

**MILITARY RETIREES AND THE CHOICE OF
A SECOND CAREER**

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MILITARY RETIREES AND THE CHOICE
OF A SECOND CAREER

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by
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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a Research Paper written by Kirby Gene Logan entitled "Military Retirees and the Choice of a Second Career." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in Secondary Guidance.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The major problem centered around military retirees at retirement is that of the military syndrome. It has been described as a period of time military retirees go through in which they experience difficulty in adjusting to civilian life. Reactions to this experience include irritability, loss of interest, lack of energy, increased alcoholic intake, and reduced efficiency. This time period has been designated and generally accepted by military authorities as beginning two to three years after retirement. The age at which this transition is made is 45 years of age for officers and a few years younger for enlisted personnel. This retirement age (41 plus or minus 4) is considered by most industries to be the peak of productivity (Druss, 1965; Greenburg, 1965; McNeil and Giffen, 1967; Milowe, 1964; Ullman, 1971). In contrast, this same time period has been referred to by others as a time of "the gray itch," "post forty blues," "metapause," "andropause," and "a nodal event" (Donahue, 1979; Flanagan, 1974; Wakin, 1978; Bellino, 1970; Sinik, 1977). Further, Hurlock identifies this period as a dreadful period, a time of transition, a dangerous and awkward age, a time of achievement, evaluation, and boredom. In addition, she quotes Havinghurst's developmental tasks relating to physical change, changed interests, vocational

adjustment and family life as contributing to this syndrome (Hurlock, 1975).

The choice of second careers, as viewed from current theories of vocational choice, are presented from two basic views: that of the developmental approach proposed by Super and Tiedeman, in which they orient themselves to the prediction of successive choices or patterns of choices; and that of vocational choice proposed by Roe and Holland, in which the prediction of the occupational role that the individual is fulfilling at a particular point in time (Bordin, Nachman and Segal, 1963). In Tiedeman's paradigm of the processes of differentiation and integration in problem solving, he outlines a bi-directional system into two aspects. The aspect of anticipation or preoccupation which includes exploration, crystallization, choice and clarification, and the aspect of implementation or adjustment which includes induction, reformation and integration. In this context, the choice of a career, be it first or last, falls into the aspect of exploration which is a time of transition--changing ideas; highly imaginary--a relatively unassociated set of possibilities and consequences. This is a time when persons probably reflect upon their aspirations, present and future opportunities, capabilities, distasteful requirements that still could be tolerated, and a societal context for themselves and their dependents. In summation, it is a time when effort is made to measure oneself in relation to one's alternate career opportunities (Tiedeman,

1961; Tiedeman & O'Hara, 1962). Further, Hershenson outlines a life stage vocational development system in which military retirees are in the Freudian stage of maturity; the Erikson issue of intimacy-generativity-ego integrity; the vocational development stage of commitment; their energy utilization is invested, their vocational mode is vocation; the vocation question is, "What meaning does what I do have for me?"; the measurement construct is satisfaction; the relevant vocational theorists are existential (Hershenson, 1968).

In contrast, Anne Roe subscribes to Maslow's hierarchy concept. It is her contention that our relationships with significant others serve to satisfy or frustrate our basic needs. This relationship subsequently influences our "toward persons" or "away from persons" vocational orientation. In her circular model of parent-child relations, she hypothesizes that varying parental attitudes of acceptance, avoidance, and emotional concentration on the child would lead to differing occupational choices (Pietrofesa and Splete, 1975).

In Holland's constructs and dimensions for the prediction of vocational choice, he outlines six occupational environments from which a person may choose. Individuals' choices or transitions from one environment to another are determined by the information obtained from each environment, the knowledge they have of themselves, and the social pressures placed on them by significant others (Holland, 1959).

This research was designed to assess the difference between

traditional and non-traditional students and the perception they have of themselves as it relates to vocational choices. Of particular interest are Erikson's psychosocial dimensions of ego identity vs. role diffusion and generativity vs. ego stagnation for military retirees as described by Neugarten & Associates (1964) and Prelinger and Zimet (1964).

Chapter 2

METHOD

Subjects

The total group sample consisted of 35 males and 15 females, $N = 50$. They were further sub-divided as follows: traditional, 9 males and 7 females, $N = 16$; non-traditional, 26 males and 8 females, $N = 34$. The military retirees were randomly chosen from various undergraduate classes. The remainder of the sample were chosen from a lower level psychology course.

Apparatus

An ego identity scale was used in this research based on Erikson's theory of ego development.¹ The scale consisted of two parts. Part one was pre-tested data for ego identity which consisted of 180 agree and disagree personal and general statements as predicted choices from the theory. Part two was the final form of the ego identity scale which consisted of 80 agree and disagree statements taken from the pre-test data. All statements were based on 20 derivatives taken from three sources to measure each psychosocial modality.²

Procedure

Students in the lower level psychology course were administered the pre-test and final form measure at two-day intervals near the end of their class schedules. Military

retiree students were given both measures and verbally instructed to complete them also at two day intervals. General instructions were printed on all test data and students were reminded to follow them.

Chapter 3

RESULTS

The t-test for a difference between two independent means yielded no significant difference between any two groups on the three comparisons that were made. In the first comparison, traditional vs. non-traditional combined sexes sub-group, the t was .25 with 48 degrees of freedom. In the second comparison, traditional vs. non-traditional all male sub-group (excluding military retirees), the t was 1.63 with 14 degrees of freedom. In the third comparison, traditional vs. non-traditional all male military retirees sub-group, the t was 78 with 28 degrees of freedom. The Kuder-Richardson coefficient of reliability was .96 on twenty items measuring the ego identity vs. role diffusion and generativity vs. ego stagnation scales for military retirees. Mean raw scores and ages for each group/sub-group are summarized in Tables 1, 2, and 3.

Chapter 4

DISCUSSION

Earlier studies on personality assessment of individuals in middle and late life stages indicate that if individuals are experiencing identity or role diffusion, they are unable to choose a career because of conflicting interest and doubts (Prelinger and Zimet, 1964). If the instrument used in this research is a valid measure and the military syndrome is prominent among military retirees, the results of this study do not appear to support their contentions. The reader, however, should be cautioned about generalizing from the results. Some individuals had much lower scores than did others in both the traditional and non-traditional groups. Obviously those scoring lower on the scale would be a more likely candidate for individual counseling concerning the choices of any given career, first or last. From the introductory literature, most of the problems associated with this age group are prominent among all males. The military syndrome may be a more compounded problem but the results seem to indicate they are commonly shared. Included in this literature is the lack of a social support system among men. Since in most cases financial support is a necessary adjunct in obtaining a new skill, the G. I. Bill definitely fills a void in that support system. Two interesting, noteworthy items were discovered during interviews

with military retirees. First, the second career choices were entirely different from their military occupation; and second, many of their spouses were reported to display many of these symptoms allegedly displayed by themselves.

In view of personality theories and their association with vocational theories of development and choice, a psychosocial disengagement approach may be more appropriate in counseling individuals concerning vocational choices. Since changing jobs six to seven times during a lifetime is becoming more common in our society, there may be a need to bring vocational theory in line with other system approaches to social problems akin to educational and social technologies as suggested by others (Reigeluth and Merrill, 1979; Varela, 1977).

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FOOTNOTES

¹The instrument used in this study was designed for research only, based on polar adjectives and is not to be taken as a valid measure.

²Sources of derivatives: (a) Erikson, E. H., The Problem of Ego Identity. Journal of Psychoanalytical Association, 1956, 4, pp. 56-122; (b) Erikson, E. H., Growth and Crises of the Healthy Personality. In M. J. E. Sean (Ed.), Symposium on the Healthy Personality. New York: Josiah Macy, Jr. Foundation, 1950; (c) Prelinger, E. and Zimet, C. N., An Ego-Psychological Approach to Character Assessment. London: The Free Press of Glenco Collier-MacMillan Limited, 1964, pp. 64-73. All statements under the first 18 derivatives were developed by and used with the permission of Dr. J. E. Rasmussen of Battelle Human Affairs Centers, 4000 N.E. 41st Street, Seattle, Washington, 98105. The remaining statements were developed by the writer from two derivatives under source "C".

Table 1
Mean Raw Scores and Ages

<u>Traditional</u>					<u>Non-traditional</u>				
Score	SD	Age	SD	N	Score	SD	Age	SD	N
81.57	13.99	19.64	1.94	16	78.58	14.90	38.44	9.85	34

NOTE: Maximum score = 100 on all tables

Table 1

Table 2

Sub-groups Mean Raw Scores and Ages

<u>Traditional</u>					<u>Non-traditional</u>									
<u>Combined Sexes</u>					<u>Combined Sexes</u>					<u>Retired Military</u>				
Score	SD	Age	SD	N	Score	SD	Age	SD	N	Score	SD	Age	SD	N
81.75	13.99	19.64	1.94	16	74.17	15.44	29.00	5.23	15	84.10	11.14	46.47	4.41	19

Table 3
Mean Raw Scores and Ages by Sex

Sex	<u>Traditional Sub-group</u>					<u>Non-traditional Sub-group</u>				
	Score	SD	Age	SD	N	Score	SD	Age	SD	N
Male	78.50	17.84	19.37	1.99	9	70.37	13.71	38.75	5.32	7
Female	85.66	5.27	20.00	2.00	7	74.22	19.15	30.11	5.46	8

NOTE: Military retirees excluded from non-traditional group