

Military Veterans are Morally Typecast as Agentic but Unfeeling: Implications for Veteran  
Employment

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What kind of “mind” do people assume those in the military have? This question has important implications for military veterans and provides an opportunity to test moral typecasting as a critical element of the theory of dyadic morality (TDM: Gray & Wegner, 2009; 2011; Schein & Gray, 2017). Based on this theory, moral agents – even those we admire, such as veterans – will be seen as more agentic (ability to plan and act) but have less capacity for experience (ability feel emotion). Leveraging previous theorizing on mind perception, dehumanization, and career typology, the current research shows that veterans are seen as having a higher capacity for agency but less capacity for experience. As a result, veterans are seen as less (more) suited for careers that require a high (low) capacity for experience. Results are found across laypeople, managers, and employees. Implications for veteran well-being are discussed.

Keywords: mind perception; stereotyping; dehumanization; moral typecasting; military; veterans; career

*“The battle, sir, is not to the strong alone; it is to the vigilant, the active, the brave.”* - Patrick Henry

Veterans are overwhelmingly thought of positively and as heroes. The common phrase “support the troops” is reflected in a 2012 survey finding that 86% and 88% of respondents saw post September 11<sup>th</sup> veterans and active troops (respectively) as valuable assets to the country (Jordan, 2012). These numbers are comparable to those of police officers, firefighters, and doctors. Like these other groups, veterans are thought of as heroic and noble “doers” who can plan, take action, and get things done. Military advertising states that soldiers “respond at a moment’s notice,” and are “the first to move toward the sounds of tyranny.” These are all quintessential traits of a *moral agent* that most of us would aspire to possess. They are also traits that one would assume that any employer would want.

However, are there downsides to being seen as a moral agent? Using the context of veterans and the employment issues they face, we argue that there are potential negative employment consequences of agency. Based on moral typecasting (a core component of the Theory of Dyadic Morality (TDM); Gray & Wegner, 2009; 2011; Schein & Gray, 2018) we posit that people may think so much about a veteran’s strength and ability to plan and act – that is, their agency – that they may forget that veterans also have the ability to *feel* emotions and sensations. That is, as moral agents, veterans may be perceived as less able to experience emotion, much like robots who can act but not feel (Gray & Wegner, 2011; 2012).

Despite there being over 20 million military veterans in the United States (United States Census Bureau, 2015), basic social psychological and organizational behavior research has largely been silent on how veterans are perceived (e.g., stereotyped) and the challenges they face. There is particularly a lack of theory-driven research aimed at understanding these issues (Stone

& Stone, 2015). Modell and Haggerty (1991) describes the literature on the broad issue of “the social impact of war” as a “sporadic production of ad hoc, rather than theoretically directed work” (p. 219). Military stereotyping research is largely focused on understanding gender, racial, and mental health stereotypes and discrimination within a military context (Archer, 2013; Armor, 1996; Ben-Shalom, 2012; Bergman et al., 2017; Galovski & Lyons, 2004; Moore, 2017).

Research on stereotypes of service people in and of themselves is surprisingly sparse and largely deals with individual traits/stereotypes that are also said be inconsistent (Stone & Stone, 2015). These include: disciplined, strong work ethic, goal-oriented, precise, leader, efficient, stoic, rigid, less able to learn new tasks, too strict with subordinates, and unable to interact with coworkers (Cooper et al., 2018; Darr, 2011; Pfaff, 2016; Rausch, 2014; Stone et al., 2018). Theory-driven interventions are also said to be lacking across various veteran-related issues (Dickstein, 2010; Galovski and Lyons, 2004; Karney & Crown, 2007; Stone & Stone, 2015). Leveraging theory can therefore shed light on the issue of veteran stereotypes, which domains veterans may experience more versus fewer challenges, and point to potential solutions.

We suggest that a two dimensional model of mind perception and moral typecasting can help advance our understanding of how, when, and why people may overlook veterans for certain careers and funnel them into others. The current research also offers a novel extension of moral typecasting (and by extension the broader theory of TDM) into the organizational behavior literature. This research generates novel insights into how basic dimensions of mind perceptions (the ability to act and the ability to feel) can help explain stereotyping in the labor market.

### **Mind Perception**

A basic tenet of TDM is that when it comes to understanding what kind of mind an entity has – whether it be an adult human, a dog, a robot, or God – we understand minds along two key

dimensions: *agency* (the ability to be a “thinking doer” who can plan and act), and *experience* (the ability to *feel* various emotions and sensations<sup>1</sup>) (Gray et al., 2007; Schein & Gray, 2018). Support for this two-dimensional mind perception framework has been found in a large-scale study involving thousands of participants and thousands of judgment comparisons between various living and non-living entities (Gray et al., 2007). TDM uses these dimensions to understand how people make moral judgments. According to TDM, moral situations are made up of dyads that feature an agent and a patient. Moral agents carry out intentions and act on the world (i.e. do good and perpetrate evil), and moral patients are “vulnerable feelers” who can feel sensations and emotions (i.e. are subject to help or harm). These components are necessary for something to be said to be (im)moral. Throwing a stone into a river or pulling it from a river is not (im)moral, as opposed to if it was a living thing that could feel. Likewise, a baby lacks the necessary agency to be seen as immoral for physically harming a living thing.

Critical to our research, not only is there empirical support for there being two dimensions of mind perception, but also that people easily think of these dimensions of mind as trading off for one another. In most (im)moral situations, the role of agent and patient are mutually exclusive; the abuser is generally not the abusee, and the rescuer is generally not the rescuee. People typically focus on the agency of moral agents (their capacity to act with intention), and conversely, as recipients of good or evil, people typically focus on moral patients’ capacity for feeling sensations and emotions (e.g. pain, pleasure, fear) (Schein & Gray, 2018).

According to TDM, *moral typecasting* is observed when more agentic actors are seen as less feeling (and conversely, those sensitive to sensations and emotions are seen as less agentic;

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<sup>1</sup> In order to avoid confusion between “experience” as the ability to feel sensations and emotions, and “experience” in the more common usage of the word such as when referring to work experience (as we frequently do in this paper), we instead refer to this dimension of mind perception as “feeling” or “the ability to feel”.

Gray & Wegner, 2009; Schein & Gray, 2018). Critically, people generalize this mutual exclusivity beyond the immediate moral context, and thus the role of unfeeling agent becomes a broader character judgment. This is consistent with research suggesting that people form enduring impressions of moral character from their role in specific acts (Pizarro & Tannenbaum, 2011). For example, and relevant to our research, people may see a serviceperson as being a relatively unfeeling agent even after this person has left that role and reentered civilian society.

Moral typecasting – the tradeoff between agency and feeling – is consistent with other theories and research (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002; Holoien & Fiske 2013; Jost et al., 2005; Jost & Kay, 2005; Jost et al., 2005; Kay & Jost, 2003). Stereotyped outgroups routinely fall into the categories of high-warmth low-competence (e.g. the elderly) or low-warmth high-competence (e.g. Jewish people) (Fiske et al., 2002; Jost et al., 2005). Women are judged as warm but not competent, whereas men are seen as competent but less warm (Cuddy, Glick, & Beninger, 2011; Jost & Kay, 2005). Working women are seen as more competent than warm, but having a child reverses this effect (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2004). Describing a target (particularly a woman) only in terms of one dimension (e.g. warmth or competence) leads people to presume they are lower on the other dimension (Kervyn, Bergsieker, & Fiske, 2012).

Moral typecasting itself has been tested and supported, although it has received less research attention than other aspects of TDM. For example, moral agents like Mother Theresa and Hitler were seen as more capable of self-control and planning (i.e., agency) but less capable of feeling various emotions (Gray & Wegner, 2009). Conversely, moral patients like victims of crime and orphans were seen as more capable of feeling but less agency. In a hypothetical task, participants more often gave “pain pills” to both good and bad agents over moral patients (because they can take it/have muted ability to feel) and more often gave “pleasure pills” to

moral patients over moral agents (because they can get more out of them) (Gray & Wegner, 2009). When a hypothetical target was described as being genetically insensitive to pain, they were rated as more agentic; conversely, targets described as more agentic we perceived to feel less (Gray & Wegner, 2009). When a target's body is more salient (e.g., the target has less or no clothing), they are seen as having a heightened ability to feel a number of sensations and emotions, but also less agency compared to when clothed (Gray et al., 2011). Overall, agents are often seen as having a lesser ability to feel a range of sensations and emotions, and not just in the immediate situation where their agency is emphasized (Gray & Wegner, 2009).

Moral typecasting specifically has received less empirical attention compared to other tenets of TDM, especially in real-world contexts. While hypothetical scenarios offer internal validity for theory testing, only one paper to date has examined moral typecasting in a real-world organizational setting (Yam et al., 2018). This research found that highly ethical leaders (i.e. moral agents) are helped less because subordinates infer that ethical leaders need less help (i.e., are seen less as victims). This research hints at how heroism can backfire, but examined this effect only within very specific team contexts. Moreover, although perceived victimhood is conceptually related to a perceived ability to feel (Schein & Gray, 2018), this past research does not directly test perceptions of feeling more generally. Veterans are an important group to test the unique predictions of TDM regarding the potential negative outcomes of typecasting people as moral agents; specifically, in the domains of employment and career stereotyping.

### **Moral Typecasting of Veterans its Consequences**

Data routinely shows higher unemployment rates for veterans (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015; Joseph, 1985). Veterans with traditional military experience struggle with skill transfer (finding employment in one's area of training; Boyle, 2014; Joseph, 1985; Mangum & Ball,

1987) and feel unprepared entering the civilian workforce (Keeling, Kintzle, & Castro, 2018). Despite the positive views that people often have of veterans, they are not necessarily preferred by employers (Kleykamp, 2009). The persistence and relevance of these issues calls for the application of contemporary psychological theory to understand how veterans are perceived, when and why they may have employment difficulties, and strategies for addressing these issues.

There is reason to think that stereotypes play a role in veteran's employment issues (Harrell & Berglass, 2012; Keeling et al., 2018; Stone et al., 2018). However, these stereotypes are often conflicting (Stone & Stone, 2015) and the literature has yet to offer a theory for understanding them; thus, numerous and opposing predictions can be made. As stated earlier, veterans are lauded as heroes and are almost universally seen positively. They are quintessential moral agents. This is an understandable consequence of military training. The military's goal is to create individuals who are "strong and capable" (Today's Military, 2016) and who will "run to the sound of imminent danger" (Slate, 2013). Military action also involves obediently executing orders with precision in the service of a greater goal. Military service also can expose people to emotionally intense experiences (both positively and negatively valenced) that many will never experience. Numerous and conflicting predictions regarding veteran stereotypes could be made based on these observations. However, according to moral typecasting, perceiving agency in veterans should actually come with *decreased* perceptions of an ability to feel emotion.

Typecasting denies mental abilities in others. It is therefore a kind of selective dehumanization whereby one kind of mind is heightened (i.e., agency) and another kind of mind is diminished (i.e., feeling). This is consistent with mechanistic dehumanization (Haslam, 2006; Waytz, Gray, Epley, & Wegner 2010) which denies the individual key traits related to emotion and sociability, making them akin to an unfeeling robot. Animalistic dehumanization,



conversely, likens people to animals that lack higher-order thinking and self-control. Again, one could make various and opposing predictions regarding how veterans are perceived, and no theory has been offered to suggest one or the other. For example, images of stealthy soldiers at night with face paint is suggestive of animalistic dehumanization. However, more typecasting firmly predicts mechanistic dehumanization. Despite (or perhaps even because of) the fact that we hold veterans in high esteem as heroic moral agents, moral typecasting predicts that people are likely to see veterans as capable of thinking but also as relatively unfeeling, emotionally unresponsive, and uncommunicative. This is another important test of the unique value of moral typecasting and mind perception, as other theories would instead predict that lauded groups are humanized on all dimensions, and disliked groups or objectified groups are dehumanized on all dimensions (Heflick, Goldenberg, Cooper, & Puvia, 2011; Khamitov et al., 2016).

This particular form of stereotyping and dehumanization may help explain the problems that veterans experience when seeking employment. Despite their positive qualities (e.g., disciplined, goal-oriented, efficient), veterans are often seen as stoic, rigid, less able to learn new tasks, too strict with subordinates, and unable to interact with coworkers (Cooper et al., 2018; Darr, 2011; Pfaff, 2016; Rausch, 2014; Stone & Stone, 2015; Stone et al., 2018). All of the above beliefs about veterans – both positive and negative – can be seen as stemming from typecasting veterans as robotic agents with less capacity for emotion. Employers valuing veterans' work ethic while being concerned about their rigidity is consistent with this form of typecasting.

Regarding concerns about social skills, there is a clear link between a basic ability to feel and sociability. Perceiving a target as lacking a basic ability to feel is associated with lacking personality and qualities that aid in social connection (Gray et al., 2007). A basic ability to feel is also necessary for empathy (Gray, Jenkins, Heberlein, & Wegner, 2011; Preston & de Waal,

2001), and emotional disclosure and intimacy are critical to social connection (Laurenceau, Barrett, & Pietromonaco, 1998). Given the lack of emotion and stoicism that people associate with the military, employers anticipate difficulty communicating with veterans (Stone & Stone, 2015; Stone et al., 2018). These anticipated difficulties have been partly attributed to the heroic pedestal that veterans are put on (Dillon, 2017). It is not surprising then that veterans often experience a lack of fit and belongingness in civilian organizations (Elliott, Gonzalez, & Larsen, 2011; Teclaw, Osatuke, & Ramsel, 2016; Yanchus et al., 2018).

Suggestive of our typecasting account, veterans are overrepresented in agentic careers that require less feeling (e.g., manufacturing, maintenance), and are underrepresented in careers that require feeling (e.g., health, education, art, services) (Schulker 2017; White, 2018).

Numerous potential explanations for these differences exist, but we argue that even equally qualified and motivated veterans will be seen as less suited for social and emotional careers compared to non-veterans. This is problematic for veterans, as jobs are increasingly requiring interpersonal connection, emotional intelligence, and empathy (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2002; Ashoka 2013; Freshman & Rubino, 2002; Ovans, 2015). That is, employers are increasingly looking for employees with skills that at least partly derive from an ability to understand, harness, and share emotion. Social services, health services, and education all require some ability to feel to be successful. Job growth is increasingly in the domain of social-emotional occupations that are difficult to automate. Conversely, fewer jobs require rote procedures, obedience, or working in solitude (Deming, 2015; Sherk 2010) (i.e. the jobs that veterans will be seen as best suited for). Ironically, these jobs are being replaced with literal robots (Acemoglu and Restrepo, 2017; Lauderdale & Landuyt 2014, Rainie & Anderson, 2017). Over half of the

top 100 jobs in the US (ranked by U.S. News and World Report, 2018) are in healthcare, mental health, and education. Only six are in low feeling careers (e.g. engineering, construction).

### **Current Research**

The current research draws from and synthesizes a number of theoretical frameworks, including mind perception (Gray & Wegner 2012), dehumanization (Haslam 2006; Waytz et al., 2010), and career typology (Holland, 1973) to first predict that military veterans will be seen as more agentic but less able to feel compared to similar targets with no military experience (H1). Study 1a offers a basic test of moral typecasting in a veteran context, and how dimensions of mind map onto perceived morality and dehumanization. We then predicted that military veterans would be seen as less suited for careers that require a high (vs. low) ability to feel (H2). Studies 2-4 connect mind perception and moral typecasting with Holland's (1973) RIASEC theory of vocational choice. We also test H2 by partnering with a large restaurant chain and collecting data from actual employees (Study 5a). Finally, support for H2 would be suggestive of novel interventions to reduce this bias. We predicted that simply including resume content that signals a veteran's ability to feel would attenuate the effects predicted in H1 and H2 (H3).

Support for our hypotheses are found across different levels of analysis (individual- and career-level), varying samples (laypeople, those who work in management, hiring/recruiting, and human resources, high-ranking employees within an organization), a variety of depictions of veteran applicants, and a wide range of careers and positions. The current work represents a unique opportunity to test and expand theory while also addressing the need for theoretically driven research on veteran stereotypes, specifically in the context of perceived employability.

### **Study 1a**

Study 1a tests the hypothesis that military veterans are seen as high in agency, but low in an ability to feel (H1). Study 1a also tests how well Abele et al.'s (Abele, Uchrowski, Suitner, & Wojcisz, 2008) model of social judgment (comparable to Fiske et al.'s 2002 stereotype content model) accounts for veteran stereotypes, which proposes two dimensions of social judgment: agency (e.g. assertive, intelligent) and communion (e.g. caring, trustworthy). It has been pointed out that communion (or warmth; Fiske et al., 2002) confounds elements of interpersonal warmth and morality (Goodwin, Piazza, & Rozin, 2014), and so we included Goodwin et al.'s measure of morality. Finally, we included a measure of mechanistic and animalistic dehumanization (Bastian, Denson, and Haslam, 2013). We expected that veterans (vs. non-veterans) would be rated as higher in (Gray et al.'s) agency, lower in feeling, higher in morality, and more mechanistically dehumanized. Finally, agency ratings ought to be related to morality perceptions, given the important link between these constructs in TDM. We also show that an agency-communion framework (Abele et al., 2008) does not show this pattern of effects.

All dependent measures and conditions are reported in all studies. Study materials for all studies can be found in the supplemental Methodological Details.

## Method

**Participants.** Two-hundred and forty-eight undergraduate students (125 men, 123 women,  $M_{\text{age}} = 21.22$ ) completed the study on Qualtrics during in-lab data collection sessions over the course of one week. Twenty-five participants failed an attention check verifying their knowledge of the target, leaving two-hundred and twenty-three participants.

**Procedure.** Participants were randomly assigned to rate a target in a 2 (non-veteran vs. veteran) X 2 (male vs. female) design. The non-veteran was described as follows: “Todd [Tammy] Billingsly is a 32 year old man [woman] who works as a real estate agent in Florida”.

In the veteran condition, they were described as “a 32 year old man [woman] who served in the U. S. Army. He [She] is now a real estate agent in Florida”. Participants then rated the target using a nine-point scale (1 = *much less than the average person*, 5 = *the same as the average person*, 9 = *much more than the average person*). All measures were shown in random order.

***Mind perception.*** Participants rated the target on traits most commonly used in past TDM research. Four traits measured capacity for agency: self-control, memory, planning, and intentional thought (Gray & Wegner, 2009; 2011; 2012; Gray et al., 2011). Four items measured the capacity for feeling: hunger, fear, pain, emotional pleasure (Gray & Wegner, 2009; 2012; Gray et al., 2011). Brief scenarios were constructed to measure each trait. Agency and feeling composites had acceptable reliability ( $\alpha = .66$  and  $.62$ , respectively).

***Social judgment.*** Participants rated the target on the agency dimension (able, active, assertive, creative, independent, intelligent, rational, and self-reliant) and communion dimension (caring, helpful, loyal, polite, sensitive, sympathetic, trustworthy, and understanding) of social judgment (Abele et al., 2008) (agency:  $\alpha = .86$ , communion:  $\alpha = .79$ ).

***Morality.*** Morality was measured using Goodwin et al.’s (2014) measure of morality developed to distinguish between warmth/communion and moral character (courageous, fair, principled, responsible, just, honest, trustworthy, loyal;  $\alpha = .93$ ).

***Dehumanization.*** Ratings of the target as being “mechanical (like a robot)” and “impulsive/lacks self-restraint (like an animal)” measured mechanistic and animalistic dehumanization, respectively (Bastian et al., 2013).

## Results

The interaction between veteran status (non-veteran vs. veteran) and target gender (male vs. female) was not significant for all dependent variables,  $F_s(1, 219) < 2.01$ ,  $ps > .16$ , except

for ability to feel,  $F(1, 219) = 5.80, p = .017$ ; the non-veteran target was seen as having a higher ability to feel, and this was particularly the case for the female target. Because of a lack of predicted or consistent or interactions, we simply test the main effect of veteran status.

**Mind perception (agency and feeling) vs. social judgement (agency and communion).** Means and *SDs* are reported in Table 1. In terms of mind perception, the veteran was seen as significantly higher in agency,  $t(221) = 4.53, p < .001, d = .61$ , and lower in feeling compared to the non-veteran,  $t(221) = 8.30, p < .001, d = 1.12$ , supporting H1. In terms of the two dimensions of social judgment (Abele et al., 2008), veterans were higher in agency  $t(221) = 4.84, p < .001, d = .65$ , and if anything also higher in communion  $t(221) = 1.95, p = .052, d = .26$ . These results suggest that feeling and communion are not merely interchangeable constructs. The aforementioned mind perception results remain when controlling for social judgment dimensions (agency and communion). In further support of moral typecasting, mind perception dimensions of agency and feeling were negatively correlated with each other,  $r = -.19, p = .004$ . In contrast, social judgment dimensions of agency and communion were highly positively correlated,  $r = .59, p < .001$ . The agency dimension of mind perception correlated positively with communion,  $r = .33, p < .001$ , whereas the feeling dimension of mind perception was uncorrelated with communion,  $r = .10, p = .13$ . This is further evidence that dimensions of mind perceptions (Gray et al., 2007) and social judgment (Abele et al., 2008) are distinct constructs.

Breaking down communion ratings proved informative; veterans were seen as more loyal and trustworthy than non-veterans,  $ts(221) > 7.04, ps < .001$ , but were seen as less polite, sensitive, and sympathetic,  $ts(221) > 1.95, ps < .052$ . Therefore, the mixed content of the communion dimension (morality and interpersonal warmth) obscures how people perceive and stereotype veterans compared to the mind perception dimensions of agency and feeling.

Moreover, the feeling dimension of mind perception significantly predicted the interpersonal warmth content of the communion scale (e.g., polite, sensitive, sympathetic, understanding),  $r = .37, p < .001$ , whereas (mind perception) agency did not,  $r = .10, p = .12$ . This further supports the connection between the basic ability to feel sensations and emotion and broader traits associated with emotionality and connecting with others (e.g., empathy, sensitivity, politeness). Mind perception dimensions of feeling and agency were negatively and positively correlated (respectively) with the morality content from the communion scale (e.g. trustworthy, loyal) ( $r = -.24, p < .001$ , and  $r = .50, p < .001$ , respectively). This is consistent with moral typecasting which posits a positive link between agency and morality judgments, as opposed to combining aspects of interpersonal warmth and morality into one dimension.

**Morality and dehumanization.** As expected, veterans were seen as more moral than non-veterans on Goodwin et al.'s (2014) measure of morality,  $t(221) = 11.30, p < .001, d = 1.52$ , further supporting the link between agency and morality judgments and veterans fitting the role of moral agent. Veterans were also seen as more mechanistic,  $t(216) = 4.31, p < .001, d = .59$ , and less animalistic,  $t(221) = 2.10, p = .03, d = .28$ , again consistent with the view that veterans are seen as capable and disciplined “doers” but lacking in feeling. Moreover, the mind perception dimensions of agency and feeling correlated with i) morality in the predicted directions ( $r = .51, p < .001$ , and  $r = -.225, p = .001$ , respectively), ii) mechanistic dehumanization in the predicted directions ( $r = .22, p = .001$ , and  $r = -.19, p = .005$ , respectively), and iii) animalistic dehumanization in the predicted directions ( $r = -.31, p < .001$ , and  $r = .22, p = .001$ , respectively). These results are again consistent with the idea that being a moral agent maps onto mechanistic dehumanization. In contrast, both social judgment dimensions of agency and

communion predicted morality ( $r = .28, p < .001$ , and  $r = .61, p < .001$ , respectively), and neither predicted mechanistic dehumanization ( $r = .05, p = .43$ ,  $r = -.06, p = .35$ , respectively).

## Replications

Additional studies (1b through 1e) supported H1 using different designs, comparison groups, veteran targets, and measures (see Methodological Details). The results are summarized in Table 2. Across Studies 1b-1e, various military targets (currently serving, veterans, Army, Marine, non-combat, male and female) were seen as more agentic, less feeling, and were more mechanistically dehumanized compared to non-veteran targets. These effects were found with varied designs (between-subjects and within-subjects). Comparing non-veterans to veterans in Studies 1a-1d on i) agency and ii) feeling yielded average effect sizes of  $d = .61$ , 95% CI [.50, .72],  $Z = 10.70, p < .001$ , and  $d = .96$ , CI [-1.08, -.84],  $Z = 15.76, p < .001$ , respectively.

## Discussion

The finding that veterans are seen as high in agency, low in feeling, higher in morality, and are mechanistically dehumanized, are all consistent with moral typecasting and the tradeoff between agency and feeling as dimensions of mind perception (Gray & Wegner, 2009; 2011; Schein & Gray, 2018). These results show the unique value of mind perception over other seemingly similar models of social judgment in understanding how veterans are perceived. Our data suggest that if one were to simply measure perceptions of veterans using other frameworks (e.g., agency and communion/warmth), it would paint a universally positive view of veterans with no indication that they might experience unfavorable biases. However, a TDM account of how moral agents (i.e. veterans) are seen can make sense of a number of observations regarding employer's concerns about veterans and the employment challenges that veterans face.

## Study 2a



Study 2a bridges TDM with the organizational literature by testing how mind perception maps onto Holland's (1973) RIASEC model of vocational choice, which categorizes careers into six types. Of these six types, we propose that realistic careers (working with things) and conventional careers (well-structured environments) will be seen as requiring agency but little feeling because they emphasize action, linearity, tangible skills, and a relative lack of emotionality and sociability. As a result, veterans ought to be seen as most suited for these careers. Conversely, recall that the basic capacity to sense and feel is associated with broader emotional and interpersonal qualities such as having "personality" (Gray et al., 2008), sensitivity, and sympathy (Study 1a). Thus, we propose that social careers (working with people) and artistic careers (creative expressions) will be seen as requiring a higher ability to feel, and that veterans ought to be seen as a poorer fit for these careers.

## Method

**Participants.** For this within-subjects design, one-hundred and eight participants (58 men, 50 women;  $M_{\text{age}} = 33.14$ ) completed the study online via MTurk. In all subsequent studies that utilize a MTurk sample, participants who had completed our earlier surveys on this topic were unable to participate.

**Procedure.** In random order, participants rated four career types (realistic, conventional, social, and artistic) on the extent to which they require the ability to "sense and feel different sensations and emotions" (i.e., feeling), and the ability to "plan and act" (i.e., agency; 1 = *much less than the average career*, 5 = *about the same as the average career*, 9 = *much more than the average career*). Career type descriptions drew from various sources (O\*Net 2016; Career Services 2016; Trapnell, 1989). We did not have any specific predictions regarding the RIASEC's remaining two career types (investigative and enterprising) because of their mixed

content and unclear relation with mind perception, and therefore were not included. Then, in random order, participants rated the fit of different targets for each of the four career types: Non-veteran vs. combat veteran, non-parent vs. parent, and person without vs. with a business degree (e.g., 1 = *non-veteran much better fit*, 5 = *about the same*, 9 = *veteran much better fit*).

## Results

**Mapping agency and feeling onto career types.** The results of a 4 (career type: realistic, conventional, social, artistic) X 2 (trait rating: agency, feeling) repeated measures ANOVA was significant,  $F(3, 312) = 128.31, p < .001$  (see Table 3 for all means and *SDs*). As expected, realistic and conventional careers scored higher in agency than feeling ( $ts > 8.48, ps < .001$ ). The opposite was found for social and artistic careers ( $ts > 8.92, ps < .001$ ). Realistic and conventional careers were seen as requiring more agency than social or artistic careers ( $ts > 2.25, ps < .027$ ). Social and artistic careers were seen as requiring more feeling than realistic and conventional careers ( $ts > 11.41, ps < .001$ ).

**Veteran fit.** The results of a 4 (career type: realistic, conventional, social, artistic) X 3 (target: non-veteran vs. veteran, non-parent vs. parent, person with vs. with a business degree) repeated measures ANOVA (with Huynh-Feldt correction) was significant, indicating that each target showed a significantly different pattern in terms of fit for each career type,  $F(5.23, 538.81) = 57.00, p < .001$ . Follow up analyses supported our hypothesis. Higher veteran fit was observed for realistic careers, followed by conventional careers, and then social careers ( $ts > 4.54, ps < .001$ ). Artistic careers were seen as a better fit for veterans than social careers ( $t = 2.47, p = .015$ ), a worse fit than realistic careers ( $t = 8.65, p < .001$ ), and a marginally worse fit than conventional careers ( $t = 1.96, p = .053$ ). Given our predictions, we created composite variables

for realistic and conventional (RC) career fit and social and artistic (SA) career fit. Veterans were seen as a significantly better fit for the RC careers versus SA careers,  $t = 8.58$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = .83$ .

Perceived fit for the other targets was considerably different from that of veterans. The best fit for parents were social careers compared to the other three career types ( $ts > 7.12$ ,  $ps < .001$ ). For those with a business degree, the highest perceived fit was for conventional careers compared to the other three career types ( $ts > 7.94$ ,  $ps < .001$ ). Realistic and social careers were comparable in terms of fit ( $t = 1.30$ ,  $p = .20$ ), and artistic was the lowest fit,  $ts > 3.80$ ,  $ps < .001$ . Veterans were seen as better suited for realistic careers ( $ts > 5.73$ ,  $ps < .001$ ), and less suited for social careers ( $ts > 3.55$ ,  $ps < .001$ ) compared to the other target groups. These comparisons show that the effect of veteran status is not just the effect that is observed for *any* social category.

Finally, difference scores were computed (RC careers – SA careers) for agency, feeling, and veteran suitability ratings. Consistent with our hypothesis, seeing SA careers as requiring more capacity for feeling over RC careers predicted the tendency to see military veterans as less suitable for SA careers versus RC careers,  $r(108) = -.34$ ,  $p < .001$ .

## Discussion

Drawing from the RIASEC model (Holland, 1973), we predicted and found that linear, hands-on jobs requiring minimal social interaction (RC careers) require agency, less feeling, and are a relatively better fit for veterans, and jobs requiring emotion and social interaction (SA careers) require an ability to feel and are a worse fit for veterans, supporting H2. Study 2b builds on this by testing the perceived fit of veterans for specific job titles representing each of these job categories, serving as a conceptual replication of Study 2a.

## Study 2b

In Study 2b, veteran fit was measured for different specific careers. We also presented resume information for the veteran applicant to make their military experience more salient. This reflected the kind of wording and language that veterans are encouraged to use when translating their military experience into language suited for civilian careers (Career & Applied Learning Center; The University of Tennessee Knoxville: Center for Career Development).

## Method

**Participants.** Ninety-nine participants (48 men, 51 women;  $M_{age} = 33.70$ ) completed the study online via MTurk.

**Procedure.** Forty careers were presented in random order (ten per relevant RIASEC category; O\*Net, 2016). Participants rated how much each career required the ability to i) plan and act, and ii) sense and feel (1 = *not at all*, 9 = *very much*). The level of training and education required was comparable between categories. Participants were then presented with resume information highlighting the applicant's military experience. Participants rated the veteran's fit for each career (assuming the veteran has required education) (1 = *very poor fit*, 9 = *excellent fit*).

## Results and Discussion

**Mapping agency and feeling onto career types.** A 4 (career type: realistic, conventional, social, artistic) X 2 (trait rating: agency, feeling) repeated measures ANOVA (with Huynh-Feldt correction) was significant,  $F(2.46, 241.05) = 70.66, p < .001$  (see Table 4 for means and *SDs*). Realistic and conventional careers were seen as requiring a significantly more agency than feeling,  $t_s(98) > 9.33, p_s < .001$ . Social and artistic careers were seen as requiring more feeling than the realistic and conventional careers,  $t_s(98) > 10.34, p_s < .001$ . Social and artistic careers in combination (SA) were also seen as requiring more agency than RC careers,  $t(98) = 2.95, p = .004$ . This may be because agency is necessary for most careers, or because the

response scale varied between Study 2a and Study 2b. Nevertheless, as expected i) RC careers were seen as requiring less feeling than agency, and ii) SA careers were seen as requiring much more feeling than RC careers. By requiring a skill that veterans are perceived as lacking, we predicted that veterans would be seen as less suited for SA careers. As an analogy, someone who is good at catching but not throwing will be perceived as a good fit for a sport that simply requires catching, but would be ill-suited for a sport that requires both abilities.

**Veteran fit.** Realistic careers were seen as the best fit for the veteran applicant, followed by conventional careers, then social, then artistic. Each comparison was significant,  $t_s(98) > 2.47$ ,  $p_s < .015$  (see Table 4). As predicted, the veteran was seen as a better fit for RC careers compared to SA careers,  $t(98) = 9.48$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = .95$ . Finally, as in Study 2a, difference scores were computed (RC – SA) for agency, feeling, and veteran fit ratings. Seeing SA careers as requiring more feeling over RC careers predicted seeing military veterans as less suited for SA careers compared to RC careers,  $r(99) = -.48$ ,  $p < .001$ , supporting H2.

Study 2b further illustrates the potential downstream consequences of stereotyping military veterans. Studies 2a and 2b also serve as a novel application of moral typecasting by bridging this theory and our earlier findings with the broader organizational behavior literature. Next, Study 3 further tests the link between careers requiring agency versus feeling and perceived veteran fit by using specific careers as the unit of observation.

### Study 3

Study 3 tests if careers that are perceived to require more ability to feel are also seen as a poorer fit for veterans. We recruited one sample of participants to rate 100 different careers on agency and feeling, and a separate sample to rate veteran fit for each career. Recruiting separate

samples to make these different ratings helps ensure that there are no demand effects and offers a more conservative test of our hypothesis.

## Method

**Participants and Procedure.** One-hundred and ninety-nine participants recruited from MTurk rated a random subset of 20 careers from The U.S. News and World Report (2015) ranking of the 100 best jobs in the U.S. Participants rated how much each career requires the “the ability to plan and act” (agency) and “the ability to sense and feel different sensations and emotions” (feeling) (1 = *much less than the average career*, 9 = *much more than the average career*). Presentation order was randomized. A separate sample of 324 participants from MTurk were asked to rank a random subset of 10 careers from the original list on how well they fit i) the average person, and ii) someone with military training and experience (presentation order was randomized). Rankings were made from 1 (best fit) to 10 (worst fit).

## Results and Discussion

Average agency, feeling, and fit scores were computed for all 100 careers. Because a random subset of careers were presented to each participant, 24-55 agency and feeling ratings and 22-47 fit rankings were obtained for each career. As predicted, higher agency ratings predicted better veteran fit ( $r = -.26, p = .009$ ; note: higher fit rankings were numerically lower, hence the negative correlation), and higher feeling ratings predicted poorer veteran fit ( $r = .26, p = .01$ ), supporting H2. In contrast, for the average person target, higher agency ratings predicted *poorer* fit ( $r = .31, p = .001$ ), and feeling ratings were unrelated to fit ( $r = .11, p = .27$ ).

Study 3 builds on our earlier studies by showing our predicted effect using a different set of careers and a different level of analysis. Our remaining studies triangulate on this effect by

testing whether or not lay people and professionals will see a specific veteran job applicant as a poorer fit for careers requiring an ability to feel.

### Study 4a

Study 4a presented participants with resume information about a target and then measured perceived fit for either technology-related careers (requiring agency but less feeling), or mental health careers (requiring more feeling). The non-veteran target listed humanitarian experience whereas the veteran target listed military experience and humanitarian experience. Similar to Study 1a, this design ensures that the veteran is the exact same as the non-veteran, except for having (vs. not having) military experience. Although the veteran resume has more work experience and information (having worked in two roles as opposed to one), this would not account for an interaction between veteran status and career type, and we held as many factors constant as possible. In Study 4b, we hold constant the amount of information available about the applicant, thereby addressing any potential issues with Study 4a. Finally, while Studies 2a-3 asked participants to assume that the applicant had the necessary education and interest in the job, Studies 4a and 4b include this information and hold it constant across targets.

### Method

**Participants.** Four-hundred and thirty-four participants completed the study via Mturk. Our target sample size was 100 people per cell, anticipating failed attention checks. Thirty-eight participants failed the manipulation check (i.e., failing to indicate that the target was a veteran or humanitarian), leaving 396 participants (176 men, 218 women, 2 unreported;  $M_{\text{age}} = 33.49$ ).

**Procedure.** In the veteran condition, the applicant worked overseas in a combat role in the Marines and as a volunteer with humanitarian disaster assistance from 2002-2008. Eight points of information explained their combined experience overseas (electronically monitoring

base perimeters, inspecting weapons, patient movement, preparing for those arriving wounded from conflict zones), which again conformed to how veterans are encouraged to translate their military experience on resumes. In the non-veteran condition, they were only described as working overseas in humanitarian disaster assistance from 2002-2008. The same points followed as in the veteran condition, except the wording of some of the points was changed to reflect a purely humanitarian role (e.g., monitoring patients vs. base perimeters, inspecting equipment vs. weapons). Non-combat related points were constant across conditions. Independently, the applicant's education varied based on career condition. They had degrees in computer science and information technology in the technology careers condition (i.e., low feeling), and had degrees in psychology and social work in the mental health careers condition (i.e., high feeling).

Participants then rated the applicant's career fit (1 = *very poor fit*, 9 = *excellent fit*). In the technology condition, these careers were: computer systems administrator, computer systems analyst, database administrator, information security analyst, and computer support specialist ( $\alpha = .92$ ). In the mental health condition, these careers were: marriage and family therapist, school psychologist, child and family social worker, school counselor, and clinical social worker ( $\alpha = .88$ ). These careers were chosen because they least (vs. most) required an ability to feel over agency (Study 3 data) and could reasonably suit the applicant given their education..

## Results

A 2 (applicant: non-veteran, veteran) X 2 (job domain: technology [low feeling] vs. mental health [high feeling]) between-subjects ANOVA was significant,  $F(1, 392) = 7.74, p = .006$  (see Figure 1). Supporting H2, the veteran applicant was seen as a poorer fit for the mental health careers ( $M = 4.72, SD = 1.64$ ) relative to the non-veteran ( $M = 5.47, SD = 1.74$ ),  $t(219) = 3.14, p = .002, d = .45$ . Moreover, the non-veteran applicant was seen as equally suited for both



career types,  $t(188) = .47, p = .64, d = .07$ , whereas the veteran was seen as a worse fit for the mental health careers compared to the technology careers,  $t(204) = 4.66, p < .001, d = .65$ . The veteran applicant was seen as equally suitable for the technology careers ( $M = 5.85, SD = 1.85$ ) as the non-veteran applicant ( $M = 5.60, SD = 1.96$ ),  $t(195) = .93, p = .35, d = .13$ .

Study 4a further shows that typecasting veteran as unfeeling agents can impact perceptions of career fit. Study 4b builds on these results by recruiting participants who work in management and recruiting, thereby contributing to the external validity of our results.

### Study 4b

Study 4b recruited participants whose jobs include managing and recruiting employees to see if they too stereotype veterans. While Study 4a did not present participants with immediately relevant information about the target beyond their education, participants in Study 4b read a cover letter where the applicant explained their passion for their field. Their experience as a veteran (vs. non-veteran volunteer) was more incidental. The letter also held constant the amount of information about the applicant. This rules out the possibility that the results of Studies 1a and 4a were somehow due to participants having more information about the veteran target.

### Method

**Participants.** Seven hundred and nine American participants (258 men, 450 women, 1 neither/other;  $M_{\text{age}} = 38.68$ ) who i) have a career involving management and/or hiring decisions, and ii) who passed an attention check (see below) were recruited through Qualtrics. Sample size was based on the largest we could afford to minimize the likelihood of wasting funds on an underpowered study. Participants were presented with a screening question asking if their current job involves any of the following: management/supervision, hiring/recruitment input or decision making, human resources, sales, customer services, none of the above, unemployed. Selecting

any of the first three allowed participants to continue. Participants were unaware what would lead to inclusion in the study. Of the participants who passed ( $n = 709$ ), 73.5% selected management/supervisions, 29.9% hiring/recruitment, and 25.4% human resources.

**Procedure.** Participants were randomly assigned to read one of four cover letters. First, cover letters varied by career type (mental health vs. technology). They were as similarly worded as possible despite the differences between career types. Second, military experience versus non-military volunteer experience was manipulated with the following statement:

“Additionally, prior to attaining my degree, I spent a few years doing volunteer work overseas with United Planet [a few years of active duty in the United States Marine Corps]. While overseas [in the military], I learned what it truly means to be effective and disciplined. I developed outstanding oral communication, leadership, and supervisory skills during my time with United Planet [as a Marine].”

Participants who correctly answered an attention check could proceed and rated the applicant's fit for the same five careers (varied by condition) as in Study 4a ( $\alpha = .90$  in both career conditions). They also rated the quality of the cover letter (1 = *very poor*, 9 = *very good*).

## Results & Discussion

A 2 (applicant: non-veteran, veteran) X 2 (job domain: technology [low feeling] vs. mental health [high feeling]) between-subjects ANOVA was significant,  $F(1, 705) = 5.65$ ,  $p = .018$  (see Figure 1). Despite having otherwise identical cover letters and education, the military veteran applicant was seen as a significantly poorer fit for the mental health careers ( $M = 5.85$ ,  $SD = 1.69$ ) relative to the non-veteran applicant ( $M = 6.30$ ,  $SD = 1.55$ ),  $t(363) = 2.66$ ,  $p = .008$ ,  $d = .28$ , supporting H2. Moreover, while the non-veteran applicant was seen as equally suited for the mental health and technology careers,  $t(355) = .11$ ,  $p = .91$ ,  $d = .01$ , the veteran was seen as a

worse fit for the mental health vs. technology careers,  $t(350) = 3.11$ ,  $p = .002$ ,  $d = .33$ . For the technology careers, the veteran applicant was seen as equally suitable ( $M = 6.40$ ,  $SD = 1.63$ ) as the non-veteran applicant ( $M = 6.28$ ,  $SD = 1.48$ ),  $t(342) = .70$ ,  $p = .49$ ,  $d = .08$ . Perceived quality of the cover letter did not vary by condition,  $F(1, 705) = 1.48$ ,  $p = .22$ .

These results support the hypothesis that veterans are seen as less suited for careers requiring a high capacity for feeling (H2), despite the fact that the quality of the cover letter did not vary by condition and military experience was only briefly mentioned.

### **Study 5a: Veteran Bias in an Employee Sample**

Study 5a tested our hypotheses in a new domain by partnering with a large North American restaurant chain. This represented an excellent opportunity to test our hypotheses in a more externally valid context. Employees rated a veteran vs. non-veteran applicant for careers that are immediately relevant to the participant and their organization.

#### **Method**

**Participants.** Two hundred and sixty-five employees completed the study (91 men, 170 women, 4 opted not to respond;  $M_{\text{age}} = 28.71$ ; bar/bartender = 16, sous chef/chef/head chef = 88, server = 15, management (bar manager, restaurant manager, general manager, dinner manger) = 123, shift leader/leader = 16, other high level management and executives = 10, other careers not otherwise listed = 11, positions within organization are not mutually exclusive).

**Procedure.** Participants were asked to look at two resumes (one at a time in random order) as they normally would when considering someone who applied to their restaurant. One resume was manipulated between subjects to either be from a veteran or non-veteran, and was either male or female (Peter Miller vs. Patricia Miller). The veteran applicant listed their military experience whereas the non-veteran had comparable humanitarian/disaster relief experience.

The other within-subjects resume served to test unrelated hypotheses of interest to the restaurant chain and to obscure the purpose of our study. The gender of the applicants always matched within-subjects. Our analyses test the between-subjects effect of veteran status on job suitability.

After reading each resume, participants were asked to rate the applicant's suitability for various positions compared to other hires they have seen. Three positions were of mutual interest: dishwasher, prep cook, and server. The restaurant chain also wanted us to include bartender to test other hypotheses of interest to them. For our purposes, dishwasher and prep cook were predicted to be a better fit for veterans due to being back of house positions requiring limited feeling. We predicted that veterans would be seen as a worse fit as a server given that it is a front of house position requiring social-emotional skills. We were more agnostic regarding the bartender position. At this particular restaurant chain the bartenders have less of a frontline service role (they prepare drinks for servers who then bring them to the customer's table). In Studies 5b and 5c, where we had more control over the study design, we also include "host" as a high feeling position predicted to be seen as less suitable for a veteran applicant.

Ratings for each position were made on the following items: "How likely is this applicant to succeed in the following positions" (1 = *not at all likely*, 9 = *extremely likely*), "how much potential does this applicant have to excel in the following positions with appropriate training" (1 = *very little potential*, 9 = *great potential*), and "Based on their basic skills and qualities, how suited is this applicant for the following positions" (1 = *not at all*, 9 = *very*). Low feeling positions (dishwasher, prep cook) were combined into a single index ( $\alpha = .91$ ). Server (high feeling) ( $\alpha = .86$ ) and bartender ( $\alpha = .90$ ) were treated separately. Participants also rated the status of each position (1 = *very low*, 9 = *very high*) and demographic questions.

## Results

We tested the effect of veteran status (non-veteran vs. veteran) on ratings of suitability for each of the position types (low vs. high feeling), as well as explored any possible interactive effects with the applicant's gender. No gender effects were found and are not discussed further. All effects below remain when controlling for applicant gender and the presentation order of the resumes, as well as perceived status of each position. Observations and implications regarding the status of the positions are discussed in the Discussion section.

All means and standard deviations are presented in Table 5. A mixed-design ANOVA testing the effect of veteran status (between subjects) on ratings of suitability for positions that require less feeling (dishwasher, prep cook) versus more feeling (server) (within subjects), was significant,  $F(1, 263) = 36.55, p < .001$ . Follow up tests revealed that veterans were seen as more suited for the low feeling positions than the comparable non-veteran applicant,  $t(263) = 4.77, p < .001$ . Additionally, veterans were seen as more suited for the low feeling positions than the high feeling position (server),  $t(126) = 9.38, p < .001$ ; this suitability gap was not significant for the non-veteran applicant,  $t(137) = 1.60, p = .11$ .

Ratings of veteran (vs. non-veteran) suitability as a server was in the predicted direction but not significant,  $t(263) = .83, p = .41$ . This is a deviation from our earlier findings regarding high feeling careers. For exploratory purposes, we controlled for all other suitability ratings (thereby controlling for scale use, general tendency to rate applicant favorably). The effect was then highly significant, with the veteran being rated as less suitable compared to the non-veteran,  $F(1, 262) = 30.39, p < .001^2$ . Controlling for server and bartender ratings did not impact the effect of veteran status on suitability for low feeling positions. Veteran status had no effect on bartender ratings,  $t(263) = .69, p = .49$ , even when controlling for other suitability ratings.

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<sup>2</sup> While our earlier studies did not similarly control for agency or suitability for other careers when ability to feel or suitability for high feeling careers was the dependent variable, doing so does not change those results.

The finding that veterans are seen as more suited for positions that have less versus more of a social-emotional component to them (i.e. low vs. high feeling) is consistent with our earlier studies. This was found among actual employees evaluating veteran fit for positions within that company, adding to the external validity of our studies. These results help illustrate a possible funneling effect where even if a veteran is hired, they may be increasingly directed toward low feeling jobs and away from high feeling jobs. We ran two more conceptual replications of this study to see if the above effects replicate. Studies 5b and 5c also added restaurant host as another high feeling position that veterans ought to be seen as less suited for.

### Study 5b

Study 5b recruited a sample of 504 Prolific users (257 men; 242 women; 5 nonbinary;  $M_{age} = 36.74$ ) who had previously reported having experience in a management position (details in the supplemental Methodological Details, means and *SDs* in Table 5). The veteran applicant was again seen as more suited for positions that require less feeling (dishwasher, prep cook) than the non-veteran,  $t(503) = 4.30, p < .001$ . For the newly added position of restaurant host (high feeling), veterans were seen as less suitable compared to the non-veteran,  $t(503) = 2.58, p = .01$ . As in Study 5a, there was no effect of veteran status on suitability as a server,  $t(503) = .06, p = .95$ , but this effect was again highly significant and in the predicted direction when controlling for suitability ratings for the low feeling careers,  $F(1, 502) = 9.22, p < .01$ . In this sample, veterans were seen as more suited to be a bartender,  $t(503) = 2.79, p = .005$ .

### Study 5c

Study 5c recruited 300 Prolific users to again read either the veteran or non-veteran resume from Study 5a. They were asked to imagine they were staffing a restaurant and to choose one of two positions for the applicant: prep cook or host. The effect of veteran status on choice

was significant,  $\chi^2(1) = 10.43, p = .002$ . A strong majority of participants (72%) chose host for the non-veteran, compared to only 54% for the veteran applicant.

## Discussion

Studies 5a-5c further show that veterans are seen as less suited for positions that require an ability to feel compared to i) a similar non-veteran applicant, and/or ii) positions that are more agency-centric and require less ability to feel. Consistent predicted effects were observed for dishwasher, prep cook, and host. Veterans were consistently rated as less suitable as servers only when controlling for suitability ratings for the low feeling careers. Variability in effects may be due to the specific careers being assessed, specific resume content, or how one's veteran status is communicated. Overall, Studies 2-5c provide converging evidence for our hypotheses.

It is noteworthy that veterans were seen as most suited for those careers that were also rated as lowest in status across both the restaurant employee sample and Prolific sample<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, it is not necessarily the case that veterans are chosen for low feeling jobs because they are higher status and that veterans are deserving of higher status jobs. Studies 5a-5c also show how veterans can be funneled into specific careers paths based on their presumed skills. Our final study looks to reduce this bias by leveraging insights from our previous studies.

## Study 6

Given that veterans are seen as less suitable for careers that require feeling, how can this bias be reduced? When it comes to veteran employment issues, researchers and practitioners have looked at transferability of skills (Kleykamp 2009; Mangum & Ball, 1987) and how veterans can better communicate their military experience to civilian employers (Military.com, 2019). Others have emphasized veterans leveraging existing or gaining new high agency-low

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<sup>3</sup> Study 5a: Dishwasher = 4.00, prep cook = 6.33, bartender = 6.61;  $t_s > 2.38, p_s < .02$ . Study 5b: Dishwasher = 3.40, prep cook = 5.62, server = 6.09, 6.17;  $t_s = 5.18, p_s < .001$ .

feeling skills (e.g. coding; Dillon, 2017). Such interventions may be effective, but also may not tackle a core problem that is highlighted in the current research. By leveraging moral typecasting, we pinpoint which dimension of mind veterans are perceived to lack, and in turn which jobs they are seen as more or less suited for. Given this, it follows that the observed stereotyping of veterans can be attenuated or eliminated by signaling their ability to feel (H3). Study 6 tests this by seeing if a simple intervention might eliminate biased perceptions of veterans and their suitability for jobs that require an ability to feel.

## Method

**Participants.** Two hundred and ninety-eight participants completed the study via Prolific (141 men, 150 women, 7 “do not identify as either”;  $M_{\text{age}} = 31.44$ ).

**Procedure.** Participants looked at a resume for Peter Miller who was either described as 25 years old (non-veteran condition), or 25 years old and “a veteran of the US military, having served as a private in the army” (veteran condition). His resume contained his education and previous work experience (data entry clerk, retail sales associate at a hardware store). The resume was manipulated between subjects to either include or not include evidence of an ability to feel. This was achieved by either including or not including work experience at a humane society, where they “effectively managed bonding time with animals to improve their emotional well-being and socialization,” “Calmed animals when stressed,” and “ensured that supplies such as toys, treats, and food were paired with each animal according to the animal’s preferences, improving their psychological and emotional well-being.”

To summarize, veteran status was only manipulated via the brief description before seeing the resume. This ensured that the non-veteran and veteran applicants had the same resume, and also captured the effect of merely knowing of one’s veteran status regardless of how



it is communicated. Resumes were manipulated to include (or not include) work experience designed to increase perceptions of a veteran's ability to feel.

Next, participants were told that Peter is interested in event planning and is hired by an event planner to perform miscellaneous tasks. Participants rated the extent to which they would call on Peter to address various issues/tasks (1 = *would definitely ask another employee*, 8 = *would definitely ask Peter*). Three were more agency-focused and did not require the ability to feel (ordering the right number of chairs, ordering food based on the number of attendees, and accurately distributing meals based on dietary restrictions;  $\alpha = .81$ ). The other three required a higher ability to feel (choosing music for an event based on the client's desired atmosphere, dealing with a bride who is crying because a family member cannot make it to the wedding, and choosing a venue to suit the style and vision of the client;  $\alpha = .79$ ). The two sets of items loaded onto two separate factors (principal components, varimax rotation).

Participants also rated Peter on agency ("The ability to be a "doer": plan, carry out intentions, and get things done"), feeling ("The ability to be an emotional being: feel and process a range sensations, feelings, and emotions"). They then rated him on three abilities that we collectively label *social-emotional work skills*: "Emotional intelligence: the capacity to be aware of, control, and express one's emotions, and to handle interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically," "Empathy: the ability to understand and share the feelings of another," and "Soft Skills: a combination of people skills, social skills, and communication skills, allowing one to form interpersonal connection and rapport" (1 = *much less than the average person*, 9 = *much more than the average person*;  $\alpha = .89$ ). Finally, participants completed the demographics section and rated their attitudes toward the military as in earlier studies.

## Results

We predicted a moderated mediation effect such that in the baseline condition (i.e., no information signaling an ability to feel), the veteran would be seen as having a lower ability to feel, and in turn be seen as i) less suited for handling tasks that require an ability to feel, and ii) lower in social-emotional work skills (e.g. empathy). Conversely, the effect of veteran status on these measures ought to be eliminated when the resume clearly indicates an ability to feel (H3). All means and standard deviations can be found in Table 6.

**Agency and feeling.** Including animal welfare experience on the resume increased ratings of the applicant's ability to feel,  $F(1, 294) = 74.65, p < .001$ . Thus, the manipulation had the desired effect. This main effect was qualified by the predicted two-way interaction between veteran status and resume content,  $F(1, 294) = 4.15, p = .04$ ; the veteran applicant (vs. non-veteran) was seen as lower in ability to feel in the baseline condition,  $t(294) = 2.58, p = .01$ , but not in the high feeling resume condition,  $t(294) = .20, p = .84$ . As expected, the same two-way interaction predicting agency was not significant,  $F(1, 294) = 2.48, p = .12$ ; the veteran was seen as higher in agency than the non-veteran regardless of resume,  $F(1, 294) = 19.05, p < .001$ .

**Task suitability.** The two-way interaction predicting suitability for the low feeling tasks was not significant,  $F(1, 294) = .01, p = .93$ . The main effect of veteran status was not significant but directionally consistent with earlier findings,  $F(1, 294) = 2.32, p = .13$ . For the high feeling tasks, participants saw the applicant as more suitable in the high feeling resume condition than in the baseline resume condition,  $F(1, 294) = 63.68, p < .001$ . This was qualified by the predicted two-way interaction,  $F(1, 294) = 6.87, p = .01$ . In the baseline condition, participants were less likely to ask the veteran to perform the high feeling tasks compared to the non-veteran,  $t(294) = 2.32, p = .02$ , whereas the veteran and non-veteran applicants were seen as equally suited for

these tasks when their resume featured animal welfare experience,  $t(294) = 1.35, p = .18$ . Thus, the simple inclusion of resume content that signals an ability to feel eliminated the previously observed stereotyping effect, supporting H3.

**Social-emotional work skills.** Similar effects were observed for ratings of the applicant's social-emotional work skills (emotional intelligence, soft skills, empathy). There was a significant main effect of resume content,  $F(1, 294) = 65.65, p < .001$ , qualified by a significant two-way interaction,  $F(1, 294) = 6.36, p = .01$ ; the veteran was rated as lower on these skills than the non-veteran in the baseline condition,  $t(294) = 2.16, p = .03$ , but this effect was eliminated when the applicant's resume included animal welfare experience,  $t(294) = 1.37, p = .17$ .

**Moderated mediation.** Given the above results, we tested a moderated mediation effect whereby in the baseline resume condition, the veteran (vs. non-veteran) applicant is seen as lower in ability to feel, which then predicts i) decreased suitability for high feeling tasks, and ii) decreased social-emotional work skills. However, these indirect effects should not occur when the applicant's resume signals an ability to feel (PROCESS macro for SPSS, model 8; Hayes 2017). Both agency and feeling were entered as potential mediators. Predicting suitability for high feeling tasks, the index of moderated mediation was significant (95% confidence interval does not cross zero (LLCI = .0026, ULCI = .4824). The indirect effect of veteran status, to ability to feel, to suitability for the high feeling tasks was significant in the baseline resume condition (LLCI = -.3927, ULCI = -.0567), but not the high feeling resume condition (LLCI = -.1507, ULCI = .1816). There was no moderated mediation effect with agency serving as the mediator (LLCI = -.0231, ULCI = .27). Instead, the veteran was seen as higher in agency regardless of resume content, which then predicted increase suitability for the low feeling tasks

(LLCI = .1764, ULCI = .4974). Conversely, ability to feel did not predict suitability for these low feeling tasks, and as such, did not serve as a mediator (LLCI = -.0606, ULCI = .0195).

These analyses provide evidence for the specificity of the predicted effects. The ability to feel as a dimension of mind perception played a unique role in predicting a perceived lack of fit between veterans and tasks that have a social-emotional component to them. However, simply including resume content that signals one's basic ability to feel eliminated this effect. Although much consideration has been given to helping veterans acquire skills or communicate existing skills, the current research offers new insights, suggesting that merely signaling one's ability to feel can reduce people's biases regarding veterans' abilities and skills.

### **Single-Paper Meta-Analysis: Veteran Status on Job Suitability**

Largely consistent effects were found across studies. In Studies 4a and 4b, the effect of veteran status on fit for low feeling jobs was directionally consistent with our hypotheses but not significant. In Studies 5a and 5b, the effect of veteran status on suitability as a server was not significant unless controlling for other suitability ratings. Overall, the average effect size of veteran status (Studies 4a, 4b, 5a, 5b, 6) on perceived suitability for high feeling careers was  $d = .23$ , 95% CI [-.33, .12],  $Z = -4.29$ ,  $p < .001$  (does not include covariate analysis in Studies 5a-5b), and for low feeling careers was  $d = .29$ , 95% CI [.19, .39],  $Z = 5.47$ ,  $p < .001$ . While the non-veteran applicant was not seen as more or less suited for any particular career or task,  $d = .06$ , 95% CI [-.14, .03],  $Z = -1.33$ ,  $p = .18$ , veterans were seen as more (less) suited for low feeling (high feeling) careers/tasks,  $d = .40$ , 95% CI [.31, .48],  $Z = 8.83$ ,  $p < .001$ .

### **General Discussion**

Despite being lauded as virtuous heroes by the public, military veterans often encounter difficulty finding employment in civilian life. The current research provides theoretically driven

insights into this issue; veterans are typecast as agents who are relatively lacking in apparent emotion. This research not only sheds light on an important real world problem but also provides a critical test of typecasting as a key tenet of TDM. This research is also the first to connect moral typecasting and mind perception to the organizational behavior literature.

We find that while heroes can be lauded for having admirable agentic traits, they are simultaneously seen as having less of a “mind” in terms of their ability to feel. This contrasts other work suggesting that people simply assign more of a mind and various positive traits to those who are seen favorably and less mind in general to those who are disliked (Heflick et al., 2011; Khamitov et al., 2016). Similarly, veterans were seen as higher on both dimensions of social perception (agency and communion), which both predicted morality, and neither predicted either form of dehumanization. However, through the lens of mind perception and moral typecasting, people do appear to dehumanize those that are admired or otherwise seen as good.

When do mind/person perception dimensions move in unison and when do they show evidence of trading off for one another? Past work on moral typecasting suggests an answer. Two dimensions of mind are correlated and ought to be in the domain of general personhood, as to be human is to have both dimensions of mind more than most non-humans. For example, the more sophisticated human mind should be able to engage in moral reasoning and feel more emotion than a fish. However, when humans are placed in roles that are asymmetric and in comparisons to one another, such as boss and employee or hero and beneficiary, there is a tradeoff by virtue of the fact that they involve the flow of something—help/knowledge/etc. from one person to another. This asymmetry, we suggest, gives rise to these inverse relations--although this needs to be tested by future research. What we do observe in the context of

veterans however is clear evidence of moral typecasting: veterans were consistently higher on agency and lower on feeling. Moreover, these two dimensions of mind were inversely correlated.

### **Limitations**

The experimental study of veteran stereotypes poses challenges. First, we do not posit that veterans have a monopoly on this particular pattern of stereotyping. Jewish people, feminists, and the wealthy are broadly stereotyped in the same way (Fiske et al., 2002) but obviously differ in the amount of and kinds of challenges they face. We chose to study veterans because despite their population and the issues they face, there is an absence of research on them in social psychology, and a lack of work on veteran stereotypes in general.

Obviously being a veteran implies having experiences that are absent for comparison targets, but this is to some degree true for all stereotyping research. For example, the very nature of a race stereotyping effect is the belief that a person has certain life experiences, traits, and skills (or lack thereof) based on their race, regardless of other relevant information (i.e., work experience, education) that is held constant. Although gender and race are independent of other variables (e.g. work experience) that can be held constant, one's status as a veteran is defined by their past experiences. One can either hold constant the amount of information about the target (e.g., they are either a veteran or something else), or hold constant all information and only vary whether or not they are a veteran (e.g., they are a data clerk and veteran, or just a data clerk). We did both across our studies. Overall, we used a wide range of designs to provide converging support for our hypotheses.

### **Implications**

Veterans face numerous barriers to employment, including being seen as rigid, cold, and lacking interpersonal skills and tact. While these and other stereotypes about veterans have been

discussed, they form a coherent constellation of traits through the lens of mind perception and moral typecasting. Laypeople, those identified as having careers in managing or recruiting employees (Study 4a, 5b), and high-level employees at an organization (Study 5a) all saw veterans as less suitable for careers that require an ability to feel. That is, those who have careers related to hiring and evaluating employees appear to have the same biases as the public, and do not curb these biases when evaluating the applicants that we presented them with.

Given recent trends in employment, veterans may increasingly face employment-related issues. Employers across industries are increasingly interested in hiring people with emotional intelligence and empathy (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2002; Ashoka 2013; Freshman & Rubino, 2002; Ovans, 2015). As implied in our studies and directly observed in Study 6, perceiving these skills in others is at least partly derived from the perception that the person has a basic ability to sense and feel. Moreover, automation and outsourcing means that fewer careers are requiring rote procedures or a limited need to engage with and understand others (Acemoglu & Restrepo, 2017; Lauderdale & Landuyt 2014; Rainie & Anderson 2017; Sherk 2010), which partly characterize the careers seen as most suitable for military veterans. Likewise, Studies 5a-5c show that the jobs that veterans were seen as most suited for were also those that were relatively low in status. Even if it was the case that veterans find high feeling careers less desirable, it is unavoidable that these careers are increasing in demand and are desirable at least among the general population.

These results have implications for veterans' experiences not just in finding a job, but also their experience at an organization once hired. Not only do we find that veterans are seen as less suited for certain careers at the application stage, but we also find that veterans may be funneled into certain types of positions and tasks once entering an organization. Assuming that a veteran is indeed a social and emotional being, they may find these positions unfulfilling. In

Study 5c, when forced to choose a role for an applicant, participants were significantly less likely to ask the veteran to be a restaurant host than a non-veteran applicant. In Study 6, upon being hired by an event planner, veterans were less likely to be asked to perform non-routine tasks that require an ability to feel. Thus, the current results have implications for hiring decisions and decisions regarding allocation of work and setting a career path for veteran employees.

Perhaps high-agency low-feeling people self-select into the military and certain careers. Thus a question for future research is how are individuals rated on these different dimensions before versus after joining the military and what kind of transformative role does military training and service play? Do people have the lay theory that the military transforms people or that certain kinds of people join the military? One might also expect these and other effects to be attenuated in countries where military service is required.

It is worth noting that the self-selection argument is a common but unpopular one when explaining gender and race employment issues (pay gaps, underrepresentation). We have no reason to think that veterans are less than fully human in their ability to experience emotion. One possibility is that people confuse the ability to hide emotion and complete a task with not feeling emotion at all in other contexts. Even if veteran stereotypes are “true” at the group level, it does not justify excluding appropriately qualified and motivated applicants. In our studies, a non-veteran was seen as more suited for a range of careers than a veteran despite having identical educations and experience. This by definition is the application of stereotypes.

The current research may be considered in preparing veterans for civilian life and also by organizations. Job advertisements can shape perceptions of a career’s required skills and anticipated fit (Gaucher, Friesen, & Kay, 2011). Therefore, job ads with more social-emotional wording may shape perceptions of fit among both veterans and interviewers/recruiters.



Relatedly, military advertisements and recruitment materials may take into account the current results. Military advertising is presumably designed to present the military in a positive, heroic light; however, given the inferences that people make about moral agents, these ads may contribute to the public's perception of veterans as mechanistic and lacking an ability to feel. Finally, Study 6 is suggestive of a simple intervention that merely requires a veteran to express existing experiences or easily obtain new experiences that signal their emotional side (e.g., via volunteer work, which is readily available with few barriers to entry).

Although the current research is in the context of veterans and the issues they face regarding employment, this paper provides a broader framework for understanding stereotyping of other social groups and the challenges they face. While there may be unique difficulties associated with other high-agency low-feelings groups that are beyond the scope of the current research, we can predict that the difficulties they face will often stem from being mechanistically dehumanized (i.e. can plan and act but lack emotion). For instance, according to the Center for Disease Control (CDC; 2016), the careers with the highest suicide rates include those in farming, fishing, forestry, construction, and maintenance/repair. This can be attributed to a number of factors, including isolation and instability (CDC, 2016), but it is noteworthy that these are also high agency, low feeling careers. It may also be the case that society is slow to take issues seriously when the affected group is perceived as less capable of experiencing a full range of emotions, including pain and suffering. Yam et al.'s (2018) aforementioned research speaks to this. The failure to fully realize the severity of post-traumatic stress (Allam, 2014; Friedman, 2014), addiction, and other mental health issues among veterans may be another consequence of seeing someone as less capable of experiencing a range of human emotion. Future research may

consider this. In addition, making mental health issues salient may also make salient a veteran's ability to feel. These factors may interact to predict job suitability and other outcomes.

### **Conclusion**

Although "hero" is an honorable label it may not always have positive consequences. By considering veterans as action-oriented heroes who bravely face danger, one may forget that they have a rich mental life that is capable of feeling deep emotions, and that they have much to contribute to careers and domains that require this ability.

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