towards veterans	0.635	0.791	1						
4. Spend time with other veterans	0.721	0.715	0.69	1					
5. Have a serious conversation with another veteran	0.686	0.678	0.67	0.758	1				
6. Engage in online media to keep up with other veterans	0.55	0.584	0.618	0.584	0.568	1			
7. Engage in online media to keep up with veteran activities	0.598	0.643	0.692	0.594	0.589	0.787	1		
8. Read or hear about veterans in the news	0.488	0.475	0.461	0.527	0.499	0.512	0.546	1	
9. Use or request the "perks" of being a veteran	0.46	0.458	0.522	0.456	0.447	0.469	0.497	0.424	1

Note. Alpha = .927; *N* = 591, 4 participants declined to respond to item 9 (“perks”).

Table 6. *Adjustment to Civilian Life Items*

Following discharge from the service…	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. My readjustment to civilian life overall was easy	1							
2. My readjustment to my relationship with my family of origin was easy	0.609	1						
3. My readjustment to my relationship with my spouse/partner was easy (if applicable)	0.599	0.639	1					
4. MY readjustment to my relationship with my child/ren was easy (if applicable)	0.545	0.589	0.609	1				
5. Financial readjustment was easy	0.576	0.514	0.584	0.491	1			
6. Finding a job was easy	0.572	0.46	0.522	0.46	0.662	1		
7. Going to school was easy (if applicable)	0.394	0.406	0.466	0.349	0.474	0.432	1	
8. Navigating the VA was easy	0.521	0.497	0.474	0.462	0.636	0.544	0.483	1

Note. Alpha = .896; *N* = 351, 39 participants indicated 'Not Applicable' for items 3 (spouse), 4 (children), and 7 (education). A total of 58 participants endorsed 'Not Applicable' to items 3 (spouse) and 4 (children). Three participants endorsed 'Not Applicable' to items 3 (spouse) and 7 (education). Twenty-two participants indicated 'Not Applicable' for items 4 (spouse) and 7 (education). An additional 10 participants indicated 'Not Applicable' to item 3 (spouse), 49 participants indicated 'Not Applicable' to item 4 (children), and 60 participants indicated 'Not Applicable' to item 7 (education). Three participants skipped item 8 (VA navigation).

Table 7. *Satisfaction with Life Scale*

	1	2	3	4	5
1. In most ways my life is close to my ideal	1				
2. The conditions of my life are excellent	0.727	1			
3. I am satisfied with my life	0.702	0.738	1		
4. If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing	0.631	0.642	0.662	1	
5. So far I have gotten the important things I want in life	0.649	0.653	0.691	0.648	1

Note. Alpha = .910; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin (1985).

Table 8. *Descriptive Information for Predictor and Outcome Variables (N = 595)*

Predictor Variables	Mean	SD	α
Positive Predictors			
Personal Growth	4.23	0.78	0.869
Military Pride	4.19	0.76	0.823
Positive Deployment Experience	3.39	0.93	0.843
Positive Discharge Training Experience	3.41	1.10	0.920
Frequent Contact with Veterans	3.23	0.96	0.927
Returned to Positive Situation (10 items)	3.37	2.22	
Negative Predictors			
Returned to Negative Situation (4 items)	0.143	0.41	
Risky Behavior Since Separating (15 items)	2.25	2.49	
Combat Exposure (yes)	.60	.49	
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (9 items)	4.37	2.77	
Personality Traits			
Extraversion	3.22	0.56	0.683
Positive Items	3.58	0.83	0.820
Negative Items	2.84	0.85	0.775
Agreeableness	3.36	0.57	0.726
Conscientiousness	3.55	0.70	0.837
Negative Emotionality	2.82	0.67	0.803
Open-Mindedness	3.39	0.54	0.669
Positive Items	3.70	0.72	0.798
Negative Items	3.01	0.89	0.786
Outcome Variables			
Adjustment to Civilian Life	3.61	0.97	0.896
Satisfaction with Life	3.80	0.97	0.910

Table 9. *Correlations Among Positive/Negative Predictors and Outcomes*

Positive Predictors	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Personal Growth	1											
2. Military Pride	**0.71**	1										
3. Positive Deployment Experience	**0.396**	**0.365**	1									
4. Positive Discharge Training Experience	**0.471**	**0.401**	**0.691**	1								
5. Frequent Contact with Veterans	**0.364**	**0.405**	**0.564**	**0.563**	1							
6. Returned to Positive Situation	**0.164**	**0.186**	**-0.082**	0.031	0.017	1						
Negative Predictors												
7. Returned to Negative Situation	**-0.193**	**-0.147**	**-0.204**	**-0.268**	**-0.125**	0.026	1					
8. Risky Behavior Since Separating	**-0.092**	0.042	**0.082**	0.002	**0.096**	**-0.122**	0.009	1				
9. Combat Exposure	0.065	**0.126**	-0.039	0.001	**0.083**	**0.105**	0.072	0.002	1			
10. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder	**-0.086**	**-0.084**	-0.061	**-0.092**	0.019	-0.075	**0.178**	**0.128**	**0.288**	1		
Outcome Variables												
11. Adjustment to Civilian Life	**0.435**	**0.39**	**0.58**	**0.675**	**0.493**	**0.153**	**-0.325**	-0.04	-0.055	**-0.315**	1	
12. Satisfaction with Life	**0.534**	**0.494**	**0.524**	**0.584**	**0.539**	**0.143**	**-0.314**	-0.053	0.037	**-0.229**	**0.681**	1

Note. Correlations that are **bolded** are significant at the p <.05 level

Table 10. *Regression Analysis: Positive/Negative Predictors and Ease of Adjustment*

	B	*SE*	*Beta*	*t*	*p*
Constant	1.327	.180		7.353	<.001
Positive Predictors					
Personal Growth	.070	.051	.057	1.385	.167
Military Pride	.017	.051	.013	.329	.742
Positive Impact of Deployment/s	.199	.042	.191	4.707	<.001
Positive Discharge Training Experience	.320	.036	.367	8.867	<.001
Frequent Contact with Veterans	.121	.036	.119	3.389	.001
Returned to Positive Situation	.058	.012	.134	4.634	<.001
Negative Predictors					
Returned to Negative Situation	-.270	.066	-.119	-4.089	<.001
Risky Behavior Since Separating	-.005	.011	-.013	-.452	.651
Combat Exposure	-.012	.057	-.006	-.201	.841
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder	-.087	.010	-.250	-8.380	<.001

Note. All predictors entered simultaneously; $R = .763$, $R^2 = .582$, $F(10,551) = 76.809$, $p < .001$

Table 11. *Regression Analysis: Positive/Negative Predictors and Satisfaction with Life*

	B	*SE*	*Beta*	*t*	*p*
Constant	0.771	0.193		3.985	<.001
Positive Predictors					
Personal Growth	0.230	0.054	0.187	4.247	<.001
Military Pride	0.114	0.055	0.090	2.065	0.039
Positive Impact of Deployment/s	0.156	0.045	0.149	3.432	0.001
Positive Discharge Training Experience	0.135	0.039	0.154	3.489	0.001
Frequent Contact with Veterans	0.236	0.038	0.232	6.181	<.001
Returned to Positive Situation	0.035	0.013	0.082	2.661	0.008
Negative Predictors					
Returned to Negative Situation	-0.311	0.071	-0.137	-4.397	<.001
Risky Behavior Since Separating	-0.014	0.012	-0.036	-1.205	0.229
Combat Exposure	0.080	0.061	0.041	1.302	0.194
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder	-0.059	0.011	-0.168	-5.273	<.001

Note. All predictors entered simultaneously; $R = .724$, $R^2 = .524$, $F(10,551) = 60.706$, $p < .001$

Table 12. *Covariances Among Predictor Variables in the Fully Saturated Path Analysis Model (RQ1)*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Personal Growth	-									
2. Military Pride	**0.709**	-								
3. Positive Impact of Deployment/s	**0.367**	**0.354**	-							
4. Positive Discharge Training Experience	**0.457**	**0.397**	**0.669**	-						
5. Frequent Contact with Veterans	**0.337**	**0.396**	**0.524**	**0.514**	-					
6. Returned to Positive Situation	**0.157**	**0.172**	**-0.082**	.037	.026	-				
7. Returned to Negative Situation	**-0.203**	**-0.154**	**-0.211**	**-0.267**	**-0.114**	.016	-			
8. Risky Behavior Since Separating	**-0.091**	-.042	.080	.002	**0.094**	**-0.121**	.009	-		
9. Combat Exposure	.029	**0.053**	-0.024	-.001	.038	**0.051**	.003	.036	-	
10. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder	**-0.105**	**-0.087**	**-0.087**	**-0.107**	.002	-.066	**0.188**	**.125**	**0.14**	-

Note. Covariances that are **bolded** are significant at $p < .05$.

Table 13. *Covariances Among Predictor Variables in the Final Trimmed Path Analysis Model (RQ1)*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Personal Growth	-							
2. Military Pride	.708	-						
3. Positive Impact of Deployment/s	.395	.366	-					
4. Positive Discharge Training Experience	.468	.398	.696	-				
5. Frequent Contact with Veterans	.363	.404	.566	.564	-			
6. Returned to Positive Situation	.150	.173	-.104	-	-	-		
7. Returned to Negative Situation	-.198	-.152	-.202	-.270	-.128	-	-	
8. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder	-.081	-.077	-.081	-.103	-	-	.180	-

Note. All covariances are significant at $p < .05$. Accepted model fit statistics: $\chi^2(6) = 5.266$, $p = .510$; CFI = 1.00, TLI = 1.00, RMSEA = .000 [0,.050].

Table 14. *Correlations Among Personality Traits and Outcomes*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Adjustment to Civilian Life	1										
2. Satisfaction with Life	**.681**	1									
3. Extraversion	**.238**	**.353**	1								
4. Positive Items	**.425**	**.473**	**.658**	1							
5. Negative Items	**-.103**	0.003	**.681**	**-.103**	1						
6. Agreeableness	**.116**	**.140**	**.350**	**.098**	**.367**	1					
7. Conscientiousness	0.078	**.174**	**.514**	**.251**	**.435**	**.594**	1				
8. Negative Emotionality	**-.415**	**-.508**	**-.556**	**-.390**	**-.354**	**-.485**	**-.516**	1			
9. Open-Mindedness	-0.070	-0.072	**.319**	**.107**	**.314**	**.466**	**.546**	**-.194**	1		
10. Positive Items	**.217**	**.176**	**.212**	**.626**	**-.328**	**.125**	**.193**	**-.115**	**.497**	1	
11. Negative Items	**-.260**	**-.226**	**.246**	**-.321**	**.638**	**.425**	**.459**	**-.128**	**.735**	**-.192**	1

Note. Correlations that are **bolded** are significant at the $p < .05$ level

Table 15. *Correlations between Military Experience and Personality Trait Variables*

	Personal Growth	Military Pride	Positive Impact of Deployment/s	Positive Discharge Training Experience	Frequent Contact with Veterans	Returned to Positive Situation	Returned to Negative Situation	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
Extraversion	**.326**	**.259**	**.151**	**.156**	**.175**	**.175**	**-.094**	**-.184**
Positive Items	**.365**	**.313**	**.365**	**.377**	**.396**	**.134**	**-.137**	-0.058
Negative Items	0.073	0.036	**-.157**	**-.165**	**-.155**	**.102**	0.011	**-.183**
Agreeableness	**.229**	**.179**	0.022	0.052	-0.006	**.182**	-0.055	**-.199**
Conscientiousness	**.284**	**.217**	-0.053	-0.008	-0.061	**.264**	-0.013	**-.148**
Negative Emotionality	**-.394**	**-.325**	**-.241**	**-.276**	**-.147**	**-.189**	**.250**	**.413**
Open-Mindedness	0.010	0.005	**-.107**	**-.133**	-0.080	**.222**	**.107**	-0.029
Positive Items	**.139**	**.135**	**.211**	**.173**	**.263**	**.177**	0.008	0.079
Negative Items	**-.116**	**-.112**	**-.298**	**-.310**	**-.292**	**.126**	**.121**	**-.097**

Note. Correlations that are **bolded** are significant at $p < .05$.

Table 16. *Regression Analysis: Military Experience, Personality Traits, and Ease of Adjustment to Civilian Life*

	B	*SE*	*Beta*	*t*	*p*
Model 1					
Constant	1.214	0.163		7.460	<.001
Personal Growth	0.086	0.038	0.069	2.243	0.025
Positive Impact of Deployment/s	0.195	0.040	0.187	4.812	<.001
Positive Discharge Training Experience	0.332	0.035	0.380	9.469	<.001
Frequent Contact with Veterans	0.137	0.034	0.136	4.046	<.001
Returned to Positive Situation	0.056	0.012	0.128	4.699	<.001
Negative Situation Returned	-0.274	0.065	-0.117	-4.193	<.001
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder	-0.081	0.009	-0.233	-8.618	<.001
Model 2					
Constant	2.206	0.396		5.568	<.001
Personal Growth	0.058	0.041	0.047	1.410	0.159
Positive Impact of Deployment/s	0.181	0.041	0.174	4.466	<.001
Positive Discharge Training Experience	0.324	0.035	0.371	9.229	<.001
Frequent Contact with Veterans	0.138	0.034	0.137	4.045	<.001
Returned to Positive Situation	0.053	0.012	0.122	4.371	<.001
Negative Situation Returned	-0.236	0.066	-0.101	-3.578	<.001
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder	-0.068	0.010	-0.195	-6.677	<.001
Extraversion	-0.002	0.059	-0.001	-0.037	0.971
Agreeableness	-0.046	0.059	-0.027	-0.771	0.441
Conscientiousness	-0.024	0.056	-0.017	-0.419	0.675
Negative Emotionality	-0.185	0.057	-0.129	-3.244	0.001
Open-Mindedness	-0.027	0.060	-0.015	-0.452	0.652

Note. Model 1: military experience predictors entered in the first block, $R = .770$, $R^2 = .594$, $F(7, 585) = 122.053$, $p < .001$; Model 2: personality trait variables entered in the second block, $R = .776$, $R^2 = .602$, $F(12,580) = 73.184$, $p < .001$; $F change(5,580) = 2.531$, $p = .028$.

Table 17. *Regression Analysis: Military Experience, Personality Traits (Positive/Negative Extraversion and Open-Mindedness Items), and Ease of Adjustment to Civilian Life*

	B	*SE*	*Beta*	*t*	*p*
Model 1					
Constant	1.210	0.163		7.419	<.001
Personal Growth	0.079	0.038	0.064	2.055	0.040
Positive Impact of Deployment/s	0.205	0.041	0.196	5.017	<.001
Positive Discharge Training Experience	0.328	0.035	0.376	9.301	<.001
Frequent Contact with Veterans	0.139	0.034	0.138	4.066	<.001
Returned to Positive Situation	0.056	0.012	0.129	4.699	<.001
Negative Situation Returned	-0.272	0.065	-0.117	-4.160	<.001
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder	-0.081	0.010	-0.231	-8.468	<.001
Model 2					
Constant	2.164	0.396		5.467	<.001
Personal Growth	0.045	0.041	0.037	1.107	0.269
Positive Impact of Deployment/s	0.175	0.041	0.167	4.293	<.001
Positive Discharge Training Experience	0.305	0.035	0.349	8.635	<.001
Frequent Contact with Veterans	0.116	0.035	0.115	3.332	0.001
Returned to Positive Situation	0.050	0.012	0.116	4.133	<.001
Negative Situation Returned	-0.228	0.065	-0.098	-3.496	0.001
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder	-0.072	0.010	-0.204	-6.981	<.001
Extraversion Positive	0.084	0.050	0.072	1.673	0.095
Extraversion Negative	-0.076	0.046	-0.067	-1.645	0.101
Agreeableness	0.003	0.060	0.002	0.058	0.954
Conscientiousness	-0.024	0.056	-0.017	-0.432	0.666
Negative Emotionality	-0.175	0.057	-0.122	-3.077	0.002
Open-Mindedness Positive	-0.001	0.053	-0.001	-0.016	0.987
Open-Mindedness Negative	-0.031	0.046	-0.029	-0.686	0.493

Note. Model 1: military experience predictors entered in the first block, $R = .770$, $R^2 = .594$, $F(7, 585) = 122.053$, $p < .001$; Model 2: personality trait variables entered in the second block, $R = .784$, $R^2 = .613$, $F(14,578) = 63.306$, $p < .001$; $F change(7,578) = 4.072$, $p < .001$.

Table 18. *Regression Analysis: Military Experience, Personality Traits, and Satisfaction with Life*

	B	*SE*	*Beta*	*t*	*p*
Model 1					
Constant	0.668	0.183		3.651	<.001
Personal Growth	0.240	0.052	0.193	4.603	<.001
Military Pride	0.116	0.053	0.090	2.186	0.029
Positive Impact of Deployment/s	0.125	0.043	0.119	2.881	0.004
Positive Discharge Training Experience	0.162	0.038	0.184	4.303	<.001
Frequent Contact with Veterans	0.250	0.037	0.246	6.749	<.001
Returned to Positive Situation	0.038	0.013	0.087	2.964	0.003
Negative Situation Returned	-0.315	0.070	-0.134	-4.503	<.001
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder	-0.054	0.010	-0.154	-5.352	<.001
Model 2					
Constant	2.590	0.407		6.370	<.001
Personal Growth	0.149	0.051	0.120	2.921	0.004
Military Pride	0.097	0.050	0.076	1.955	0.051
Positive Impact of Deployment/s	0.101	0.041	0.096	2.442	0.015
Positive Discharge Training Experience	0.147	0.036	0.167	4.122	<.001
Frequent Contact with Veterans	0.254	0.035	0.250	7.175	<.001
Returned to Positive Situation	0.029	0.012	0.067	2.358	0.019
Negative Situation Returned	-0.228	0.067	-0.097	-3.414	0.001
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder	-0.022	0.010	-0.064	-2.166	0.031
Extraversion	0.111	0.060	0.064	1.842	0.066
Agreeableness	-0.123	0.060	-0.072	-2.046	0.041
Conscientiousness	0.052	0.057	0.038	0.914	0.361
Negative Emotionality	-0.381	0.058	-0.263	-6.572	<.001
Open-Mindedness	-0.152	0.061	-0.085	-2.486	0.013

Note. Model 1: military experience predictors entered in the first block, $R = .735$, $R^2 = .540$, $F(8,584) = 85.743$, $p < .001$; Model 2: personality trait variables entered in the second block, $R = .773$, $R^2 = .597$, $F(13,579) = 66.035$, $p < .001$; *Fchange*$(5,579) = 16.406$, $p < .001$.

Table 19. *Regression Analysis: Military Experience, Personality Traits (Positive/Negative Extraversion and Open-Mindedness Items), and Satisfaction with Life*

	B	*SE*	*Beta*	*t*	*p*
Model 1					
Constant	0.677	0.184		3.672	0.000
Personal Growth	0.247	0.053	0.199	4.696	0.000
Military Pride	0.103	0.053	0.081	1.930	0.054
Positive Impact of Deployment/s	0.124	0.044	0.118	2.833	0.005
Positive Discharge Training Experience	0.162	0.038	0.184	4.267	0.000
Frequent Contact with Veterans	0.255	0.037	0.251	6.797	0.000
Returned to Positive Situation	0.038	0.013	0.087	2.962	0.003
Negative Situation Returned	-0.314	0.070	-0.134	-4.476	0.000
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder	-0.054	0.010	-0.153	-5.274	0.000
Model 2					
Constant	2.671	0.410		6.517	0.000
Personal Growth	0.151	0.051	0.121	2.941	0.003
Military Pride	0.086	0.050	0.067	1.713	0.087
Positive Impact of Deployment/s	0.090	0.042	0.085	2.151	0.032
Positive Discharge Training Experience	0.133	0.036	0.151	3.686	0.000
Frequent Contact with Veterans	0.244	0.036	0.241	6.757	0.000
Returned to Positive Situation	0.029	0.012	0.067	2.334	0.020
Negative Situation Returned	-0.221	0.067	-0.094	-3.311	0.001
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder	-0.024	0.011	-0.067	-2.249	0.025
Extraversion Positive	0.157	0.051	0.133	3.047	0.002
Extraversion Negative	-0.020	0.047	-0.017	-0.421	0.674
Agreeableness	-0.093	0.061	-0.054	-1.506	0.133
Conscientiousness	0.033	0.057	0.023	0.572	0.568
Negative Emotionality	-0.381	0.058	-0.264	-6.547	0.000
Open-Mindedness Positive	-0.123	0.054	-0.091	-2.262	0.024
Open-Mindedness Negative	-0.054	0.047	-0.049	-1.152	0.250

Note. Model 1: military experience predictors entered in the first block, $R = .735$, $R^2 = .540$, $F(8,584) = 85.743$, $p < .001$; Model 2: personality trait variables entered in the second block, $R = .775$, $R^2 = .601$, $F(15,577) = 57.998$, $p < .001$; $Fchange(7,577) = 12.630$, $p < .001$.

Table 20. *Covariances Among Military Experience and Personality Traits in the Model (RQ3)*

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1.	Personal Growth	-														
2.	Military Pride	**.715**	-													
3.	Positive Impact of Deployment/s	**.398**	**.365**	-												
4.	Positive Discharge Training Experience	**.470**	**.401**	**.698**	-											
5.	Frequent Contact with Veterans	**.367**	**.407**	**.567**	**.570**	-										
6.	Returned to Positive Situation	**.154**	**.174**	**-.104**	-	-	-									
7.	Returned to Negative Situation	**-.199**	**-.155**	**-.204**	**-.271**	**-.130**	-	-								
8.	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder	-.071	-.071	-.077	**-.099**	-	-	**.178**	-							
9.	Extraversion Positive	**.366**	**.312**	**.366**	**.376**	**.400**	**.124**	**-.143**	-.054	-						
10.	Extraversion Negative	.070	.032	**-.156**	**-.168**	**-.158**	**.092**	.008	**-.179**	**-.105**	-					
11.	Agreeableness	**.226**	**.173**	.014	.046	-.008	**.174**	-.061	**-.186**	**.095**	**.366**	-				
12.	Conscientiousness	**.280**	**.208**	-.059	-.014	-.061	**.256**	-.020	**-.125**	**.250**	**.436**	**.592**	-			
13.	Negative Emotionality	**-.389**	**-.321**	**-.247**	**-.277**	**-.156**	**-.162**	**.258**	**.399**	**-.392**	**-.353**	**-.479**	**-.509**	-		
14.	Open-mindedness Positive	**.139**	**.134**	**.206**	**.168**	**.261**	**.179**	.003	**.087**	**.628**	**-.332**	**.124**	**.195**	**-.114**	-	
15.	Open-mindedness Negative	**-.120**	**-.116**	**-.302**	**-.315**	**-.297**	**.123**	**.118**	**-.088**	**-.324**	**.642**	**.420**	**.458**	**-.122**	**-.193**	-

Note. Covariances that are **bolded** are significant at $p < .05$. Model fit statistics: $\chi^2(6) = 5.750$, $p = .452$; CFI = 1.00, TLI = 1.00, RMSEA < .001 [0,.053].

Table 21. *Path Analysis: Military Experience and Personality Traits Direct Effects on Ease of Adjustment to and Satisfaction with Civilian Life (RQ3)*

	Ease of Adjustment to Civilian Life			Satisfaction with Life		
	Estimate	*SE*	*p*	*Estimate*	*SE*	*p*
Military Experience						
Personal Growth	.036	.033	.262	.121	.040	.002
Military Pride	-	-	-	.067	.037	.070
Positive Impact of Deployment/s	.168	.039	<.001	.085	.039	.029
Positive Discharge Training Experience	.348	.040	.001	.151	.040	<.001
Frequent Contact with Veterans	.115	.034	<.001	.241	.035	<.001
Returned to Positive Situation	.116	.027	<.001	.067	.028	.017
Negative Situation Returned	-.097	.027	<.001	-.094	.028	.001
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder	-.206	.029	<.001	-.067	.029	.022
Personality Traits						
Extraversion Positive	.072	.042	.090	.133	.043	.002
Extraversion Negative	-.066	.040	.096	-.017	.040	.669
Agreeableness	.002	.035	.953	-.054	.036	.127
Conscientiousness	-.017	.040	.661	.023	.040	.562
Negative Emotionality	-.122	.039	.002	-.263	.040	<.001
Open-Mindedness Positive	-.001	.039	.987	-.091	.040	.022
Open-Mindedness Negative	-.029	.042	.487	-.049	.042	.243

Note. Model fit statistics: $\chi^2(6) = 5.750$, $p = .452$; CFI = 1.00, TLI = 1.00, RMSEA < .001 [0,.053]; covariance between ease of adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life = .112.

Table 22. *Covariances Among Military Experience and Personality Traits in the Trimmed, Final Model (RQ3)*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Personal Growth	-											
2. Military Pride	.713	-										
3. Positive Impact of Deployment/s	.408	.366	-									
4. Positive Discharge Training Experience	.480	.401	.702	-								
5. Frequent Contact with Veterans	.372	.406	.568	.571	-							
6. Returned to Positive Situation	.148	.174	-.102	-	-	-						
7. Returned to Negative Situation	-.190	-.143	-.192	-.254	-.129	-	-					
8. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder	-	-	-	-	-	-	.151	-	-			
9. Extraversion Positive	.374	.315	.370	.382	.401	.124	-.137	-	-			
10. Extraversion Negative	-	-	-.187	-.207	-.170	.087	-	-.197	-.133	-		
11. Negative Emotionality	-.349	-.291	-.218	-.239	-.239	-.157	.247	.366	-.370	-.336	-	
12. Open-mindedness Positive	.166	.149	.222	.189	.189	.181	-	.113	.639	-.346	-.113	-

Note. Covariances are all significant at $p < .05$. Model fit statistics: $\chi^2(18) = 24.175$, $p = .149$; CFI = .998, TLI = .991, RMSEA = .024 [0,.047].

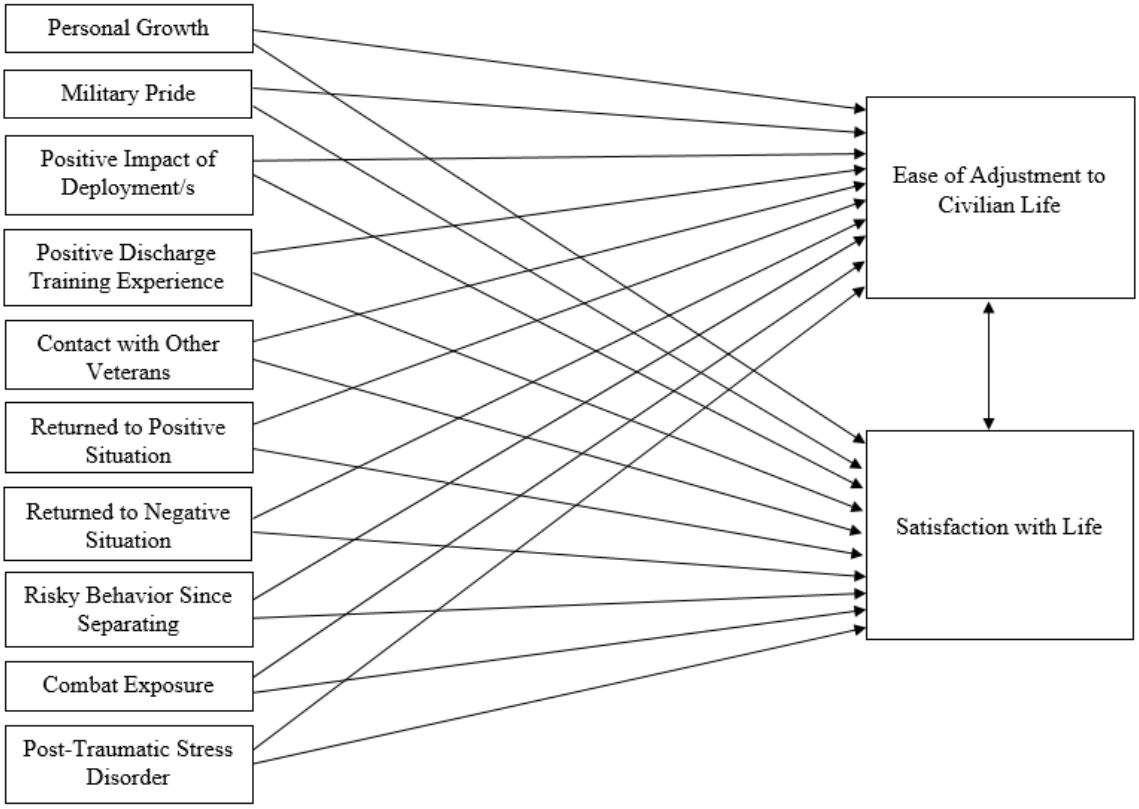

Figure 1. Hypothesized model of positive and negative military experiences that relate to ease of adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life (RQ1).

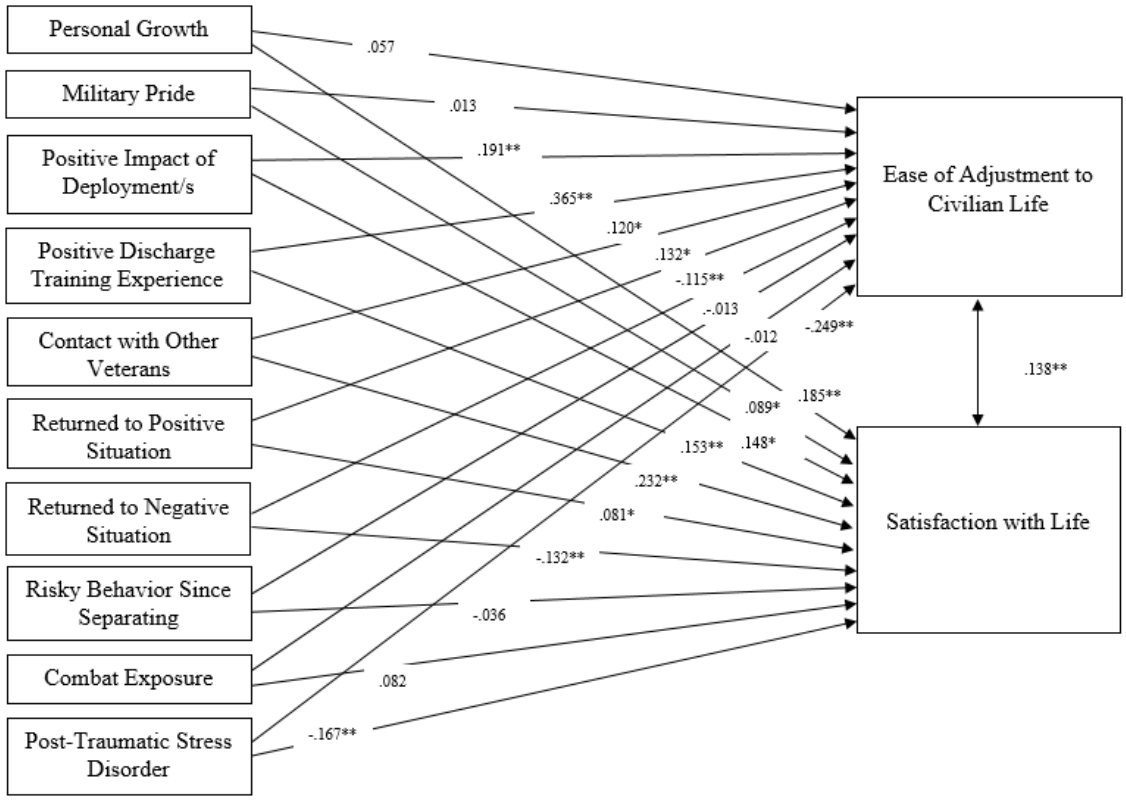

Figure 2. Fully saturated path analysis examining the direct effects of military experience variables on ease of adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life (RQ1); ***p* <.001, **p* <.05. Most of the variables had direct effects on both outcomes and the bivariate correlation between outcomes decreases from .681 to .138 with the predictors in the model.

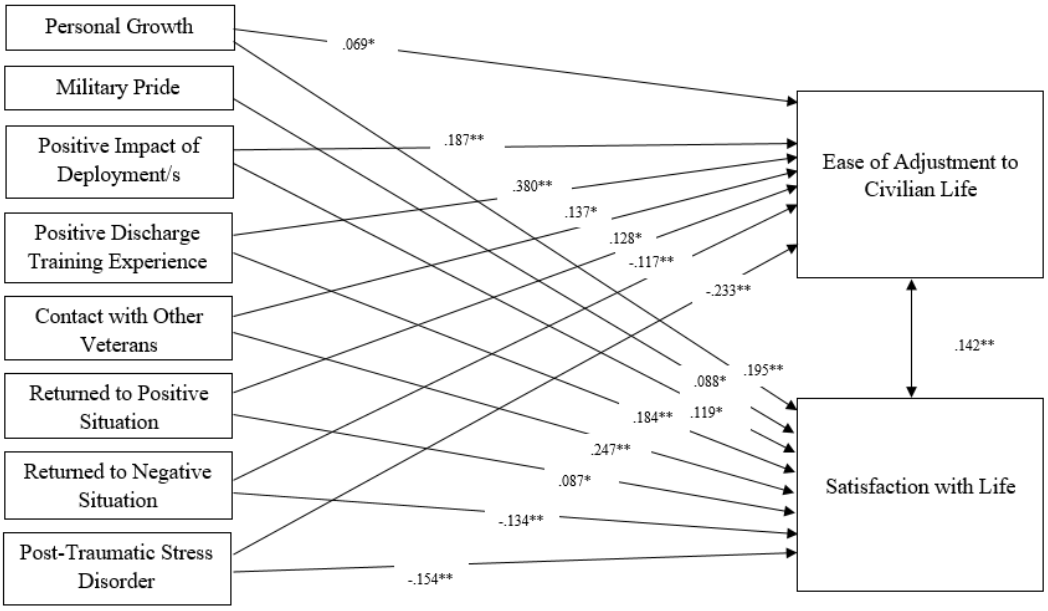

Figure 3. Trimmed, final model with acceptable fit examining the direct effects of military experience variables on ease of adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life (RQ1), $\chi^2(6) = 5.266$, $p = .510$; CFI = 1.00, TLI = 1.00, RMSEA = .000 [0,.050], $^{**}p < .001$, $^{*}p < .05$. Risky behavior since separating and combat exposure were completely removed as was the direct path from military pride to ease of adjustment to civilian life. In addition to removing nonsignificant paths, five nonsignificant covariances between predictor variables were also removed for model simplicity. Specifically, the covariances between positive impact of deployment/s and positive situation returned, contact with other veterans and positive situation returned, contact with other veterans and post-traumatic stress disorder, positive situation returned, and negative situation returned, and positive situation returned and post-traumatic stress disorder.

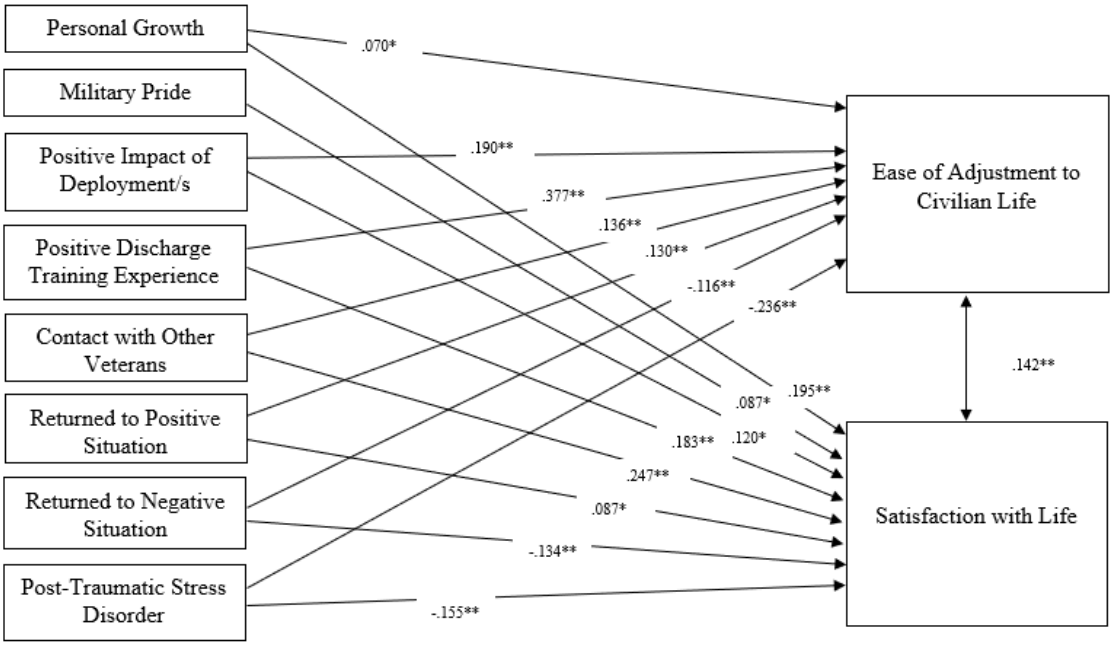

Figure 4. Gender constrained model examining the direct effects of military experience variables on ease of adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life (RQ2), $\chi^2(71) = 165.824$, $p < .001$; CFI = .961, TLI = .951, RMSEA = .067 [.054,.081], $^{**}p < .001$, $^{*}p < .05$. A total of 59 paths, covariances, intercepts, and residuals were constrained to be equal. Additionally, the same 5 covariances and single nonsignificant path from military pride to adjustment to civilian life was fixed to 0.

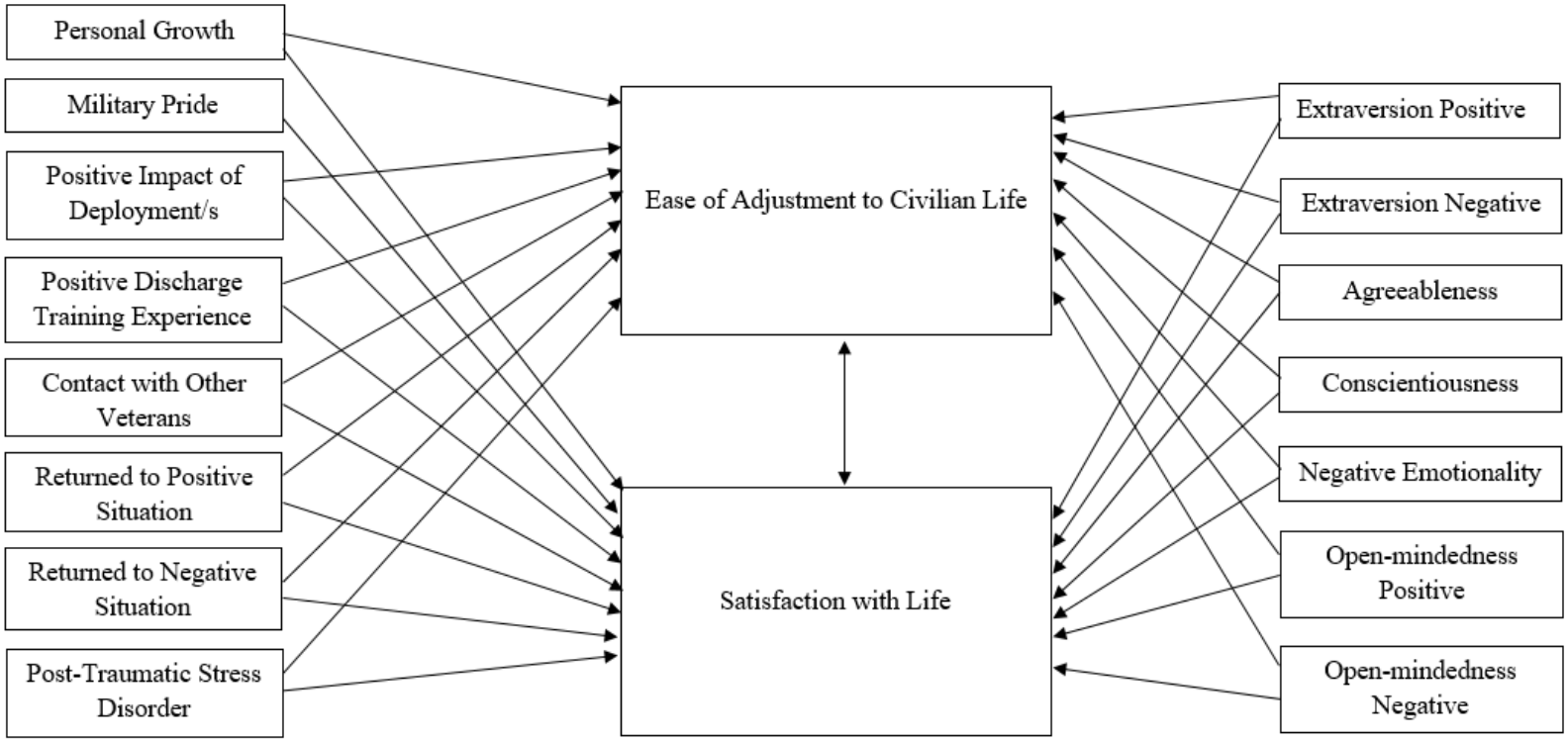

Figure 5. Hypothesized model of positive and negative military experiences and personality trait variables that relate to ease of adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life (RQ3).

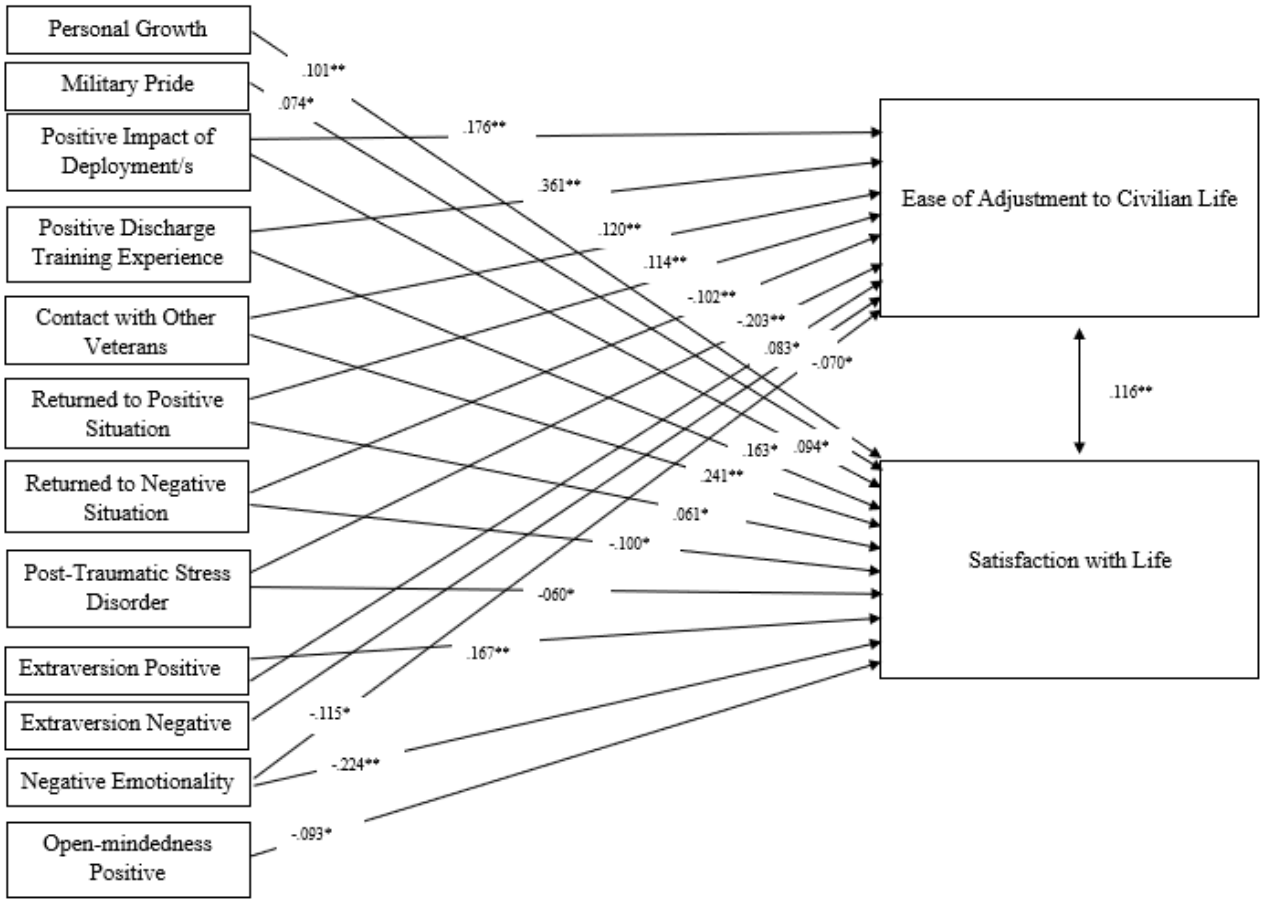

Figure 6. Trimmed, final model with acceptable fit of positive and negative military experiences and personality trait variables that relate to ease of adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life (RQ3), $\chi^2(18) = 24.175$, $p = .149$; CFI = .998, TLI = .991, RMSEA = .024 [0,.047], $^{**}p < .001$, $^{*}p < .05$ (9 additional covariances were removed). Extraversion negative, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and open-mindedness negative were completely removed as was the direct path from personal growth and open-minded negative to ease of adjustment to civilian life.

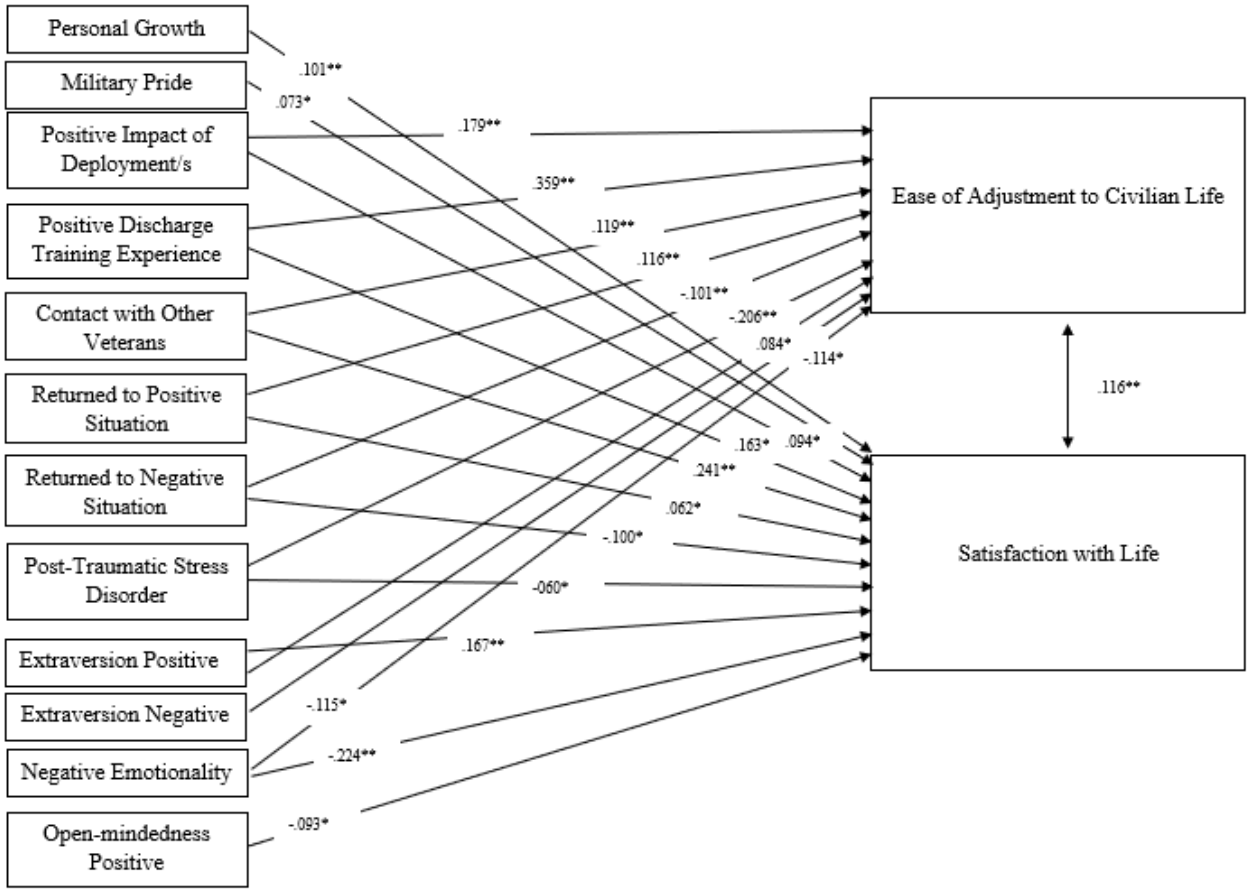

Figure 7. Gender constrained model of positive and negative military experiences and personality trait variables that relate to ease of adjustment to and satisfaction with civilian life (RQ4), $\chi^2(137) = 306.370$, $p < .001$; CFI = .952, TLI = .936, RMSEA = .065 [.055,.075].

Appendix A.

Demographic Items

What is your gender?
1. Male
2. Female

What is your age? _____ years

Last year, what was your total family income from all sources, before taxes?
1. Less than $10,000
2. $10,000 to under $30,000
3. $30,000 to under $50,000
4. $50,000 to under $75,000
7. $75,000 to under $100,000
8. $100,000 to under $150,000
9. $150,000 or more

In general, how would you describe your political views?
1. Very conservative
2. Conservative
3. Moderate
4. Liberal
5. Very liberal
6. Other

In what country were you born? _____

What is your race/ethnicity? _____

Approximately how often do you attend religious services?
1. Never
2. Rarely
3. A few times a year
4. Once or twice a month
5. Once a week
6. More than once a week

What is your present religious affiliation? _____

What is the highest grade in school that you completed?
1. Did not attend high school (did not attend 9th grade)
2. High school incomplete (Grades 9-11)
3. High school graduate (Grade 12 or GED certificate)
4. Technical, trade, or vocational school AFTER high school
5. Some college, associate degree, no 4-year degree
6. College graduate (B.S., B.A., or other 4-year degree)
7. Post-graduate training or professional schooling after college (e.g., toward a master's Degree or Ph.D.; law or medical school)

Are you now enrolled in school, either full or part-time?
1. Yes, full-time student
2. Yes, part-time
3. Not enrolled

Are you now employed full-time, part-time or not employed?
1. Full-time
2. Part-time
3. Not employed
If employed, what is your occupation? _____

With whom do you currently live with? (check all that apply)
1. Spouse/Partner
2. Children
3. Parent
4. Other family members (aunt, uncle, grandparent, etc.)
5. Friend(s)
6. Roommate (type not listed above)
7. Pet
8. Alone·
9. Other: _____

What type of home do you currently reside in (homeless, public housing, apartment, single family home, etc.)? _____

What is your current relationship status?
1. Single
2. Dating
3. Committed relationship
4. Not married but living with a partner
5. Married
6. Separated
7. Divorced
8. Widowed

Appendix B.

Military Characteristic Items

Were you married at any point when you were in the military?
1. Yes
2. No

(if yes) A. When were you married?
1. Before you entered the service
2. Before you were sent on your first deployment
3. Other, please explain _____

Were you the parent of a child under age 18 when you were in the military?
1. Yes
2. No

(if yes) A. When did you have children? (check all that apply)
1. Before I entered the service
2. After I entered the service but before my first deployment
3. After I entered the service and after my first deployment
4. Other: _____

(if yes) B. How many children do you have? How old are they and what is there gender? (add as many as needed) Child 1: Age _____ Gender _____

Before I joined the military I (check all that apply):
1. Graduated high school
2. Completed my education
3. Was employed part-time
4. Was employed full-time

Why did you decide to join the military? _____

At the time of your (most recent) discharge or retirement what was your rank?
1. Commissioned officer
2. Warrant officer
3. Enlisted
4. Reservist

What type of military discharge did you receive?
1. General
2. Honorable
3. Bad conduct
4. Dishonorable
5. Other than honorable (OTH)
6. Other, please explain: _____

What year did you first enter the military? _____ YEAR

Altogether, how long did you serve on active duty?
_____ years and _____ months

How much of your time in the service were you away from family?
1. None, I was always stationed near my family
2. Some of the time (minimal deployments)
3. Most of the time
4. All of the time (did not see family unless on leave)

In which branch or branches did you serve on active duty?
_____

A. What was your job title in the service? _____

During your military service, how many times were you deployed away from your permanent duty station?
_____ # OF TIMES

A. How long was your longest deployment (please be as specific as possible)?
_____ years, _____ months, _____ days

B. Were you deployed in your last two years of service?
1. Yes
2. No

C. If yes, how stressful was your last deployment?
1 (not stressful at all)……5 (extremely stressful)

D. If yes, how distant from non-military friends and family were you?
1(not far)…….5(farthest you have ever been)

While deployed, how often did you initiate contact with non-military friends and family members?
5. Very often
4. Often
3. Occasionally
2. Rarely
1. Never
0. Not Applicable (never deployed)

Approximately how long have you been discharged (please be as accurate as possible)?
_____

Why did you leave the service? _____

Have you received any benefits from the Veterans Administration? Consider educational and medical benefits, job training, a home loan, pension or other kinds of benefits.

1. Yes, which? _____
2. No

Were you ever seriously injured while performing your duties in the military?
1. Yes
2. No

A. Please list the injury(s) you sustained while in the military?
_____

B. Please rate the extent to which your injury(s) has impaired your functioning in everyday life.
1……..2……3…….4……..5
No impairment Major impairment

Were any of those injuries combat-related?
1. Yes, injured in combat
2. No, not combat-related
3. Not applicable

Did you ever serve in a combat or war zone?
1. Yes, served in combat or war zone
2. No did not serve

Regardless of whether you have been diagnosed, do you think you ever suffered from symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of your experiences in the military?
1. Yes
2. No

Below is a list of complaints that veterans sometimes have, please indicate any that you have personally experienced:

1. Do you ever experience unwanted memories of your time in the military?
2. Do you ever have flashbacks of your time in the military?
3. Do you ever dream about your time in the military?
4. Do you avoid people or places that remind you of your time in the military?
5. Do you ever feel emotionally numb?
6. Do you feel constantly on guard for danger?
7. Do you have difficulty sleeping?
8. Do you have difficulty concentrating?
9. Are you easily startled?

Appendix C.

Personal Growth Items

Please answer the following question(s) on a 1 to 5 scale:
5. Strongly agree
4. Moderately agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
2. Moderately disagree
1. Strongly disagree

For the following questions, please report your **current** views:

My military experience taught me how to work with other people.

My military experience gave me self-confidence.

My military experience prepared me for a job or career.

My military experience helped me grow and mature as a person.

My military experience has helped me get ahead in life.

Appendix D.

Military Pride Items

Please answer the following question(s) on a 1 to 5 scale:
5. Strongly agree
4. Moderately agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
2. Moderately disagree
1. Strongly disagree

For the following questions, please report your **current** views:

I would advise a young person close to me to join the military.

I think of myself as someone who is part of a military family.

I am glad that I served in the military.

I enjoyed the time I served in the military.

I am proud of serving in the military.

Appendix E.

Deployment Experience Items

Please answer the following question(s) on a 1 to 5 scale:
5. Strongly agree
4. Moderately agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
2. Moderately disagree
1. Strongly disagree

For the next questions, please think back to when you were **in the service**:

The deployment(s) that took me away from home had a positive impact on my financial situation.

The deployment(s) that took me away from home had a positive impact on my health.

The deployment(s) that took me away from home had a positive impact on my chances for promotion and advancement within the military.

The deployment(s) that took me away from home had a positive impact on my relationship with my family of origin (parent/s and sibling/s).

The deployment(s) that took me away from home had a positive impact on my relationship with my spouse/partner (if applicable).

The deployment(s) that took me away from home had a positive impact on my relationship with my children (if applicable).

Appendix F.

Discharge Training Experience Items

Please answer the following question(s) on a 1 to 5 scale:
5. Strongly agree
4. Moderately agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
2. Moderately disagree
1. Strongly disagree

For the next questions, please think back to when you were **in the service**:

My discharge training prepared me for returning to my family of origin (parent/s and sibling/s).

My discharge training prepared me for returning to my spouse (if applicable).

My discharge training prepared me for returning to my child/ren (if applicable).

My discharge training prepared me to be a useful member of my society upon return.

My discharge training prepared me for financial independence and stability.

My discharge training prepared me for pursuing a career.

My discharge training prepared me for pursuing my education.

Appendix G.

Contact with Other Veterans Items

Please answer the following question(s) on a 1 to 5 scale:
5. Very Often
4. Often
3. Occasionally
2. Rarely
1. Never

For the following questions, please report on your **current** behaviors:

How frequently do you socialize with other military veterans?

How frequently do you volunteer for veterans or with other veterans?

How frequently do you attend an event geared towards veterans?

How frequently do you spend time with other veterans?

How frequently do you have a serious conversation with another veteran?

How frequently do you engage in online media to keep up with other veterans?

How frequently do you engage in online media to keep up with veteran activities?

How frequently do you read or hear about veterans in the news?

Appendix H.

Readjustment Items

Please answer the following question(s) on a 1 to 5 scale:
5. Strongly agree
4. Moderately agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
2. Moderately disagree
1. Strongly disagree
0. Not applicable

For the following questions please indicate how you felt **immediately** following discharge.

Following discharge from the service, my readjustment to civilian life overall was easy.

Following discharge from the service, my readjustment to my relationship with my family of origin (parent/s and siblings/s) was easy.

Following discharge from the service, my readjustment to my relationship with my spouse or partner was easy.

Following discharge from the service, my readjustment to my relationship with my child(ren) was easy.

Following discharge from the service, my financial readjustment was easy.

Following discharge from the service, going to school was easy.

Following discharge from the service, finding a job was easy.

Following discharge from the service, navigating the VA was easy.

Appendix I.

Satisfaction Items

Please answer the following question(s) on a 1 to 5 scale:
5. Strongly agree
4. Moderately agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
2. Moderately disagree
1. Strongly disagree

For the following questions please indicate how you felt **immediately** following discharge.

At the time I was discharged, I thought that in most ways my life was close to my ideal.

At the time I was discharged, I thought that the conditions of my life were excellent.

At the time I was discharged, I thought that I was satisfied with life.

At the time I was discharged, I thought that I have gotten the important things I want in life.

At the time I was discharged, I thought that if I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.

Appendix J.

Return Situation Checklist

For the following questions please indicate the situation in which you returned to **immediately** following discharge from the service.

Immediately following discharge, I returned to a situation that included (check all that apply):

1. An acceptable place to live
2. Family nearby
3. Partner (if applicable)
    1. Was this partner supportive upon your return?
4. Supportive children (if applicable)
    1. Were your children supportive upon your return?
5. Employment options
6. Financial security
7. School
8. Civilian (non-military) friends
9. A reliable form of transportation (car, bus, etc.)
10. Ability to have free time
11. Financial debt
12. Other: _____

Appendix K.

Risky Behavior Checklist

For the next set of questions, please answer as honestly as possible:

While in the service, I did the following for enjoyment (check all that apply):	Since separation from the service, I have done the following for enjoyment (check all that apply):

	1. Extreme recreational activities not related to my military job (i.e. skydiving)	
	2. Drank more than 4 alcoholic drinks on a daily basis	
	3. Used illegal drugs	
	4. Used legal drugs not prescribed to you	
	5. Got in a physical fight with another person	
	6. Not show up for work	
	7. Bet a week's pay on an unsure outcome (i.e. horse races)	
	8. Forged someone else's signature	
	9. Removed classified documents	
	10. Shoplifted	
	11. Had an affair with a married man or woman	
	12. Had unprotected sex	
	13. Engaged in a "one-night stand"	
	14. Not wear a seatbelt while driving	
	15. Text/use phone while driving	

Appendix L.

The Big Five Inventory-2

Here are a number of characteristics that may or may not apply to you. For example, do you agree that you are someone who *likes to spend time with others?* Please write a number next to each statement to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with that statement.

1 Disagree strongly	**2** Disagree a little	**3** Neutral; no opinion	**4** Agree a little	**5** Agree strongly

I am someone who...

1. ___ Is outgoing, sociable.
2. ___ Is compassionate, has a soft heart.
3. ___ Tends to be disorganized.
4. ___ Is relaxed, handles stress well.
5. ___ Has few artistic interests.
6. ___ Has an assertive personality.
7. ___ Is respectful, treats others with respect.
8. ___ Tends to be lazy.
9. ___ Stays optimistic after experiencing a setback.
10. ___ Is curious about many different things.
11. ___ Rarely feels excited or eager.
12. ___ Tends to find fault with others.
13. ___ Is dependable, steady.
14. ___ Is moody, has up and down mood swings.
15. ___ Is inventive, finds clever ways to do things.
16. ___ Tends to be quiet.
17. ___ Feels little sympathy for others.
18. ___ Is systematic, likes to keep things in order.
19. ___ Can be tense.
20. ___ Is fascinated by art, music, or literature.
21. ___ Is dominant, acts as a leader.
22. ___ Starts arguments with others.
23. ___ Has difficulty getting started on tasks.
24. ___ Feels secure, comfortable with self.
25. ___ Avoids intellectual, philosophical discussions.
26. ___ Is less active than other people.
27. ___ Has a forgiving nature.
28. ___ Can be somewhat careless.
29. ___ Is emotionally stable, not easily upset.
30. ___ Has little creativity.
31. ___ Is sometimes shy, introverted.
32. ___ Is helpful and unselfish with others.
33. ___ Keeps things neat and tidy.

34. ___ Worries a lot.
35. ___ Values art and beauty.
36. ___ Finds it hard to influence people.
37. ___ Is sometimes rude to others.
38. ___ Is efficient, gets things done.
39. ___ Often feels sad.
40. ___ Is complex, a deep thinker.
41. ___ Is full of energy.
42. ___ Is suspicious of others' intentions.
43. ___ Is reliable, can always be counted on.
44. ___ Keeps their emotions under control.
45. ___ Has difficulty imagining things.
46. ___ Is talkative.
47. ___ Can be cold and uncaring.
48. ___ Leaves a mess, doesn't clean up.
49. ___ Rarely feels anxious or afraid.
50. ___ Thinks poetry and plays are boring.
51. ___ Prefers to have others take charge.
52. ___ Is polite, courteous to others.
53. ___ Is persistent, works until the task is finished.
54. ___ Tends to feel depressed, blue.
55. ___ Has little interest in abstract ideas.
56. ___ Shows a lot of enthusiasm.
57. ___ Assumes the best about people.
58. ___ Sometimes behaves irresponsibly.
59. ___ Is temperamental, gets emotional easily.
60. ___ Is original, comes up with new ideas.