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VETERAN CONTEMPT FOR CIVILIAN COMMUNICATION (VCCC):  
THE DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION OF A SCALE FOR USE WITH  
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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this project was to develop and validate a measure of the amount of contempt military veterans feel toward civilian communication. Veterans may experience the moral emotion of contempt if they believe civilian communication violates the communal norms of the military. This study conjectures that communication-related contempt could be a root cause for veterans' inability to reintegrate successfully into civilian society. Military socialization creates a deeply embedded military identity. If veterans cannot enact this communal identity with civilians, a gap may form between their communal identity frame and their enacted identity frame (Jung & Hecht, 2004). The larger the gap between these two identity frames, the more likely veterans are to withdraw from communicating with civilians. Such a withdrawal could lead to social isolation, which is linked to anxiety and depression (Fried et al., 2016). In the first study post-9/11 military veterans were recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk service and asked to complete the Veteran's Contempt for Civilian Communication (VCCC) scale. The researcher then used exploratory factor analysis to examine underlying factor structures and reduce the number of items in the initial scale. Study 1 produced a 20 item VCCC scale that the researcher used in a second study. In Study 2 military veterans completed the VCCC as well as measures for willingness to communicate, communication apprehension, the military to civilian questionnaire (M2CQ), the UCLA loneliness scale, military identity scale, and the temporal satisfaction with life scale, in addition to demographic variables. Results of Study 2 confirmed the factor structure of the VCCC, through confirmatory factor analysis, and showed significant relationships with several other variables. Of interest is the significant relationship found between the

VCCC and the M2CQ, loneliness, and military identity. Not only were significant correlations found for these variables, but significant regression results were found as well. A discussion of the methodological, theoretical, and practical implications of the newly created VCCC concludes the research project.

## Chapter 1

### Military Socialization and Identity

In 2017, there were 22 United States (U.S.) servicemembers killed in Iraq and 15 in Afghanistan (iCasualties, 2020). The same year, 6,139 veterans committed suicide, an average of 16.8 veterans each day. Suicide is an ongoing concern in the veteran community, with veterans being 1.5 times more likely to commit suicide than their non-veteran counterparts. Furthermore, the number of veterans who commit suicide increased 6.1% from 2005 to 2017 (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2019), a disturbing trend given the irreversibility of this act. Additionally, researchers estimate that every suicide affects approximately 135 other individuals (Cerel et al., 2019), which means the U.S. veteran suicide epidemic could affect over 800,000 individuals each year. In a cover letter of the 2019 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report, the Director of the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA), Dr. Richard Stone, wrote:

Suicide is a national public health problem that disproportionately affects those who served our Nation. Preventing suicide among Veterans is VA's top clinical priority. Our commitment in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is to help Veterans establish and maintain a healthy balance of unique protective factors to equip and empower them to live their fullest lives. We cannot do this alone; *we call on our community partners to join us in this effort.* (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2019, n.p., emphasis added)

The current work answers this call from a communication perspective by proposing a new measure to assess veterans' communication behaviors, grounded in communication theory of identity and other theoretical concepts.

Numerous reports, public awareness campaigns, and academic research articles document negative health risks (e.g., alcoholism, depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress) as well as self-destructive behaviors (e.g., suicide, risk-taking, binge drinking) associated with serving in the military. To date, most of this academic research has focused primarily on veterans who have served in combat roles (e.g., Luxton, et al., 2019; Thomas et al., 2019; Weiner, et al., 2011), but not all veterans who have issues reintegrating serve in combat (Howe & Shpeer, 2019). Furthermore, few studies have gone beyond describing these issues and uncovering communication events associated with risky health behaviors. Lande (2019) theorized that early interventions could help reduce the number of veterans with treatment-resistant depression. To perform early interventions, practitioners and researchers must have screening tools to identify those who may need treatment.

There is currently no validated communication measure which can predict which servicemembers may be successful, or not, in the reintegration process. The purpose of this study is to develop such a measure, based in the communication theory of identity, which can help practitioners and researchers identify veterans who are most at risk of reverse-culture shock upon military exit (Howe & Shpeer, 2019; Truusa & Castro, 2019), so early treatment can be provided. The military socialization process tends to create a deeply embedded military identity, which members might adopt as a personal identity

(Orazem et al., 2017). If military veterans perceive they cannot enact their military identity in the civilian world, they might not be able to interact successfully with civilians and may withdraw from communication with them. If this occurs, former military members may experience social isolation (Stein & Tuval-Mashiach, 2015). Empirical researchers have identified social isolation as a contributor to mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression (Fried, et al., 2016) which may, in turn, increase the likelihood of harm against self or others (Neacsiu, et al., 2017). Additionally, Norman et al. (2015) found reintegration difficulty was significantly and positively related to post-traumatic stress, anxiety, and depression. Similarly, reintegration difficulty was significantly and negatively associated with quality of life. This study proposes and tests a scale designed to measure the degree to which military veterans feel contempt toward communication with a generalized civilian other. Military veterans who feel civilian communication constrains the communication enactment of their military identity may experience the moral emotion of contempt. As described in detail below, this study conjectures that communication-related contempt could be a root cause for some military veterans being unable to reintegrate within civilian society successfully and that identification of these veterans could allow interventions to occur before problems begin.

The following pages first discuss and synthesize the theoretical elements of organizational socialization (Kramer, 2010), totalistic organizations (Hinderaker, 2015), communication theory of identity (Hecht, 1993), and the contempt-anger-disgust triad (Rozin, et al., 1999). After providing this theoretical foundation, the next section explains the applicability of this theoretical synthesis to the U.S. Military (USM). Finally, the

method section details the steps taken to develop a scale, theorize convergence/divergence with willingness to communicate, communication apprehension, the military to civilian questionnaire, loneliness, satisfaction with life, and military identity. Furthermore, two studies were conducted to first find factorable and reliable, scale items using exploratory factor analysis and second to corroborate factor structures and reliability using confirmatory factor analysis, with a different sample, as well as assess relationships between this new measure and established measures of both communication and well-being.

### **Socialization in Totalistic Organizations**

In a study of military veteran reintegration, Koenig, et al. (2014) found “veterans’ experiences resulted from an underlying tension between military and civilian identities consistent with reverse culture shock” (p. 414). Truusa and Castro (2019) add “military culture will have important implications for how a service member transitions back to civilian life” (p. 5). Because the socialization process is one indicator of organizational culture (Kramer, 2011; Kramer & Dailey, 2019), and military culture affects reintegration (Koenig et al., 2014; Truusa & Castro, 2019), an explanation of how socialization occurs in totalistic organizations (TOs; Hinderaker, 2015), such as the military, is essential to this study.

Scholars have proposed organizational socialization to have four phases: anticipatory socialization, encounter, metamorphosis, and exit (Jablin, 2001; Myers & Woo, 2017). Anticipatory socialization occurs when potential members seek out information about the organization and decide whether to join the organization or not



(Cranmer & Myers, 2016). Encounter is the phase where members enter the organization and learn the values and norms of the specific organization (Lee, Kramer, & Guo, 2019). Metamorphosis occurs when a member internalizes the values and norms of the organization and recognizes, psychologically, their role as an insider of the organization (Kramer & Dailey, 2019). Exit is the final stage and occurs when a member leaves an organization (Herrmann, 2017). The entry phase may be the most important phase of military socialization as it is during this time new military members learn and embody the values and norms of the military (Delobbe, et al., 2016; Thomas & Anderson, 1998), although other members undoubtedly reinforce these values throughout a member's time in service (Carré, 2018). The military has deeply entrenched these values and norms in servicemembers' lives, and servicemembers must abide by the values, norms, and rules of the military both in and out of uniform. For these reasons, scholars classified the USM as a totalistic organization (TO), or an organization that seeks complete control over the lives of its members (Howe & Hinderaker, 2018).

Tracy (2000) laid the groundwork for studying TOs by exploring the emotional labor and exploitation of members of total institutions, such as theme park and cruise line employees. Hinderaker (2015) identified a specific organizational type as totalistic and provides four characteristics of TOs: (1) value-based, or organizational moral beliefs play an important role in member recruitment and retention, (2) central to identity, meaning that identity runs over into other social and organizational identities, (3) involves primary relationships, family and friends are also part of or committed to the organization, (4) requires fealty, commitment of members goes beyond that of traditional organizations.

Hinderaker further theorized that many high-reliability organizations (HROs), or organizations that “regularly operate in unforgiving circumstances for long periods of time while facing emerging environmental conditions and/or technological complexity” while “they manage to consistently avoid large accidents and fatalities even though the conditions they face make such events likely” (Jahn, 2017, p. 1097), are totalistic in nature and argued that both police and fire departments are totalistic. TOs differ from the total institutions, which were studied by Tracy (2000), in how they are nearly all-controlling of the speech, actions, dress, and relationships of their members at all times, regardless of whether the member is at the organization or on vacation. TOs also differ from total institutions in how they are heavily reliant on values and morals as a basis for organizational motivation, whereas traditional organizations may use other motivations such as financial rewards or individual recognition. To date, the limited research on TOs is focused on religious organizations. For example, researchers have examined the totalistic nature of Mars Hill Church (Garner & Peterson, 2017; Peterson & Garner, 2019), All Peoples Global Outreach (McNamee & Gould, 2019), and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Hinderaker, 2015, 2017; Hinderaker & O’Connor, 2015). More recently, communication researchers have studied the USM as a TO (Howe & Hinderaker, 2018; Shpeer & Howe, 2020).

Because of the four characteristics of TOs (i.e., values, deep identity, primary relationships, deep loyalty), exit is more difficult than in traditional organizations, as the identity of the member is thoroughly intertwined with that of the organization (Garner & Peterson, 2018; Hinderaker, 2015; Hinderaker & O’Connor, 2015). Therefore, since the

USM is a TO, researchers should expect exit from the military to be difficult. Howe and Shpeer (2019) found support for this idea when they interviewed military veterans who were beginning college, as veterans described an inability to communicate with fellow students and instructors due to differences between military and civilian cultures. Koenig et al. (2014) also found veterans had trouble exiting the military and successfully reintegrating in society. Notably, Koenig et al. found military veterans had the greatest difficulty interacting with health-care providers, likely due to veterans viewing some healthcare providers as culturally incompetent (Ruiz, 2018). Evidently TO members do not experience exit the same way members of traditional organizations do because they carry inculcated norms and values after exit more closely than members of traditional organizations. In other words, military exit may not follow the phasic model for at least two reasons: military exit is prolonged and military identity cannot be performed at any other organization, inside of the United States. The second reason is a key differentiator from most other strong occupational identities (e.g. doctor, nurse, banker) that can be performed in a different organization (Howe & Bisel, 2020). Due to the protracted exit process, military members may abide by organizational norms and values in their daily lives even after exit. The USM establishes value-centrality and strong control over members in at least two ways. First, the U.S. Army requires soldiers to live military values both on and off duty (Philips, 2013). Second, veterans reported that they are aware of the observations of other members even when off duty, therefore, they must abide by military values (Howe & Hinderaker, 2018). This undoubtedly embodies a form of unobtrusive control (Bullis, 1991), or “the process by which members of an organization

are guided in making organizationally relevant decisions” (Bisel, et al., 2007, p. 137). Such control may influence the actions of veterans after they leave the military as well.

This reliance on values as a governance for military decisions creates a distinct new culture (Philipsen, 1992) for military members. Because of the emphasis of values in this new culture, it may create a moral system reinforced by group members (Haidt & Joseph, 2004; Keyton, 2014), which results in difficulty during exit (Koenig et al., 2014; Truusa & Castro, 2019). The military is a culture with a moral framework that overlaps with, but remains distinct from, civilian culture. For example, many civilians are not blasé about death, but for military members, who must deal with death daily, the USM has instilled a callousness about death in members during basic training (Knight, 1990; Shpeer & Howe, 2020). Given it is natural for individuals to identify with the organization they belong to (Burke, 1937; Cheney, 1983), the value-centric and all-encompassing military culture could lead to a deeply-embedded military identity, which creates difficulty transitioning back to civilian life (Gade & Wilkins, 2012). The communication theory of identity supplies added support for these descriptions.

### **Communication Theory of Identity**

The identity of military veterans differs from non-veterans. This difference could lead to veterans believing they cannot communicate with non-veterans in a manner which is true to the identity of the veteran, and such lack of communication could lead to both a deepening of the military-civilian divide and social isolation for individual veterans. Scholars have theorized about identity for centuries. Descartes may have been the first to differentiate identity in the mind from the identity, or form, of the body (Allison, 1966).

Descartes saw identity as stable and unchanging, but Locke (1847) argued against the ideas of Descartes and was the first to supply a systematic approach to individual identity (Allison, 1966). Since Locke (1847), theorists have proposed many theories of identity, but perhaps the best known is social identity theory (SIT). SIT focuses on how individuals realize they belong to a group and the influence the group has on the identity of its members (Stets & Burke, 2000; Tajfel, Turner, Austin, & Worchel, 1979). Tajfel (1979) described a minimal group study in which researchers randomly assigned participants to groups and in which participants began to assign favorable meanings to their groups and membership even though the groups had no logical ordering or purpose. Participants rated members of their group with higher scores than members of other groups. Tajfel et al. (1979) built upon these findings and proposed SIT as a way of explaining how group membership influences individual identity and behavior.

Self-categorization theory (SCT) stems from SIT. Theorists of SCT went beyond examining the link between group and self-identity and began to examine depersonalization or redefining the self in terms of the group (McGarty, 1999), as well as perceiver readiness or categories used for others (Turner, 1985, 1987). For example, an individual may categorize others based on race, nationality, religion, veteran status, or a combination of these, and this categorization often occurs based on the groups most salient to the perceiver (Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McCarty, 1994). Another theory of identity social scientists use is identity theory (IT), which focuses on the meanings and expectations associated with the role a person holds (Burke & Tully, 1977).

Social psychologists argued scholars should synthesize these theories so both macro, or group level, and micro, or role level, identity needs are considered simultaneously (Stets & Burke, 2000). Recently, scholars proposed a social identity approach (SIA), which blends these theories (Postmes & Branscombe, 2010). SIA focuses on how the actions of individuals stem from the groups to which they belong. Such an approach privileges the group and overlooks other potential factors such as personal relationships, feelings, beliefs, and values that may differ from other members of the group. Additionally, communication is not present in a social identity approach as the theorists presume individuals conform to the norms of the group, but explanations of exactly how this process occurs through communication are lacking (Hecht, 1993).

The communication theory of identity's (CTI) central premise is that individuals display identity in diverse ways, depending on context. Specifically, Hecht (1993) proposed four identity frames individuals use to communicate: personal, enactment, relational, and communal. Hecht also proposed the orientation of these frames shape identity portrayal because how an individual communicates reveals their identity (Hecht, 1993). Hecht grounded CTI in work on dialectics (Baxter, 1988) and paradoxes (Capra, 1975) because "[a] dialectical perspective tells us that there are polarities or contradictions in all social life" (Hecht, 1993, p. 76). Hecht (1993) expanded on this line of reasoning by explaining, "[w]e often think of contradictions between only two elements at a time" (p. 76) and this thought process has led to a conceptualization of identity as a "dialectic between the individual and society" (p. 76). Hecht then showed how oppositions are not dyadic because three or more elements can simultaneously be in

conflict or concert. Consider a military veteran who has a spouse, children, an occupation, and friends. CTI proposes these multiple roles would be in tension and influence a veteran's identity portrayal. Grounded in this fundamental understanding of multiple simultaneous sources of influence, Hecht proposed four identity frames. Hecht further theorized these frames as layered, interpenetrated, and in tension with each other. Germane to understanding these frames is Hecht's claim that "identity is inherently a communicative process and must be understood as a transaction in which messages are exchanged" (p. 78). The frames proposed by Hecht (1993) are communication centric, but draw from literature in anthropology, psychology, and sociology to create a theory that considers identity from a multifaceted and layered approach.

The four identity frames Hecht (1993) proposed—personal, enactment, relational, and communal—allow individuals to display different portions of an individual's identity. The *personal* frame considers self-cognition and spiritual awareness, which influence how individuals define and describe themselves to both the self and others. In the *enactment* frame, Hecht argues that only through communication is identity revealed because "[n]ot all messages are about identity, but identity is part of all messages" (p. 79). Because communication has both content and relationship dimensions (Watzlawick, Bavelas, & Jackson, 1967), Hecht argues an enactment frame cannot exist without a relationship frame. The *relationship* frame is the most complex of the frames proposed by Hecht as it is a frame with sub-frames. Hecht reasoned the presented self is a product of who else is present. For example, if several veterans are in the presence of a military veteran, the veteran is more likely to use military jargon and slang than when surrounded

by civilians. The second sub-frame deals with interpersonal relationships, and the third with the relational identity of a dyad in relation to a larger group. A veteran will speak to a spouse differently than they speak to a manager at work. Additionally, if a veteran and spouse share a military identity, they will be less likely to display this identity when interacting with civilian couples. The fourth frame proposed by Hecht is the *communal* frame, and this frame most closely aligns with SIT as it considers the identity of groups and how such group identities influence the identity of the individual. The key concept of CTI is there is no singular identity individuals display, but as the orientation of frames change, the identity portrayed changes as well.

Hecht's (1993) proposal of CTI is complex. The initial conceptualization of CTI was non-parsimonious and difficult to validate, as it is challenging to assess all four frames simultaneously, and especially when the frames are constantly changing. Perhaps it is for this reason CTI was rarely used until it was extended by Jung and Hecht (2004) who proposed the value of CTI may lie in examining the *identity gaps* of individuals. Identity gaps are "discrepancies between or among the four frames of identity" (p. 268). Jung and Hecht developed two scales to measure two of the possible 11 identity gaps, one for every combination of the four frames. The two gaps the researchers measured were the personal-relational and personal-enacted identity gaps. After the researchers created reliable scales, they examined how these gaps were related to communication satisfaction, feeling understood, and communication competence. Results of their research indicate identity gaps are negatively correlated with communication outcomes. Meaning that, as the gap between personal identity and either relational or enacted



identities increased, the amount of reported communication satisfaction, feeling understood, and communication competence decreased. Important to the present study is Jung and Hecht's (2004) conclusion that "identity gaps may also have potential associations with psychological issues such as depression and behavioral issues such as drug use and violent behavior" (p. 280). If veterans perceive a gap between their veteran, or communal identity, and their personal, enactment, or relational identity, or any combination thereof, then they may be at risk of the negative behaviors Jung and Hecht describe.

As previously mentioned, research using CTI is sparse, but the proposal of identity gaps has led scholars to begin to assess communication phenomena through this theoretical lens. Urban and Orbe (2010) performed a qualitative analysis of the stories of immigrants to the United States and noted five combinations of identity gaps. One important finding of Urban and Orbe involves their conclusion that "competing cultural worldviews impact immigrant identity negotiation and influence each [other] identity gap" (p. 315). Although most veterans are not immigrants, veterans still often experience culture shock when leaving the strict totalistic organization of the USM and reentering civilian life (Howe & Shpeer, 2019; Koenig et al., 2014). Therefore, the findings of Urban and Orbe (2010) may be transferrable to the current investigation, if researchers can accurately assume that the inculcated culture of the military can "clash" (Howe & Shpeer, 2019) with civilian culture.

In another study inspired by CTI, Brooks and Pitts (2016) examined how students from the U.S. interacted with those from Singapore and focused on intercultural

communication. A key finding was that some students *wanted* to have gaps between personal and communal layers. The researchers describe how many students from the U.S. wanted students from Singapore to view the U.S. students as individuals and not as Americans. These students made a conscious effort to distance themselves from the communal identity of American, and especially if they perceived the American stereotype as negative. Another key contribution of Brooks and Pitts is it supplies evidence of how communal identity is observable when distinct cultural differences exist between two individuals who are interacting. Specifically, the research of Brooks and Pitts provides evidence that when two groups or cultures differ, as is the case with veteran-civilian relations, the communal identity frame may play a key role in either helping or interfering with interpersonal interactions. This is a crucial finding, as other theorists (Jung & Hecht, 2004; Jung, Hecht, & Wadsworth, 2007; Wadsworth, Hecht, & Jung, 2008) noted previously that the communal frame was difficult to assess as the macro nature of this frame may have a vast number of influential sources.

Phillips et al., (2018) extended CTI by studying identity gaps within family communication. The researchers found if a family member felt they could not be true to their personal identity with their family members, because of the sway of enactment and relational frames, they were less likely to be committed to the family. Important to the study at hand are the findings of the gap between relational and communal identities. Phillips et al. found participants with lower family identification were more vulnerable to negative outcomes (e.g., estrangement, lack of social support) as compared to highly identified participants. When applied to the present study, the findings of Phillips et al.

may suggest veterans who do not have a strong family identity, but have a strong military veteran identity, may become estranged from their family, and lose this source of social support. Furthermore, an extension of these findings would suggest that, when communal identity is greater than relational identity, individuals will look to satiate the communal identity (e.g., veterans may avoid civilian relationships).

In a recent study, Rubinsky (2019) examined how polyamorous couples, or those who “pursue multiple concurrent romantic relationships with the permission of their partners” (McCoy et al., 2015, p. 134), navigated identity gaps. Rubinsky found identity gaps were particularly salient for polyamorous individuals, and identity gaps accounted for more variance in statistical models than did interpersonal communication competence. Furthermore, the researcher found identity gaps had a significant negative relationship with communication competence, a finding which echoes the findings of Jung and Hecht (2004). Rubinsky (2019) also stated, “This extends previous research on CTI because in addition to accounting for some of the variance explained by communication phenomena, identity gaps may be relevant in the study of cognitive phenomena” (p. 26); in this case, jealousy. Because of identity gaps, between communal-relational and/or communal-enactment identity frames, which form from the incongruity of military and civilian identities, contempt toward civilians is a probability. Given this understanding, the current study develops a scale to assess the amount of contempt veterans feel toward civilian communication. Considering identity gaps are related to cognitive phenomena, then it is plausible that violations of a veteran’s military identity could make veterans perceive identity gaps and arouse feelings of contempt.

## Contempt, Anger, and Disgust Triad

Contempt is a moral emotion defined as “a strong aversion similar to disgust, cool disregard, or amused dismissiveness” (Bell, 2013, p. 27). Contempt is one of three moral emotions which form the contempt, anger, and disgust (CAD) triad (Rozin et al., 1999). Izard (1971) named these three moral emotions the hostility triad and supported this assertion by showing how all three emotions occur in everyday interactions and all involve the negative evaluation of others. Rozin et al. (1999) stated the reason many psychologists are interested in moral emotions is because “[a]uthors in a variety of fields have begun to argue that emotions are themselves a kind of perception or rationality” (p. 574). One of the differentiators between the moral emotion of contempt and other emotions is the lack of a single characteristic feeling or behavioral marker. When people are sad, they often cry; when amused, they smile; when joyful, they feel elation, but when feeling *contempt*, individuals often do not have a singular reaction but a suite of emotions. Therefore, capturing the emotion of contempt felt by an individual requires measurement rather than observation. As Bell (2013) explained, “contempt seems to lack a characteristic feeling . . . one distinctive feature of contempt is that it readily combines with a wide variety of affects” (p. 27).

Rozin et al. (1999) proposed the CAD triad hypothesis has two fundamental principles. The first is, although contempt, anger, and disgust have much in common, they have differences stemming from the stimulation of the emotion. Rozin et al. link *anger* to autonomy, as they argue when someone threatens an individual’s personal autonomy, anger is the emotion likely to arise. For example, when driving on a two-lane

highway, and two tractor-trailers are driving slowly side-by-side blocking the driver from passing, the driver will often become angry because of autonomy threat. Rozin et al. further theorize individuals feel *disgust* when an individual threatens what another holds as divine. From religious texts to the U.S. Bill of Rights, there are many examples of textual artifacts held as divine. If another individual were to deface or defame these texts, it would create a feeling of disgust by those who hold these texts as divine, sacred, or transcendently meaningful. Rozin et al. link the final piece of the triad, *contempt*, to community. Much, but not all, of identity is rooted in groups to which individuals claim oneness or belongingness to (Tajfel, 1979). Therefore, when a group or community is under threat, it creates a need for the members to reaffirm the superiority of the group (Brown & Starkey, 2000; Ploeger & Bisel, 2013). One way members can reestablish group superiority is by discounting, discrediting, and devaluing the attacker to the point a threat is no longer felt, as they now have a mental model of the attacker as inferior and not worthy of interactions (Padilla-Walker & Jensen, 2015; Wirshbo, 1990). While counter-intuitive, contempt can both drive groups apart and bring groups together. Bell (2013) argues the way to combat racially based contempt is for all races to “mobilize a robust counter-contempt for racists” (p. 273). Contempt, anger, and disgust are closely related, but given the ability of the military to foster a deep sense of community, via the inculcated values and practices of members, then it is more probable military members have a shared sense of contempt than of disgust or anger.

Relevant to this study is the differentiation of primary reactions of contempt and thoughtful approaches which lead to contempt. Davidson and Youniss (1991) discuss

how intertwined morality and identity are. In their piece, the researchers argue “[m]oral judgement research has tended to obscure the important distinction between primary or spontaneous moral judgment and the more deliberative activity of moral theorizing” (p. 105). This differentiation between the spontaneous and the deliberative is key. The spontaneous response is “an integral aspect of one’s social conduct and self-presentation, and thus reflects a dimension of one’s identity” (Davidson & Youniss, 1991, p. 105). When a veteran responds to a scale item, it is unlikely the veteran contemplates how each statement makes them feel thoroughly. It is probable; however, veterans react instinctively to how they feel about the statement and this reaction may be how they respond. Rather than a thoughtful consideration of facts researchers could gather through interviews, this project looks to evoke and measure the spontaneous reaction. This reaction is likely influenced by the moral beliefs and values ingrained through military service, and more closely represents how veterans would respond in an everyday scenario than evaluations of moral theorizing would.

Morals and moral emotions are both biological and cultural (Fischer & Giner-Sorolla, 2016; Paxton & Greene, 2010). The strong culture of the military is likely to exert considerable influence on moral foundations. In a recent study, Shpeer and Howe (2020) found during basic training drill sergeants reframed morally-charged ideas about killing, honor, trustworthiness, and suicide to recruits. Of interest to this study was the contempt drill sergeants showed toward recruits as they laughed at them, degraded them, and punished them. The researchers found that in the tightly controlled entry phase into the USM, the communication acts of drill sergeants shaped military culture, which likely

results in a cultural influence on feelings of contempt. Shpeer and Howe (2020) detailed how new recruits glorified and mimicked the communication of drill sergeants.

Therefore, USM recruits may develop a predilection for an attitude of contempt, as that moral emotion has been modeled and normalized.

### **Focusing on the United States Military**

Serving in the USM is not a tranquil task (Knight, 1990). The intense constitutive communication of drill sergeants/instructors helps instill a value-laden military identity (Shpeer & Howe, 2020). This process is more difficult for those who are not accustomed to military communication (Pelts & Albright, 2014; Van Gilder, 2018). Although military units differ in the specific actions performed during entry training, they each center around the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) and are focused on indoctrinating military values (Howe & Hinderaker, 2018; Newton, Gilchrist, Devin, & Bradley, 2016; Sørensen, 2011). The Military Leadership Diversity Commission (2009) summarizes these values and a cursory overview reveals the values among branches are more similar than different (see Table 1). The U.S. Army is the largest military branch, with over 470,000 members, which accounts for 36.6% of the USM force (Council on Foreign Relations, 2018). Therefore, examples of value inculcation in the U.S. Army are provided, and Table 1 shows how these values are similar to those adopted by other branches.

**Table 1**

***The Core Values of the Department of Defense (DoD) and Military Branches***

| Branch or Unit        | Adopted Values   |
|-----------------------|--|
| Air Force             | Integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all we do            |
| Army                  | Loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, personal courage |
| Coast Guard           | Honor, respect, devotion to duty   |
| Department of Defense | Duty, integrity, ethics, honor, courage, loyalty                             |
| Marine Corps          | Honor, courage, commitment   |
| Navy                  | Honor, courage, commitment   |

Note: (Military Leadership Diversity Commission, 2009, p. 1)

Entry training has two main goals. The first goal is to train new military members in the fundamentals of military warfare, or as the U.S. Army website states: “Basic Combat Training, often known as ‘boot camp’, is your introduction to Army service, and where you will learn the traditions, tactics and methods of becoming a Soldier” (U.S. Army, 2019, para. 1). The second goal of military training is to transform individual members from across the country, and in some cases the world, into a cohesive fighting force. The Army phrases this goal as:

During Basic, you’ll learn how to work as a member of a team to accomplish tasks. You’ll learn discipline, including *proper* dress, marching, and grooming standards. Most importantly, you’ll be instilled with the Seven Core Army Values and the Soldier Creed. (U.S. Army, 2019, para. 2, emphasis added).

This second goal begins on the first day of reception when the military requires all male recruits to pay for a military barber to shave their head; then all new recruits turn in their



civilian clothes, jewelry, and electronics in exchange for military activewear, sleepwear, and uniforms (Herbert, 2007; Jones, 2019). This symbolic and literal stripping away of layer after layer of civilian identification markers reduces some of the clear differences among military members—methods which tend to boost a sense of military and unit pride (Howe & Hinderaker, 2018; Knight, 1990). Furthermore, the U.S. Army's (2019) use of the word “proper” supplies evidence of the value-laden and moral-centric nature of everyday tasks such as “dress, marching, and grooming standards” (para. 2).

Important to the present study, the military fosters a unique culture and identity, in part, to ensure recruits communicate according to specific professional and organizational norms. All commissioned officers are referred to as ‘sir’ or ‘ma’am’, as are civilians, and all non-commissioned officers are referred to by rank or specialization, such as ‘sergeant’, ‘lieutenant’, ‘gunnery sergeant’, ‘colonel’, or ‘drill sergeant’. New soldiers also learn to use military-based 24-hour time, the phonetic alphabet, and direct communication, or what at least one researcher referred to as “masculine” communication (Van Gilder, 2018). Members must also memorize and be able to recite creeds, values, songs, cadences, and technical military facts that help guide their military indoctrination and make sense of this new social and occupational environment (Herbert, 2007; Jones, 2019). The military goes to great lengths to ensure members experience a significant identity and communication transformation to increase the likelihood of servicemembers enduring the trials of combat. Not all military members serve in combat roles or deploy to combat zones, but members of the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines serve as soldiers, sailors, airmen (sic), and marines first and then perform their

specific duties second. Therefore, the military trains members for war, regardless of their future military duties, because all servicemembers are potential combatants (Arkin & Dobrofsky, 1978; Howe & Shpeer, 2019).

The strict value-laden military socialization process could shape and reshape the matrix of innate moral intuitions that military members had when they joined (Haidt, 2012). Furthermore, moral psychologists have found reliable measures that have practical implications in predicting actions such as voting behaviors (Franks & Scherr, 2015), water conservation (Lam, 1999), and intimate partner infidelity (Shariff & Norenzayan, 2011). Therefore, the ability to measure the amount of contempt veterans feel toward civilian communication could have a practical value of predicting if veterans may be likely to experience reverse-culture shock. Such reverse-culture shock may lead to negative physical and mental health issues (Koenig et al., 2014).

## Chapter 2

### **Theorizing a Veteran Contempt of Civilian Communication (VCCC) Scale**

Responses to mental health measures developed from largely civilian samples (e.g., anxiety, depression, alcoholism) vary drastically among military samples (Bloeser et al., 2014; Wilmoth et al., 2017). This inconsistency in measurement led Sayer et al. (2011) to develop the military to civilian questionnaire (M2CQ) as an assessment of veteran transition with a scale derived from veteran, rather than civilian, responses. This scale asks participants to rate how much difficulty they have had, over the past 30 days, regarding 16 different scenarios such as: “Feeling like you belong in ‘civilian’ society?” and “Confiding or sharing personal thoughts and feelings?” This scale could prove useful in assessing military veterans who are willing and able to seek help and be honest about their reintegration experiences. However, the method of development of the M2CQ may limit the use of this measure. The M2CQ was developed and validated using a sample of combat veterans who had been recently deployed and under the care of the Department of Veteran Affairs. Therefore, this measure may not pertain to non-combat veterans. Additionally, the M2CQ asks veterans to engage in higher-order thinking as they must recall the last 30 days. This level of thinking may result in more calculated and deliberative responses, or moral reasoning, than spontaneous reactions. Sayer et al. report the main purpose of this measure was to develop a “self-report measure of postdeployment community reintegration difficulty” (p. 660), but given that not all veterans deploy, this scale may not be suitable to use in non-combat veteran populations. Furthermore, given the average 14 of 20 veterans who commit suicide are not under the

care of the Department of Veteran Affairs (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2019), and veterans often have difficulty interacting with medical practitioners during reintegration (Brenner et al., 2008), perhaps the M2CQ could be benefitted by additional measures and measurement strategies.

Considering the research on socialization, SIT, and moral emotions, it may be beneficial to measure veterans' beliefs about civilian communication. If civilian communication violates communal military values, it may trigger contempt from military veterans (Ahern et al., 2015). Veterans may communicate this contempt, or avoid the target of their contempt, based on the current alignment of relational and enactment identity frames (Howe & Shpeer, 2019; Scheufele, Shanahan, & Lee, 2001). If military veterans have unexpressed contempt, this may lead to isolation, feelings of exclusion, and/or missing familiar camaraderie (Smith & True, 2014). Additionally, civilians may also feel contempt for veteran communication, which could lead to a downward self-perpetuating cycle of isolation (Berndtsson, Dandeker, & Yden, 2015; Liggans et al., 2018). Therefore, a scale measuring the amount of contempt veterans feel toward civilian communication may prove useful in assessing the ability of military members to reintegrate into society.

### **Step One: Theoretical Concept and Item Generation**

Carpenter (2018) conducted a meta-analysis of 600 published journal articles, where researchers used exploratory factor analysis for scale development, and then supplied a ten-step process to aid researchers interested in developing scales. The scale development process in this project followed these ten steps and then added further

validation methods suggested by Hinkin (1998). These validation practices extended beyond exploratory factor analysis to include convergent and discriminant validity analyses. Carpenter (2018) served as a guide in determining specific validation strategies and cut-off values, in conjunction with the best practices laid out by other scholars (e.g., Cronbach & Meehl, 1955; Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2013; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The following paragraphs explain how this scale was developed.

### **Theoretical Concept Defined**

Prior research has increased scholarly understanding of the theoretical concept intended to be developed and measured here, which is (i.e., contempt), which the veteran contempt of civilian communication (VCCC) scale. The researcher used prior research as a guide (Broom, 2006; DeVellis, 2012) for developing the “intended meaning and breadth of the theoretical concept” (Carpenter, 2018, p. 26) as mentioned above. The new scale measures the degree of contempt, or “cool dismissiveness” (Bell, 2013, p. 27), military veterans feel toward civilian communication. Initial items were generated after reviewing qualitative literature on veterans’ interactions with civilians (e.g., Osborne, 2013; Olsen et al., 2014; Strayer & Ellenhorn, 1975; Wilson et al., 2019). This first scale item generation process considered two types of communication: verbal and non-verbal. The researcher considered four types of verbal communication: face-to-face, mobile phone, social networking sites, and handwritten letters. Regarding non-verbal communication, Burgoon, Guerrero, and Floyd (2016) outline eight dimensions the researcher relied on to generate items: appearance, artifacts, chronemics, haptics, kinesics, olfactics, proxemics, and vocalics. The researcher generated five items for each

of the 12 categories (four verbal and eight non-verbal) for a total of sixty initial items. A sample verbal item would be “Civilians are overly sensitive to profanity” and a sample non-verbal item is “Civilians do not pay attention to their surroundings”.

### **Expert Academic Review**

After this initial item generation ( $N = 60$ ), the researcher sought expert advice as a source of peer review (Carpenter, 2018; Worthington & Whittaker, 2006), and to bolster both face and content validity. The first expert who supplied feedback has worked as an academic for over fifteen years, holds a doctorate degree in organizational communication, and is a full professor at a research university. The expert supplied advice about what was missing and what could be removed from the items. The expert noted no items used military language (e.g., jargon, acronyms). Because of the desire to capture veteran contempt of civilian communication, it was decided contempt may be more adequately measured by using language familiar to the participants (Daza, Novy, Stanley, & Averill, 2002; Wilmoth et al., 2017), who, in this study, are military veterans. The author therefore developed more items which used military jargon, resulting in 46 additional items ( $N = 106$ ). Anchors of “Hell No” and “Hell Yes” were also set as such language is normative in veteran communication and was believed to be more appropriate for the target population than traditional anchor points.

The author then met with the same academic expert again and they created, through theorization, three criteria for the wording of items. Specifically, the author and expert agreed each item should: (a) emphasize communication, (b) arouse contempt, and (c) conjure a mental model of a prototypical civilian. Rewording of items that did not

meet these criteria ensued. During this iteration of item generation, the researcher added six reverse-coded items ( $N = 112$ ).

### **Expert Veteran Provider Reviews**

At this point the author contacted three non-academic experts, who work extensively with veterans, and asked them to read the items and supply feedback about what they would delete, add, or edit (DeVellis, 2012; Ruel, Wagner, & Gillespie, 2016) to bolster face and content validity. Two of the experts have worked with veterans as veteran support staff in a university setting for a combined 21 years. The third expert was a licensed clinical social worker who has served in the military and has counseled veterans for over 20 years. These experts suggested item deletions, edits, and additions which resulted in 14 more items being added ( $N = 126$ ).

### **Veteran Open-Ended Questioning**

The researcher sought feedback directly from veterans to further refine the scale (Broom, 2006; Worthington & Whittaker, 2006) and to increase content validity. The researcher distributed an open-ended questionnaire to personal contacts who were veterans, which asked: “What civilian communication do you find contemptuous?” and “What civilian communication do you appreciate?” The author’s university IRB supplied retroactive approval for use of these responses.

Participants ( $N = 6$ ) all wrote about how indirect communication from civilians was vexing and aroused contempt. One example of this type of communication is exemplified in the following participant response:

I also find the lack of directness exceptionally annoying. I do not know if this is something I learned in the military (I've been told that many Veterans have this issue once they leave service), but I have to significantly soften my language when speaking with civilians.

Other participants echoed this belief with statements such as: “They refuse to be honest about their communication. For example: they will use nice words instead of words that come to mind”, “They do not say what they mean”, and “Feigned sincerity all the time, regardless of whether they are or not.” Furthermore, some participants made moral assumptions about all civilians in their responses such as:

Lack of courage: civilians have no ability to have difficult conversations, in person, on the spot. They will align behind your back (this is also known as gossip), pack up on you, and then limply present feedback that is coated in so much velvet you have no idea what they're talking about.

Responses illustrated an overwhelming desire for truth over tact, but a belief that civilians communicated in a way that valued tact over truth.

However, when responding to what participants appreciated about civilian communication, they indicated that, at times, they appreciated civilians’ indirectness. For instance, one participant wrote:

In the civilian world, it feels like there is a lot more feedback, and it is typically delivered in a much softer tone. That helps me manage my bruised ego. However, it can still be really hard to figure out what is real feedback vs. just fluffy words meant to make me feel better.



Other participants had similar responses with statements such as: “They are informal which at times can be significant better and faster than the standard chain of command” and “While they fake sincerity, they're also more likely to actually help and be sincere as well.” Another topic that was mentioned by military veterans revolved around the use of vulgarity and included phrases such as, “Typically inclusive and sensitive: the debauched, sophomoric communication style of the military (especially my Marine Corps) was exhausting and negative. It is mostly absent in the civilian world” and “They are nicer about communication than we are. They don’t curse as much.” It was apparent from these responses that, although veterans had a shared understanding of what they disliked about civilian communication (i.e., indirectness), there were some differences in what veterans appreciated about civilian communication.

After receiving these responses, the author consulted the academic expert about these findings. They determined there appeared to be two subdimensions of how veterans perceived civilian communication: truth and tact. Not enough data were collected to perform an extensive qualitative analysis, but enough responses were gathered to supply some support for the idea of a tension between truth and tact. These two dimensions shared tensions similar to those found in the communication competence literature between effectiveness and appropriateness (Lane, 2016; Spitzberg, 1983). Based on the context of the communicative event, veterans may prefer tact over truth. Specifically, in high-stake situations, veterans are likely to prefer truth over tact as they default to communication patterns instilled in the military. No items were edited, added, or

removed at this point; however, it was noted there could be two sub-dimensions of truth and tact in veterans' perceptions of civilian communication.

### **Veteran Item Review**

The author then emailed the list of scale items to three veterans for them to supply feedback about what items could be added, removed, or edited (Ruel et al., 2016).

Veterans suggested minimal changes to the statements and affirmed these items reflected their own experiences. At this point, the scale's 126 drafted items remained. The author and the expert decided this number of items was too demanding of participants' time and attention. Therefore, the researcher pursued a source of systematic item reduction.

### **Determination of Items Included for Analysis**

The author and the expert read and reread the items while keeping in mind the feedback of non-academic experts, veterans, and earlier qualitative research (Clark & Watson, 1995). The researcher noted, during this iterative process, items could be categorized as either general or specific communication. General communication items assessed broad assumptions, such as "Civilian talk is stupid." Specific items referred to unique situational communication, such as "Civilians should not walk and talk on the cell phone." The author and academic expert agreed general communication items were more likely to capture a consistent level of contempt, or dismissiveness, among veterans, whereas specific items may evoke more anger or disgust, as opposed to contempt (see Bell, 2013; Rozin et al., 1999). The primary reason that general items were chosen to be retained was because the overarching goal of the project was to create a scale that measured the amount of contempt veterans feel toward a generalized civilian other. Some

specific items such as “Civilians should not walk and talk on the cell phone” may evoke anger if they are perceived as threatening autonomy or disgust if they are violating the military code of conduct. Furthermore, individual items may conjure an image of the most recent individual the veteran has seen performing this act instead of a generalized other, and may then prompt a response to the individual person and not the general public. Therefore, the researcher coded items as either general or specific communication, and only general items were kept ( $N = 61$ ). This reduction both enhanced the generalizability of items and simultaneously created a broader applicability of this scale.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Developing and Analyzing the VCCC**

In the first study, the 61 testable items generated were presented to participants via an online survey. Exploratory factor analysis was then used to examine scale and factor structures.

#### **Study 1 Method**

After receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from the researcher's university, the researcher distributed a survey, hosted by Qualtrics, to Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) participants. The next sections detail the participants, procedures, data cleaning, and data analysis used in this study.

#### **Step Two: Sampling and Participants**

After IRB approval, the researcher recruited participants and received 250 responses. Requirements for completing the study were that the participant had served in the military since September 11, 2001 and was between the inclusive age of 18 and 50. These ages were set to ensure the participant was old enough to consent and to increase the likelihood the veteran was a post-9/11 veteran. Of the 250 responses received 21 responses failed the military (i.e. "Have you served in the United States Military since September 11, 2001?") or age verification questions embedded in the survey. Additionally, 14 participants failed one or more attention check verification questions. The number of valid responses retained was 215, a "fair" sample size according to Comrey and Lee (1992). Most participants stated they were assigned male at birth (67.9%) and were also white (68.4%). The military is also mostly men (83.5%) and white

(69.0%) according to a Department of Defense: Demographics Profile of the Military Community (2018) report. Most other participants identified as being assigned female at birth, save two who identified as being assigned undetermined. Regarding race and ethnicity, other reported identifications were black or African American (11.6%), multiracial (9.8%), Asian (1.9%), Spanish (1.4%), indigenous American (0.9%), and other (0.9%). One participant that selected other said “I am an American and refuse to be labeled by anything else” and the other left the field blank. Participants’ age ranged from 19 to 50 ( $M = 35.26$ ,  $SD = 7.00$ ). Regarding education, 47.1% reported two years or less of college, 34.8% reported completing a bachelor’s degree, 15.2% reported completing a master’s degree, and 3% reported having a doctoral or professional degree.

Participants reported serving in the Army (46.5%), Air Force (20.0%), Navy (17.7%), Marines (10.2%), and Coast Guard (0.9%). Ten participants did not disclose the branch in which they had served. Many participants had served in a combat area (50.7%). The remaining participants reported they had been stationed overseas at a non-combat location (14.0%), that they had only been stationed in the United States (29.3%), or did not disclose where they had been stationed (6.0%). Participants’ deployment times ranged from 0 to 55 months ( $M = 7.12$ ,  $SD = 9.30$ ) and participants reported leaving the military 85.19 months ago, or approximately 7 years and 1 month, on average ( $SD = 67.20$ ).

The researcher compensated participants for their participation at a fair wage, via MTurk’s payment process. Qualtrics estimated the survey would take six minutes to complete; therefore, at a wage of \$10.00 an hour, participants received \$1.00 for

completing the study, which is above the market rate for MTurk (Necka, Cacioppo, Norman, & Cacioppo, 2016). Such a move negates one of the chief complaints of using an MTurk sample: exploitative compensation. Another potential threat to validity involves skepticism about whether online respondents are truthful in their responses (Downs, Holbrook, Sheng, & Cranor, 2010). These researchers supply strategies to increase the dependability of MTurk responses, such as attention check and reverse coded items, custom prescreens, and unique survey codes all of which were employed in this study. Furthermore, Casler, Bickel, and Hackett (2013) found MTurk respondents had no significant differences in how they answered scale items than did either participants recruited from social media or participants who came to the lab. In fact, the only difference found between MTurk respondents and social media and lab respondents was MTurk respondents were more diverse in terms of ethnicity, socio-economic status, biological sex, and age. Thus, using an MTurk sample may have provided the greatest opportunity to reach the most diverse sample of post-9/11 veterans possible with a cross-sectional survey.

### **Procedure**

Once participants elected to participate they were referred to the study website where they completed a survey hosted by Qualtrics. The first page presented the standard online university consent document which informed participants of their rights, told them they could withdraw from the study at any time, and supplied clear information about compensation. After participants agreed to participate in the study, they were directed to a new page where they were asked if they were between 18 and 50 years of age and if

they had served in the military since September 11, 2001. Not agreeing to the consent form or answering “no” to either the age or veteran status question resulted in survey termination. These age and veteran checks served as a secondary filter to the MTurk filters of age and military veteran status that were employed during recruitment (Downs et al., 2010).

Those who passed the eligibility questions proceeded to complete the study. The logic function in Qualtrics randomly ordered scale items to spread participant fatigue across items, additionally the scale was divided into four blocks that were also randomly ordered. The only scale presented was the 61-item veteran contempt of civilian communication (VCCC) described above (see Appendix A for complete scale). Participants completed the demographic portion after completing the scale.

### **Step Three: Data Cleaning**

Data cleaning and analysis were conducted using IBM’s SPSS v.26 software package. The first step was to analyze missing data to see if absent responses were systematic (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). The missing value analysis (MVA) function in SPSS was used to assess Little’s test of missing data using estimated means (EM). Little’s test was non-significant [ $\chi^2 (64, N = 215) = 59.236, p = .694$ ]; therefore, the researcher concluded that data were not likely systematically missing. The results from Mahalanobis  $D^2$  indicated that there were some multivariate outliers. The researcher examined 12 responses on a case by case basis and determined that only one of them had data that was not plausible as the participant reported 86 months of deployment but also 86 months of time in the military, and it would be impossible to serve the same amount of

time deployed as in the military because, at a minimum, basic training has to occur. It is possible the participant misread the question; therefore months of deployment was removed and treated as missing data.

Little's test was non-significant, and the total percent of missing data was less than 2.0%; therefore, missing data were imputed in IBM's SPSS v. 26 using the expectation maximization (EM) function in the missing values analysis (MVA) (IBM Knowledge Center, n.d.).

#### **Step Four: Data Factorability**

The researcher conducted an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using the maximum likelihood method (Worthington & Whittaker, 2006). Factors were based on eigenvalues > 1.00, with items sorted by size, and any loadings < .30 suppressed. The EFA utilized oblique Promax rotation (Thompson, 2004). The researcher first examined the correlation matrix of all scale items, and noted that most items had a relationship of .20 or higher and were significantly correlated. The researcher then examined the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) score to see if the value was at or above .60, as Kaiser (1974) considers this a "mediocre" score. KMO in this study was .938, a "marvelous" score according to Kaiser (1974). Additionally, Bartlett's test of sphericity indicated that the items were suitable for factor analysis [ $\chi^2 (1770, N = 215) = 8130.84, p < .001$ ].

Therefore, further examination of EFA results began (McCroskey & Young, 1979; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007) for the veteran contempt of civilian communication (VCCC) scale (See Appendix A for initial items).



### **Step Five-Ten: Exploratory Factor Analysis**

Factors were determined by examining the scree plot (Preacher & MacCallum, 2003), eigenvalues, and percentage of variance explained. The guidelines for factor loadings were loadings at or above .50 with no cross-loaded items (Kachigan, 1986; Russell, 2002; Tinsley & Tinsley, 1987). Factors needed to have at least three indicators for retention in the scale, as less than three factors is unidentified, although the preferred number was four or more (Kline, 2013). Following these guidelines, the researcher analyzed EFA results in an iterative manner and removed items that did not fit within these standards (see Table 2 for more details).

**Table 2*****Summary of EFA Iterations***

| Iteration | Item<br>Removed | Reasoning                            |
|-----------|-----------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1         | 37              | Loading > 1.00                       |
| 2         | 54              | No loadings > .30 on any factor      |
| 3         | 28              | No loadings > .30 on any factor      |
| 4         | 15              | No loadings > .30 on any factor      |
| 5         | 38              | No loadings > .30 on any factor      |
| 6         | 53              | No loadings > .30 on any factor      |
| 7         | 19              | No loadings > .30 on any factor      |
| 8         | 57              | 2 loadings > .30; .323 and .375      |
| 9         | 39              | No loadings > .30 on any factor      |
| 10        | 14              | 2 loadings > .30; .386 and -.356     |
| 11        | 3               | Poorest loading at .342              |
| 12        | 40              | 2 loadings > .30; .336 and .306      |
| 13        | 31              | 2 loadings > .30; .379 and .351      |
| 14        | 41              | Poorest loading on a two-item factor |
| 15        | 42              | Poorest loading at .349              |
| 16        | 13              | Poorest loading on a two-item factor |
| 17        | 12              | 2 loadings > .30; .319 and .473      |
| 18        | 17              | 2 loadings > .30; .411 and .464      |
| 19        | 18              | Poorest loading at .382              |
| 20        | 11              | 2 loadings > .30; .432 and .313      |
| 21        | 9               | 2 loadings > .30; .450 and .318      |
| 22        | 22              | 2 loadings > .30; .478 and .403      |
| 23        | 26              | Poorest loading at .424              |
| 24        | 58              | 2 loadings > .30; .505 and .508      |
| 25        | 10              | Poorest loading at .426              |
| 26        | 30              | 2 loadings > .30; .303 and .377      |
| 27        | 5               | Poorest loading on a two-item factor |
| 28        | 8               | One-item factor                      |
| 29        | 23              | Poorest loading at .324              |
| 30        | 56              | Poorest loading at .452              |
| 31        | 16              | Poorest loading at .458              |
| 32        | 29              | Poorest loading at .497              |
| 33        | 4               | No loadings > .30 on any factor      |
| 34        | 35              | No loadings > .30 on any factor      |
| 35        | 33              | Poorest loading at .360              |
| 36        | 1               | Poorest loading at .393              |
| 37        | 6               | Poorest loading at .377              |
| 38        | 59              | Poorest loading at .351              |
| 39        | 47              | Poorest loading at .374              |
| 40        | 25              | Poorest loading at .460              |
| 41        | 49              | Poorest loading at .480              |

## Study 1 Results

At the conclusion of iteration, 32 five factors remained. Two of the factors had more than four items but the other three factors had three indicators each. An examination of the scree plot showed a flattening out after the second factor. Additionally, examination of the eigenvalues revealed that factor one had a value of 11.62, factor two had an eigenvalue of 2.32, and factors three, four, and five all had values  $< 2.00$ . Therefore, the eigenvalues of factors to be extracted was set to  $> 2.00$  and iterative analysis continued using the items that items that had been retained. After 41 iterations rotated EFA results showed two factors with no items that loaded  $< .50$  and no cross-loaded items. Furthermore, Bartlett's test was significant [ $\chi^2 (190, N = 215) = 2523.04, p < .001$ ] and KMO = .942. Therefore, the scale was deemed suitable for conducting reliability analysis.

The researcher then conducted a reliability analysis for each factor. Factor one had a Cronbach's alpha of .926 and factor two of .900. The factors were significantly and positively correlated at .634. Notably the item "I have contempt for the way civilians communicate" was one of the indicators for factor two, providing criterion validity of this scale, as the goal was to measure the amount of contempt veterans feel toward civilian communication.

| <b>Table 3</b>  |                    |                    |                  |
|---|--------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| <b><i>Final Two-Factor EFA Results</i></b>  |                    |                    |                  |
| Item  | Formative Contempt | Summative Contempt | Cronbach's alpha |
| Civilians talk like they know a lot more than they do.  | .825               |                    | .926             |
| Civilians disguise their intentions with indirect communication.  | .817               |                    |                  |
| Civilians misuse political correctness to hide their true intentions.   | .814               |                    |                  |
| Civilians "beat around the bush" when they talk.  | .761               |                    |                  |
| Civilians talk in a way that values embellishment more than efficiency.   | .754               |                    |                  |
| Civilians try to hide the truth by using misleading language.   | .732               |                    |                  |
| Civilians get their feelings hurt too easily when arguing.  | .702               |                    |                  |
| Civilians do not get to the point quickly.  | .652               |                    |                  |
| Civilians value flowery language over truth.  | .613               |                    |                  |
| Civilians do not speak accurately about the rest of the world.  | .606               |                    |                  |
| Civilians judge foul language.  | .601               |                    |                  |
| Civilians will betray others to get ahead.  | .566               |                    |                  |
| Civilians are overly sensitive to profanity.  | .552               |                    |                  |
| Civilian talk is stupid.  |                    | .892               | .900             |
| Civilian conversations are meaningless.   |                    | .843               |                  |
| Civilian communication makes as much sense as a "football bat".   |                    | .790               |                  |
| I have contempt for the way civilians communicate.  |                    | .720               |                  |
| Civilian talk is "FUBAR".   |                    | .645               |                  |
| Communicating with civilians is a waste of time.  |                    | .643               |                  |
| Civilian communication is "low-speed and high-drag".  |                    | .552               |                  |
| <i>Notes: Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood. Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization. Inter-factor Correlation = .634, p &lt; .001.</i> |                    |                    |                  |

The remaining items were also tested as a single factor scale to see how loadings might differ. An additional EFA was performed, with items forced to load on one factor, and all items loaded  $> .500$  and the one factor scale had a Cronbach's alpha of .939.

| <b>Table 4</b>  |      |                  |
|---|------|------------------|
| <b><i>Final Single-Factor EFA Results</i></b>   |      |                  |
| Item  | VCCC | Cronbach's alpha |
| Civilians talk like they know a lot more than they do.  | .759 | .939             |
| Civilians disguise their intentions with indirect communication.  | .739 |                  |
| Civilians misuse political correctness to hide their true intentions.                                   | .739 |                  |
| Civilians "beat around the bush" when they talk.  | .779 |                  |
| Civilians talk in a way that values embellishment more than efficiency.                                 | .705 |                  |
| Civilians try to hide the truth by using misleading language.   | .770 |                  |
| Civilians get their feelings hurt too easily when arguing.  | .699 |                  |
| Civilians do not get to the point quickly.  | .653 |                  |
| Civilians value flowery language over truth.  | .731 |                  |
| Civilians do not speak accurately about the rest of the world.  | .617 |                  |
| Civilians judge foul language.  | .547 |                  |
| Civilians will betray others to get ahead.  | .619 |                  |
| Civilians are overly sensitive to profanity.  | .567 |                  |
| Civilian talk is stupid.  | .626 |                  |
| Civilian conversations are meaningless.   | .573 |                  |
| Civilian communication makes as much sense as a "football bat".   | .654 |                  |
| I have contempt for the way civilians communicate.  | .509 |                  |
| Civilian talk is "FUBAR".   | .682 |                  |
| Communicating with civilians is a waste of time.  | .563 |                  |
| Civilian communication is "low-speed and high-drag".  | .675 |                  |
| <i>Notes:</i> Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood. Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization. |      |                  |

### **Study 1 Discussion**

The researcher and an academic expert examined the two factors to determine what labels might best capture the essence of these factors considering the purpose of this study. Initial thoughts were that implicit attitudes and explicit labeling were appropriate

factor labels, but further reflection led to theorizing these factors as *formative contempt*, or an implicit response to the violation of communal communication beliefs, and *summative contempt*, or an explicit label that suggests veterans' mental model of civilian communication. The discussion of the development and results of this process, including the two differing factors, are discussed in greater detail in the final chapter after Study 2 is performed. To that end, further testing, via confirmatory factor analysis and other validity assessments was necessary to better understand the function of this measure.

## Chapter 4

### Testing the VCCC

As previously explained, contempt is often invisible and not easily observable. The first factor of formative contempt included items such as: “Civilians talk like they know a lot more than they do” and “Civilians get their feelings hurt too easily when arguing”. Presumably, if veterans affirm these negative attributions of civilians, they will begin to feel contempt building, and may need to engage in self-monitoring behaviors, such as self-silencing. Researchers have found that veterans who engage in self-silencing for an extended period often engage in verbal conflict later (Howe & Shpeer, 2019). Therefore, formative contempt may show hidden mindsets that veterans feel but are unable to express. If veterans experiencing these mindsets can receive early interventions which offset the way they feel about civilians, then perhaps negative communication and health outcomes (e.g., social isolation, depression, verbal aggression) can be avoided. The second factor of summative contempt had indicators such as: “I have contempt for the way civilians communicate” and “Communicating with civilians is a waste of time”. Additionally, items in this factor included words such as “stupid”, “meaningless”, “contempt”, and “FUBAR”.

If veterans are willing to label a generalized civilian in such a manner and to communicate contempt toward civilians, then it is likely that they will be unwilling to communicate with civilians. Therefore, participants will be presented with the willingness to communicate scale and it is proposed that:

**H1:** VCCC [(a) overall (b) formative, and (c) summative] is inversely related to willingness to communicate.

Similarly, veterans that express a high amount of contempt toward civilian communication may be using such contempt to mask feelings of apprehension they have during conversation, as the communal norms are differing creating a broader identity gap. For this reason, veterans that experience a higher amount of contempt may also experience a higher amount of communication apprehension, or formally:

**H2:** VCCC [(a) overall (b) formative, and (c) summative] is positively associated with communication apprehension (H2).

Non-communication variables are also likely related to the VCCC. The military to civilian questionnaire (M2CQ) measures the difficulty that veterans have had, over the last 30 days, integrating to society. Veterans that are experiencing a higher amount of contempt for civilians likely have difficulty reintegrating. Reintegration issues have also been associated with loneliness. Although a veteran may experience contempt, they still have a human need for connection and therefore loneliness is likely to increase as contempt increases. To account for, or perhaps in concert with, the feeling of loneliness is the likelihood that a veteran will embrace their military identity to a greater extent than veterans that are experiencing less contempt. For these reasons it is proposed that:

**H3-5:** VCCC [(a) overall (b) formative, and (c) summative] is positively associated with the military to civilian questionnaire (H3), loneliness (H4), and military identity (H5).



Veterans that are experiencing a high amount of contempt may be feeling such emotions based on the reliance on previously held values and norms that they can no longer abide by. If this is the case it would be expected that veterans would look fondly on past experiences where they could embrace these values and norms as part of their identity, but may look negatively at their current situation and future prospects that do not allow for enactment of this identity. Such a belief leads to the theorization that:

**H6-8:** VCCC [(a) overall (b) formative, and (c) summative], is positively associated with participants' temporal satisfaction with life for the past (H6) but inversely related for the present (H7) and future (H8).

All veterans do not have the same experiences during their service, although the entry process is similar for most. Therefore, certain aspects of military training and experiences may influence how much contempt they report. This acknowledgement raises the following questions.

**RQ1-3:** Do participants of different branches (RQ1), sexes (RQ2), or deployment statuses (RQ3) score differently on the VCCC [(a) overall (b) formative, and (c) summative]?

In addition to general experiences time of exposure to combat or the military and time since the veteran left the military may also be related to the amount of contempt veterans feel and it is therefore asked:

**RQ4-6:** Is VCCC [(a) overall (b) formative, and (c) summative] associated with months of deployment (RQ4), time in the military (RQ5), or time since military departure (RQ6)?

## **Study 2 Method**

After receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from the researcher's university, the researcher distributed the survey, hosted by Qualtrics, to Amazon MTurk and Prolific research participants. The researcher compensated participants for their participation. Qualtrics estimated the survey would take fifteen minutes to complete; participants received \$3.00 for completing the study, a wage of \$12.00 an hour, which is well above the market rate for participants recruited online (Necka et al., 2016). As previously explained in Study 1, researchers have supplied strategies to increase the dependability of online responses, such as attention checks and unique survey codes which were employed in this study. Thus, the same approach was taken in Study 2 as is detailed in Study 1.

## **Study 2 Participants**

Of the 587 participants that began the study 88 responses failed the military or age verification questions embedded in the survey. Additionally, 33 participants failed one or more attention check verification questions. The number of valid responses retained was 466, a "good" sample size according to Comrey and Lee (1992). Most participants reported their biological sex, or the sex listed on their birth certificate, as male (67.8%), female (29.2%), whereas 0.6% were undetermined. The remaining participants did not respond to this question. Most participants identified as White (62.0%), Black or African American (14.4%), bi-/multi-racial (14.4%), Asian (2.4%), Latina/o/x (1.9%), indigenous American (1.1%), and other (1.5%). Participants who selected "other" did not report a specific racial or ethnic identity. Participants' age ranged from 19 to 50 ( $M = 34.76$ ,  $SD =$

6.68). Regarding education, 43.2% reported two years or less of college, 40.3% had completed a bachelor's degree, 11.2% had completed a master's degree, and 3.4% had a doctoral or professional degree. Education demographics similar to those of the general veteran population where 52.6% have no degree, 31.0% have an undergraduate degree, 8.9% have a master's degree, and 3.0% have a doctoral or professional degree (Rolen, 2017).

Participants reported serving in the Air Force (20.4%), Army (46.3%), Coast Guard (0.6%), Marines (10.2%), and Navy (23.0%). Ten participants did not disclose in which branch they served. Most participants reported only being stationed in the United States (44.6%), followed by those in an active combat zone (35.4%), and then those stationed overseas at a non-combat location (17.4%). Twelve participants did not disclose where they had been stationed. Participant deployment times averaged 7.65 months ( $SD = 10.18$ ). Participants had served in the military for 82.81 months, approximately 6 years and 11 months, on average ( $SD = 113.74$ ), and participants reported leaving the military 87.06 months, approximately 7 years and 3 months, ago ( $SD = 71.36$ ), on average.

## **Study 2 Procedure**

Once participants accessed the study, they completed a survey hosted by Qualtrics. The first page included an online consent document which informed participants of their rights, told them they could withdraw from the study at any time, and supplied clear information about compensation. After participants agreed to take part in the study, they were directed to a new page where they were asked if they were between 18 and 50 years of age and if they had served in the military since September 11, 2001.

Not agreeing to the consent form or answering “no” to either the age or veteran status question resulted in survey termination. This age and veteran check served as a secondary filter to the recruitment filters for age and post-9/11 veteran status (Downs et al., 2010).

Participants who agreed to the consent form and passed the verification questions, proceeded to complete the study. The logic function in Qualtrics randomly ordered scale items, on all scales, to enhance reliability by spreading participant fatigue across items and scales. The first scale presented was the 20-item VCCC described in Study 1 (see Appendix B for complete scale). Participants then completed five randomly-ordered scales which included willingness to communicate, communication apprehension, military to civilian questionnaire, UCLA loneliness scale, and the temporal satisfaction with life scale. The items for each individual scale were also randomly ordered using the logic functions in Qualtrics.

The researcher performed confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of scale variables in Mplus v. 8.2 (Muthén & Muthén, 2018). By default, Mplus makes the metric assumption and no adjustments to this calculation was made. The cleaned data was imported from SPSS to Mplus and maximum likelihood modeling was used for all analyses. Hu and Bentler’s (1999) recommendations were used as guidance to determine model fit. These researchers suggest that a model should have scores close to a  $RMSEA \leq .06$ ,  $CFI \geq .95$ , and  $SRMR \leq .08$ . However, as Brown (2015) notes, “Hu and Bentler’s (1999) use of the phrase ‘close to’ is not accidental, because the recommended values were found to fluctuate as a function of modeling combinations” (p. 74) and that “some researchers have asserted that the Hu and Bentler (1999) guidelines are far too conservative for many

types of models, including CFA models...” (p. 75), and other researchers such as Browne and Cudek (1993) have suggested that RMSEA values should be less than .10. Therefore, CFA models that meet the guidelines of Hu and Bentler (1999) were preferred, but models that were “close to” (Brown, 2015, p. 74) these values were accepted.

### ***Veteran Contempt of Civilian Communication***

The final twenty-item scale developed in Study 1 was used to measure the amount of contempt military veterans felt for civilian communication. This scale asked participants to rate the degree to which they agreed with statements such as: “Civilians value flowery language over truth”, “Civilians do not speak accurately about the rest of the world”, and “Civilians judge foul language” on a five-point Likert-type scale. In Study 1 two competing models were identified via EFA. The first was a two-factor model with two categories of variables labeled formative and summative. The second was a single-factor model where all items loaded on one factor. A third model, a bi-factor model, was tested as well. In the bi-factor model, the indicators could load on both the formative and summative factors and on an overall general factor simultaneously. Reise et al. (2010) define a bi-factor model as “latent structure where each item loads on a general factor. This general factor reflects what is common among the items and represents the individual differences on the target dimension that a researcher is most interested in” (p. 547), see Figure 1 for an illustration. A nested model is not possible (Kline, 2013) as “a second-order factor with two first-order factor indicators is not identified” (Muthen, 2008, n.p.). When creating the bi-factor model, the correlations of

the main factor and each sub-factor and between each sub-factor were set to 0 to avoid multicollinearity concerns (Muthen, 2008).

The two-factor model was tested first with items loaded according to the EFA results of Study 1 (see Table 3). This model's fit approached the values of Hu and Bentler (1999) [ $\chi^2(169, N = 466) = 695.58, p < .001$ ; RMSEA = .082 (CI: .076-.088); CFI = .923; SRMR = .059]. Examination of the completely standardized loadings revealed no items loading less than .500. Many researchers suggest that factor loadings should be greater than .70, however, Hulland (1999) explains how:

In practice it is common to find that at least several measurement items in an estimated model have loadings below the 0.7 threshold, particularly when new items or newly developed scales are employed. (p. 198)

Therefore, Hulland proposes “items with loadings of less than 0.4 (a threshold commonly used for factor analysis results) or 0.5 should be dropped” (p. 198). Therefore, since this is a new scale development the guidelines of dropping items provided by Hulland were employed, although the more restrictive guideline of .50 was used to enhance credibility, as other scholars have also done (e.g., Ertz et al., 2016; Truong & McColl, 2011) and proposed (Hair et al., 2006; Perry et al, 2015). Furthermore, the three indicators below .60, the proposed cutoff of Chin et al. (1997), would be rounded to .60 according to rounding rules and most indicators were higher than the cutoff of .70 proposed by Kline (2013). As all of the items loaded above .50, modification indexes (MI) were examined to see if model fit could be improved by allowing the errors of any indicators to covary. The items “Civilians judge foul language” and “Civilians are overly

sensitive to profanity” had a MI of 131.36. It seems likely that these items would have related errors as they both involve evaluating cursing; therefore, the errors of these indicators were allowed to correlate (Matsunaga; 2010). This improved the model fit [ $\chi^2$  (168,  $N = 466$ ) = 548.03,  $p < .001$ ; RMSEA = .070 (CI: .063-.076); CFI = .944; SRMR = .055] to a point that it was close to the guidelines of Hu and Bentler (1999). See Table 5 for final loadings.

| <b>Table 5</b>   |                    |                    |                  |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| <b><i>Final Two-Factor CFA Results</i></b>   |                    |                    |                  |
| Item   | Formative Contempt | Summative Contempt | Cronbach's alpha |
| Civilians talk like they know a lot more than they do.   | .753               |                    | .946             |
| Civilians disguise their intentions with indirect communication.   | .833               |                    |                  |
| Civilians misuse political correctness to hide their true intentions.  | .812               |                    |                  |
| Civilians "beat around the bush" when they talk.   | .781               |                    |                  |
| Civilians talk in a way that values embellishment more than efficiency.  | .790               |                    |                  |
| Civilians try to hide the truth by using misleading language.  | .818               |                    |                  |
| Civilians get their feeling hurt too easily when arguing.  | .817               |                    |                  |
| Civilians do not get to the point quickly.   | .762               |                    |                  |
| Civilians value flowery language over truth.   | .808               |                    |                  |
| Civilians do not speak accurately about the rest of the world.   | .745               |                    |                  |
| Civilians judge foul language.   | .595               |                    |                  |
| Civilians will betray others to get ahead.   | .727               |                    |                  |
| Civilians are overly sensitive to profanity.   | .630               |                    |                  |
| Civilian talk is stupid.   |                    | .841               | .915             |
| Civilian conversations are meaningless.  |                    | .804               |                  |
| Civilian communication makes as much sense as a "football bat".  |                    | .799               |                  |
| I have contempt for the way civilians communicate.   |                    | .692               |                  |
| Civilian talk is "FUBAR".  |                    | .822               |                  |
| Communicating with civilians is a waste of time.   |                    | .804               |                  |
| Civilian communication is "low-speed and high-drag".   |                    | .710               |                  |
| <i>Notes:</i> Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood. STDYX Loadings. Inter-factor Correlation = .743, $p < .001$ . |                    |                    |                  |

The single-factor model (see Table 4) was then tested but the model fit was significantly worse than the two-factor model [ $\chi^2 (170, N = 466) = 1359.03, p < .001$ ; RMSEA = .123 (CI: .117-.129); CFI = .826; SRMR = .074], according to a difference in



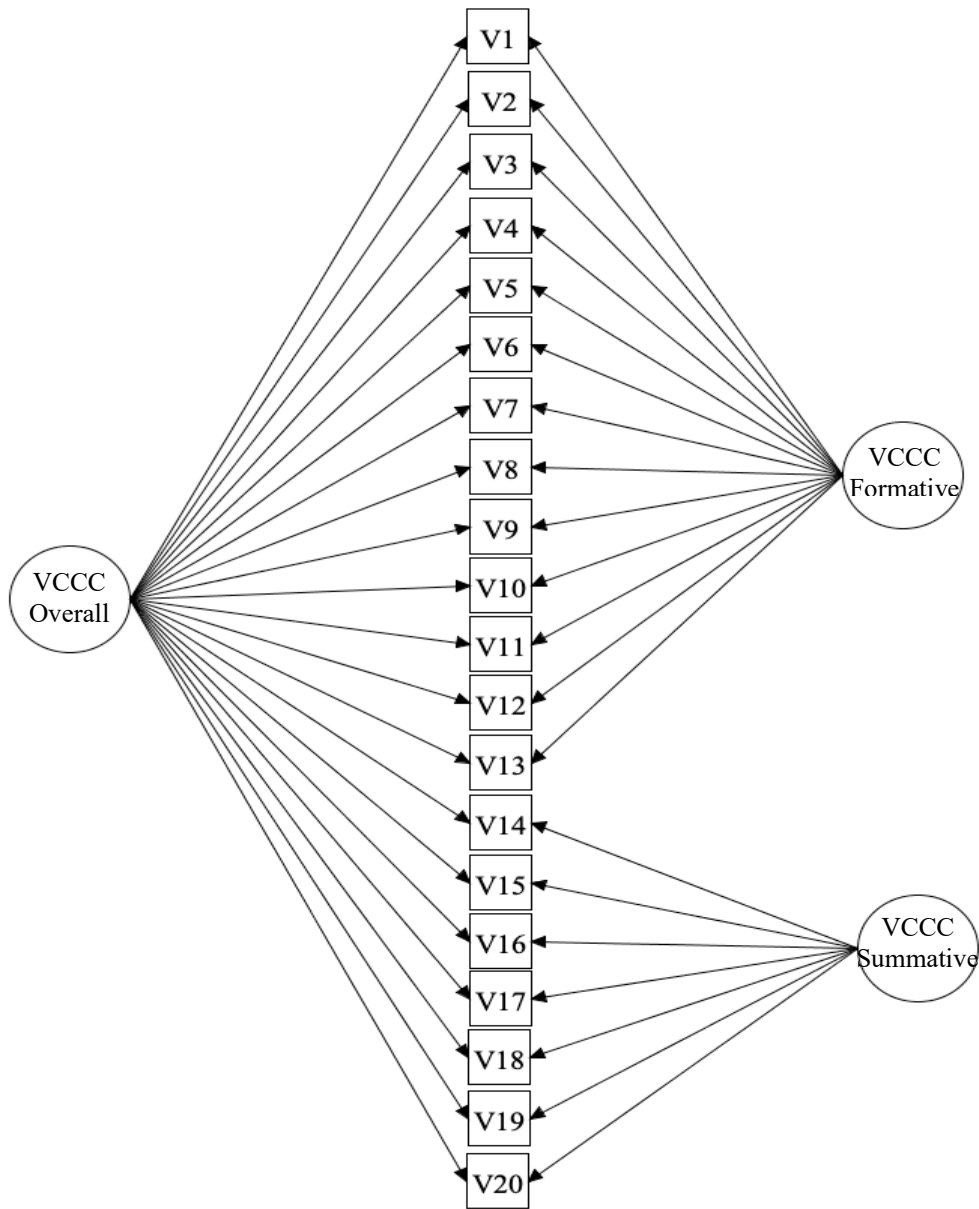
chi-square computation [ $\chi^2 (1, N = 466) = 663.45, p < .001$ ] and all other fit indices scoring worse than the two-factor model. Modification indices were examined to see what variables might share error variance. Six pairs of similar worded items, including the pair mentioned in two-factor structure, were found to have MI over 100. The errors of these items were allowed to correlate in an iterative manner and the final result [ $\chi^2 (164, N = 466) = 709.57, p < .001$ ; RMSEA = .084 (CI: .078-.091); CFI = .920; SRMR = .061] was superior to the starting point, but still below and a significantly poorer fit [ $\chi^2 (4, N = 466) = 161.54, p < .001$ ] than the two-factor result, however, it was close enough to the guidelines of Hu and Bentler (1999) to be considered a valid overall factor. See Table 6 for final loadings.

| <b>Table 6</b>  |      |                  |
|---|------|------------------|
| <b><i>Final Single-Factor CFA Results</i></b>                           |      |                  |
| Item  | VCCC | Cronbach's alpha |
| Civilians talk like they know a lot more than they do.                  | .747 | .956             |
| Civilians disguise their intentions with indirect communication.        | .810 |                  |
| Civilians misuse political correctness to hide their true intentions.   | .793 |                  |
| Civilians "beat around the bush" when they talk.                        | .764 |                  |
| Civilians talk in a way that values embellishment more than efficiency. | .771 |                  |
| Civilians try to hide the truth by using misleading language.           | .815 |                  |
| Civilians get their feeling hurt too easily when arguing.               | .804 |                  |
| Civilians do not get to the point quickly.                              | .747 |                  |
| Civilians value flowery language over truth.                            | .793 |                  |
| Civilians do not speak accurately about the rest of the world.          | .748 |                  |
| Civilians judge foul language.  | .596 |                  |
| Civilians will betray others to get ahead.                              | .717 |                  |
| Civilians are overly sensitive to profanity.                            | .625 |                  |
| Civilian talk is stupid.  | .676 |                  |
| Civilian conversations are meaningless.                                 | .622 |                  |
| Civilian communication makes as much sense as a "football bat".         | .682 |                  |
| I have contempt for the way civilians communicate.                      | .594 |                  |
| Civilian talk is "FUBAR".   | .688 |                  |
| Communicating with civilians is a waste of time.                        | .626 |                  |
| Civilian communication is "low-speed and high-drag".                    | .789 |                  |
| <i>Notes:</i> Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood. STDYX Loadings.    |      |                  |

The bi-factor model was then tested (see Figure 1) and had model fit indicators [ $\chi^2$  (150,  $N = 466$ ) = 481.00,  $p < .001$ ; RMSEA = .069 (.062-.076); CFI = .951; SRMR = .034] that approached or exceeded the guidelines of Hu and Bentler (1999) and fits the guidelines of Steiger (2007) who suggests RMSEA should be less than .07. Furthermore, a comparison of the difference in chi-square scores revealed that the bi-factor model was superior to both the two-factor model [ $\chi^2$  (18,  $N = 466$ ) = 67.03,  $p < .001$ ] and the one-factor model [ $\chi^2$  (14,  $N = 466$ ) = 228.57,  $p < .001$ ].

**Figure 1**

***Bi-Factor Model Illustrated***



In Study 1, VCCC formative had a Cronbach's alpha of .93, VCCC summative of .90 and a VCCC overall of .94. In the present study, VCCC formative was reliable at  $\alpha = .95$ , VCCC summative at  $\alpha = .92$ , and VCCC overall at  $\alpha = .96$ . Composite scale items

were created for VCCC overall ( $M = 3.17$ ,  $SD = 0.82$ ), VCCC formative ( $M = 3.51$ ,  $SD = 0.87$ ), and VCCC summative ( $M = 2.53$ ,  $SD = 0.88$ ) by creating a new composite variable, for each variable, in SPSS with the response mean.

### ***Willingness to Communicate***

McCroskey's (1992) scale asks participants to rate how often they are likely to engage in various communicative acts on a sliding scale where 0 = *never* and 100 = *always* (see Appendix C for full scale). Two sample items are: "Talk in a large meeting of acquaintances.", and "Talk with a stranger while standing in line." This scale was slightly modified for this project as McCroskey included "filler" items such as "Talk to a salesperson" and "Talk to a police officer" that are unnecessary in this study.

Additionally, this study is not concerned with public speaking and, therefore, this dimension was excluded. These eliminations allow for a shortened 9-item scale. Initial CFA results were well below the established standards for this test [ $\chi^2 (27, N = 466) = 776.56$ ,  $p < .001$ ; RMSEA = .244 (CI: .229-.259); CFI = .732; SRMR = .103].

McCroskey noted that there are seven sub-scores which can be calculated from this overall scale. The researcher theorized that veterans may respond systematically different to statements about "strangers" than "friends" or "acquaintances" and a visual examination of factor loadings supported this belief, as indicators that contained the same type of relationship had similar loadings. Therefore, a new CFA was performed as a nested model where three items that contained the word "stranger", "acquaintance", and "friend" were loaded onto sub-factors and then these three sub-factors were loaded onto an overall willingness to communicate factor. This nested model was significantly better

at [ $\chi^2$  (24,  $N = 466$ ) = 317.60,  $p < .001$ ; RMSEA = .162 (CI: .146-.178); CFI = .895; SRMR = .060], according to computations of chi square difference. All items loaded at .60 or higher on their respective sub-factor. Some items were highly correlated. An examination of the items revealed that these items were similarly worded and therefore the errors of four items were allowed to correlate, iteratively. These adjustments resulted in a final scale that met the guidelines of Hu and Bentler (1999), [ $\chi^2$  (20,  $N = 466$ ) = 90.46,  $p < .001$ ; RMSEA = .087 (CI: .070-.106); CFI = .975; SRMR = .045].

McCroskey (1992) reported a reliability of the overall scale developed at  $\alpha = .92$ ; the overall scale, in this study, had a reliability of  $\alpha = .90$  overall,  $\alpha = .84$  for acquaintances,  $\alpha = .85$  for friends, and  $\alpha = .86$  for strangers. The higher the score on these scales the more likely to communicate the participant is with a particular communication partner. Scale items were computed in SPSS, the mean score was divided by 20 for readability, as the other scales, in this study, are five-point Likert-type scales. Willingness to communicate overall had a mean of 2.84 ( $SD = 0.98$ ). However, means varied from 1.91 to 3.66 for acquaintances ( $M = 2.96$ ,  $SD = 1.44$ ), friends ( $M = 3.66$ ,  $SD = 1.06$ ), and strangers ( $M = 1.91$ ,  $SD = 1.22$ ).

### ***Communication Apprehension***

The short form of communication apprehension scale (McCroskey, 1978) measures the overall communication apprehension of individuals (see Appendix D for full scale). This scale was measured on a five-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree* and 5 = *strongly agree*). Two sample items are: “I dislike to use my body and voice expressively.” and “I’m afraid to speak up in conversations.” The initial CFA had

scores that did not fit the established guidelines, [ $\chi^2$  (35,  $N = 466$ ) = 380.98,  $p < .001$ ; RMSEA = .146 (CI: .112-.153); CFI = .846; SRMR = .067]. All items loaded on the scale at .600 or greater and, therefore, the modification indices were examined for ways to improve model fit. Two items used the same word “afraid” and their errors were suggested to allowed to correlate, and another two items used the word “speech” and their errors were also suggested to be allowed to correlate. These pairs of items were allowed to correlate, in an iterative manner, and the final scale scores [ $\chi^2$  (33,  $N = 466$ ) = 177.91,  $p < .001$ ; RMSEA = .097 (CI: .083-.111); CFI = .935; SRMR = .049] were deemed acceptable as they were nearing the guidelines of Hu and Bentler, or exceeding in the case of SRMR. Furthermore, none of the other modifications that were indicated made theoretical sense. Therefore, to avoid a measurement driven scale, this final iteration was used. Researchers have found this scale to be reliable ( $\alpha = .88$ , Garrison & Garrison, 1979); in this study the scale was reliable at  $\alpha = .89$ . A composite variable of communication apprehension was computed in SPSS ( $M = 2.94$ ,  $SD = 0.85$ ) by computing response means.

### ***Military to Civilian Questionnaire***

Participants also completed the M2CQ (Sayer et al., 2011). This scale asked participants to rate how much difficulty they had, over the past 30 days, with 16 different scenarios such as: “Getting along with your child or children (such as communicating, doing things together, enjoying his or her company)?” and “Finding or keeping a job (paid or nonpaid or self-employment)?” (see Appendix E for full scale). Participants were asked to rate this scale on a five-point Likert-type scale where 1 = *no difficulty* and 5 =

*extreme difficulty*. CFA was performed with all factors loading on one variable and the model fit approached the established guidelines [ $\chi^2$  (104,  $N = 466$ ) = 492.52,  $p < .001$ ; RMSEA = .090 (CI: .082-.098); CFI = .907; SRMR = .043]. All items loaded at .60 or higher in the standardized loadings and were, therefore, retained. Modification indices revealed that some items should be allowed to correlate. An investigation of these items led to the belief that the errors of the items about family and friends should be allowed to correlate. Four pairs of items were allowed to correlate, in an iterative manner and the final model fit indices approached the established guidelines [ $\chi^2$  (99,  $N = 466$ ) = 390.87,  $p < .001$ ; RMSEA = .080 (CI: .071-.088); CFI = .930; SRMR = .038]. Sayer et al. (2011) reported a reliability of this scale as  $\alpha = .95$  and a similar reliability was found in this study ( $\alpha = .94$ ). A composite scale variable of the M2CQ response mean was created ( $M = 2.37$ ,  $SD = 0.93$ ).

### ***UCLA Loneliness***

Participants completed the loneliness scale (Russell, Peplau, & Ferguson, 1978) to see how the VCCC was related to feelings of loneliness, an indicator of social isolation (see Appendix F for full scale). This 20-item scale asked participants to rate how often they have feelings of loneliness on a five-point Likert-type scale where 1 = *never* and 5 = *always*. Sample items include: “I lack companionship” and “I feel left out”. Initial CFA results [ $\chi^2$  (170,  $N = 466$ ) = 1203.15,  $p < .001$ ; RMSEA = .114 (CI: .108-120); CFI = .839; SRMR = .062] revealed that the scale needed adjustments to improve fit. One item had a poor loading (.432) and was removed from the analysis. Further adjustments needed to be made. An examination of modification indices revealed that the fit could be

improved by allowing some errors of items to correlate. All suggestions were examined to see where items were worded or could be interpreted similarly and this led the researcher to allow seven pairs of variable errors to correlate, in an iterative manner, for a final model fit that approached the guidelines [ $\chi^2 (143, N = 466) = 678.85, p < .001$ ; RMSEA = .090 (CI: .083-.097); CFI = .915; SRMR = .054]. Russell (1996) reported the reliability of this scale ranged from  $\alpha = .89$  to  $\alpha = .94$  in a meta-analysis of studies using this scale, but in this study the alpha reliability was .95. SPSS was used to create a composite variable of loneliness ( $M = 2.64, SD = 0.90$ ).

### ***Temporal Satisfaction with Life***

Participants completed the temporal satisfaction with life (SWL) scale (Pavot, Diener, & Suh, 1998) to see how the VCCC is related to life satisfaction (see Appendix G for full scale). This scale asks participants to rate to what degree they agree with statements such as: “I am satisfied with my life in the past”, “My current life is ideal for me”, and “I will have the important things I want in the future” on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. CFA showed that, when items were loaded on a single factor, model fit was poor [ $\chi^2 (90, N = 466) = 1500.26, p < .001$ ; RMSEA = .183 (CI: .175-.192); CFI = .694; SRMR = .113]. Therefore, the alternate scoring method of loading past, present, and future SWL as separate factors, in a nested model, was used and resulted in a better model fit [ $\chi^2 (87, N = 466) = 546.54, p < .001$ ; RMSEA = .106 (CI: .098-.115); CFI = .900; SRMR = .083]. The researcher noted that the loadings of two items were low at .363 and .462, both had wording about changing life, and therefore these items were removed from analysis. This



change led to a final model fit of [ $\chi^2$  (62,  $N = 466$ ) = 264.23,  $p < .001$ ; RMSEA = .084 (CI: .073-.094); CFI = .951; SRMR = .054]. Pavot, Diener, and Suh (1998) reported reliability of the overall scale as  $\alpha = .91$  in one study and  $\alpha = .93$  in another study, but no alpha coefficients for the subdimensions were provided by the researchers. In this study, all subscales had an alpha larger than .80: past ( $\alpha = .84$ ), present ( $\alpha = .91$ ), and future ( $\alpha = .90$ ). SPSS was used to create composite items for each of these scales: past, present, future.

### ***Military Identity***

To assess how strongly participants identified with the military, they were asked “With what identity do you identify more strongly?” where 0 = *civilian* and 100 = *military*. This assessment had an average response of 56.18 ( $SD = 26.66$ ).

### ***Demographics***

Participants were asked to complete a demographics section where they were asked multiple choice questions about their military branch, type of service (i.e., U.S., overseas, combat), months deployed in a combat zone, months served in the military, months since they left the military, military job, age, education, race, ethnicity, and biological sex.

### **Study 2: Data Cleaning**

The researcher followed the same steps as outlined in Study 1 for data cleaning. First missing data was analyzed and according to Little’s MCAR test, there was not a significant indication that data was missing systematically [ $\chi^2$  (6497,  $N = 466$ ) = 6365.75,  $p = .876$ ]. The MVA EM function in SPSS was used to save a new file with values

imputed from the MVA analysis. Next the researcher examined responses for multivariate outliers using Mahalanobis  $D^2$ . Twenty-seven cases were identified as being possible multivariate outliers. Two of these responses reported more months in combat than months of service in the military. Therefore, months of combat were removed and treated as missing data, in these two cases. The other cases had no values that were outside of the realm of possibility and were not adjusted. Of the 84 scale items included in this study, four items were skewed higher than an absolute value of one with the highest being -1.36 and 28 items had a kurtosis higher than an absolute value of one with the highest being -1.34. The hypotheses testing in this study relies primarily on correlations and mean differences between groups. Therefore, if one item in a scale is transformed the entire scale must be transformed and since most items were skewed  $< .05$  or  $-.05$ , which is approximately symmetric (Hair et al., 2017), no transformations were performed.

## **Study 2 Results**

The researcher used IBM's SPSS v. 26 to test the proposed hypotheses and provide answers for the research questions. The scale variables included in these analyses include veteran contempt of civilian communication (VCCC; overall, formative, summative), willingness to communicate (WTC; friend, acquaintance, stranger), communication apprehension (CA), loneliness, military to civilian questionnaire (M2CQ), satisfaction with life (SWL; past, present, future), and military identity. A higher score on the VCCC (all parts), CA, loneliness, and M2CQ indicates that a veteran is struggling with these issues. Conversely, a higher score on WTC (all parts) and SWL

(all parts) indicates a veteran is not experiencing issues in these areas. Additionally, a higher score on military identity indicates a stronger connection to the military.

The hypotheses advanced in this study were relational and therefore testable via bivariate correlations. Please see Table 7 for full correlation matrix. H1 proposed that VCCC (a) overall, (b) formative, and (c) summative would be inversely related to willingness to communicate (WTC). This hypothesis found no support. VCCC formative was significantly and positively related to WTC friend [ $r(466) = .10, p < .05$ ] and VCCC summative was significantly and positively related to WTC stranger [ $r(466) = .10, p < .05$ ]. This indicates that the higher veterans scored on the VCCC the more willing they were to communicate in these situations, although with small correlations. These relationships were opposite the proposed direction. H2 proposed that the VCCC would positively relate to communication apprehension (CA). Correlational data did not support this hypothesis as there were no significant relationships.

H3 proposed that the VCCC would be positively associated with the military to civilian questionnaire (M2CQ). Results fully supported this hypothesis as VCCC (a) overall [ $r(466) = .29, p < .001$ ], (b) formative [ $r(466) = .27, p < .001$ ], and (c) summative [ $r(466) = .26, p < .001$ ] were all significantly and positively related to the M2CQ and were all moderately sized relationships. Results indicate that the higher participants scored on contempt the more difficulty they reported with reintegration. Results also fully supported H4 as VCCC was positively associated with loneliness. VCCC (a) overall [ $r(466) = .21, p < .001$ ], (b) formative [ $r(466) = .18, p < .001$ ], and (c) summative [ $r(466) = .23, p < .001$ ] were all significantly and positively associated with loneliness and had

small to moderate correlations. Which means that the higher participants scored on contempt the higher they scored on feeling lonely.

H5 proposed the VCCC would be significantly and positively associated with military identity. Results fully supported this hypothesis with moderate to large correlations: VCCC (a) overall [ $r(466) = .43, p < .001$ ], (b) formative [ $r(466) = .40, p < .001$ ], (c) summative [ $r(466) = .40, p < .001$ ]. Thus, results indicated that the more veterans identified with the military the more contempt they felt toward civilians, as theorized. Notably, military identity was significantly related to WTC acquaintance, although correlations were weak to moderate, [ $r(466) = .24, p < .001$ ], friend [ $r(466) = .13, p < .001$ ], stranger [ $r(466) = .26, p < .001$ ], CA [ $r(466) = -.23, p < .001$ ], and satisfaction with life in the past [ $r(466) = .12, p < .001$ ], but it was not significantly related to loneliness and had a weak association with the M2CQ [ $r(466) = .13, p < .01$ ]. These findings may suggest a mediated relationship between the VCCC and communication variables, as discussed later. The final hypotheses (H6-8) predicted relationships between satisfaction with life and the VCCC, but these hypotheses did not find support.

Due to the similar relationships found between both the VCCC formative and the VCCC summative additional analyses were conducted to see which factor better predicted the M2CQ, loneliness, and military identity. VCCC formative and summative were entered as predictors with M2CQ as the dependent variable. Results of this analysis were significant [ $F(2,463) = 20.77, p < .001, R^2 = .082$ ], however, the *formative* factor was the only significant predictor ( $t = 2.91, p < .01, \beta = .186$ ), although summative was

nearly significant ( $t = 1.91, p = .057, \beta = .122$ ). However, when loneliness was examined in the same manner the analysis was still significant [ $F(2,463) = 12.78, p < .001, R^2 = .052$ ], however, the *summative* factor was the only significant predictor ( $t = 3.03, p < .01$ ), and formative was non-significant ( $t = 0.637, p = .525$ ). Furthermore, when military identity was analyzed [ $F(2,463) = 53.44, p < .001, R^2 = .188$ ], following the same steps, both formative ( $t = 3.77, p < .001, \beta = .227$ ) and summative ( $t = 3.98, p < .001, \beta = .240$ ) factors were significant predictors. These results suggest that although the factors work in concert to predict military identity they operate in differential manners when predicting reintegration and loneliness.

**Table 7*****Correlation Matrix of Veteran Contempt of Civilian Communication and other Scale Variables***

| Variable             |           | 1      | 2      | 3      | 4       | 5       | 6       | 7       | 8       | 9       | 10      | 11     | 12     | 13   |
|----------------------|-----------|--------|--------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|--------|------|
|                      | <i>M</i>  | 3.17   | 3.51   | 2.53   | 2.84    | 2.96    | 3.66    | 1.91    | 2.94    | 2.37    | 2.64    | 2.88   | 3.09   | 3.71 |
|                      | <i>SD</i> | 0.82   | 0.87   | 0.88   | 0.98    | 1.14    | 1.06    | 1.22    | 0.85    | 0.93    | 0.90    | 1.01   | 1.11   | 0.94 |
| 1. VCCC Overall      |           |        |        |        |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |        |        |      |
| 2. VCCC Formative    |           | .965** |        |        |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |        |        |      |
| 3. VCCC Summative    |           | .877** | .719** |        |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |        |        |      |
| 4. WTC Overall       |           | .028   | .032   | .014   |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |        |        |      |
| 5. WTC Acquaintance  |           | .004   | .009   | -.006  | .937**  |         |         |         |         |         |         |        |        |      |
| 6. WTC Friend        |           | .041   | .095*  | -.065  | .810**  | .721**  |         |         |         |         |         |        |        |      |
| 7. WTC Stranger      |           | .027   | -.013  | .095*  | .832**  | .697**  | .411**  |         |         |         |         |        |        |      |
| 8. Comm Apprehension |           | .062   | .068   | .039   | -.542** | -.488** | -.379** | -.522** |         |         |         |        |        |      |
| 9. M2CQ              |           | .287** | .274** | .256** | -.194** | -.179** | -.220** | -.109** | .216**  |         |         |        |        |      |
| 10. Loneliness       |           | .213** | .183** | .227** | -.351** | -.312** | -.352** | -.250** | .433**  | .577**  |         |        |        |      |
| 11. SWL Past         |           | -.064  | -.089  | -.006  | .243**  | .228**  | .168**  | .226**  | -.287** | -.214** | -.287** |        |        |      |
| 12. SWL Present      |           | -.061  | -.059  | -.054  | .285**  | .243**  | .205**  | .281**  | -.296** | -.355** | -.604** | .428** |        |      |
| 13. SWL Future       |           | -.054  | -.028  | -.089  | .354**  | .313**  | .291**  | .309**  | -.353** | -.349** | -.560** | .355** | .686** |      |
| 14. Identity         |           | .430** | .400** | .403** | .247**  | .241**  | .130**  | .257**  | -.225** | .134*   | .012    | .115*  | .070   | .053 |

*(M = 2.81, SD = 1.33)**Note: \* = p < .05; \*\* = p < .001*

RQ1 asked how participants from different military branches would score on the VCCC. VCCC (a) overall and (c) summative had no significant differences between branches. According to one-way ANOVA results, VCCC (b) formative did yield a significant difference between groups [ $F(4,451) = 2.51, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = .022$ ]. Post hoc tests with Bonferroni correction revealed that the only significant difference between branches was between the Army and Marines; Army veterans scored lower ( $M = 3.44, SD = 0.93$ ) than Marines ( $M = 3.87, SD = 0.75$ ). RQ2 asked if there was a difference among those that identified as male or female, participants who selected undetermined were excluded as there were not enough cases to statistically analyze. According to one-way ANOVA results, VCCC (a) overall (b) formative and (c) summative were not significantly different between male or female participants.

RQ3 asked if participants that remained in the United States throughout their military service, deployed overseas but not a combat zone, and those that deployed to combat scored differently on the VCCC. One-way ANOVA results showed that VCCC (a) overall [ $F(2,451) = 4.17, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = .018$ ] and (b) VCCC formative [ $F(2,451) = 5.51, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .024$ ] were both significant. For VCCC overall, significant differences were found. Participants that did not deploy or deployed to non-combat zones scored significantly lower than those that deployed to combat. Participants who saw combat scored significantly higher on VCCC formative than both those that remained in the United States and those that deployed overseas but not to a combat zone, according to post hoc tests using Bonferroni correction. See Table 8 for more details, including means and standard deviations.

**Table 8*****ANOVA of VCCC by Type of Service***

| Variable       | Service Type Comparison |          | <i>M</i> 1 | <i>SD</i> 1 | <i>M</i> 2 | <i>SD</i> 2 | <i>p</i> |
|----------------|-------------------------|----------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|----------|
|                | 1                       | 2        |            |             |            |             |          |
| VCCC Overall   | Combat                  | Overseas | 3.32       | 0.84        | 3.05       | 0.78        | .045     |
|                | Combat                  | US Only  | 3.32       | 0.84        | 3.11       | 0.81        | .036     |
|                | US Only                 | Overseas | 3.11       | 0.81        | 3.05       | 0.78        | .870     |
| VCCC Formative | Combat                  | Overseas | 3.69       | 0.84        | 3.35       | 0.83        | .020     |
|                | Combat                  | US Only  | 3.69       | 0.84        | 3.45       | 0.89        | .011     |
|                | US Only                 | Overseas | 3.45       | 0.89        | 3.35       | 0.83        | .670     |
| VCCC Summative | Combat                  | Overseas | 2.62       | 0.97        | 2.50       | 0.87        | .551     |
|                | Combat                  | US Only  | 2.62       | 0.97        | 2.47       | 0.83        | .234     |
|                | US Only                 | Overseas | 2.47       | 0.83        | 2.50       | 0.87        | .974     |

The remaining research questions asked how months of deployment (RQ4), months of service (RQ5), and months since military exit (RQ6) were associated with scores on the VCCC. See Table 9 for correlation matrix. The only variable significantly associated with the VCCC was months deployed. Months deployed was significantly and positively associated with VCCC (a) overall [ $r(464) = .18, p < .001$ ], (b) formative [ $r(464) = .17, p < .001$ ], and (c) summative [ $r(464) = .16, p < .001$ ], or as months deployed increased the more contempt veterans expressed toward civilian communication across all VCCC variables.



**Table 9*****Correlation Matrix of Veteran Contempt of Civilian Communication and Demographic Variables***

| Variable                     | 1      | 2      | 3      | 4       | 5       | 6      | 7     |
|------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|---------|---------|--------|-------|
| <i>M</i>                     | 3.17   | 3.51   | 2.53   | 7.65    | 82.81   | 87.06  | 34.76 |
| <i>SD</i>                    | 0.82   | 0.87   | 0.88   | 10.18   | 113.74  | 71.36  | 6.68  |
| 1. VCCC Overall              |        |        |        |         |         |        |       |
| 2. VCCC Formative            | .965** |        |        |         |         |        |       |
| 3. VCCC Summative            | .877** | .719** |        |         |         |        |       |
| 4. Months in Combat          | .182** | .173** | .163** |         |         |        |       |
| 5. Months in Military        | -.003  | .017   | -.037  | .259**  |         |        |       |
| 6. Months Since Military     | -.067  | -.087  | -.019  | -.188** | -.167** |        |       |
| 7. Age                       | .025   | .004   | .060   | .144*   | .219**  | .531** |       |
| 8. M2CQ                      | .287** | .274** | .256** | .093*   | -.064   | .011   | -.053 |
| <i>(M = 2.37, SD = 0.93)</i> |        |        |        |         |         |        |       |

*Note:* \* =  $p < .05$ ; \*\* =  $p < .001$

Because combat veterans scored significantly different than non-combat veterans and months of combat were significantly associated with scores on the VCCC, a correlational analysis examined the relationships of key study variables for combat veterans only. See Table 10 for full results. Results of this analysis were consistent with findings presented previously for WTC, CA, M2CQ, loneliness, and identity. However, this analysis revealed significant relationships between satisfaction with life (SWL) in the past and future not found in the overall sample. Specifically, SWL present (H7) was significantly and negatively associated with the VCCC overall, formative, and summative and SWL future (H8) was significantly and negatively associated with VCCC overall and summative. This means that the more contempt combat veterans reported the more unsatisfied with life they were, at least for these variables. See Table 8 for full correlation matrix, means, and standard deviations.

**Table 10**

**Correlation Matrix of Veteran Contempt of Civilian Communication and other Scale Variables for Combat Veterans Only**

| Variable             | 1      | 2      | 3       | 4       | 5       | 6       | 7       | 8       | 9       | 10      | 11     | 12     | 13    |
|----------------------|--------|--------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|--------|-------|
| <i>M</i>             | 3.32   | 3.69   | 2.62    | 2.96    | 3.14    | 3.71    | 2.01    | 2.80    | 2.47    | 2.68    | 2.89   | 3.09   | 3.71  |
| <i>SD</i>            | 0.83   | 0.84   | 0.97    | 0.99    | 1.13    | 1.08    | 1.23    | 0.85    | 0.98    | 0.99    | 1.04   | 1.14   | 0.96  |
| 1. VCCC Overall      |        |        |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |        |        |       |
| 2. VCCC Formative    | .965** |        |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |        |        |       |
| 3. VCCC Summative    | .905** | .762** |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |        |        |       |
| 4. WTC Overall       | .053   | .075   | .010    |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |        |        |       |
| 5. WTC Acquaintance  | -.003  | .013   | -.028   | .938**  |         |         |         |         |         |         |        |        |       |
| 6. WTC Friend        | .041   | .099   | -.058   | .826**  | .760**  |         |         |         |         |         |        |        |       |
| 7. WTC Stranger      | .095   | .082   | .100    | .821**  | .673**  | .412**  |         |         |         |         |        |        |       |
| 8. Comm Apprehension | .100   | .098   | .088    | -.594** | -.539** | -.472** | -.520** |         |         |         |        |        |       |
| 9. M2CQ              | .353** | .344** | .312**  | -.295** | -.269** | -.283** | -.215** | .383**  |         |         |        |        |       |
| 10. Loneliness       | .357** | .317** | .368**  | -.493** | -.448** | -.462** | -.370** | .565**  | .711**  |         |        |        |       |
| 11. SWL Past         | -.097  | -.145  | -.006   | .247**  | .242**  | .241**  | .161*   | -.166*  | -.268** | -.230** |        |        |       |
| 12. SWL Present      | -.227* | -.190* | -.252** | .305**  | .270**  | .243**  | .272**  | -.283** | -.503** | -.640** | .333** |        |       |
| 13. SWL Future       | -.175* | -.137  | -.210** | .441**  | .409**  | .358**  | .370**  | -.466** | -.467** | -.629** | .243** | .692** |       |
| 14. Identity         | .431** | .386** | .438**  | .168*   | .129    | .054    | .238**  | -.122   | .247**  | .179*   | -.014  | -.222* | -.138 |

(*M* = 3.21, *SD* = 1.23)

Note: \* =  $p < .05$ ; \*\* =  $p < .001$

Finally, data collection for this project began on March 5, 2020 and concluded on March 19, 2020. On March 7<sup>th</sup> the stock market plunged, and reports came out of hundreds of Americans diagnosed with COVID-19. Therefore, participant responses recorded before March 7<sup>th</sup> were coded as a 1 ( $n = 218$ ) and those on March 7<sup>th</sup> and later were coded as a 2 ( $n = 248$ ) to see if there were any significant differences in these responses. One-way ANOVA results revealed that two variables were significantly different between these two groups: M2CQ [ $F(1,464) = 44.99, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .088$ ] and loneliness [ $F(1,464) = 15.14, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .032$ ]. Interestingly, both the M2CQ and loneliness scores were higher (M2CQ  $M = 2.67, SD = 0.92$ ; loneliness  $M = 2.81, SD = 0.92$ ) prior to March 7<sup>th</sup> than they were after (M2CQ  $M = 2.11, SD = 0.86$ ; loneliness  $M = 2.49, SD = 0.86$ ). SWL variables were also nearly significant with past [ $F(1,464) = 3.81, p = .05, \eta_p^2 = .008$ ], present [ $F(1,464) = 3.41, p = .06, \eta_p^2 = .007$ ], and future [ $F(1,464) = 3.58, p = .06, \eta_p^2 = .008$ ].

The researcher therefore split the file and organized reports by output and reran the correlations for the primary research variables (see the full results in Table 11). After the correlation matrix had been generated for both groups (i.e., pre- and post-March 7<sup>th</sup>) the correlations were compared for statistical difference using the Fisher r-to-z transformation calculator created by Lowry (2020). Ten correlation pairs were found to be significantly different. The correlations between the M2CQ and VCCC summative ( $z = -2.34, p < .01$ ) was the only significant difference that involved the VCCC scale. Other significant differences were between WTC friend and WTC overall ( $z = 2.27, p < .05$ ), WTC friend and WTC acquaintance ( $z = 1.91, p < .05$ ), WTC friend and WTC stranger

( $z = 2.10, p < .05$ ), WTC acquaintance and SWL future ( $z = 1.76, p < .05$ ), WTC stranger and loneliness ( $z = -1.74, p < .05$ ), M2CQ and CA ( $z = -1.85, p < .05$ ), M2CQ and loneliness ( $z = -4.63, p < .001$ ), M2CQ and SWL present ( $z = 2.31, p < .01$ ), and M2CQ and military identity ( $z = -2.46, p < .01$ ). These findings suggest that some of the overall reported relationships must be interpreted with caution, especially those involving either WTC or M2CQ, as some relationships between variables were significantly different before and after March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020. However, the scale under development in this project had no significant changes in ANOVA results and only one significant correlational difference, in the relationship with the M2CQ. Therefore, it appears that the VCCC remains relatively stable both pre- and post-crisis, as a moral reasoning approach would suggest.

**Table 11**

***Correlation Matrix of Veteran Contempt of Civilian Communication and other Scale Variables: Pre- and Post-March 7<sup>th</sup>***

| Variable             | 1      | 2      | 3             | 4             | 5             | 6             | 7              | 8             | 9              | 10      | 11     | 12     | 13   |
|----------------------|--------|--------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|---------|--------|--------|------|
| 1. VCCC Overall      |        |        |               |               |               |               |                |               |                |         |        |        |      |
| 2. VCCC Formative    | .964** |        |               |               |               |               |                |               |                |         |        |        |      |
|                      | .965** |        |               |               |               |               |                |               |                |         |        |        |      |
| 3. VCCC Summative    | .881** | .723** |               |               |               |               |                |               |                |         |        |        |      |
|                      | .873** | .715** |               |               |               |               |                |               |                |         |        |        |      |
| 4. WTC Overall       | -.011  | -.001  | -.025         |               |               |               |                |               |                |         |        |        |      |
|                      | .067   | .066   | .067          |               |               |               |                |               |                |         |        |        |      |
| 5. WTC Acquaintance  | -.026  | -.015  | -.040         | .940**        |               |               |                |               |                |         |        |        |      |
|                      | .035   | .033   | .030          | .932**        |               |               |                |               |                |         |        |        |      |
| 6. WTC Friend        | .007   | .050   | -.070         | <b>.845**</b> | <b>.762**</b> |               |                |               |                |         |        |        |      |
|                      | .076   | .139*  | -.056         | <b>.772**</b> | <b>.676**</b> |               |                |               |                |         |        |        |      |
| 7. WTC Stranger      | -.008  | -.033  | .038          | .848**        | .715**        | <b>.492**</b> |                |               |                |         |        |        |      |
|                      | .060   | .006   | .150*         | .817**        | .679**        | <b>.329**</b> |                |               |                |         |        |        |      |
| 8. Comm Apprehension | .014   | .025   | -.007         | -.562**       | -.502**       | -.392**       | -.576**        |               |                |         |        |        |      |
|                      | .104   | .106   | .081          | -.524**       | -.476**       | -.366**       | -.472**        |               |                |         |        |        |      |
| 9. M2CQ              | .226** | .243** | <b>.154*</b>  | -.173**       | -.171**       | -.219**       | -.075          | <b>.141*</b>  |                |         |        |        |      |
|                      | .355** | .317** | <b>.357**</b> | -.197**       | -.166*        | -.207**       | -.130*         | <b>.305**</b> |                |         |        |        |      |
| 10. Loneliness       | .211** | .182** | .223**        | -.393**       | -.348**       | -.365**       | <b>-.325**</b> | .456**        | <b>.413**</b>  |         |        |        |      |
|                      | .213** | .184** | .227**        | -.299**       | -.265**       | -.331**       | <b>-.172**</b> | .422**        | <b>.703**</b>  |         |        |        |      |
| 11. SWL Past         | -.111  | -.140* | -.038         | .289**        | .253**        | .210**        | .293**         | -.332**       | -.182**        | -.302** |        |        |      |
|                      | -.017  | -.040  | .031          | .186*         | .193**        | .116          | .156*          | -.243**       | -.212**        | -.249** |        |        |      |
| 12. SWL Present      | -.050  | -.048  | -.044         | .323**        | .282**        | .215**        | .346**         | -.323**       | <b>-.254**</b> | -.613** | .431** |        |      |
|                      | -.069  | -.067  | -.057         | .236**        | .194**        | .188**        | .213**         | -.270**       | <b>-.443**</b> | -.589** | .415** |        |      |
| 13. SWL Future       | -.043  | -.025  | -.068         | .410**        | <b>.383**</b> | .328**        | .367**         | -.411**       | -.294**        | -.597** | .363** | .710** |      |
|                      | -.060  | -.029  | -.105         | .288**        | <b>.234**</b> | .245**        | .248**         | -.298**       | -.386**        | -.513** | .337** | .655** |      |
| 14. Identity         | .370** | .338** | .358**        | .253**        | .252**        | .154**        | .255**         | -.249**       | <b>.021</b>    | -.027   | .117   | .087   | .074 |
|                      | .478** | .449** | .441**        | .244**        | .233**        | .110          | .260**         | -.205**       | <b>.246**</b>  | .046    | .115   | .056   | .035 |

*Note:* First line is prior to March 7<sup>th</sup> and the second is March 7<sup>th</sup> and later. \* =  $p < .05$ ; \*\* =  $p < .001$ . **Boldface** correlation pairs are significantly different at  $p < .05$ .

## Chapter 5

### Discussing the VCCC

The primary goal of this study was to develop a scale to measure the amount of contempt military veterans feel toward civilian communication. Drawing on communication theory of identity (CTI) as well as the theoretical constructs of organizational socialization, totalistic organizations, and the contempt-anger-disgust triad, this dissertation has argued that veterans of the United States Military (USM) may feel contempt toward civilian communication. Furthermore, researchers have linked contempt (Rozin et al., 1999), social isolation (Fried et al., 2016), and identity gaps (Jung & Hecht, 2004) to negative psychological and communication outcomes. Thus, a measurement of contempt veterans feel toward civilian communication could supply researchers and practitioners with a screening device, which might help identify which veterans will have the most difficulty reintegrating into civilian society. The paragraphs to follow first provide a brief review of the developmental process of the veteran contempt of civilian communication (VCCC) scale before examining the theoretical and practical contributions of this scale.

#### **Recap: Development of the Veteran Contempt of Civilian Communication (VCCC) Scale**

Prior to discussing this study's contributions to the literature (see below), it is important to summarize the process undertaken to develop and validate the VCCC. The scale development process followed the guidelines outlined by Carpenter (2018). Consulting prior research (Broom, 2006; DeVellis, 2012), gathering expert opinions

(Worthington & Whittaker, 2006), and receiving feedback from military veterans (Broom, 2006) were key in the developmental process of items that were intended to measure veteran's contempt of civilian communication (VCCC). Information obtained from these sources aided in the development of items, refinement of wording, and reduction of items (Ruel et al., 2016). At the end of this inductive process, 61 items remained that had face validity, according to experts, veterans, and theorizing. Furthermore, the inclusion of multiple sources (academic experts, veteran experts, and veterans themselves) strengthened the likelihood that the items generated had content validity and addressed the general attitudes of veterans (Clark & Watson, 1995). Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) helped to reduce these items to a more manageable and accessible length, following established guidelines (Kachigan, 1986; Kline, 2013; Russell, 2002; Thompson, 2004; Tinsley & Tinsley, 1987; Worthington & Whittaker, 2006). EFA revealed two competing models. In the first model, items loaded well on two subdimensions and in the second model, items loaded well on a single dimension when forced to fit on one factor.

The first model had two subdimensions labeled, formative and summative contempt. Notably, one item with strong and construct face validity ("I have contempt for the way civilians communicate") was statistically supported throughout the process. EFA results aided in further item reduction, and 20 items remained. A second study provided additional data to perform supplementary analyses of the VCCC to further support reliability and investigate whether criterion validity could be established in conjunction

with the face, content, and construct validity found during the scale development and refinement process (Hinkin, 1998).

Additionally, the new measure was confirmed to be empirically reliable. Separate studies revealed support for the statistical reliability of this scale through both exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis (Hinkin, 1998). In a second study, a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted in Mplus and a bifactor model was found to be the superior model to either a one- or two-factor model and this bifactor model exceeded the model fit guidelines of Hu and Bentler (1999) with no adjustments. In both study one and two, alpha coefficients of the overall scale, as well as individual formative and summative factors, were above .90, suggesting a high reliability of both the overall (combined) scale and the individual subdimensions. Thus, this study contributes an original measure of veteran contempt for civilian communication.

In summary, the feedback of academic experts, practitioners, and military veterans supplied support for face validity of the scale. Considering multiple voices and generating diverse items helped bolster content validity. EFA and CFA results both found items that directly asked about the amount of contempt felt toward civilian communication loaded well on the scale overall and on summative contempt when split into two factors, thus indicating construct validity. Finally, an assessment of criterion validity in study two showed that the VCCC had criterion validity with established measures of well-being and with military identity.

The size of significant relationships noted between the VCCC and several convergent constructs suggest criterion validity. VCCC overall, formative, and



summative correlated significantly and positively with each other, the M2CQ, loneliness, and military identity. Interestingly, formative and summative contempt had similar relationships with other study variables. However, some differences were found in the results. First summative contempt had a lower mean than formative. Participants might be more willing to rate the formative items higher as they use less moralized language and are more hedged than summative items; indeed, communication research indicated that individuals tend to avoid using explicitly moralized language, even when they are experiencing specific and morally-charged emotions and cognitions (i.e., the moral mum effect; Bisel, Kelley, Ploeger, & Messersmith, 2011). However, the second difference found in the regression analyses may point to another way these factors differ. Formative contempt was found to be a significant predictor of the M2CQ, summative to predict loneliness, and both factors predicted military identity, while also explaining 18.80% of the variance. Thus, the conclusion that these two factors are highly related but still have unique differences is supported. Future research could further explicate these differences.

Not only was the VCCC significantly associated with other study variables, but the significant findings were meaningful. Most correlations had medium to large effect sizes. Scholars continue to debate cutoffs for effect sizes (see Lovakov & Agadullina, 2017; Stukas & Cumming, 2014); however, guidelines provided by Cohen (1992),  $r \geq .10$  is a small effect size,  $r \geq .30$  is a medium effect, and  $r \geq .50$  is a large effect, and according to Hemphill (2003),  $r < .20$  is a small effect,  $r > .20$  but  $< .30$  is a medium effect, and  $r > .30$  is a large effect, are used most frequently. Hemphill (2003) notes that “it seems too simplistic to have a single set of empirical guidelines for interpreting the

magnitude of correlation coefficients” (p. 79). Yet, to show that relationships are both significant and meaningful, guidelines can be useful. Lovakov and Agadullina (2017) supplied evidence of a compromise between these values. They performed a meta-analysis of 98 journal articles that reported 9,884 correlation coefficients and then calculated percentile cutoffs for reported correlations. They found that  $r = .12$  began the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile,  $r = .25$  began the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile, and  $r = .42$  began the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile. Therefore, the guidelines of Hemphill (2003) were adopted for this study. Considering this cutoff criterion for correlational relationships, the VCCC overall, formative, and summative each had a medium effect size in relation to the M2CQ, a medium effect size in relation to loneliness, and a large effect size in relation to military identity. Therefore, all parts of the VCCC were significantly associated with the M2CQ, loneliness, and military identity, and these relationships were also meaningful.

These results are consistent with prior theorizing about the relationship between military identity (Orazem et al., 2017), social isolation, and loneliness (Stein & Tuval-Mashiach, 2015). Earlier research linked loneliness to anxiety and depression (Fried et al., 2016) and suggested that such outcomes could lead to harm to the self (Neacsiu et al., 2017). Significant relationships were found between VCCC formative and willingness to communicate (WTC) with friends and VCCC summative and WTC with strangers, but these relationships were very small ( $< .10$ ) and post hoc analyses revealed an interesting trend that will be discussed later. In summary, as predicted, the VCCC was significantly, positively, and meaningfully associated with the M2CQ, loneliness, and military identity, providing criterion validity for this scale as a measure of veteran contempt of civilian

communication grounded in CTI theorizing (Hecht, 1993). The significant and meaningful relationships found in this study begin to supply a groundwork for research on veteran well-being and transition from a communication perspective.

### **Theoretical and Practical Contributions of the VCCC**

This scale is one of the first measures devoted to communication and the military. Numerous communication scales exist, but, as scholars in other fields have discussed, applying measures developed from a civilian sample to the USM may not be appropriate (Bloeser et al., 2014; Wilmoth et al., 2017). After all, scales that measure anxiety, depression, substance abuse, and post-traumatic stress, that were reliable in civilian samples, were found to be unreliable in samples of military personnel (Wilmoth et al., 2017). The newly developed measure is grounded in CTI theorizing (Jung & Hecht, 2004), coupled with qualitative communication scholarship focused on military veterans (Howe & Hinderaker, 2018; Howe & Shpeer, 2019; Van Gilder, 2018). Such scholarship was integral to item generation. Therefore, this scale is most certainly a communication scale, with a specific focus on USM veterans, that advances scholarship in this area by providing a measure developed and validated with samples from the population of interest.

This study also contributes more broadly to the field of communication by presenting evidence that directs scholarly attention to the role played by moral emotions in communication theorizing. Scales such as willingness to communicate (WTC), communication apprehension (CA), and communication competence (CC) are some of the most enduring and fundamental tools of knowledge generation in the field. However,

these scales emphasize communication as a state (i.e., WTC; McCroskey, 1992), trait (i.e., CA; McCroskey, 1978), or skill (i.e., CC; McCroskey & McCroskey, 1988). In contrast, the present study investigates moral emotions as drivers of communication patterns, and moral emotions which stem from instilled military values. Such a finding can fundamentally change the way scholars theorize, conceptualize, and measure communication. For years scholars have posited that competent communication “incorporates at least two fundamental properties—appropriateness and effectiveness” (Canary & Spitzberg, 1987, p. 93) within a given context (Lane, 2016; Spitzberg, 1983). A moral reasoning approach to the issue of communication competence could complement existing measures to garner a more holistic understanding of this concept.

This study offers some early indications of how the VCCC scale, specifically, and moral reasoning, in general, can contribute to organizational communication theorizing and testing. All portions of the VCCC were significantly and positively associated with months in combat, according to results of correlational analyses that revealed a small relationship. Post hoc analyses of MANOVA results revealed a demographic pattern such that combat veterans scored significantly higher than non-combat veterans. Specifically, MANOVA results found that combat veterans scored significantly higher on the VCCC overall and formative than those stationed solely in the United States or overseas, but not in a combat zone.

Combat service is likely indicative of moral injury, or a psychosocial “wound” that occurs as the result of one or more ethical violations (Frankfurt & Frazier, 2016; Jinkerson, 2016; Zerach & Levi-Belz, 2018). Jinkerson (2016) defines the two

dimensions of moral injury symptoms as core and secondary. According to Jinkerson, core symptoms of moral injury are “guilt, shame, spiritual/existential conflict, and loss of trust” (p. 122), whereas secondary symptoms are “depression, anxiety, anger, reexperiencing, self-harm, and social problems” (p. 122). Researchers found that moral injury is “one of the negative effects of combat, representing a trauma-related syndrome following exposure to events that have been perceived as violations of deep moral beliefs by oneself or trusted individuals” (Zerach & Levi-Belz, 2018, p. 1538).

The nature of combat means veterans might, at times, need to shift or alter their moral frameworks to cope psychologically with the horrors of war and the moral injury those experiences can produce (Flipse Vargas et al., 2013; Knight, 1990; Litz et al., 2009). Shifted moral frameworks could result in both a heightened protection of the newly adopted moral stance and a more salient military identity (Farnsworth et al., 2014). The current study did, in fact, find months of deployment to be significantly and positively associated with military identity. Veterans who serve in combat must enact military identity in a salient rather than theoretical manner and performance of combat duties may create an altered morality in combat veterans. A shifted moral framework may make combat veterans more sensitive to perceiving civilians who do not share their worldview with contempt. Shifted moral frameworks that arise as the result of moral injury in combat could further combat veterans’ sense of group superiority and create a need to discount, discredit, and devalue civilian morality. Combat veterans may have a mental model of civilians as inferior and, therefore, not worthy of further interactions (Padilla-Walker & Jensen, 2015; Wirshbo, 1990).

Additionally, this study supplied evidence of two underlying subdimensions of the VCCC. Summative contempt may be related to core symptoms of moral injury, as several items hint at a loss of trust, whereas formative contempt may be related to secondary symptoms, as items used stronger language that may be indicative of anger or lead to social problems (Jinkerson, 2016). Future research could further illuminate this proposal.

Furthermore, combat months endured was significantly and positively associated with VCCC. The 24/7 nature of military communication, in a combat zone, could inculcate values and beliefs that incite seasoned combat veterans to judge civilians more harshly, as previously mentioned. An alternative explanation is that most veterans who deploy repeatedly are usually stationed at military bases founded for rapid deployment. These bases usually have a small civilian presence (e.g., Fort Hood or Fort Bliss) and, therefore, these veterans may interact more often or exclusively with other military veterans, even while not deployed (MacLeish, 2015). Of course, longitudinal data collection and interviews could support this line of reasoning or supply an alternative perspective.

This study supports and contributes to the communication theory of identity (CTI) literature by revealing how identity patterns are observable among veterans. CTI posits that individuals have four identity frames: personal, relational, enacted, and communal (Hecht, 1993) and that when these frames are misaligned negative health symptoms such as anxiety and depression will follow (Jung & Hecht, 2004; Phillips et al., 2018). The VCCC was significantly and positively associated with military identity and had a large

relationship. Furthermore, the VCCC was significantly associated with the M2CQ, previously linked to anxiety, depression, and social isolation (Sayer et al., 2011), and associated with loneliness (Brenner et al., 2008), again consistent with the predictions and findings of CTI researchers (Jung & Hecht, 2004; Phillips et al., 2018). Taken together, results show that the VCCC is positively and significantly related to military identity. Thus, this study supports the underpinnings of CTI and supplies a way to measure the discrepancy between the embraced communal military identity, and the enactment of identity in civilian society.

CTI may also help explain why no significant relationships were found between the VCCC (all parts) and either WTC or CA. Notably, military identity was significantly and positively associated with all forms of WTC and significantly and negatively with communication apprehension. The researcher predicted these relationships would be observed among the VCCC and these variables. Therefore, although the VCCC may not have a direct relationship with WTC and CA, future research should investigate whether VCCC may have an indirect relationship through military identity with WTC and CA. Consideration of the other identity frames proposed by Hecht (1993) could also explain this lack of a significant relationship as the personal and/or relational frames veterans hold may override the gap between military, or communal, identity and the ability to enact that identity.

Recall Hecht (1993) suggests all four frames are constantly in tension and interpenetrate each other frame. As such individual traits may mitigate or augment identity gaps that exist between only two frames such as communal and enactment

(Hecht, 1993). If a veteran has a strong social support network of homogenous relationships, then perhaps the personal and relational frames offset the gap between communal and enactment frames. This could bolster a veteran's willingness to communicate and decrease communication apprehension (Laschever, 2009; Phillips et al., 2018). Laschever found that veterans helped each other readapt after World War I by hiring other veterans of the war in the Doughboys Network. Veteran owned companies (e.g., Plated, RallyPoint, Red Owl Analytics, Unite US, Black Rifle Coffee Company) may be more willing to hire veterans than non-veterans. Veterans who work for a veteran-owned organization may encounter less conflict with civilian communication than veterans working for non-veteran owned companies. This study did not measure veterans' social networks but understanding these social networks is essential to understanding a veteran's willingness to communicate and communication apprehension. Furthermore, strong social networks have been found to help bolster social support (Lee et al., 2019; Owen et al., 2016). Veterans who surround themselves with other veterans may report being willing to communicate and not experiencing communication apprehension, but an experimental design where they must communicate with civilians might reveal that this is not the case. Therefore, future research must be conducted.

This study provides empirical support for the use of the M2CQ in both non-combat and combat veteran samples, for whom it was developed and has been used (Sayer et al., 2011; Wilson et al., 2019). The current sample consisted of both combat and non-combat veterans and the M2CQ remained reliable, according to CFA. This study also extends knowledge of military transition by analyzing how the M2CQ relates to other



study variables. The M2CQ had a significant relationship with every other study variable, and in the directions hypothesized for the VCCC. Therefore, this study shows how the M2CQ could be used in future communication studies by finding that scores on the M2CQ were positively associated with VCCC (all parts), communication apprehension, loneliness, and military identity, but negatively associated with WTC (all parts) and SWL (all parts). The M2CQ has been linked to negative psychological states, such as anxiety and depression (Sayer et al., 2011). This study provides evidence that the M2CQ is also linked to negative communication acts such as being unwilling to communicate with others and anxiousness about communicating. The M2CQ may, therefore, be a useful tool for communication scholars to use when studying veterans who have been out of the military for an extended period and understand what communicating with civilians is like.

The M2CQ asks veterans to reflect on the last 30 days when completing the questionnaire. Such an approach can aid in capturing the changes in a veteran's adaptation over time, but it may not have predictive value. In fact, in this study, veterans scored significantly different before March 7<sup>th</sup> (the day COVID-19 fallout hit the stock markets and many reported cases appeared in the U.S.) and veterans who took the survey March 7<sup>th</sup> or later. The M2CQ appears to be sensitive to current events and may best serve as a diagnostic tool to examine what has happened in the last 30 days of a veteran's life. In contrast, veterans' response to the VCCC, however, showed no significant differences between these two time periods as scale means and variable relationships remained mostly stable across this historical event. Therefore, the VCCC may be a better

predictive scale as it is measuring a semi-stable moral emotion of contempt rather than the M2CQ's measurement of a veteran's state of transition (Berndtsson, Dandeker, & Yden, 2015; Smith & True, 2014). These scales could complement each other as the VCCC can be administered before or after military exit, while the M2CQ requires that the veteran be out of the military for at least 30 days. The VCCC, all parts, and the M2CQ also had a significant moderate relationship. The value of utilizing both the VCCC and the M2CQ is that the M2CQ is sensitive to what has occurred in the life of the veteran, but the VCCC may be able to predict what will occur in the future. Longitudinal studies are needed to validate the veracity of this claim, but early support in this study shows that VCCC formative is a significant predictor of the M2CQ and VCCC summative is a significant predictor of loneliness. Thus, the combined use of the VCCC and the M2CQ may provide a more well-rounded view of a veteran's condition.

An unintended opportunity offered by the timeframe of data collection was the ability to examine whether scores on study variables changed before and after the media coverage of the COVID-19 outbreak in the United States. Participants scored significantly different on the M2CQ, loneliness, and military identity on and after March 7<sup>th</sup> than before, perhaps because this crisis supplied an opportunity to enact military training and display posttraumatic growth, or "positive personal changes following adversity" (Morgan et al., 2017, p. 434). Psychologists have suggested that events that trigger deliberative rumination increase the amount of posttraumatic growth (Morgan & Desmarais, 2017; Morgan et al., 2017). Therefore, veterans that felt compelled to act quickly, in the face of COVID-19, may have been able to enact their military identity in a

salient way and make sense of the unfolding events through their military training. Specific differences were found in the relationships among variables between veterans that took the survey before March 7<sup>th</sup> and those that took it after this date. Specifically, VCCC formative was found to be significantly related to WTC with friends and VCCC summative was found to be significantly related to WTC with strangers in the overall sample; however, responses from before March 7<sup>th</sup> had non-significant relationships and the relationships became significant after March 7<sup>th</sup>. This may show that veterans feel more comfortable communicating with civilians during a crisis than during routine interactions, and the focus on effective rather than appropriate communication may explain why. Of course, this claim is rather speculative, although supported by literature, theorizing, and some statistical analysis, however, a study utilizing retrospective interview accounts of veterans may be able to support or provide an alternative explanation for the results found in this study.

Caution should be used when interpreting the relationships between the VCCC and WTC, as the WTC had significantly different correlations with several study variables after March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020 than before. The idea that the outbreak of COVID-19 supplied an ability to enact military training in the civilian world may also explain why scores on the M2CQ and loneliness decreased, while military identity increased. Veterans may feel more comfortable communicating during a crisis than during routine interactions with civilians. First, during a crisis direct and effective communication may be valued more than appropriate communication, and veterans prefer direct communication, as noted in the responses from veterans received during the scale

development process. Second, the strict socialization process of the military (Howe & Hinderaker, 2018; Sørensen, 2011) trains servicemembers to remain calm during a crisis (Knight, 1990). Thus, in the face of crisis, veterans may feel both an ability to enact military identity and an excitement that is not naturally occurring in those who have not undergone rigorous military training. Perhaps it is for this reason that over 17,000 veterans have volunteered to return to the military in support of the COVID-19 response (Rempfer, 2020).

In fact, communication from the military to former servicemembers uses language that draws on these military values. On March 25, 2020 the Department of Defense sent an email containing the following language to former servicemembers: “These extraordinary challenges require equally extraordinary solutions and that's why we're turning to you -- trusted professionals capable of operating under constantly changing conditions. When the Nation called -- you answered, and now, that call may come again” (W. Howe, personal communication, March 25, 2020). This sentence likely resonated with veterans and stirred military values instilled in veterans during basic training (Howe & Hinderaker, 2018; Shpeer & Howe, 2020; U.S. Army, 2019). Future research should consider interviewing these veterans and seeing what, specifically, about the rise of COVID-19 made veterans feel more connected than before. Understanding how military veterans respond to such messages may be one way that some good is garnered from the current crisis.

Similarly, this study contributes to totalistic organization (TO) literature some quantitative support for ideas that qualitative scholars have proposed previously.

Specifically, scholars described the difficulty TO members experience when attempting to exit either a role (McNamee & Gould, 2019) or a TO itself (Garner & Peterson, 2017; Hinderaker, 2015). There was no significant relationship between either time since military service or time in the military and military identity. These findings could be explained by the idea that military identity does not cease upon military exit, which aligns with what qualitative research has concluded (Howe & Shpeer, 2019). Further research on organizational socialization should consider reconceptualizing the phasic model of organizational socialization (Jablin, 2001; Kramer, 2010) to include post-exit as a fifth stage of socialization that is the counterpart to anticipatory socialization. Scholars have documented the lengthy (Hinderaker, 2015) and non-linear (McNamee & Gould, 2019) process of exit from totalistic organizations. Therefore, during the protracted exit process it is likely that former members may influence both potential and future members, even if through informal socialization process such as family and friend communication (Jablin, 2001). Such an addition could help explain the retention of TO identities after exit and how former members influence the socialization process of future and current members (Howe & Bisel, 2020).

### **Limitations**

This study is not without limitations. The cross-sectional study design does not allow for causal or predictive testing. Therefore, although these data support theoretical assumptions about the relationships between and among study variables, causal claims are not appropriate. Second, participants who completed this study did so outside of a lab environment and therefore may not have been completely focused on the survey. The

greatest limitation, however, is the historical event of COVID-19. Although data collection occurred over a period of weeks it is still possible that participants near the end of the collection period responded in significantly different ways than participants at the beginning. In fact, participants who took the survey on or after March 7<sup>th</sup> did score significantly different than participants who took the survey before March 7<sup>th</sup> on some study variables (see above). Also, the COVID-19 crisis was not a singular event but increased in severity throughout data collection. Therefore, participant responses could have changed as this severity grew. One possible limitation is online recruitment and survey administration perhaps some of these participants lied to the recruitment company and in the survey in order to be able to complete the study, therefore, a follow-up study could find a way to partner with a veteran organization to administer this survey to those that are known to have served. Another limitation is that military identity was measured on a one-item scale, perhaps a more complex measure such as the organizational identification questionnaire would produce different results about the relationship between military identity and the VCCC. Additionally, dropping some poor loading items from the validated scales could have possibly changed the meaning of the scale. The sample was also somewhat homogenous, perhaps participants of various demographic backgrounds would score differently on this scale. The bi-factor model was also difficult to use in this study to assess factor scores and should probably be reserved for structural equation models instead of for scales that will be only used for tests in SPSS.

## **Conclusion and Future Directions**

This study supplies communication scholars with a new tool, the VCCC, to assess the communication of military veterans. This tool is highly related to identity and the M2CQ and is moderately related to loneliness. This study also contributes to communication literature the idea that understanding moral emotions individuals experience while communicating with out-group partners may lead to a better understanding of communication patterns. This study is only the first step in a line of research on communication and the military that could prove fruitful for understanding veteran communication, which could help to stem the tide of veteran suicide.

This study supports the idea that veteran communication is influenced by moral emotions and reasoning. However, moral theorizing could aid in studies beyond military veterans. One direct application may be the consideration of law enforcement communication, as members of this profession are in a comparable suicide crisis to military veterans (Violanti, Robinson, & Shen, 2013). Furthermore, scholars have shown how context influences communication competence (Lane, 2016; Spitzberg, 1983). The general context of organizational communication is changing. One example of this change is the moral beliefs of those entering the workforce. Millennials “use social networking to take social and political action, engage in social entrepreneurship, and conduct charitable solicitation and donation” (Ferris, 2011, p. 277) and “differ in their social orientations and behavioral characteristics from older generations” (Avraamova, 2019, p. 79). Therefore, the current social climate demands attention to developing ethically reliable workspaces (Bisel, 2018; Ploeger & Bisel, 2013), working relationships

(Bisel, Messersmith, & Kelley, 2012; Meeks & Howe, 2020), and work ethics (Freeman, Hirschhorn, & Maltz, 2004). Further consideration and theorization of the role moral emotions play in organizational communication could play a vital part in creating ethical organizations (Bisel, 2018) that can survive and thrive in an age of enhanced moral awareness.

This scale is the first communication scale focused on measuring the amount of contempt that veterans feel toward civilian communication. As such it offers some preliminary results to help better understand the role communication plays in veteran reintegration. This initial evidence suggests that the VCCC may be a new way for providers, employers, places of higher education, and even the military itself to assess the ability of veterans to reintegrate successfully to society. Furthermore, understanding the moral reasoning of veterans and how that moral reasoning influences identity and is demonstrated through communication could also aid family and friends in knowing what type of communication many veterans prefer. Such communication, at least from the results of this study, is clear, concise, and competent communication often assessed through the lens of military values. Future studies are needed to further validate this scale and to tease out the practical applications, yet the results of this project indicate that this scale could be an effective tool for assessing veterans' communicative abilities and providing early and innovative interventions for those that report a large amount of contempt. Such an intervention could be a reverse-basic training where veterans are placed in a veteran community in the civilian world and forced to interact with civilians, while still employed by the military. This would allow veterans to learn how they can



temper contempt, improve communication with civilians, have a smoother transition, and lessen the chance they commit the irreversible act of suicide.

A recent study by Aldrich & Cerel (2020) found that “[e]xposure to suicide significantly impacted mental health, specifically depression, anxiety, and PTSD symptoms. The level of exposure to suicide was associated with higher levels of depression, anxiety, and PTSD.” (p. 11). Although the work of these researchers examined occupational exposure to suicide, which does occur in the military (Shpeer & Howe, 2020), it would be logical to conclude that exposure to other veterans committing suicide could lead to the same outcome. Therefore, since we know veterans have a higher chance of committing suicide than the civilian population and such exposure can lead to increased negative health outcomes, then one way to combat the veteran suicide epidemic is to identify those who are most at risk and provide early interventions, and now the VCCC provides a new way to realize this goal. If veterans view civilian communication with contempt and therefore avoid communicating with them then perhaps the best way to combat veteran suicide is to train veterans to look out for each other, similar to proposals for health care staff (Silva et al., 2016). During interventions with veterans that are at risk of committing this act a purposeful attempt should be made to raise appreciation and, if possible, fondness for civilian communication as Gottman & Gottman (2015) suggest appreciation is the antidote for contempt. If veterans begin to appreciate the communication of civilians, then they may begin to communicate more with civilians, and by communicating more with civilians a veteran may be able to reduce social isolation and build social support which could lessen suicidal ideation.

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## Appendix A

### Veteran Contempt of Civilian Communication (Howe, 2020) Study 1

DIRECTIONS: This instrument is composed of statements concerning your communication with civilians. Please indicate the degree to which you agree with each statement by marking: "Hell No", "No", "Undecided", "Yes", or "Hell Yes" for each statement.

Note: If you do not select an option, a response will not be recorded.

Civilians do not show appreciation for the actions of others.

Civilian talk is intelligent.

Civilians "beat around the bush" when they talk.

Civilians are "blue falcons".

Civilian communication is "low-speed and high-drag".

Civilians are appropriately comfortable with profanity.

Civilians are more concerned with tact than truth when they speak.

Civilians are often communicating in a helpful manner.

Civilians are overly sensitive to profanity.

Civilians are overly tactful when they communicate.

Civilians are overly-concerned with protecting feelings while communicating.

Civilians fear speaking directly.

Civilians are scared to speak openly.

Civilians are too serious when communicating.

Civilians try to hide the truth by using misleading language.

Civilians cannot take a joke.

Civilians cannot be trusted to be truthful.

Civilians cannot be trusted to speak directly.

Civilians communicate in a way that makes it easy to know where you stand.

Civilians communicate like "window lickers".

Civilians communicate like a "butter bar".

Civilians communicates in a chaotic manner.

Civilians communication creates an atmosphere of uncertainty.

Civilians disguise their intentions with indirect communication.

Civilians do not get to the point quickly.

Civilians do not show respect to others when communicating.

Civilians do not speak accurately about the rest of the world.

Civilians do not try to understand the communication of others.

Civilians do not use foul language.

Civilians get their feeling hurt too easily when arguing.

Civilians get worked up too easily.

Civilians have little direction in their conversation.

Civilians heavily filter their communication.

Civilians know what they are talking about when they speak.

Civilians misuse political correctness to hide their true intentions.

Civilians mostly talk about dumb things.

Civilians need "Barney-style" communication.

Civilians need child-like explanations to understand complex topics.

Civilians speak without sincerity.

Civilian talk is not efficient.

Civilian talk is not precise.

Civilians talk like they know a lot more than they do.

Civilians talk in a way that value embellishment more than efficiency.

Civilians value flowery language over truth.

Civilians who use flowery language should be treated with suspicion.

Civilians will betray others to get ahead.

Civilians will communicate to make themselves look better at my expense.

Civilian communication makes as much sense as a "football bat".

Civilian conversations are meaningless.

Civilian intentions can be easily determined by how they talk.

Civilian talk illustrates that they do not understand the way the world really works.

Civilian talk is "FUBAR".

Civilian talk is ignorant.

Civilian talk is stupid.

Civilian talk is undisciplined.

Communicating with civilians is a waste of time.

Communicating with civilians is worth my time.

I have contempt for how meaningful civilian communication is.



I admire how meaningful civilian communication is.

I have admiration for the way civilians communicate.

I have contempt for the way civilians communicate.

## Appendix B

### Veteran Contempt of Civilian Communication (Howe, 2020) Study 2

DIRECTIONS: This instrument is composed of statements concerning your communication with civilians. Please indicate the degree to which you agree with each statement by marking: "Hell No", "No", "Undecided", "Yes", or "Hell Yes" for each statement.

Note: If you do not select an option, a response will not be recorded.

Civilians talk like they know a lot more than they do.

Civilians disguise their intentions with indirect communication.

Civilians misuse political correctness to hide their true intentions.

Civilians "beat around the bush" when they talk.

Civilians talk in a way that values embellishment more than efficiency.

Civilians try to hide the truth by using misleading language.

Civilians get their feeling hurt too easily when arguing.

Civilians do not get to the point quickly.

Civilians value flowery language over truth.

Civilians do not speak accurately about the rest of the world.

Civilians judge foul language.

Civilians will betray others to get ahead.

Civilians are overly sensitive to profanity.

Civilian talk is stupid.

Civilian conversations are meaningless.

Civilian communication makes as much sense as a "football bat".

I have contempt for the way civilians communicate.

Civilian talk is "FUBAR".

Communicating with civilians is a waste of time.

Civilian communication is "low-speed and high-drag".

## Appendix C

### Willingness to Communicate Scale (McCroskey, 1992)

DIRECTIONS: Below are twelve situations in which a person might choose to communicate or not to communicate. Presume you have completely free choice. Indicate the percentage of times you would choose to communicate in each type of situation. Indicate by moving the slider to the correct position what percent of the time you would choose to communicate. 0 = "Never", 100 = "Always".

Note: if you do not click on an answer a response will not be recorded.

Talk with an acquaintance while standing in line.

Talk in a large meeting of friends.

Talk in a small group of strangers.

Talk with a friend while standing in line.

Talk in a large meeting of acquaintances.

Talk with a stranger while standing in line.

Talk in a small group of acquaintances.

Talk in a large meeting of strangers.

Talk in a small group of friends.

## Appendix D

Personal Report of Communication Apprehension Short Form (McCroskey, 1978)

DIRECTIONS: This instrument is composed of 10 statements concerning your communication with other people. Please indicate the degree to which you think each statement applies to you by marking: "Strongly Disagree", "Disagree", "Undecided", "Agree", or "Strongly Agree" for each statement. There are no right or wrong answers. Work quickly, just record your first impression.

Note: if you do not click on an answer a response will not be recorded.

I look forward to expressing myself at meetings.

I am afraid to express myself in a group.

I look forward to an opportunity to speak in public.

Although I talk fluently with friends, I am at a loss for words on the platform.

I always avoid speaking in public if possible.

I feel that I am more fluent when talking to people than most other people are.

I like to get involved in group discussion.

I dislike to use my body and voice expressively.

I'm afraid to speak up in conversations.

I would enjoy presenting a speech on a local television show.

## Appendix E

### Military to Civilian Questionnaire (Sayer et al., 2011)

DIRECTIONS: Over the past 30 days have you had difficulty with...

Dealing with people you do not know well (such as acquaintances or strangers)?

Making new friends?

Keeping up friendships with people who have no military experience?

Keeping up friendships with people who have military experiences (including friends who are active duty or Veterans)

Getting along with relatives (such as siblings, parents, grandparents, in-laws and children not living at home)?

Getting along with your spouse or partner (such as communicating, doing things together, enjoying his or her company)?

Getting along with your child or children (such as communicating, doing things together, enjoying his or her company)?

Finding or keeping a job (paid or nonpaid or self-employment)?

Doing what you need to do for work or school?

Taking care of your chores at home (such as housework, yard work, cooking, cleaning, shopping, errands)?

Taking care of your health (such as exercising, sleeping, bathing, eating well, taking medications as needed)?

Enjoying or making good use of free time?

Taking part in community events or celebrations (for example, festivals, PTA meetings, religious or other activities)?

Feeling like you belong in “civilian” society?

Confiding or sharing personal thoughts and feelings?

Finding meaning or purpose in life?

## Appendix F

UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell, Peplau, & Ferguson, 1978)

DIRECTIONS: Please indicate the degree to which you agree with each statement by marking: "Strongly Disagree", "Disagree", "Undecided", "Agree", or "Strongly Agree" for each statement.

Note: if you do not click on an answer a response will not be recorded.

I am unhappy doing so many things alone

I have nobody to talk to

I cannot tolerate being so alone

I lack companionship

I feel as if nobody really understands me

I find myself waiting for people to call or write

There is no one I can turn to

I am no longer close to anyone

My interests and ideas are not shared by those around me

I feel left out

I feel completely alone

I am unable to reach out and communicate with those around me

My social relationships are superficial

I feel starved for company

No one really knows me well

I feel isolated from others



I am unhappy being so withdrawn

It is difficult for me to make friends

I feel shut out and excluded by others

People are around me but not with me

## Appendix G

Temporal Satisfaction with Life Scale (Pavot, Diener, & Suh, 1998)

DIRECTIONS: Please indicate the degree to which you agree with each statement by marking: "Strongly Disagree", "Disagree", "Undecided", "Agree", or "Strongly Agree" for each statement.

Note: if you do not click on an answer a response will not be recorded.

If I had my past to live over, I would change nothing.

I am satisfied with my life in the past.

My life in the past was ideal for me.

The conditions of my life in the past were excellent.

I had the important things I wanted in my past.

I would change nothing about my current life.

I am satisfied with my current life.

My current life is ideal for me.

The current conditions of my life are excellent.

I have the important things I want right now.

There will be nothing that I will want to change about my future.

I will be satisfied with my life in the future.

I expect my future life will be ideal for me.

The conditions of my future life will be excellent.

I will have the important things I want in the future.