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AN EVALUATION OF THE MILITARY EXTENSION INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty

of

Purdue University

by

Lynette Marie Griffin

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For my family

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Matthew 6:33

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ABSTRACT

Griffin, Lynette M. M.S., Purdue University, May 2015. An Evaluation of the Military Extension Internship Program. Major Professor: Dr. Natalie Carroll.

The Department of Defense (DoD) identified a need in military communities, both on and off installations, to offer high quality child care and youth services to military families as well as civilian families who serve the military communities. In response, the Office of the Secretary of Defense – Military Community and Family Policy (OSD-MC and FP), United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)'s National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and Purdue University created the Purdue University Military Extension Internship Program (MEIP) to help university students and recent graduates gain professional skills through unique internships that provide real-world work experience with military child and youth programs. The MEIP was established five years ago and, to date, has not completed a formal evaluation that utilizes in-depth interviews to examine and understand the participants' views of their internship experience. Therefore, the MEIP Evaluation reported here serves as the program's first formal evaluation and provides an understanding of the career choice outcomes of interns and their personal self-efficacy perceptions to stakeholders: the principal investigator, program coordinator, and program partners.

Many programs implement an evaluation component upon immediate completion, but there is a gap in the literature regarding long-term impact of cooperative education and internship programs. This evaluative study intended to fill that gap by exploring the effectiveness of objectives and the outcomes of participants upon completion of the MEIP and graduation from their respective academic institution. The Context-Input-Process-Product (CIPP) model and Social Cognitive Career Theory informed this study.

The evaluator utilized triangulation through a Qualtrics survey, Likert scale questionnaire, and phone interviews. The first two methods were distributed via e-mail to all MEIP alumni who agreed to participate in this Evaluation. The third method used purposeful random sampling to interview 16 alumni. There were two groups of interview participants, those with DoD careers and those who chose a different career path.

Results from the Evaluation conclude that the main objectives of the MEIP have been successfully met over the last five years. A combined 83% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that their internship influenced their career choice. More than half of the participants agreed their primary reason for securing employment with DoD was due to the opportunities available to them. Future research should examine mentor-mentee relationships within internship programs.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This follow-up program Evaluation explored the effectiveness of program

objectives and the outcomes of program participants in the context of a specific program:

the Purdue University Military Extension Internship Program (MEIP). This research was

based on the experiences of interns who completed the MEIP and graduated from their

respective degree programs. It also broadly addressed the success of an internship

program relevant to current workforce employment upon college graduation. Internship

programs integrate classroom knowledge, practical application, and skills development in

a professional setting. "Internships" refer to part-time field experiences including a

diverse array of academic disciplines and organizational settings (Gault, 2000).

1.1   Nature of the Problem

The MEIP is the result of a partnership funded by the Department of Defense –

Office of Military Community and Family Policy and the United States Department of

Agriculture (USDA)'s National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) through a

grant/cooperative agreement with Purdue University. An annual RFA is requested to

which the Principal Investigator responds (R. McKee, personal communication, February

23, 2015). Students interested in the program must complete the application and

interview process. Once accepted into the program, interns start their internship during

and orientation that includes teaching about military life, meeting the other interns,

touring a military installation, and meeting the intern's military branch points of contact to plan details of the internship (Military Extension Internship Program, 2014).

The program was initiated and launched in the fall of 2009 with the first cohorts of interns participating in orientation and being placed on installations in the spring of 2010. There are three cohorts of interns annually (spring and fall semester and summer). The interns participate in required orientation with their mentors (R. McKee, personal communication, February 23, 2015). Internships are at least 10-15 weeks, and may be extended if the opportunity presents itself. Specific hours and duties depend on the internship location and planned activities. Ultimately, they will be agreed on by the intern and mentor. Interns typically work five days a week, eight hours a day, with some weekend and evening work required for special events. Interns have represented 171 academic institutions since the implementation of the MEIP with intern placements on 110 military installations in the United States and overseas (Military Extension Internship Program, 2014).

Interns must complete four professional development hours per week which includes recording their experiences on a Ning blog, preparation of a final project, and work on other professional development opportunities. During these hours, interns may also research potential career paths and participate in program conference calls. Ning is a website used by the MEIP where interns blog weekly about their experiences. They are encouraged to upload photos, and tell about successes and challenges. The final project, a capstone presentation, provides an opportunity for interns to describe and explain their experiences during their internship. This also allows discussion about future internship and employment opportunities (Military Extension Internship Program, 2014).

Students, colleges, and employers continually seek guidance about how young people can be better prepared for the challenges faced when transitioning from education to career. Many students find that the traditional college experience consisting of the classroom and residence hall setting does not fully prepare them to become successful employees in the current competitive environment. Cooperative education, also referred to as internship programs, introduces students to, and prepares them for, the workplace environment by providing real-world work experiences (Linn, Howard, & Miller, 2004). Those involved in the creation and implementation stages of an internship program understand the need for these programs. There is often a lack of support in higher education, however, because the value of experiential learning relies on the goodwill of higher education administrators, their understanding of the value of these programs, and the fluctuations of funding. A combination of work and educational studies have been shown to be a powerful learning model for students, but in order for the field of cooperative education to be credible outside of education, these claims need to be relative to the field of internships and workplace environments (Linn, Howard, & Miller, 2004). Co-op educators need a more diverse range of models that describe and understand the cognitive, social, and career-building outcomes combining work and school together simultaneously to create credible standards (Linn, Howard, & Miller, 2004).

Evaluation methods and models are not found in internship literature. There is an increasing demand for internship studies that will help internship program leaders and funders understand the value of internships in preparing students for the workforce and the relative success of former interns compared to their peers in the entry-level job market (Gault, Redington, & Schlager, 2000). Students generally seek internships to gain

a competitive edge in the job market. This results in pressure to create more internship programs across all fields of learning (Cannon & Arnold, 1998).

There is a need for internship program evaluations to ensure a particular internship program is successful, efficient, effective, and aligned with its' program goals and mission. Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen described the primary purpose of research as adding to a specific body of knowledge, and an evaluation study as adding to our knowledge of social science theories and laws (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2012, p. 15). Evaluation, defined as "the identification, clarification, and application of defensible criteria to determine an evaluation object's value in relation to those criteria" (Fitzpatrick, et al., 2012, p. 9), is critical to ensure strong programming. A program, in this context, is defined as "an ongoing, planned intervention that seeks to achieve some particular outcome(s), in response to some perceived educational, social, or commercial problem" (Fitzpatrick et al., 2012, p. 8).

1.2   Statement of the Problem

There has been no formal, retrospective evaluation of the Purdue University Military Extension Internship Program. Program staff have previously collected demographic information from intern alumni through a Qualtrics survey regarding their employment and degree status, further educational plans, and general demographics such as name, age, and intern orientation year. "The ongoing evaluation assessments that have been conducted were accomplished as program partners and staff reflected on the very design of intern experiences ranging from the orientation feedback received, to what has been picked up via Ning blogging and capstone presentations. Each component provides the opportunity to pick up on concerns or flags that have caused us [program staff] to

adjust program criteria or to work new material into orientation" (R. McKee, personal communication, February 23, 2015).

1.3   Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The purpose of the program evaluation of the MEIP was to assess the effectiveness of the program's ability to meet the stated objectives over the past five years, and to determine interns' chosen career or educational path upon their completion of the internship and completion of the students' degree program. Most internship programs incorporate an evaluation component, but most often they are administered during or immediately following the completion of the program. Through the Context-Input-Process-Product (CIPP) Model developed by Stufflebeam (1971), this study explored the participant outcomes regarding their experiences and perceptions of the MEIP in accordance to program goals and objectives.

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Evaluate the impact of the MEIP on intern career choices;
2. Evaluate the success of the MEIP.

1.4   Significance of the Study

The Purdue University Military Extension Internship program was in its fifth year of operation at the time this study began. Though ongoing assessment had occurred by the program's principal investigator, staff and partners, there had not been a formal, retrospective evaluation of the program. Stakeholders, including the program coordinator, principal investigator, and funders will be referred to as the evaluation team. They were included in the Evaluation's development to assure questions were appropriately developed to gather information and that the methods included all necessary components.

The evaluation team was interested in whether the MEIP was successfully meeting stated program objectives with employment being secured by eligible interns. This is in line with Scriven (1967), who states: "the single goal or purpose of an evaluation is to determine the worth or merit of whatever is evaluated;" therefore, this Evaluation assessed the efficiency, effectiveness, and desired outcomes of the program (as cited in Fitzpatrick et al., 2012, p. 13). The MEIP Evaluation provided an opportunity to test the Social Cognitive Career Theory in a real-world setting with a new subject group.

The awareness and importance of internships as a component of academic programs has grown significantly since the late 1990s. Students are increasingly participating in some form of internship program. Reports indicate that they appreciate the real-world challenges and experiences they receive. Internships contribute to and benefit student's career development and networking opportunities (Linn, Howard, and Miller, 2004). Participating students gain the opportunity to explore different careers within their field while gaining valuable job experiences (Linn, Howard, & Miller, 2004). This study will significantly contribute to the knowledge in the field of internships while evaluating a specific internship program.

The MEIP is the result of a partnership funded by the Department of Defense – Office of Military Community and Family Policy and the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture through a grant/cooperative agreement with Purdue University. Initiated in the fall of 2009, the MEIP provides college students and recent college graduates the opportunity to use their college coursework in the real-world through valuable work experience with the military child and youth programs (Military Extension Internship Program, 2014). The purpose and goal of the MEIP was to increase the

number of experienced graduates entering and remaining in the fields of child care and youth development, especially in those areas relating to military families (Wandless & McKee, 2013).

This study will be most relevant to the MEIP stakeholders and future program participants because it was situated in the context of this specific program; however, it may also be significant to the academic community on multiple levels. The University itself, other universities, and the broader field of internship programs might also benefit from this study's methods and findings.

1.5   Delimitations of the Study

Prior to the implementation of the study, the evaluator identified the following constraints that were expected to impact the validity:

1. Only intern alumni who have completed their formal degree program were eligible for participation in the evaluation.
2. Only those alumni for whom program staff have a functioning e-mail address received the initial e-mail and survey link.
3. There was no formal incentive for participation, thus respondent numbers were expected to be low.

1.6   Assumptions of the Study

The evaluator assumed that the participants would give their honest perceptions of the program and their experiences. Also, it was assumed that participants would agree to participate in the telephone interviews if they had strong feelings for or against the

program. In addition, the evaluation team assumed that the alumni contact information was up-to-date with functioning e-mail addresses.

<p style="text-align:center">1.7   Definition of Terms</p>

Department of Defense (DoD): "is America's oldest and largest government agency…not only in charge of the military, but it also employs a civilian force of thousands" (U.S. Department of Defense, n.d.)

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA): a cabinet-level federal agency that "provides leadership on food, agriculture, natural resources, rural development, nutrition, and related issues based on sound public policy, the best available science, and efficient management" (United States Department of Agriculture, n.d.)

Yes Group: includes eight MEIP intern alumni who identified themselves as having graduated from their academic program and are currently working for the DoD, and who were participants in this study

No Group: includes eight MEIP intern alumni who identified themselves as having graduated from their academic program and are <u>not</u> currently working for the DoD, and who were participants in this study

Purdue University Military Extension Internship Program (MEIP): "the Military Extension Internship Program helps university students and recent graduates gain professional skills through unique internships that provide real-world work experience

with military child and youth programs. These professional skills will help interns competitively enter the workforce like many former interns have done after completing their internships." (Military Extension Internship Program, 2014)

1.8   Summary

The Department of Defense (DoD) identified a need in military communities, both on and off installations, to offer high quality child care and youth services to military families as well as civilian families who serve the military communities. As a result of a partnership funded by OSD-MC & FP and through a USDA/NIFA grant/cooperative agreement with Purdue University, the MEIP was created to provide college students and recent graduates the opportunity to utilize their college coursework in the real world through valuable work experiences with military child and youth programs (Military Extension Internship Program, 2014). An ongoing evaluation assessment has been done annually to provide program partners and staff feedback on the design of intern's experiences from orientation and throughout their internship. This feedback has been gathered via Ning blogging, monthly conference calls, and capstone presentations, and provides staff with information regarding concerns or flags that allow changes to be implemented into orientation. However, the MEIP had not completed a formal, retrospective evaluation that utilized in-depth interviews to examine and understand the participants' views of their internship experience.

There were three methods of data collection utilized during this Evaluation. Survey 1 was a Qualtrics survey sent via e-mail by the MEIP program coordinator to all intern alumni. After being open the month of November, there were 178 total responses from Survey 1. Survey 2 was a Likert scale questionnaire sent via e-mail to 162 intern alumni

who agreed via Survey 1 to participate in this Evaluation. 88 responses were received from Survey 2 and 20 individuals were selected via purposeful random sampling to participate in telephone interviews. The evaluator ultimately included 16 phone interviews. This resulted in eight intern alumni in the *Yes Group* and eight intern alumni in the *No Group*. The *Yes Group* included those intern alumni who secured DoD employment upon completion of the MEIP and completion of their degree program. The *No Group* included intern alumni who chose a different career path.

The MEIP Evaluation found that overall the program was meeting its five main objectives. Findings from the surveys and telephone interviews provided the program staff with additional feedback regarding intern's self-perceptions, personal goals and career choice outcomes.

CHAPTER 2.   LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   Introduction

This chapter focuses on several areas of literature that are relevant and

necessary to the MEIP Evaluation. An overview of the history and background of the

foundational collaboration between Department of Defense (DoD), United States

Department of Agriculture (USDA)'s National Institute of Food and Agriculture

(NIFA) and Cooperative Extension Service (CES) is given. Literature related to

internships and program evaluations, and a brief summary of the military components

and partnerships are also included to give a better understanding of how they have

evolved over time, what they entail, and why this study was necessary. Research on

theoretical underpinnings of program evaluations and internship programs are also

discussed.

The DoD and USDA established a partnership more than 25 years ago which

also included land-grant universities, and CES. Together, the partners conduct

research regarding support systems for military families, and offer education and

extension programs for military personnel, their families, and military helping

professionals. "The mission of this partnership is to advance the health, well-being,

and quality of life for military service members, families, and their communities

through the coordination of research, education and extension programs" (Thompson,

Elrod, & McKee, 2014).

2.2   Key Partners Funded by the Department of Defense

Land-grant universities (LGUs) were established in the nineteenth century when the federal government granted land to specific institutions in each state in exchange for low cost college education for citizens. These LGUs made it easier for citizens to get an education and focused on agriculture, engineering, sciences, and military tactics (Blaisure, Saathoff-Wells, Pereira, Wadsworth, & Dombro, 2012). Purdue University is located in west central Indiana and serves as Indiana's land-grant university. Higher education institutions engage in research and teaching, but land-grant colleges and universities have a third mission: extension. These land-grant institutions "extend" their resources to support the public needs with college and university resources. Extension simply means to reach out to the community by disseminating research from these land-grant institutions to their local residents. Extension educators are land grant university employees who are found in nearly all of our nation's 3,000 counties. These educators help "farmers grow crops, homeowners plan and maintain their homes, and children learn skills to become tomorrow's leaders" (National Institute of Food & Agriculture, 2014). Extension work focuses in six major areas: 4-H Youth Development, Agriculture, Leadership Development, Natural Resources, Family and Consumer Sciences, and Community and Economic Development. These areas have trained and knowledgeable educators that all have one goal, to meet the public needs in their local area (National Institute of Food & Agriculture, 2014).

The USDA houses NIFA which is part of the executive branch of the Federal Government. NIFA was created by Congress through the Food, Conservation, and

Energy Act of 2008, replacing the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES). NIFA's stated mission is to lead food and agricultural sciences to create a better future for the Nation and the world by supporting research, education, and extension programs in the Land-Grant University System (LGU) and other partner organizations (National Institute of Food & Agriculture, 2014).

NIFA provides leadership in research, education, and extension by funding programs that are managed and executed at the state and local levels. NIFA has a duty to increase the importance and impact of food, agricultural, and natural resource sciences to grow support for agricultural research, education, and extension (National Institute of Food & Agriculture, 2014). Where public concerns include agricultural producers, small business owners, youth and families, and others, NIFA helps identify and meet these research, education, and extension priorities in all 50 states. The administrators also provide annual formula funds to land-grant universities and competitively granted funds to researchers at these universities to implement their mission focus to advance knowledge (National Institute of Food & Agriculture, 2014).

The LGU is comprised of institutions of higher learning and comprise NIFA's key partnerships. NIFA partners with other federal agencies, within and beyond USDA; non-profit associations; professional societies; commodity groups and grower associations; multistate research committees; private industry; citizen groups; foundations; regional centers; the military; task forces; and other groups (National Institute of Food & Agriculture, 2014). Together, NIFA and the LGUs focus on critical issues that affect people's daily lives and the nation's future, and support

people and communities to solve problems and improve their lives. State, regional, and county extension offices respond to quality-of-life problems including, but not limited to, strengthening children, youth, and families, and revitalizing rural American communities. The Cooperative Extension System (CES) has strong community networks and connections, is an educational resource, and includes networks of faculty and staff experts from land-grant universities (LGUs). The DoD identified a need in military communities to offer high quality child care, and to improve the quality of off-installation child care that serves military children and families as well as civilian children and families in the area and believed that CES was best positioned to meet this need (McKee, 2009).

DoD, USDA-NIFA, and the CES have partnered to develop a collaboration to maintain the family support programs, workforce development, and childcare and youth development expansion needs of the DoD. The collaboration consists of educational institutions, non-governmental and community-based organizations, and other groups and organizations with expertise in early childhood education, youth development or related fields. The intent through this on-going collaboration is that programs will be mutually beneficial to support military youth, families, and communities as well as non-military audiences (Schmeising & Kress, 2009).The MEIP was developed specifically to assist in meeting the goals of this objective. The collaboration identified three focal areas to be addressed, and determined that Land-Grant Universities (LGUs) and CES would best fulfill the goals of the collaboration. One focal area identified was workforce development which is where the MEIP is situated.

The Department of Defense (DoD) is the foundational partner in the collaboration that led to the creation of the MEIP. This section provides detail on the U.S government and the Armed Forces and includes statistics, missions, and goals of the DoD. The purpose of this section is to introduce the vast array of opportunities, services, and protections the U.S. government provides to military families and civilian organizations that support the military.

The newly formed U.S. government established our military departments, Army, Navy, and Marine Corps in 1775, during the American Revolution. The Department of Defense was established in 1789, and it was initially known as the War Department. The National Military Establishment Act of 1947 unified these three services and created the War Department which was later renamed the Department of the Army. The U.S. Air Force was established in 1947. In 1949, cabinet-level status from the three Service secretaries was withdrawn by an amendment to the National Security Act which then consolidated the national defense structure. The National Military Establishment was then renamed the Department of Defense, familiar to our country today (U.S. Department of Defense, n.d.).

The Department of Defense is the nation's largest employer, and America's oldest and largest government agency. The Department is headed by the Secretary of Defense, Ashton Carter (2015), and is responsible for both military and civilian employees. According to the U.S. Department of Defense's website , over 1.4 million men and women are on active duty, 718,000 civilian personnel who support the services, 1.1 million serve in the National Guard and Reserve forces, and more than 2 million military retirees and their families receive benefits such as retirement, health

care, housing, education, disability, and many others (2014). Presently, there are more than 450,000 military service members and civilian employees overseas, both afloat and ashore. Our national security depends on defense installations and facilities "being in the right place, at the right time, with the right qualities and capacities to protect our national resources" (U.S. Department of Defense, n.d.).

The Pentagon is one of the world's largest office buildings and houses the headquarters of the Department of Defense and, when combined with all other locations, the Department utilizes over 30 million acres of land. This includes several hundred thousand buildings and structures at more than 5,000 different locations and sites. These buildings range from very small (home on less than one-half acre) or an unoccupied site that supports a single navigational aid, to the Army's White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico with over 3.6 million acres, and the Navy's complex of installations at Norfolk, Virginia which has more than 78,000 employees (U.S. Department of Defense, n.d.).

The mission of the Department of Defense is to provide the necessary requirements for military forces to deter war and to protect the security of our country. The website for the DoD supports the overall military mission through official, timely and accurate information dissemination to military members, DoD civilians, military family members, the American public, the Congress, and the news media about defense policies, organizations, functions and operations (U.S. Department of Defense, n.d.).

The Military Community and Family Policy (MC & FP) is a department created by the DoD to empower and support our military community and families. "A

high performing, tenacious team…people focused, people centered, people always" is their vision (Office of the Under Secretary for Personnel & Readiness, n.d.). The four touchstone values include Mission focused, Collaborative, Flexible, and People-centric. The MC & FP supports policies and programs established for families during relocation, transition, mobilization, deployment and casualty affairs. The MC & FP also supports policies for educational programs stateside and overseas, and ensures that the military community quality of life programs are meeting the needs of their forces.

2.3   Inquiry Methodology

The Non-Researcher's Guide to Evidence-Based Program Evaluation (2012) defines program evaluation as the study of a program to discover how well it is working to achieve its' goals. The main goals of an evaluation are to assess a program's appropriateness and effectiveness of implementation and to solidify continued financial support. An evaluation leads to judgments by examining and describing a particular thing, and considering its value (Fitzpatrick et al., 2012).

Research efforts are judged on internal and face validity: a study establishes causality and is generalizable to other settings and times. These criteria are not appropriate, nor sufficient, for judging the quality of a program. Program evaluations, and other qualitative approaches, focus on the specific characteristics or policies being evaluated. Therefore, evaluations are judged using the following four criteria: accuracy, utility, feasibility, and propriety. Accuracy addresses the truthfulness of the obtained information with regards to the program's reality. Utility is a measure of how well the evaluation results served the practical informational needs of the

intended user. Feasibility is a measure of the extent to which the evaluation is realistic, prudent, and diplomatic. Propriety measures the extent to which the evaluation is legal and ethical (Fitzpatrick et al., 2012).

There are a variety of program evaluations that can be implemented to achieve various program evaluation goals. A *process evaluation* is used to provide information pertaining to the implementation stage of evaluation. It typically is not used to prove whether or not the program is effective. *Impact evaluation* focuses on the long-term, global changes of a program. *Outcome evaluation* documents short-term or immediate changes of a program (Non-Researcher's Guide to Evidence-Based Program Evaluation, 2012; Fitzpatrick et al., 2012).

If the primary purpose of an evaluation is to provide information for program improvement, a *formative evaluation* should be conducted. The audience for a formative evaluation is generally those who deliver the program or those stakeholders and participants who are involved. A formative evaluation can be very useful at the outset of a program to give an early evaluation of the degree to which it achieves intended outcomes. A *summative evaluation*, on the other hand, provides information and judgments about program adoption, continuation, or expansion. The audience for a summative evaluation includes, but is not limited to, potential consumers, funders, and program personnel. These individuals are often policymakers, administrators, or any audience who makes decisions regarding evaluation outcomes (Fitzpatrick et al., 2012).

Any evaluation approach that actively involves program staff or participants in decision making of planning and implementing is called *participatory evaluation*.

The practical participatory approach is limited to the program being evaluated and is used for practical reasons. In order to maximize the use of results, participatory approaches involve stakeholders in the evaluation (Fitzpatrick et al., 2012). Cousins and Earl developed Practical Participatory Evaluation (P-PE) (Cousins & Earl, 1992) based on evidence from research, specifically from Bandura (1986, 1997) that showed that knowledge is based on a person's images or interpretations of reality which is socially constructed (as cited in Fitzpatrick et al., 2012). This approach encouraged organizational learning and change particularly useful for formative evaluations (Cousins & Earl, 1992).

The *objectives-oriented approach* has dominated the thinking and development of evaluation since the 1930s. This approach focuses on the extent to which the objectives of the program are reached. Results are used to determine continuation of funding, and implementation of changes in program personnel or purpose (Fitzpatrick et al., 2012). The objectives-oriented procedure is straightforward and uses program objectives and results to determine the program's successes and failures. A program's objectives serve as the foundation for improvements, maintenance, and termination. Objectives-oriented evaluators ignore other, potentially important, outcomes of the program that do not focus on the objectives, but have a large impact on the program. The approach is easy to understand, follow and implement. However, the lack of attention to other outcomes can lead to an under evaluation of the program or lack of attention to major barriers that can affect the program significantly (Fitzpatrick et al., 2012).

Program evaluations are useful to stakeholders, program leaders, and future participants. An evaluation report often helps stakeholders and decision-makers create a judgment on specific issues such as program personnel and funding, continuation, expansion, goals and objectives (Fitzpatrick et al., 2012). An evaluation seeks to examine and describe a particular program or event and evaluate its value. The single goal is to determine the worth or merit of whatever is evaluated (Scriven (1976) as cited in Fitzpatrick et al., 2012). Involving the stakeholders enhances the validity of the study and increases the use of results. The stakeholders reduce their concerns during the planning phase, increase their understanding of the evaluation's purpose and intent, and confirm that the questions of the evaluation address their concerns. Stakeholders are the experts of the program whereas the evaluator is not; they are new to the program (Fitzpatrick et al., 2012). The internship host organization and its program participants reap benefits of both the internship and its evaluation. Good evaluations involve the stakeholders since they are the single most important source in determining program value and procedures. The evaluator must identify the hopes, fears, insights, and perceptions of the stakeholders in order to truly understand their focus for the program evaluation.

Many fields have developed standards for practice, or guidelines for program planning. When evaluating the success of a program evaluation, program evaluation standards are commonly used. The evaluation criteria and standards are specified after the evaluation questions have been agreed upon by the evaluator and stakeholders. This must be completed before data collection begins. Program participation and demographic information should be reviewed before the evaluation begins. However,

stakeholders may be reluctant to give information that may reflect the success of their program because they do not know what to expect from the evaluation or how to figure those numbers before entering the evaluation. Stakeholders may present numbers that they know will show success (Fitzpatrick et al., 2012).

Central to any evaluation are criteria which set the standards for the level of performance. The criteria are subsets of the standards. There are two types of standards, absolute and relative. Absolute standards are typically those established for political purposes or accreditation. When standards do not exist, the evaluator and stakeholders must discuss program expectations and establish standards that are realistic and not too low to ensure program success nor too high to guarantee failure. Relative standards reflect actual choices made by stakeholders, program funders, and policy makers. These standards can compare program performance with past performance in terms of program planning, implementing, and analyzing (Fitzpatrick et al., 2012).

There are three types of data collection methods that qualitative researchers may utilize. These include interviews, observations, and document review (Patton, 1990). Qualitative methods were utilized throughout this program evaluation for several reasons. First, the qualitative approach involves organizing and synthesizing data, finding patterns and what is important, and figuring out what to tell the audience (Linn, Howard, & Miller, 2004). Qualitative methods are typically more flexible than quantitative methods. They usually have greater spontaneity and adaptation of the interaction between the evaluator and the participants with a less formal relationship. And, finally, open-ended questions lend themselves to meaningful, culturally salient,

rich and explanatory responses that may be unanticipated by the researcher (Patton, 1990).

Qualitative methods were used in this Evaluation to gain a better understanding of intern experiences and their reflections of their MEIP experience. Participatory evaluations allow for program staff, participants and stakeholders to actively engage in the entire process. However, the nature of participation must be portrayed as voluntary to all potential participants. During the recruitment process, the evaluation team must avoid saying anything that the potential participant could interpret as coercive and forceful (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005).

Purposeful sampling is a qualitative sampling technique that studies chosen cases to be examined on a deeper level than the rest of the general body of participants. Patton described that the logic and power of purposeful sampling is due to selecting information-rich cases for an evaluation (Patton, 1990). This allows the evaluation team to learn the most about the central importance to the purpose of the program evaluation, thus the term "purposeful sampling" (Coyne, Dipn, & Rgn, 1997). The first step in conducting an evaluation using the purposeful random sampling methods is to identify the characteristics of the sample and document the rationale for studying them. This will help the researcher describe the context of the program evaluation.

Purposeful random sampling is often used, even with the smallest samples, to help increase the credibility of the study (Patton, 1990). Sandelowski described selective sampling, what Patton described as purposeful random sampling, as a type

of purposive sampling (Sandelowski, 1995). It is conducted according to preconceived criteria regarding potential participants which is created prior to the beginning of an evaluation (Coyne et al., 1997). This type of sampling does not permit generalizations and is not representative of the entire population. The purpose is to reduce suspicion about why certain cases were chosen (Patton, 1990).

Purposeful sampling is particularly necessary when the evaluators and stakeholders have an interest in the opinions or performance of a particular subgroup of a population (Fitzpatrick et al., 2012). Stakeholders are involved in the program evaluation primarily to enhance the validity. Each of them will have a different view depending on their knowledge and expertise regarding specific program areas. They are familiar with the program and its context. Involving the stakeholders also helps them understand the evaluation, gain trust in it, and allows them to explore how they will use the results. Their involvement throughout the program evaluation will later increase the use of information gathered as they understand more about why certain conclusions were reached (Fitzpatrick et al., 2012).

Interviews are used to learn about the participants' perspectives, attitudes, behaviors, and experiences regarding a specific event or question. Telephone interviews have been used for many years. Conducting an evaluation using the telephone has both benefits and challenges. Evaluation questions can be shared before the interview or withheld. Prohibiting the participants to see the questions prior to the interview and restricting access to the interview guide during the interview is thought to aid in consistency by respondents. Telephone interviews without the respondent's prior access to questions of the interview guide are more controlled because

respondents cannot read ahead or skip around, nor can they change their response(s). Researchers have found that respondents are more willing to speak a sentence or a paragraph than to write one about a particular response thus, information can be obtained more quickly and is often more complex in an interview than if using a paper survey (Fitzpatrick et al., 2012).

Open-ended questions during interviews allow for clarification, probing, and exploration both by the respondent and evaluator (Fitzpatrick et al., 2012). The respondent can ask for clarification in the posed question, or may answer a question with an unexpected response. Similarly, the evaluator can ask follow-up questions and questions that make the respondent critically think about a particular answer. This develops a clearer understanding by both the evaluator and the respondent. Probing questions also allow the evaluator to interpret the data from more thorough answers.

Evaluation participants and evaluators cannot remain neutral throughout the evaluation because they are always culturally, historically, and theoretically positioned (Freeman, DeMarrais, Preissle, Roulston, & St. Pierre, 2007). So, researchers must keep an audit trail that includes notes on evolving perceptions, day-to-day procedures, methods decisions, and any experience that may influence the evaluator. This will help assure a full evaluation and reduce bias. Evaluators, and their teams, should reflect on their own biases and how they may have influenced the evaluation (Fitzpatrick et al., 2012). The evaluator must first recognize his or her personal cultural norms and values and how they affect his or her perspective before he or she can begin to learn and understand the norms, values and behaviors for the

culture of the program being evaluated (Fitzpatrick et al., 2012). "One can only evaluate adequately what one can describe accurately" (Fitzpatrick et al., 2012).

Decision-oriented evaluation approaches were developed to highlight the importance of evaluations and to impact the programs as a result of the findings. Their main focus was to work closely with a program's administrator and/or key authority to make decisions about the program at hand based on sufficient information collected about the program's stages. Daniel Stufflebeam was an influential leader in developing an approach oriented to decisions. Stufflebeam worked to expand systematic thinking about administrative studies and educational decision making (Fitzpatrick et al., 2012).

Stufflebeam defined evaluation as "the process of delineating, obtaining, reporting and applying descriptive and judgmental information about some object's merit, worth, probity, and significance to guide decision making, support accountability, disseminate effective practices, and increase understanding of the involved phenomena" (Stufflebeam, 2005, p. 61). He, and others, emphasized the concept of judging the merit and worth of a program (Fitzpatrick et al., 2012; Scriven, 1967). Although Stufflebeam has revised his definition of evaluation over the years, the essential components of his CIPP model remain consistent. His evaluation framework, described by the CIPP model, was created to serve four different kinds of decisions: context, input, process and product evaluations (Fitzpatrick et al., 2012).

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  <====  Formative  =========================>  Summative

  ┌─────────┐    ┌───────┐    ┌─────────┐    ┌─────────┐
  │ Context │ => │ Input │ => │ Process │ => │ Product │
  └─────────┘    └───────┘    └─────────┘    └─────────┘
```

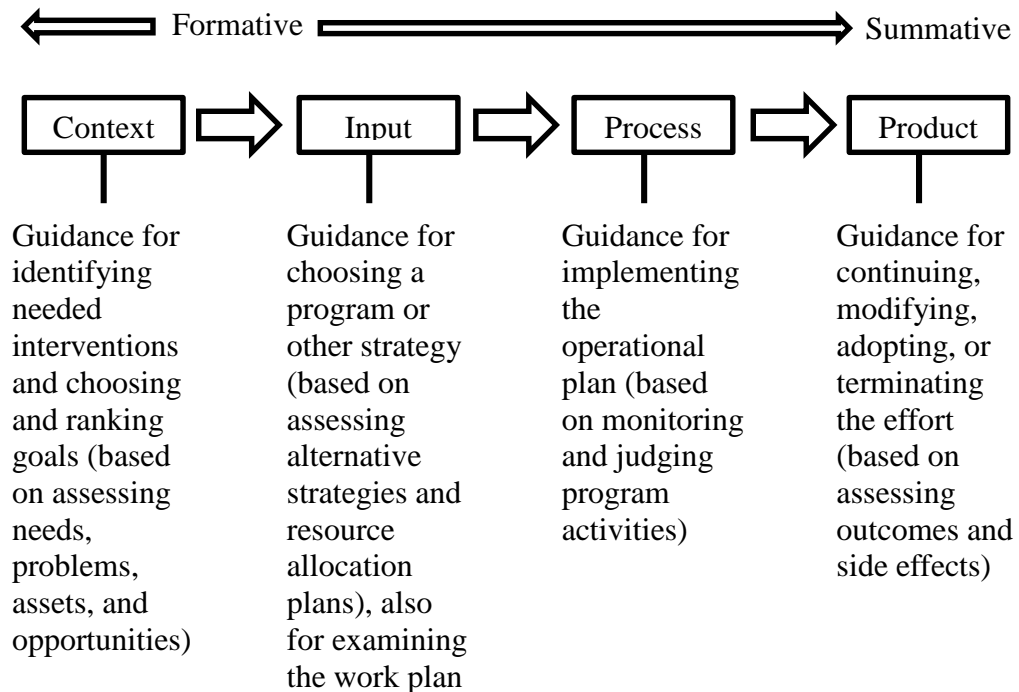| Guidance for identifying needed interventions and choosing and ranking goals (based on assessing needs, problems, assets, and opportunities) | Guidance for choosing a program or other strategy (based on assessing alternative strategies and resource allocation plans), also for examining the work plan | Guidance for implementing the operational plan (based on monitoring and judging program activities) | Guidance for continuing, modifying, adopting, or terminating the effort (based on assessing outcomes and side effects) |

Figure 2.1 Context-Input-Process-Product Model (modified from Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2012)

All four kinds of evaluations are vital and important to the success of a program evaluation, and all four should be considered. However, for the purpose of this study, the evaluation team will focus primarily on the process and product components. While context and input reference and descriptions may come up in discussion, they are not the main purpose for this study. Context evaluation determines the goals, objectives, target populations, and intended outcomes for a program. Input evaluation defines the strategy to implement and to resolve the determined problem. Both of these stages have been completed and resulted in the creation of the Purdue University Military Extension Internship Program (Fitzpatrick et al., 2012).

The process evaluation, when used in its formative role, provides guidance for the implementation and operational stages of a program. It is used to determine whether the program is being run as planned; whether any key changes have been

made; and if there are any threats to the program's success. A program administrator

may monitor, adapt and refine their key procedures and events during the evaluation

process as they receive feedback from the evaluator (Fitzpatrick et al., 2012). This

kind of evaluation is periodic, and on-going throughout the duration of the program.

It is often used to help keep the program fresh so that program administration does

not have to reform every three years (J. Greenan, personal communication, November

24, 2014).

Product evaluations are typically conducted at the end of a program to assess

program outcomes. They examine the results, side effects, and successes upon

completion of a particular program. Evaluators often seek answers such as: how well

were the needs met, and should the program expand or be discontinued. The

evaluation team compares their program's results and consequences to those of

competitive programs. The evaluator must offer interpretation of results against the

program's efforts, context, inputs and processes (Fitzpatrick et al., 2012). This

Evaluation was conducted at the conclusion of five years implementation of the

internship program and was directed by product evaluation formatting. Because the

program is expected to continue in the future, results and recommendations will be

used to revisit and refine the program's objectives for future improvement.

The process evaluation is conducted in its formative role and continues through

a program's life influencing the other kinds of evaluations as a result. The process

evaluation will look very specifically at the MEIP in terms of an intern's experiences

at their internship location. The product evaluation is performed in a summative

manner at a specific time period in the lifespan of the program. This kind of

evaluation will look at the outcomes of MEIP interns in terms of their career choices through self-efficacy and personal goals.

Both process and product evaluations may occur simultaneously. The process evaluation examines a program at the conclusion of a particular program event or activity. The product evaluation looks at the program at a specific time period to evaluate the lifespan or certain period of time. For example, process evaluations are common at the end of workshops, camps, and retreats. They collect immediate information from those participants who were in attendance. On the other hand, product evaluations are conducted at the conclusion of a course, the whole program, or a milestone.

2.4   Social Cognitive Career Theory

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) was proposed by Bandura to describe people's beliefs about their effectiveness according to their perceptions and actions (Bandura, 1986). The Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) was developed by Lent, Brown, and Hackett and builds on Bandura's SCT theory (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994). SCCT is a relatively recent addition to the literature focused on career development and was chosen as the guiding theoretical framework for this study because it includes participant self-perceptions and outcome expectations regarding career choice. The central tenets of SCCT include (1) forming and elaborating career interests, (2) selecting academic and career choice options, and (3) performance and persistence in educational and vocational pursuits. These tenets are task and environmental specific which means that they can be adapted to specific

characteristics of different environmental and educational tasks. The tenets are open to change and have the potential to design specific interventions (Rocca, 2005).

Self-efficacy, one of the three tenets of SCT, is defined as "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances" (Bandura, 1986). Self-efficacy beliefs are acquired and modified primarily through personal performance accomplishments; however, vicarious learning, social persuasion, and physiological states and reactions also influence these beliefs (Brown & Lent, 1996). The concept of self-efficacy also applies to perceived capability rather than actual capability and involves the belief that one can do a certain behavior rather than the intent to willingly do a behavior. Bandura explains that an individual's "level of motivation, affective states, and actions are based more on what they believe than on what is objectively true." (Bandura & Bandura, 1997).

Pajares (2002), identified self-efficacy as the foundation for human motivation, well-being, and personal accomplishments. He explained there is little to no incentive to pursue a desired outcome when an individual is faced with difficulties without a belief in their ability to produce that specific outcome. An individual determines how to utilize their knowledge and skills according to their self-efficacy beliefs, and the perception of an individual's beliefs are often a better indicator of their capabilities than their actual accomplishments (Rocca, 2005). These beliefs can influence and enhance an individual's accomplishments, their choices, and courses of actions to pursue regarding their desired outcomes. The choices to pursue certain

careers are, therefore, influenced by an individual's perception of his or her

capabilities and conceptions of those occupations (Bandura, 1997).

Self-efficacy beliefs are related to specific performances and tasks. Depending

on the topic or situation, an individual may feel more successful in his or her abilities

and knowledge than when confronted by a different topic or situation (Pajares, 2002).

Although both positions use similar skills, the different environments and student

population regarding backgrounds and family life may cause the individual to feel

differently about their teaching abilities (Rocca, 2005).

Brown and Lent define personal goals as "one's intention to engage in a

certain activity or to produce a particular outcome" (Brown & Lent, 1996). These

goals play a central role in career choice and decision-making theories. Student goals

are reflected by their career plans, decisions, aspirations, and expressed choices.

Internships help to organize and guide student personal behaviors regarding career

choice by assisting with setting personal goals. A goal is defined as the determination

to engage in a particular activity or to effect a particular future outcome (Lent et al.,

1994).

People set goals to organize and guide their own behavior in order to increase

achievement of desired personal outcomes. Goals reflect an individual's ability to

present their expected outcomes and to react to his or her behavior through self-

evaluation and internal standards of performance (Lent et al., 1994). Self-motivating

qualities of goals are reached by linking self-satisfaction to goal fulfillment and by

behaving in ways that align with a person's internally set standards. If an individual's

goals are unrealistic compared to their abilities, repeated efforts will be disappointing

and produce failures. This leads to weakened self-efficacy and reduced motivations to perform any desired activity (Bandura, 1986). Much of the motivation and guidance for students regarding their career choice process is described by the SCCT's goal formation tenet (Rocca, 2005).

Outcome expectations are the perceived consequences of actually performing a certain activity on which an individual concentrated their self-efficacy beliefs in order to complete a task (Lent et al., 1994). Bandura states that "an outcome expectancy is defined as a person's estimate that a given behavior will lead to certain outcomes" (Bandura, 1977). People act on beliefs about their capabilities and the likely effects of their actions. Bandura (1986) argues both self-efficacy and outcome expectations influence behavior, but that self-efficacy is the most influential. This is shown when the quality of performance guarantees a desirable outcome. However, when outcomes are not closely tied to the quality of performance, outcome expectations may influence behaviors (Lent et al., 1994; Bandura, 1986). According to Brown and Lent, outcome expectations are defined as the beliefs about the consequences or outcomes of performing particular behaviors (Brown and Lent, 1996).

Holland proposed that people's career interests lead them towards certain fields where they might perform particular activities and interact with others who are similar in specific areas (Holland, 1985). Economic need, family dictates, discrimination, or educational considerations may constrain a person's career choice. On the other hand, choice may also be guided by work availability, an individual's perceived competence, and whether the expected outcomes are worth the effort

(Brown & Lent, 1996). "SCCT is concerned with two primary aspects of career performance: the level of attainment individuals achieve in their work tasks and the degree to which they persist, despite obstacles, at a particular work activity or career path" (Brown & Lent, 1996). Career performance, here, is assumed to be influenced by self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and performance goals.

Brown and Lent explained how self-efficacy and outcome expectations were the primary stages of occupational and academic interest development (Brown & Lent, 1996). They stated that some persons may not consider potentially rewarding occupations because of a lack of self-efficacy, inaccurate outcome expectations, or both. Low self-efficacy and inaccurate outcome expectations result from lack of confidence, experience, and encouragement. A person may not pursue a gratifying occupation because they believe they are not capable or educated enough or that they do not have the right skills or abilities to become successful. Brown and Lent also indicated that persons with well-developed interests in a particular career path may not pursue that path if they perceive considerable barriers to entering or advancing in that career field. The SCCT suggests that the perception of barriers moderates the relationship between interests and choices in careers. Self-success and other reinforced performance accomplishments create self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations. When these accomplishments and expectations are positive, an individual rightly believes they have the capabilities to succeed in a given field from that particular experience (Brown & Lent, 1996).

The SCCT framework focuses on three areas to be affected by the central tenets. First, the development of academic and career interests are affected by an

individual's self-efficacy beliefs. Second, interests, combined with other variables, promote career-relevant choices and are affected by outcome expectations. Third, people attain varying levels of performance and persistence in their educational and career pursuits through their personal goals and self-efficacy beliefs (Brown & Lent, 1996). However, all three areas can be influenced by each of the tenets in some way, shape or form. When people view themselves as competent in a particular activity and when they anticipate that performing the activity will produce valued outcomes, they will continue to participate and set goals in that specific interest (Bandura, 1986; Brown & Lent, 1996).

      2.5   Internships as an Instructional and Work-Based Learning Strategy

     The term and concept, *cooperative education* (co-op), was developed by Herman Schneider in 1906 as a way to meet students' financial needs while attending college. Schneider noticed that most student-jobs were tedious and unrelated to students' career goals, so he created cooperative education opportunities to meet their financial needs while they received a meaningful experience (Linn, Howard, & Miller, 2004). Although this concept was originated over 100 years ago, it was not until the 1960s that cooperative education was formally implemented. Title VIII of the Higher Education Act of 1965 established funds for co-op programs to be used by colleges and universities to establish their own co-op programs. The federal government eliminated this funding option shortly after the Act was created, but due to the demand by employers, co-ops and internships became increasingly popular in educational systems. The primary reason for this interest was because these

opportunities helped students prepare to make a smooth transition from student to young professional (Linn et al., 2004).

Internship programs were created to help students become more competent in the workplace by combining their education and out-of-classroom experiences. Student internships have become increasingly popular with colleges and universities as they realized the value of work-based learning. These opportunities are also known as volunteer service learning, cooperative education or internships. Regardless of the name, they create a seamless and intentional transition from higher education to the workplace through opportunities explored beyond the classroom. Students begin to develop the necessary and expected workforce skills to transition from student to professional by actively participating in an internship program. During these experiences, students learn to make decisions, negotiate their different roles, take on responsibilities, and work as a team member (Linn et al., 2004).

Internships help students develop skills and make informed decisions about their career path. They are generally short-term work experiences that allowed the participant to observe and learn in professional work environments related to possible careers (Veloz, 2002). An internship serves many different purposes depending on the student's needs and interests. George Kuh identified six common elements that made a high impact internship in his report *High-Impact Educational Practices: What Are They, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They matter* (2008). He noted that high impact internships are effortful and help students build substantive relationships. They help students engage across differences in education, backgrounds, and career interests and provide rich feedback. High impact internships also help students apply

and test what they are learning in first-hand situations, and then reflect individually on who they are becoming (as cited in O'Neill, 2010).

Internships have been shown to help students improve their classroom, workplace performance, and knowledge while in college and provided increased opportunities for employment upon graduation. A study of small-scale internships found that such programs helped students clarify their career choices, provided information on occupations, reduced indecisiveness and anxiety about choices, and increased their confidence in their abilities to choose desired career paths (Neapolitan, 2014). This research showed that internships helped students become more skillful in the workplace by combining their education and out-of-classroom experiences.

Internships have served many different purposes for different students which resulted in student benefits and outcomes of each experience. Student interns had opportunities to build early professional experience, develop a network in a particular field, discover their interests and dislikes, and understand the purpose of college regarding career choice (O'Neill, 2010). One significant advantage student interns had upon completion of their internship was additional employment opportunities and transferable skills. Better job opportunities should be the most important result of the internship due to students having experienced the world of work (Knouse et al., 1999). Interns also gained direct access to job sources, the opportunities to impress potential employers, built confidence in the job search, honed their work values, and built social skills to benefit their interviews (Knouse et al., 1999). Student interns benefited through direct experience in their desired work setting with the supervision and coaching from professionals in their chosen field (Kuh, 2008).

Students generally chose to become an intern because they had a better idea about the careers they wished to pursue than did those students who did not complete an internship. Student-interns had a higher self-efficacy about their perceived abilities to perform in their desired fields than did those students who were still weighing their interests, abilities, and career options. This is consistent with Bandura who suggested that people determine what they can do based on their beliefs and perceived outcomes (Bandura, 1986). However, a study by Neapolitan found that while interns were no more certain of their career choice before the internship than were other students; they were more certain of their career choice after the internship than students entering the workforce without internship experience (Neapolitan, 2014).

2.6 Summary

The field of cooperative education and internship programs has evolved over time in response to economic norms and workforce demands. Many of these programs are created to help an intern transform from student to professional. The CIPP model and Social Cognitive Career Theory inform this study. Many programs implement an evaluation component upon completion of the program, but there is a gap in the literature regarding long-term impact internships in general and no summative evaluation has been conducted for MEIP. This evaluative study intended to fill that gap by exploring the effectiveness of objectives and the outcomes of participants upon completion of the Purdue University Military Extension Internship program and their respective academic degree. The Evaluation utilized the objectives-oriented approach through a participatory lens. Both process and product evaluations were conducted at two different stages of the MEIP life span.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this program evaluation was to determine whether the Purdue University Military Extension Internship Program (MEIP) was successful in meeting its stated goals and objectives. This chapter discusses the research methodology which utilized a mixed methods approach. The qualitative evaluation techniques were used to obtain detailed information from program participants. Two Qualtrics surveys (quantitative) and one round of phone interviews were used to gain information about interns' experiences, self-efficacy, personal goals, and career choice.

3.1   Rationale

There is a lack of research that has explored the success and failures of college-level internship programs in the field of youth development in the military realm. Before the MEIP, military branches had their own internships that put civilians on installations. The MEIP is the first formal partnership with a LGU to connect with degree programs across the country to inform students about these opportunities (R. McKee, personal communication, February 23, 2015). Internship programs in the field of youth development are relatively new to academia. A need exists to further determine the effectiveness of the MEIP and whether it was achieving stated goals and objectives. In order to enhance the evaluation, the evaluator and her team used qualitative methods. The qualitative components will allow for depth of detail and the

ability to ask open-ended questions without being constrained by predetermined

categories of analysis.

3.2   Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Social Cognitive Career Theory stems from Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory

(Bandura, 1986). Bandura's concept of reciprocal determinism explains how three

important factors interact and influence one another. This relationship between

personal attributes, external environmental factors, and explicit behavior determines

an individual's behavior pattern. Lent et al. created the SCCT as a framework for

understanding the three aspects of career development as adapted and extended from

Bandura's SCT (Lent et al., 1994). The three aspects of SCCT are: (1) forming and

elaborating career interests, (2) selecting academic and career choice options, and (3)

performance and persistence in educational and vocational pursuits. These aspects

translate from the central core tenets of self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goals

through which individuals develop, pursue, and modify their career interests (Lent et
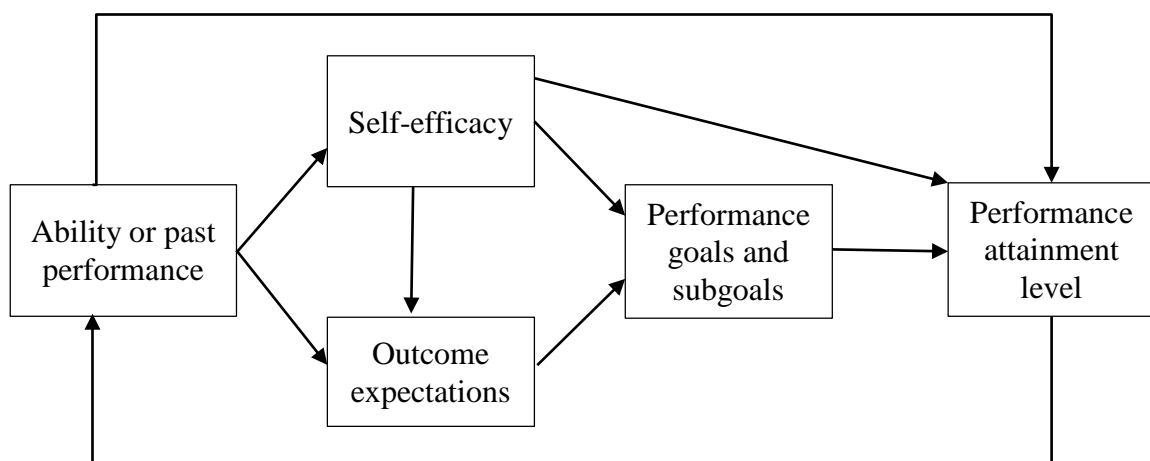
al., 1994).

Figure 3.1 Model of Task Performance by R.W. Lent, S.D. Brown, & G.
Hackett (1994).

This framework from SCCT was utilized as the guiding theory in this Evaluation. The framework is relevant to both academic and career behavior because an individual's learned interests and skills developed at school later translate into career outcomes. When an individual feels effective and successful in completing activities of high interests, this perception will likely persist over time. These interests, combined with outcome expectations, guide an individual's formation of personal goals. The development of these goals often leads an individual to pursue a career in that area (Lent et al., 1994).

Social cognitive theory explains the reciprocal interaction of three factors that require evaluation efforts to be directed at personal, environmental, and behavioral factors. The main purpose of the MEIP is to increase the number of experienced graduates entering and remaining in the fields of childcare and youth development (Mission, Purpose, & Objectives, 2013). Utilizing this theoretical framework, an intern can increase, repair and rebuild any negative self-regulatory practices (behavior), thus allowing the intern to familiarize themselves to the site to enhance success (environmental factors) (Rocca, 2005).

Many human-oriented behaviorist theories place the greatest importance on environmental factors in the development of human behavior and learning. Bandura's SCT, however, is a grounded view of human agency, which means individuals engage in their personal development and use their own actions to create changes (Bandura, 1986). Pajares suggested that individuals are both producers and products of their environments and social systems (Pajares, 2002).

3.3   Research Design

The Purdue University Military Extension Internship Program (MEIP)

Evaluation had three phases of contact between the evaluation team and program

participants. The first contact was an e-mail from the program coordinator to all

interns (395) who completed the MEIP orientation since the initiation of the program.

The e-mail and a follow up demographic survey have been distributed annually to

prior program participants to obtain updated demographic information and

employment status. For purposes of this Evaluation, the email included a link to an

online survey using Qualtrics software (Appendix A: Survey 1). E-mail addresses for

the study participants were obtained from the program coordinator who gathers this

information from the intern's applications. Because some of these interns completed

the program over five years ago, it was expected that some e-mail addresses would be

inactive.

Respondents were asked if they were willing and able to participate in an in-

depth program evaluation in Survey 1. Those who answered "yes" were sent the

second contact: a follow-up e-mail from the evaluator with a link to a second online

(Qualtrics) survey (Appendix B: Survey 2). The follow-up e-mail thanked study

participants for their willingness to participate in the Evaluation and asked them to

complete a brief questionnaire. The questions generally assessed the internship

experience and mentoring the participant received and utilized a five-point Likert

scale.

The evaluator used purposeful random sampling to select the participants from

those who agreed to participate in Survey 1 and completed Survey 2 for the third

point of contact: telephone interviews. Respondents who agreed to participate in the study and who had graduated from their academic institution were separated into two groups: *Yes Group* and *No Group*. In no particular order, every sixth name was selected. Interns who completed phone interviews comprised the final study population. The interview guide was pilot tested by 3 people who were interns in fall 2014. They were not included in the study as they had not completed their internship at the time of the study.

The evaluator conducted individual phone interviews with two study groups: those participants who answered "yes" from Survey 1 when asked if they are currently employed with DoD were identified as the (*Yes Group*), and the second group were those who answered "no" to this same question (*No Group*). Phone interviewees from both groups were asked the same evaluation questions (described in the next section and in Appendix C: Survey 3) as well as additional probing questions so that the evaluator could better understand each individual experience. These phone interviews were voice recorded and, on average, lasted about 23 minutes per phone call. The shortest duration was 15 minutes, and the longest phone conversation was 49 minutes.

3.4   Research Questions

The evaluation team examined the four following guiding questions through both surveys and phone interviews.

1. How did the program meet or fall short of the program's overall goal which is to increase the number of traditional and non-traditional students completing internships and entering careers in child-care and youth programs?

2. What are the experiences of those interns who have graduated and completed the MEIP according to the tenets of the social cognitive career theory?

3. In what ways did the MEIP influence the interns on the tenets of SCCT?

4. What critical piece of learning did participants experience from the MEIP?

3.5   Population and Sample

The purpose of the Purdue University Military Extension Internship Program was "to give college students and recent graduates opportunities to use their college coursework in the real-world through valuable work experience with military child and youth programs" (Mission, Purpose, & Objectives, 2013). The mission of the MEIP is "to help university students and recent graduates gain professional skills through unique internships that provide real-world work experiences with military child and youth programs (Mission, Purpose, & Objectives, 2013).

The overall goal of the Purdue University Military Extension Internship Program was to increase the number of students completing internships and entering careers in child-care and youth programs. There were four strategies created by the Principal Investigator and DoD representative to achieve this goal:

1. To place interns in facilities such as child-care centers or youth community centers located in communities with significant military family presence to enhance programmatic or child-care efforts, connect families with support systems, and engage new youth and families in programs.

2. To offer intensive professional development opportunities for university students (current or potential interns) to gain or increase knowledge on public policy, child-care and youth development issues, program development and implementation, evaluation, and community strengthening and connections for child-care and youth programs. In order to achieve this goal, interns are connected to a mentor who provides technical assistance throughout their experience.

3. To evaluate the program including impacts on communities, students, programs, and youth and families (McKee, 2009).

Annually, the Purdue University Military Extension Internship program coordinator, Principal Investigator, and DoD Points of Contact along with a representative from the DoD-MC&FP conducts an internal and on-going iterative review of how MEIP is working. From time to time, changes to the criteria for intern applicants as well as expectations during the intern experience have been made due to

this review. The following are changes made as a result of the internal review (R. McKee, personal communication, November, 19, 2015):

- The option to have a second internship or to extend the current internship ended with the spring 2012 cohort.

- Intern applicants must have completed five semesters of college coursework, changed from four semesters, for the spring 2014 cohort.

- The Air Force added recreation to their list of accepted majors for the spring 2012 class, and then in the spring 2014 refined recreation as outdoor recreation.

- The program did not start with all branches. Air Force and Navy have participated in all cohorts; Army did not participate in the first semester, nor over the past year.

- GPA has been changed from a required 3.0 out of 4.0 to 2.75 out of 4.0.

Several requirements must be met in order to become a MEIP intern. Potential interns must complete an application, interview and background screening process before being accepted into the program in addition to the following specified guidelines one must meet: each applicant must be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident, have a GPA of at least 2.75 out of 4.0, have completed at least five semesters of college classes, major in childcare, youth development, recreation, management or a similar program, and plan to pursue a professional career similar to their college major such as those within education, child or youth programs, or family services (Military Extension Internship Program, 2014).

There are three military branches that an applicant may be interviewed by once they have been accepted through the application process at Purdue University: the Air Force, Navy, and Army. The Air Force and Navy have been active partners since the inception of the first intern placements in the spring, 2010, while the Army participated summer 2010 through spring 2014. Upon completion of the interview with the specific branch's Point of Contact (POC), the intern is then placed on an installation.

Once an intern has been placed at their internship location, there are five main objectives expected to be accomplished during their experience. These objectives were established by the MEIP principal investigator and DOD-MC&FP. First, interns were to actively engage in networking opportunities with both professionals and peer interns who worked in the military and the Cooperative Extension System (CES). The second objective stated that the interns would benefit from professional development opportunities to learn more about public policy, childcare and youth development issues, program development and implementation, evaluation, and community strengthening for childcare and youth programs. Interns would explore career interests, and gain beneficial hands-on experience in the field of interest connected to their educational experiences. The final objective of the program was to increase the interns' chances of finding employment and/or advanced degree opportunities within the field of child and youth development (Mission, Purpose, & Objectives, 2013).

The population for this Evaluation included all MEIP intern alumni who completed the program and had also graduated from college. The sample for the telephone interviews included those chosen by a purposeful random sample from

Survey 2. There were 16 total MEIP intern alumni selected to participate in one-on-one in-depth interviews. There were eight participants from both the *Yes Group* and the *No Group.* They represented all five years of the program's existence, and represented ten of the fifteen cohorts. Three of the sixteen participants were male; one participant was Asian; the other 15 identified their race as white. The population of MEIP intern alumni who responded to Survey 1 and identified themselves as either American Indian or Alaskan Native: 1, Asian: 5, Black or African America: 24, White: 136, More than one race: 3, and undetermined: 1.

3.6   Instrumentation

There were three instruments utilized during the Evaluation. The first was an e-mail including a link to an online survey utilizing Qualtrics software: Survey 1. The e-mail was sent by the program coordinator and contained a welcome message, brief background of the evaluator and purpose of the study, as well as an invitation for the respondent to participate in the Evaluation (Appendix A: Survey 1). Survey 1 asked for general demographic information, update on employment status, and agreement to participate in the program Evaluation. These data have been collected on an annual basis from all program alumni who received the e-mail.

The second instrument was sent by the MEIP evaluator via e-mail and included a link to an online survey utilizing Qualtrics software containing five statements using the Likert scale (Appendix B: Survey 2). The e-mail thanked the respondent for agreeing to participate in the Evaluation. The survey included statements regarding the overarching evaluation questions. Participants in phase 2 were asked to rank each statement on a 5-point Likert scale to signify their

agreement/disagreement. The purpose of this questionnaire was to give the evaluator more insight to the participant's experience prior to the individual phone interview. The statements were:

1. The internship experience influenced my career choice.

2. The internship experience impacted and/or changed my career goals.

3. I gained professional skills from the internship experience.

4. My assigned mentor was supportive during my internship experience.

5. My assigned mentor provided insight regarding my career goals.

The third instrument was a voice recorded phone interview. The evaluator used a semi-structured interview guide during the phone interview and added probing questions when necessary. This allowed collection of a rich data set regarding individual experiences, emotions, feelings and points of view from each participant. While the selected 16 interviews do not represent the entire population of prior interns, they allowed for the evaluation team to draw specific and efficient conclusions and recommendations for future implementation with the MEIP program.

3.7   Threats to Validity and Measures of Reliability

The 16 participant responses of this study were not generalizable to all participants within the scope of the Evaluation because the number of participants was limited and the sample was purposive. The mixed-methods approach to this study provided the opportunity for content and face validity threats. Survey 1 was developed by MEIP stakeholders prior to implementation of the Evaluation and was assessed for face and content validity. However, this instrument was modified for the purpose of the Evaluation by adding clearer demographic questions, and the option to

participate in this study. Survey 2 and the interview guide were evaluated for face and content validity by an expert panel. Reliability was established by utilizing instruments that had previously been successful to the program evaluation goals. Both instruments were modified according to the expert panel and pilot test results. The reliability of Survey 2 was established by calculating Cronbach's alpha coefficient for 5 items ($\alpha=0.67$).

Credibility was established by using triangulation of data from multiple sources (Patton, 2002). The evaluator met weekly with her advisor and intermittent meetings with the graduate committee members to evaluate and interpret the findings which identified the researcher's bias. Informal member checks were conducted during the telephone interviews to fully understand the participants' responses and to support the trustworthiness of the data (Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, 2014).

3.8   Data Collection

The first e-mail was sent from the program coordinator during the first week of November, 2014 to 395 e-mail addresses. A reminder e-mail was sent on November 17[th] and November 24[th] to encourage participants to respond to Survey 1 if they had not already done so. The program coordinator also made a post to the MEIP Facebook and Twitter accounts informing alumni that an important e-mail was sent and that if they did not receive the e-mail they should private message their updated e-mail address to receive the initial e-mail. These posts were made at the same time that the e-mails were sent. The e-mails included the survey link, but the social media blasts did not and only gave directions on how to receive the survey link if they did

not receive the e-mail. This ensured the general public could not gain access to the
survey.

Survey 2 data was collected through the Qualtrics software as well. An e-mail
from the evaluator was sent to those alumni who answered yes in Survey 1 indicating
they would agree to participate in this evaluation study. The e-mail expressed
appreciation to all those who agreed, and requested that they complete a five
statement survey (Survey 2). The purpose of Survey 2 was to gain a better
understanding of each participant's thoughts prior to the phone interview.

Phone interviews were conducted during January, 2015. There were 20 phone
interviews scheduled and 16 of those phone calls were conducted. Two interviews did
not happen because the intern failed to call into the conference line. Two of the
interns forgot about the time difference. The conversations were voice recorded and
then destroyed immediately following transcription. The average phone interview
duration was 24 minutes. Each participant was asked six fixed, open-ended questions.
Depending on their answer and conversation, the evaluator asked additional probing
questions to fully understand the participant's answer regarding their experience,
thoughts, and expectations.

<p style="text-align:center">3.9   Data Analysis</p>

The formative evaluation conducted on the MEIP utilized both participatory
and objectives-oriented approaches during the data collection processes. The
evaluation team wished to gain information for program improvement by actively
involving program staff and participants. To begin the analysis process, the
evaluation team revisited the ultimate goal of the Evaluation and the specific

questions that were to be answered. This led to the readily interpretable information about the processes and effectiveness of the program's goals (Non-Researcher's Guide to Evidence-Based Program Evaluation, 2012).

During the analysis stage, evaluators made claims about the interpretations and findings of specific data. Claims are statements of meaning based on evidence and theory (Freeman et al., 2007). They described, interpreted, deconstructed, critiqued, predicted, and explained lived experiences by the participants of the evaluation. These statements connect the world bounded by data to our interpretations and understandings of that data (Freeman et al., 2007).

Inductive analysis was used to determine patterns, themes, and categories from the data for the purpose of aiding in the program evaluation. Each phone interview participant's data were analyzed, synthesized, and summarized. Responses were grouped by question according to participant group, and then according to common themes that emerged (Patton, 1990). Open coding was used to identify discrete pieces of data from the individual phone interviews after they were transcribed and the notes were typed. The data were given conceptual labels which then were grouped by the same or similar labels. Themes and categories emerged from the grouping (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The Evaluation was not looking for similarities, differences, or consistencies between participants, therefore none of the data were compared or contrasted.

The purpose of analyzing and interpreting the data was not to find commonalities and comparisons among the participants. Rather, the purpose and importance of the Evaluation was to understand the experiences, reflections, and

knowledge of the intern alumni regarding the MEIP. Fitzpatrick, Sanders and

Worthen (2012) recommend that the evaluator report back to the stakeholders and

program leaders periodically throughout the evaluation to help draw conclusions on

the data being gathered and determine if the evaluation needs to be adjusted. The

MEIP stakeholders received weekly updates during all three data collection phases.

Survey results and interview responses were shared, according to protocol, in order to

better interpret and evaluate the data. This helped the evaluator better understand the

expressed experiences and reflections of the participants, especially when specific

program language was used.

3.10   Summary

The evaluator utilized triangulation of information from two online surveys and

one round of telephone interviews. The survey data were collected using Qualtrics

software and all MEIP alumni were asked to participate. The second survey was sent

to those who responded to Survey 1 and agreed to participate in this Evaluation. The

third phase used purposeful random sampling to interview 16. There were two groups

of interview participants, those with DoD careers and those who chose to pursue a

different career path.

CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS

4.1   Introduction

The findings given in the following sections were collected from three different methods: two surveys and one round of phone interviews. The data collection focus was on the 16 intern alumni from the Purdue University Military Extension Internship Program who comprised the sample for phone interviews. These responses are not generalizable to all of the alumni of this program. Participants were chosen by the evaluation team using purposeful random sampling which included preset criteria that the alumni had to fit. The general responses to each evaluation question are presented first, and then according to each participant group and the interview question that addresses the research question for that group.

4.2   Survey 1

All intern alumni for whom the MEIP program coordinator had functioning e-mails received Survey 1 which asked for updated contact information, general demographics, and employment status. This survey is sent annually to all alumni and included the same or similar questions. The program coordinator sent Survey 1 via e-mail to 395 intern alumni in November, 2014 and 37 failed email addresses were discovered. Two reminder e-mails were sent on November 17th and November 24th. Facebook and Twitter were also utilized in an attempt to increase the response rate. Both social media sites were linked together; thus, the posts were simultaneous to the

surveys being emailed. One alumni responded each time for a total of three additional responses. The posts had the same message for the intern to notify the MEIP program coordinator if they had not received Survey 1 via e-mail. There were 178 total surveys started and 172 surveys completed. Of the total 178, there were 23 invalid responses in which the participant did not answer or choose not to participate in the research. Four surveys did not include a name, and 17 responses indicated they were either full- or part-time undergraduate students; therefore, they did not meet the Evaluation criteria. There were 154 usable survey responses from Survey 1.

4.3   Survey 2

The recipients of Survey 2 were respondents of Survey 1 who agreed to participate in this Evaluation. There were 154 responses that indicated "yes" they would be willing to participate in further research for the MEIP. There was a total 88 responses for Survey 2 which was active online for five days. Participants were asked to indicate their strength of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements: Statement 1: The internship experience influenced my career choice; Statement 2: The internship experience impacted and/or changed my career goals; Statement 3: I gained professional skills from the internship experience; Statement 4: My assigned mentor was supportive during my internship experience; Statement 5: My assigned mentor provided insight regarding my career goals.

Overall, participants agreed with all five of the statements. 72% of respondents strongly agreed that they gained professional skills from the internship experience. A combined 82% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that their internship experience impacted and/or changed their career goals. Similarly, 83% of respondents

agreed or strongly agreed that their internship experience influenced their career

choice. Only 4% of the respondents strongly disagreed with the first three statements.

The evaluation team did not anticipate findings on mentor-mentee relationships, but

the results from statements 4 and 5 show that participants had strong opinions about

this topic. This was particularly true for the 7% of the respondents strongly

disagreeing that their mentor was supportive during their internship experience and,

9% of respondents strongly disagreeing that their mentor provided insight regarding

their career goals. Figure 4.3 shows the results from Survey 2.

Figure 4.1 Survey 2 Results for the Following Statements:
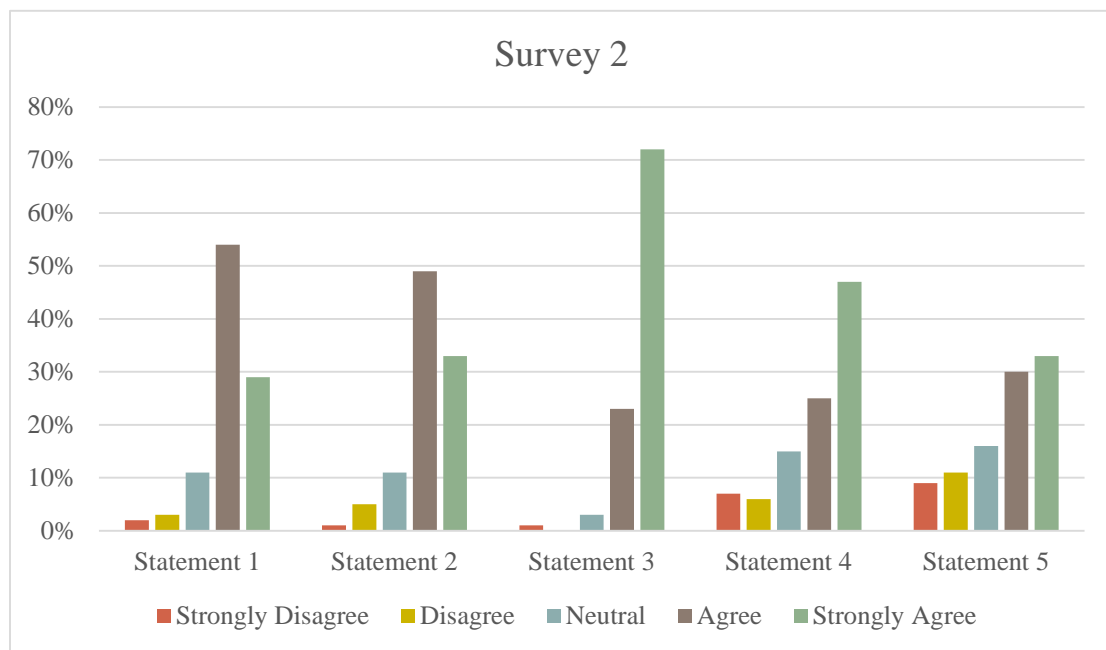Statement 1: The internship experience influenced my career choice.
Statement 2: The internship experience impacted and/or changed my career goals.
Statement 3: I gained professional skills from the internship experience.
Statement 4: My assigned mentor was supportive during my internship experience.
Statement 5: My assigned mentor provided insight regarding my career goals.

4.4   Telephone Interviews

The richest data obtained during the Evaluation came from the phone interviews conducted by the evaluator with 16 MEIP intern alumni. The evaluation team helped to create the semi-structured interview guide with the understanding that there would be additional probing questions used by the evaluator. The interview guide questions were created based on the Evaluation questions to be answered.

4.4.1   Evaluation Question 1

The first evaluation question was: "How did the program meet or fall short of the program's overall goal which is to increase the number of traditional and non-traditional students completing internships and entering careers in child-care and youth programs?" This question was addressed by the following two questions during the phone interviews:

1. Why did you choose to participate in the Purdue Military Extension Internship Program?

2. As a result of the internship experience, did your career goals change? Please explain.

Responses to the first phone interview question follow these four major themes: MEIP awareness, travel, career goals, and experience. Participant responses to each theme are given below.

Yes Group Responses

• MEIP Awareness – Three of the eight participants in the *Yes Group* indicated they needed this internship for credit to graduate. They heard about the MEIP from their on-campus supervisor and advisors, the director of their local military

clearing house, or from a department wide e-mail. One supervisor, knowing it would fit multiple student needs, recommended MEIP to a student who wanted to go abroad, had a background only with youth, and needed experience with recreation. Half of the participants learned out about this internship from Google searches using keywords including: internships with kids, overseas internships, and military internships.

- Travel – Three participants strongly indicated their primary purpose for choosing this internship program was that it provided the opportunity to travel abroad. Two of these three interns specifically searched online for overseas internships and neither of them had any military background or knew anything about the work involved.

- Career goals – All participants hoped their internship would clarify their career goals or provide them with knowledge of potential employment path. Likewise, all eight participants mentioned the reason for participating in the MEIP was that they knew they wanted a career in the military or a career with the youth. Four of the eight participants grew up with one or both parents in the military. They knew they wanted to work for the military and use employment as an opportunity to give back to the military community. The other four participants had no previous experience with the military culture, but knew they "wanted to work with kids." Multiple participants indicated surprise that working for the military is an option for civilians. Participant 009 said: "I thought to myself, civilians can work for the military? Cool!" Participant 003 said: "Recreation with the military *and* kids was an option? Cool!"

No Group Responses

- MEIP Awareness –Four of the eight participants in the *No Group* needed this internship for credit to graduate. Two of them received the MEIP URL from their departments at college, and one participant had peers participate the year before. Two other participants heard about the MEIP from their professor and through a list serve at school. One participant in this group was location bound due to her on-campus summer course.

- Experience – Six of the eight participants mentioned their purpose for participating in the MEIP was because of previous experience from somebody they knew. Two participants were told about this internship program by Extension Personnel. One intern was working at a summer camp and learned about the internship through the staff who had previously participated in the MEIP. Both audiences of the summer camp and MEIP were military youth. Another intern was recommended to participate by their local 4-H Educator who saw the program as a great opportunity to widen the intern's experience, to learn about military lifestyle, to work with youth, and to potentially create a job opportunity.

Responses to the second phone interview question, did your career goals change, followed two major themes: clarification and career goals in both groups. Participant responses to each theme are given below.

Yes Group Responses

- Clarification – Six out of eight participants said this internship either affirmed or clarified their career goals; however, five of the participants did not have

clear goals or aspirations for the internship prior to beginning the internship. These *Yes Group* participants had some thoughts and ideas about what they might enjoy as a career, but they used the internship as a means to making that decision more clear and "tested the waters with different positions." Intern responses from both participant groups showed a lack of knowledge about civilian employment in child and youth services. Participants used the internship as a learning experience for their careers. "I used this experience to find my way in my career goal thinking," (participant 003). Interns generally knew they: wanted to travel; desired interactions with children and youth; wanted to stay connected to the military; desired work with adolescents and youth athletics; wanted to work with youth not in a classroom; desired management; but, they were not clear on specific job positions. One participant shared that their career goals changed from wanting to work with kids to wanting to work with adults and/or families.

No Group Responses

- Clarification – Three of the eight participants indicated that their career goals changed as a result of the internship. Two of these did not have previously set goals, but had thoughts about what their career might look like after the experience. Five of the eight participants in the *No Group* did not change their career goals, but this indicated that the internship experience clarified their goals. These participants reported that the high level of experience with their desired age groups was the primary purpose for career clarification. Responses for anticipated career goals included working with youth, working

with school-aged kids, or working with the family as a whole during
deployment and service members' return home.

4.4.2 Evaluation Question 2

The second evaluation question was: "What are the experiences of those interns
who have graduated and completed the MEIP according to the tenets of the social
cognitive career theory?" This question was broken down into two questions for the
interviews.

1. What do you feel you gained professionally from the internship experience?

2. *Yes Group* – Why did you pursue employment with the military child care or
   youth programs? *No Group* – What is the primary reason for not pursuing
   employment with the military child care or youth programs?

Responses to the first question follow these three major themes: communication
skills, basic skills, and military culture. Participant responses to each theme are given
below.

Yes Group Responses

- Communication Skills – Four of the eight participants in the *Yes Group*
  indicated that communication skills were the most important aspect
  professionally gained from the internship experience. Interacting with other
  staff members, communicating to all groups of people, communicating on
  different levels, and learning how to disseminate information from classroom
  to parents were highlighted. They all mentioned how important
  communication skills are, especially when working with kids and their
  families. Two participants noted, both positively and negatively, how quickly

information is shared from one facility to the next, and from one group of people to the next. Similarly, two participants noted the importance of networking through communicating.

- Basic skills – Four participants reported on gaining basic professional skills including, but not limited to, time management, rules and regulations, inspections, scheduling, and paperwork. Half of the participants had never experienced an in-depth facility inspection before this internship and noted how vital this process was. Other basic professional skills mentioned by the *Yes Group* included maintaining ratios of care providers to youth and employees, hard work, instructions, and event planning. Participant 010 summarized the responses best: "With overall professionalism, personality, appearance, manners and being a leader – you can go where you want!"

No Group Responses

- Communication skills – Six of the eight participants indicated communications skills as their greatest professional gain. Learning how to interact with so many different groups of people and in so many different ways was mentioned most often. Interns learned to interact with "unique" people, and in different situations. Other communication skills mentioned included: how to professionally communicate via e-mail and telephone, public speaking, discipline, problem solving, and networking.

- Military culture – Six of the eight participants in the *No Group* mentioned an aspect of learning about the military culture and how they felt they matured from that experience. Interns learned how to work and communicate with

military families, and how to live the "military lifestyle." Participants gained

professional knowledge about how to dress on an installation, to be flexible,

and how to take constructive criticism from military officers.

- Basic skills – All participants in the *No Group* reported on gaining basic

  professional skills including budgeting, leadership, programming, evaluation,

  event planning, scheduling, organization, time management, prioritizing,

  flexibility, and teamwork.

Responses to the second question regarding the primary reason for pursuing/not

pursuing military employment follow these four major themes: opportunity, location,

timing, and barriers. Participant responses to each theme are given below.

Yes Group Responses

- Opportunity – Six participants provided the evaluator with their primary

  reasons for securing employment after their internship. All six participants

  knew they wanted a government position as a result of their MEIP experience.

  Of the responses provided, five interns said they pursued their careers because

  of their mentors or a shadowing experience. Three participants noted that they

  did not exactly know how to apply for DoD jobs or the expectation, so they

  took the first job offered to them.

No Group Responses

- Geographic location – Three participants indicated one reason for not

  pursuing employment with DoD was because they wanted to move back

  home. They indicated that they would have chosen a career with the military if

it was possible to be close to home but none of their homes were close to a military installation.

- Barriers – Five of the participants indicated that timing affected their career paths. Four of these five participants were unable to find a job with DoD, so they returned home for employment. Reasons for not finding jobs included the hiring freeze, sequester, graduate school, and not hearing back from submitted applications. Two of the interns said this internship confirmed that they wanted to work with the military community, but not directly for the government. One of these said timing was perfect to secure employment with Extension in an area with a strong military community. The other intern said the military/government had too much red tape and bureaucracy. There were too few resources, and the intern was frustrated and stressed because of the sequestration (permanent budget cuts from the Federal Government) at the time the intern was leaving the internship and jobs froze. This intern noted that the United Service Organization (USO) was very appealing. The USO is a nonprofit organization that supports the U.S. troops and their families with services and programs.

4.4.3   Evaluation Question 3

The third evaluation question was: "In what ways did the MEIP influence the interns on the tenets of SCCT?" This question was broken down into two questions for the interviews.

1. In what ways was this program useful to you?

2. From this experience, what factors were important for you to consider as you were developing your career choice?

Responses to the first question follow these three major themes: networking, awareness, and military job titles & positions. Participant responses to each theme are given below.

Yes Group Responses

- Networking – All of the participants in the *Yes Group* mentioned the internship was useful in creating good professional relationships for their future careers. This was attributed either to their mentor or others they looked up to during their experience. Interns met new people, established good rapport, and learn different positions. Two of the interns specifically noted the internship "helped them get their foot-in-the-door." Participant 016 said, "This program was useful because it laid the base for what's to come. It was a great way to lay the foundation."

- Awareness – All of the participants shared experiences from this internship by which they gained awareness about a particular facility, position, or branch of the military. Interns learned about the different facilities and positions because they were with these staff members every day. For one participant, it was useful to see a top-down perspective after being in a bottom-up position with the military prior to the internship. Two other interns noted the importance of learning the rules, regulations, and standards of the child and youth services within the military. "It's not all about the child and youth; the government is a great place to be with a job," said participant 009.

No Group Responses

- Networking – Five out of the eight participants in the *No Group* indicated that the internship was useful to them due to networking with other professionals. Responses indicated improved levels of professionalism from working with military professionals in child care environments. Interns discussed the importance of meeting people from other places, including meeting people from all over the world when traveling. Participant 004 said, "This was my first time traveling alone and I knew nobody. I met people from all over the world though."

- Military Job Titles & Positions – Interns learned about job titles and positions that only those in the military and those who support the military would understand. Six of the eight *No Group* participants found this internship useful to learn about the military in general. Half of the interns were not aware these job positions existed in the military or that "this world even existed" (participant 012). Interns learned about the military family life consultant (MFLC) position, child and youth services, and family readiness positions within each branch. Participant 008 said, "This internship helped find what community I wanted to work in. It opened my eyes to the military population and their families." Interns also gained awareness about living and working on a military installation, and how to serve and act professionally in a new environment. One intern (participant 017) said that "More than anything, I learned about myself. I knew I wanted to be back home, but seeing how much I learned about myself was the greatest benefit."

Responses to the second question, important factors to consider when developing

career choices, follow the three major themes: location, job assignment, and timing.

Participant responses to each theme are given below.

Yes Group Responses

- Location – Of the eight *Yes Group* participants, six interns mentioned an

  important factor to consider when developing their career choice as location.

  Interns either were specific on their location, or it was the last factor they

  considered. Three participants were not concerned about their designated

  location, but said it was a factor to consider when looking at job offers. The

  other three interns either wanted a job close to Fort Riley, "absolutely not

  close to home" (participant 014), or a place of comfort. Participant 016 said,

  "Most importantly, I want somewhere to be comfortable, be happy, and

  something I want to do, just not a desk job."

- Job Assignment – Seven interns said that first and foremost they would look

  at the job description before considering a career. Preferred assignments

  include work with special needs, human resources, training and curriculum

  specialists, management, active duty and retiree families, or recreation. The

  ability to receive additional training was an important factor as well. This

  group was split between wanting to work with the youth versus wanting to

  work with younger kids.

No Group Responses

- Job Description – The *No Group* participants had eight different important

  factors to consider when developing their career choice. Two commonalities

were income and job responsibilities. Two interns said they would look at income as a deciding factor because "you need to make enough to live" (participant 017), and "this major isn't known for making money out of school" (participant 006). Four of the eight interns noted their daily duties of a potential job would be important. One intern wanted a job specifically with families and the other was looking for a career in social work.

4.4.4   Evaluation Question 4

The fourth evaluation question was: "What critical piece of learning did participants experience from the MEIP?" This question was answered with one question for the interviews.

1. Was there a particular experience or activity during your internship that impacted your thoughts about your career choice? If so, please explain.

Responses to the question follow these two major themes: awareness and specific experience or event. Participant responses to each theme are given below.

Yes Group Responses

- Awareness – Six of the eight participants in the *Yes Group* explained that there was not a particular experience or activity that impacted their career choice thinking, but rather the whole internship in general helped influence their choice. Interns explained the many observations they made during their internship. Participant 011 said, "There wasn't one event. CYSS [child, youth, and school systems] are so important. This internship validated the importance and need for my field. These [CYSS] really matter to our military families." Other interns agreed. Participant 003 stated, "Seeing the effect of youth sports

on the whole community . . . parents becoming friends on base, kids having fun . . . and, knowing you helped make this happen. This impacted my career choice." Interns also talked about the general awareness they gained which affected their futures regarding careers. Reponses included helping with logistics and event planning, allocating funds, and creating schedules. This group cited "not one particular thing, but seeing the overall, general picture – how collectively the whole thing [CYSS] works" (participant 007).

- Specific experience or event – Two participants described two particular experiences that influenced their career choice thoughts: graduate school and the Single Airman Program. One intern had no real plans for graduate school nor any plans for after graduation. This intern was informed about base college from a teaching assistant in the teen center, and says "getting my M.S. has really changed my life" (participant 009). The second intern, participant 005, said, "The Single Airman Program made it all worthwhile. I would work at the youth center during the day, and then volunteered with the airman at night. I spent my free time with that program."

No Group Responses

- Awareness – Five of the eight participants in the *No Group* did not mention one particular event or activity that affected their thoughts about their career choice. Intern responses about general military awareness included living on a base and being a part of their [military personnel] living, broadening horizons to the military population, the importance of child and youth centers, and all of it [the internship] regarding CYSS. One intern explained five different

experiences affected their decision and summarized these by saying, "All of my internship; I did so many different things. I wasn't a kid lover, but now I want to get to know and work with the whole family" (participant 008).

- Specific experience or event – Three interns explained specific experiences or activities during their internship that impacted their thoughts about career choice. One intern described the Airman Readiness Center and how seeing and feeling the differences being made was impactful for this intern's future. Another intern discussed a USDA funded program, *Tweens in the Kitchen*, that helped teenagers create and make a healthy snack after school that they could afford. Participants in this group were not specific and did not have specific experiences that affected their career choices.

4.5   Final Thoughts and Recommendations from Participants

Before ending the telephone interview, participants were asked for any recommendations for changes to improve the experiences of future interns. Participants used this opportunity to show appreciation for the program, to provide advice to future interns, and to suggest recommendations.

Responses to the question follow these four major themes: experience, advice for future interns, orientation, and recommendations. Participant responses to each theme are given below.

Yes Group Responses

- Experience – Six of the eight participants in the *Yes Group* mentioned specific aspects of their overall experience when asked for any other comments or recommendations. Four of the interns indicated that the MEIP was a great

experience. <u>Participant 007</u> said, "I wouldn't trade this experience for the world! It is what you make it!" And, <u>participant 016</u> said, "It [MEIP] is a big reason why I'm here now as youth sports director. The program did so much!" More than half of the respondents said they recommend this program to everyone or other peers. Interns also noted this internship was the best thing for them, and that it helped them get their foot-in-the-door. One intern mentioned the importance of the MEIP for the benefit of starting their career at a higher GS [general schedule] position rather than starting from the bottom and trying to make their way to the top. GS positions are for civilian employee rankings and do not have the same rankings as military personnel.

- Advice for future interns – Three interns in the *Yes Group* took this question to offer specific advice for future interns. One intern, <u>participant 007</u>, said, "A lot of days you just have to find work. The mentors won't always have something for you to do, so find something you are allowed to do that will help. Pre-plan to do things if you're on a smaller base. Be productive and satisfy yourself and the site" to which <u>participant 009</u> similarly agreed. <u>Participant 010</u> said, "I'd do it [MEIP] with a more open mind next time. Daycare is <u>not</u> just a glorified babysitter. Play every role that you can! Experience it all! Talk to the ones who create lesson plans; see it from all perspectives, not just the management aspects." Other interns offered pieces of advice including the importance of administrative duties, inspections, and networking starting at orientation.

- Orientation – Five interns talked about their thoughts on orientation. Three of these discussed their levels of enjoyment specifically on the *Real Colors Activity*. <u>Participant 009</u> said that they "loved the colors part of orientation. I still use and do it at our orientations here." Other interns commented on their appreciation of the orientation experience and the opportunity to meet their mentors and other interns, travel to a new place, and see an installation for the first time. Two interns gave specific recommendations for orientation. One intern advised more of an introduction about the management side of CYSS during orientation. The other intern would like to see more organization about the discussion on job search and applying. "Don't just throw information at them [the interns] about how to apply or what the positions mean. It's very hard to remember how to apply because you didn't know anything about it. A webinar in the middle or end of the internship when it all makes sense would be good," said <u>participant 003</u>.

No Group Responses

- Experience – Five of the eight participants in the *No Group* added positive, additional comments about their experience during the internship. Responses included appreciation for the program as a whole, getting a well-rounded experience, or happiness about the pay received. One intern said it was a great experience and would encourage anybody to do it, and another intern wishes everybody could have such a great experience. Two of the interns were glad to hear the program still exists. <u>Participant 015</u> sums it up this way, "The

experience was life and career changing! That's what good internships do! You see things in a different light."

- Orientation – Four interns provided insights and recommendations about orientation. One intern was excited to talk about orientation and traveling to D.C. for it. Participant 006 said, "Orientation was perfect! The packet was helpful. Eddy Mentzer is great! The private tour of the Pentagon was so great. Brent Edwards with the Navy was a great resource. I felt better connected and ready afterwards." Another intern commented on the orientation in Indianapolis. The day at Camp Atterbury was this intern's favorite experience. "Interacting with actual military members was very helpful; I loved it! It's the best way to explain it by experiencing actual military culture," said participant 013. One intern recommends that before getting to orientation, interns are provided more information about orientation and internship sites in terms of expectations, definitions, terms, etc. so that the intern is not overwhelmed or lost during orientation. This intern indicated that the website is very vague, and honestly did not know what the internship would entail. Participant 018 said it would be a good idea to describe possible positions and duties during orientation, and share interests between mentor and intern. Participant 012 said, "Orientation was great on how to learn about USA jobs, but they [the presenters] missed the KSA [knowledge, skills, and abilities] part and it was the most important when applying!"

- Recommendations – From the *No Group*, five participants mentioned specific recommendations for the MEIP. One suggestion was to place two interns

together at one site so that they could help each other navigate their

installation and get acquainted with others. This intern said the staff already

knew each other and were friends outside of work, and that it would be

helpful to have another person to create and present ideas. This intern added

that he/she was "probably just too shy." Another participant suggested that

interns provide expectations, goals, and interests during the selection process

to better be placed with mentors and locations for a more successful

experience. Participant 013 explained that their expectations of the internship

program were not met regarding child and youth services. This intern said that

the "online description made it seem like it would not be all about CDC." Two

participants noted the lack of communication between MEIP staff and their

site staff which resulted in too much administrative work and boredom. The

suggestion is for better communication for clearer directions and a better

understanding of the purpose, requirements, and expected outcomes of the

program.

4.6   Additional Findings

The first seven participant interviews mentioned the mentor or supervisor

relationship to some extent. This heightened the interviewer's awareness of this topic

as an emerging theme. If mention was made during subsequent participant interviews,

the interviewer would ask probing questions to assist in understanding the impact

such a relationship had on the participant. Although mentoring was not one of the

primary focal points of the original evaluation questions, it was added to Survey 2 in

response to the pilot tests and stakeholder conversation prior to conducting the interviews.

There was no established question concerning mentor or supervisor relationships from the interviewer. If the participant mentioned this topic, the interviewer would then probe for more information. All of the participants in the Evaluation told about their experiences and feelings towards their mentor relationships.

Responses to any question that included a discussion of the MEIP mentor followed three major themes: purpose, relationship, and experience. Participant responses to these themes are given below.

Yes Group Responses

- Purpose – Seven out of the eight participants discussed the purpose of their mentor and the relationship created from the internship. One participant was glad his/her mentor was at orientation because they talked about goals and expectations. This intern said his/her mentor enhanced the MEIP internship. Another intern who returned as a mentor said the expectations are not always clear as a mentor. This intern, participant 016, suggested that it would be "better to meet the intern in person before coming to the site; it would make things easier." Four participants talked about the importance of mentors knowing the purpose of hosting an intern and what this program means for the intern. Interns said the mentors should know intern expectations, provide a variety of opportunities, and know the program requirements. Participant 009 said, "Mentors need to know interns are there to learn and not be used as an

extra body. This is a developmental and learning program." One intern said

their mentor knew their expectations and the mentor helped the intern focus in

their desired career direction. The intern appreciated that the mentor helped

the intern apply for DoD jobs, and perfect their resume.

- Relationship – Half of the interns discussed their relationship with their

  mentor and/or supervisor. Four interns talked about the positive impacts

  gained from these relationships. Responses included the ability to call the

  mentor 'whenever about anything,' using mentors as references still years

  later, and receiving useful advice. One intern spoke highly of the mentor and

  co-workers and how they took the intern under their wing and ended up

  creating friendships from the MEIP. Two other interns said the Training and

  Curriculum Specialists were most helpful and provided the best experiences.

No Group Responses

- Relationship – Six out of the eight participants in the *No Group* commented

  on the importance of their mentor-mentee relationship. All these interns

  indicated that they are still in contact with their mentors, and that they have

  used their mentor as a reference. Appreciation was stated for the number of

  reference letters and reviews given by the mentors for the interns. Participant

  012 said, "We had a really good relationship when there were daily

  interactions. My mentor was all about me learning the facilities,

  administration; she gave valuable feedback, advice, and wrote references for

  grad school." Interns noted their high levels of comfort with their mentors in

  that they could go to them for anything, and whenever needed. Participant

<u>012</u> said, "My mentor made my internship happen. It was a positive experience with my mentor because she didn't hover, gave me different opportunities, and I met new people through her." One intern explained her only reason for considering DoD employment was to continue working for a specific mentor.

- Experience – All of the interns shared some experience or thoughts about their relationships with their mentors. Responses included the various opportunities given by the mentors, and valuable real-world experiences interns received because of their mentors. One intern wishes they would have utilized their mentor more when applying for jobs. Three interns explained their appreciation when their mentor would invite them to attend special meetings and luncheons, additional trainings, and other special events.

4.7   Summary

There were 16 telephone interviews conducted with intern alumni for an average interview of approximately 24 minutes. Participants were asked six predetermined questions with additional probing questions as needed to better understand their experiences, perceptions, and knowledge of the MEIP. The four evaluation questions were answered from the interview questions, and participant responses were outlined according to participant group. After further review, the Evaluation team found an important additional theme of mentor-mentee relationships.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1   Introduction

This chapter provides a discussion of the evaluator's connection of findings to what was learned from recent literature on internships and high-impact educational practices. Implications for future research and recommendations for future use are also discussed. Three data collection efforts were made. Survey 1 findings were gathered from an online survey (Qualtrics software) that was sent to all MEIP intern alumni. Survey 2 was sent to all intern alumni who agreed to participate from Survey 1. Survey 2 consisted of a five question Likert scale questionnaire. The third method of data collection was telephone interviews which were conducted with 16 selected intern alumni. Findings were presented in two groups: *Yes Group* and *No Group.* The *Yes Group* were those intern alums who secured DoD employment upon completion of the MEIP and graduation from their respective institutions. The *No Group* included those MEIP intern alums who pursued a different career path. Not surprisingly, phone conversations went longer with the Yes Group participants so more information was shared and, thus, more direct quotes were presented in the findings to validate and solidify themes. I'm hopeful that the results of the Evaluation will help determine funding continuation, changes in personnel and purpose while examining the program's successes and failures.

The MEIP Evaluation utilized Lent, Brown, and Hackett's (1994) Social Cognitive Career Theory as well as Stufflebeam's (1971) Context-Input-Process-Product model to inform this study. The three aspects of SCCT are: (1) forming and elaborating career interests, (2) selecting academic and career choice options, and (3) performance and persistence in educational and vocational pursuits. These aspects translate from the central core tenets of self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goals through which individuals develop, pursue, and modify their career interests (Lent et al., 1994). Both process and product stages of the MEIP were evaluated.

5.2   Conclusions and Discussion

The purpose of the MEIP Evaluation was to assess the effectiveness of the program's ability to meet its stated objectives and to contribute to the knowledge in the field of internships. The purpose and goal of the MEIP is to increase the number of experienced graduates entering and remaining in fields of child care and youth development, especially in those areas relating to military families. The evaluator can conclude from this study that the MEIP is successfully achieving its stated goals. It also can be said that with revisions and recommended changes, the program can increase positive intern experiences.

Survey 1 responses and the telephone interviews both showed that intern alumni were more likely to secure employment with DoD upon completion of the MEIP and graduation from their respective institutions when they had positive, life-changing, well-rounded internship experiences and strong mentor-mentee relationships. Conversely, those interns who had poor internship experiences and/or lacked relationships with their mentors and co-workers have generally pursued other

careers. Interns who did not seek DoD employment pursued other career paths including, but not limited to, graduate school for education and social work, Extension Educators, church staff, insurance agents, and non-profit organizations.

Career choice is the end result of the combined three tenets of SCT: self-efficacy, personal goals, and outcome expectations. When there are no prior expectations, goals or aspirations, it is difficult to gauge an individual's success and failure. The Evaluation participants had polarized responses regarding their career goal influences as a result of the MEIP. They either had strong outcome expectations, or no expectations at all. Findings from the telephone interviews show three results: 4 interns had no expectations to confirm or change career goals; 9 interns confirmed/clarified their career goals; and, 3 interns had their career goals changed as a result of this internship. Veloz (2009) said that internships were established to help students make informed decisions about their career paths which is what the MEIP has done for the 88 interns who responded to Survey 2. As discussed in Chapter 4, Survey 2 results show that the MEIP impacted and/or changed, and influenced interns' career goals and choices.

The MEIP was created to increase the number of experienced graduates entering and remaining in the fields of child care and youth development, especially in those areas relating to military families (Wandless & McKee, 2013). The MEIP has helped to fill the need identified by the DoD and both provide college students and recent graduates the opportunity to use their college coursework and gain work experience on military installations. Five of the surveyed interns had no idea these job opportunities existed until they searched online for internships, or heard about the

MEIP from peers and local Extension programs; these participants did not know civilians could work for the military and not be enlisted. However, there were four interns that knew these positions and facilities existed because they grew up in a military family, and two participants who worked in the military prior to their internship experience. The MEIP goal of increasing the number of civilian military employees in child care and youth development facilities has been successful overall. However, few (four) MEIP interns found out about the program because of LGU recommendations. It appears that universities and colleges are not actively promoting the MEIP because half of the participants who secured DoD employment found out about MEIP only by online searches.

The five main objectives of the MEIP during an intern's experience were:

1. Interns will actively engage in networking opportunities with both professionals and peers who worked in the military and the CES.

2. Interns will benefit from professional development opportunities to learn more about public policy, child care and youth development issues, program development and implementation, evaluation, and community strengthening for child care and youth programs.

3. Interns will explore career interests.

4. Interns will gain beneficial hands-on experience in the field of interest connected to their educational experiences.

5. Interns will increase their chance of finding employment and/or advanced degree opportunities within the field of child and youth development.

All five objectives have been met as stated in the findings reported in Chapter 4. Interview participants discussed their appreciation for networking opportunities and the skills they gained through working in a professional environment. Networking begins during orientation and often leads to great resources for future employment opportunities. Although most, or parts of, the second objective were met, only one intern made mention of an evaluation component experience; therefore, the second objective should be revisited and revised by the program staff if it is an important objective to be met. No participant reported learning about public policy, child care and youth development issues, program development and implementation, and community strengthening as opportunities or experiences during their internship.

Interns primarily explored career interests and received hands-on experiences in their field of interest. These two objectives were met overall, but the evaluator believes there is room for improvement. Participants expressed, on more than one occasion, the desire to see all of what the internship program has to offer in terms of different facilities and services within child and youth services. While some interns said they really obtained the full experience, the majority wished they could have seen and experienced more during their internship. Further, the awareness that there were additional opportunities came from reading other intern's blogs, listening to capstone presentations, and through talking to each other about individual internship experiences.

The final objective received both positive and negative responses from the study participants. The evaluator recommends that towards the end of each semester a reminder document or monthly call topic regarding employment opportunities and

applications with DoD be sent to all interns. This might be a refresher for the interns, but it will help them apply the information received at orientation to their current situations.

Surveys 1 and 2 gave general feedback to the Evaluation Team. Survey 1 is sent to all MEIP interns annually regarding demographics, employment status and updated contact information. Survey 2 provided some general information about the influence of MEIP on intern's career choice and mentor relationships. Therefore, only a discussion of the evaluator's analysis of the phone interview questions is given here.

The first Evaluation question was: "How did the program meet or fall short of the program's overall goal which is to increase the number of traditional and non-traditional students completing internships and entering careers in child-care and youth programs?" The evaluator recommends in order to answer the first part of this question, there ought to be a desired percentage to be increased in order to measure the success or failure of the stated goal. If the program staff believes an increase in interns from semester to semester constitutes success, then this goal is being met. However, without an actual goal, it is difficult to determine if the program is as successful as desired. There also should be clear definitions of 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' students.

The second Evaluation question was: "What are the experiences of those interns who have graduated and completed the MEIP according to the tenets of the social cognitive career theory?" Interns described particular experiences and activities that affected their career outcomes regarding their desired interests. Those participants who entered the MEIP with personal goals of a desired career

communicated this to their mentor and put forth the effort to learn more about these positions. Thus, career interests were created and expanded. Once an intern's career interests were created, they began exploring various academic and career choice options. One intern had no desire to pursue graduate school, but because of his/her changed career interest, they subsequently realized that this path was the best choice. Many interns told the evaluator that this internship opened their eyes to new fields and positions within their academic interests. The MEIP has done a good job in aiding interns through their career choice options both with DoD and with other organizations. It is most apparent to the evaluator that those participants who were highly self-efficacious and had set career goals performed at higher levels than those participants who were uncertain of their abilities and career goals. Career interest formation, and academic and career choice option selection, leads to better performance and persistence in educational and occupational pursuits. The *Yes Group* participants had strong self-perceived skills and abilities, more defined personal and career goals, and more distinct career outcome expectations than those participants in the *No Group*. The lack of self-efficacy resulted in the lack of career goals/aspirations. This group of participants had no outcome expectations or goal pursuits because there were no goals to start with.

The third Evaluation question was: "In what ways did the MEIP influence the interns on the tenets of SCCT?" This internship provided participants with hands-on opportunities to form and improve their skills and abilities according to their desired career interests. Mentors, supervisors, and other staff members were active in every intern's experience to help guide their academic and career choice thoughts after their

internship. The MEIP helped those interns who desired future employment with DoD to perform well in these positions, and then to pursue those career options.

The fourth Evaluation question was: "What critical piece of learning did participants experience from the MEIP?" Each intern gained valuable life and career lessons through the MEIP as described in Chapter 4. Participants experienced teamwork, time management, regulations, inspections, professionalism, and many other skills. Most importantly, interns experienced the military culture through child and youth services as a potential career with military childcare or youth programs. Learning began for the interns during orientation and continued through the internship.

From phone interview conversations with the participants, the evaluator can conclude that many of the mentor relationships had great influence on the intern's future after the MEIP. Many interns expressed high levels of uncertainty and being unfamiliar with military culture, but because they met their mentors at orientation, they felt more prepared and more comfortable. Mentor-mentee relationships are becoming more important and valuable in education settings today. Mentors act as a comfort, a trusted outlet, and somebody the intern can resort to while away from their homes. A few interns expressed their concerns for mentors not being prepared, qualified, or informed about their role during the internship experience. Because these relationships are vital to successful experiences, the evaluator suggests more focus be given to selecting mentors and assuring they are oriented to the internship program and its requirements.

5.3   Implications

Although the evaluator's sample size was small compared to the number of intern alumni. 16 MEIP intern alumni were interviewed and associations to the overall implementation of the program can be made from these findings.

The concept of mentoring and mentor relationships was important to the participants of this study. The literature review did not expand on mentoring, and should include a review of mentor relationships outside the fields of military internship programs and early education. In the education field, mentor relationships are often associated with the cooperating teacher, student teacher or advisor. The conclusions of this study show a growing need for more research pertaining to mentors and their role perceptions, expectations, and assumptions. This will help program leaders better train and equip mentors before they are actively mentoring. Although mentors receive some training at orientation, study findings show consequences when the mentor is not present, and/or if the expectations of mentors are not clearly delivered, received, and acted upon. Practically, mentors are a necessity to successful internships; therefore, mentors should be knowledgeable about their role and the expectations of their mentee. The conclusions show that interns are receiving benefits from these relationships, thus they should continue to look for improvement, changes, and suggestions.

Implications for policy are discussed in terms of the program's policies. Interns are required to attend orientation, submit weekly Ning blogs, and present their capstone report. However, study participants reported negative perceptions on employment stability due to lack of understanding and support. There should be an

additional requirement for interns to attend a once-a-semester webinar covering the topic of employment security. This webinar should be conducted in the middle of the semester when interns understand the terminology and have a better sense of their future career goals and choices. This webinar will help ease the uncertainty, frustrations, and failures interns experience upon completion of their internship and graduation from their degree program.

5.4   Recommendations in Theory, Practice, & Policy

The Evaluator has acknowledged the following limitations which occurred as a result of this study:

- Lack of attention to time zone differences caused participants to miss interviews;

- Evaluator unexpectedly missed the final day of interviews, missing five interviews;

- Communication means for those participants overseas caused time and instrument challenges;

- Lack of response to e-mail about scheduling from potential participants resulted in missed interviews

However, these limitations do not negate the findings and results of the Evaluation; therefore, the following recommendations are offered. This was the first formal MEIP Qualitative Evaluation which opened the doors for necessary, new, and advanced research in many areas. A deeper examination of intern's self-efficacy for participating in an internship program is needed. Further research should be conducted on mentor-mentee relationship within this internship program.

Self-efficacy, one of the core tenets of SCCT, was not evaluated as thoroughly as proposed in the beginning stages of this Evaluation. The literature review indicated that individuals pursued certain careers according to their perceptions of their capabilities; however, when the Evaluation participants were asked why they participated in this internship, none of the participants responded with beliefs about their performance in this career field. Further research should delve more deeply into this question to discern why participants chose this internship beyond expressing a desire to travel or needing an internship as part of a degree requirement. Intern motives for participation need to be furthered explored, and intern alumni should be asked what attracted them to this specific internship. Additional probing questions would have led to more depth of understanding.

According to the findings in this Evaluation, mentors and supervisors had either a positive impact or no impact on an intern's experience. Results from this Evaluation show a greater need to delve deeper into the realm of mentor-mentee relationships and how those relationships play important roles in an internship program. None of the participants shared that they had a negative experience with their mentor. Three participant's responses particularly highlight the importance of the mentor-mentee relationship.

Participant 003 says: "Your mentor has a lot to do with applying for jobs. If the intern has someone who just brushes them off, they will be less willing to apply for these jobs. But, if they have a supervisor who is willing to help them out, and teach them the ropes, I think they will be more willing to apply and get a job."

Participant 007 says: "My mentor was really awesome. He could know exactly what I came wanting to do. I spoke to him about it at orientation and it was kind of mapped out that way from there. He was really good at facilitating opportunities for me to work in a number of different environments which was really nice. In fact, I think he kind of made the internship for me."

Participant 011 says: "The first person in charge of me was really high up in the chain of command like in charge of all the centers. She really didn't have time for me and not long after I started we did a transfer where the person below her became my supervisor. That's actually the person who had come to the orientation. It was kind of weird because the person who actually came to the orientation event wasn't supposed to be my supervisor. She was really nice and also wanted me to have a good experience, but she was too busy to really devote a lot of time to me. She only came around when I needed something and signed for my university credit. She dropped in maybe once or twice over the whole course of the internship."

Future research should examine these relationships to help internship program staff better understand the need and purpose of mentors. Practically, the MEIP should look more in-depth at their site mentors and supervisors to ensure they are equipped and stable to host an intern. Mentors and supervisors should know the purpose of MEIP, their role and responsibilities for hosting an intern, and the requirements and expectations of the intern so that the program is successful according to the intern and the program's objectives.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A   Survey 1

Intern Alumni Evaluation - 2014

We appreciate your willingness to answer a few questions about your experience with the Military Extension Internship Program.

Q1 First Name

Q2 Last Name

Q3 Please select the Intern Orientation in which you participated.
❍ Spring 2010
❍ Summer 2010
❍ Fall 2010
❍ Spring 2011
❍ Summer 2011
❍ Fall 2011
❍ Spring 2012
❍ Summer 2012
❍ Fall 2012
❍ Spring 2013
❍ Summer 2013
❍ Fall 2013
❍ Spring 2014
❍ Summer 2014

Q4 Please select the branch with which you interned. (Select all that apply.)
❑ Air Force
❑ Army
❑ Navy

Q5 What is your current employment status?
❑ Employed Full-time
❑ Employed Part-time
❑ Seeking Employment
❑ Full-time Undergraduate student
❑ Full-time Graduate student
❑ Part-time Undergraduate student
❑ Part-time Graduate student
❑ Other (Please explain) _____

Q6 When is your expected graduation date?

Q7 Who is your employer?

Q8 What is your position title?

Q9 Do you feel this will be a long term employer of choice?
○ Yes
○ No

Q10 Were you employed with the military prior to the internship?
○ Yes, my position title was _____
○ No

Q11 If you are seeking employment or have sought employment supporting military families, how many applications have you submitted?

Q12 We appreciate that you have stayed in touch with us after your internship experience. Please update any contact information that may have changed - i.e. mailing address, email, phone number, etc.

Q13 We have a current Purdue University graduate student who will be conducting a program evaluation of the Military-Extension Internships starting late fall 2014/early winter 2015. Would you be willing to have this student contact you for additional information?
○ Yes
○ No

Q14 What is your preferred contact method?
❑ Phone _____
❑ Email _____
❑ Both

Q15 Please select your gender.
○ Male
○ Female

Q16 Race:
○ American Indian or Alaskan Native
○ Asian
○ Black or African American
○ Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
○ White
○ More Than One Race
○ Undetermined

Q17 Ethnicity
- ○ Hispanic or Latino
- ○ Not Hispanic or Latino

Q18 What year were you born?

Q19 What is the highest degree or level of education you have completed?
- ○ Some college credit, no degree
- ○ Associate degree
- ○ Bachelor's degree
- ○ Master's degree
- ○ Doctorate degree
- ○ Professional degree/license
- ○ Other _____

Q20 When did you earn your highest degree? (i.e. 2012, 2014, etc.)

Additional Comments:

THANK YOU FOR ASSISTING US BY COMPLETING THIS SURVEY!

Appendix B   Survey 2

Military Extension Internship Qualtrics Survey (Pre-phone interview)

Respondents to the Qualtrics Survey Instrument will receive a thank you email and a request to complete the five questions below. These questions were designed to gain additional information regarding internship experiences, mentors and their impact or influence on the interns in terms of career goals or career path. Likert responses will be utilized as an additional tool to aid in the identification of participants identified for phone interviews. These questions were designed to create a link between prior responses from the Qualtrics survey and questions that will be utilized on the telephone script.

On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being *not at all* and 5 being *a lot:*

Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree

1. The internship experience influenced my career choice.

2. The internship experience impacted and/or changed my career goals.

3. I gained professional skills from the internship experience.

4. My assigned mentor was supportive during my internship experience.

5. My assigned mentor provided insight regarding my career goals.

Appendix C   Interview Guide

<Interview Method: The laddering technique will be utilized for these interviews. Participants will be asked a question i.e. "How was this program useful?" based on the participants' response, the interviewer will ask probing questions to prompt a deeper response from the participant.>

Interview Script/Guide and Questions – Military Extension Internships

Opening:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. Your participation will help us gain a better understanding of intern experiences and their reflections of the Purdue University Military Extension Internship Program. I will ask you several types of questions about your internship experience and knowledge about the internship program. There are no right or wrong answers –I am just interested in your opinion. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer, and you may stop this interview at any time.

At times, it may seem that I am repeating questions or asking very obvious questions. This is part of the interview technique I am using to better understand your answers.

If it's OK with you, I would like to record this interview to help me as I will need to accurately present your responses when compiled in written form. Your name will not be associated with the recording as each participant is identified by a number. The

recordings will be destroyed after a transcript of the responses has been created and any

answers you give me will be summarized along with responses from other people – there

will be no way to connect this information back to you. Do you have any questions about

this process? <Confirm employer and position from initial Qualtrics results obtained

November, 2014. Answer any questions and address any concerns. Record interview only

if given permission.>

Questions for all participants:

1. Why did you choose to participate in the Purdue Military Extension Internship Program?

2. In what ways was this program useful to you?

3. From this experience, what factors were important for you to consider as you were developing your career choice?

4. As a result of the internship experience, did your career goals change? Please explain.

5. What do you feel you gained professionally from the internship experience?

6. Was there a particular experience or activity during your internship that impacted your thoughts about your career choice? If so, please explain.

Question for participants NOT employed with military child care or youth programs

1. Would you please provide us with the primary reason for not pursuing employment with the military child care or youth programs?

Thank You for all participants:

(Name), again, I thank you for your time and participation in this interview. You answers and opinions are greatly valued and will be used to help inform further implementation of the internship program. One last question before we go. . .

1. Based on your internship experience, do you have any recommendations for changes we could make to improve the experiences of future interns?