

The Greatest Generation II: A Narrative Study of Post-9/11 Veterans in Higher Education

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty

of

Drexel University

by

Jeffrey F. Weston

in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree

of

Doctor of Education

February 2015



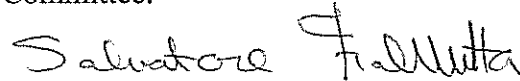
© Copyright 2015
Jeffrey F. Weston. All Rights Reserved

This Ed.D. Dissertation Committee from The School of Education at Drexel University certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:

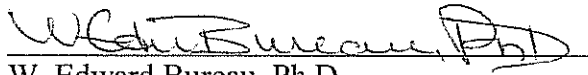
The Greatest Generation II: A Narrative Study of Veterans in Higher Education

Jeffrey Frank Weston

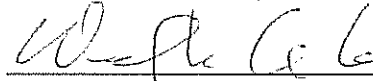
Committee:



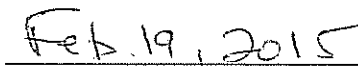
Salvatore Falletta, Ed.D.



W. Edward Bureau, Ph.D.



Wendy Combs, Ph.D.



Date

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my family.

Your love and support has gotten me through.

I am thankful every day to have each of you in my life.

Acknowledgments

There are a number of people that helped make my academic goals a reality. First, I would like to thank Drexel faculty and staff for the support they have shown over the past few years. I would like to thank my supervising Professor, Dr. Sal Falletta, and committee members Dr. William Bureau and Dr. Wendy Combs, for the hard work and dedication you have shown for me throughout the process. I would also like to thank my fellow members of cohort six.

Most importantly, I would not be where I am at today if it wasn't for my family. I would not be the person I am today without all your love and support. To my wife, Tara, you have always believed in me and supported me even through the tough times. I will be forever grateful to you. To my children, Jordan and Ashley, you are the driving force behind everything I do. I would like to thank my parents, Lena and Bob Haynes for all the love and support you have shown me through the year. To my sisters, Debbie and Ruth, and my brother in-law, Jerry, thank you for all you have done for me over the years and for always being there for me.

Finally, I would like to thank the 13 participants in this study. Their willingness to share their stories made this research possible.

Table of Contents

LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
1. INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH	1
Statement of the Problem to Be Researched.....	4
Purpose and Significance of the Problem	4
Research Questions	5
Conceptual Framework.....	6
Definition of Terms.....	10
Assumptions and Limitations of the Study.....	14
Summary	15
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	17
Introduction to Chapter 2	17
Literature Review.....	19
Summary	43
3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	45
Introduction.....	45
Research Design and Rationale	45
Site and Population	46
Research Methods.....	47
Data Analysis Procedures	50

Ethical Considerations	52
4. FINDINGS, RESULTS, AND INTERPRETATIONS.....	54
Introduction.....	54
Participant Profiles.....	58
Findings.....	68
Results and Interpretations.....	87
Summary.....	91
5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	94
Introduction.....	94
Conclusions.....	95
Recommendations.....	98
Summary.....	99
LIST OF REFERENCES	100
APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL	110
APPENDIX B: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE.....	112
APPENDIX E: INFORMED CONSENT	113

List of Tables

1. Example of Coding for Initial Concepts	57
2. Demographic Data of Study Participants.....	58

List of Figures

1. Conceptual framework of research streams	8
2. Conceptual framework of research streams	18
3. Schlossberg's transition theory	32
4. Schlossberg's moving out, moving through, and moving in	36
5. Steps of conducting narrative research	50

Abstract

The Greatest Generation II: A Narrative Study of Post-9/11 Veterans in Higher Education

Jeffrey F. Weston, Ed.D.

Drexel University, February 2015

Chairperson: Salvatore Falletta

The Post 9/11 GI Bill is the most lucrative version of the GI Bill since the original World War II version. As such, veterans are entering colleges and universities around the country at an increased rate that is expected to continue for the foreseeable future. Despite this growing number of student veterans, it is unclear if university faculty and staff are prepared to deal with their unique needs.

This study examined the transitional issues faced by veterans as they leave the military and enter higher education. Moreover, it sought to explore how colleges can provide support services that promote a positive and rewarding college experience for student veterans. Three questions guided this research: (a) How do veterans describe their transition from military to civilian life? (b) What stories do Post 9/11 veterans tell about their experiences in higher education? and (c) How do Post 9/11 veterans describe what faculty and staff can do to better serve their needs.

To address these questions, a qualitative narrative research design was applied and semi-structured interviews were conducted with 13 veterans who successfully completed college following military service. Through analysis of the data, five findings revealed that veterans in college have unique needs that need to be addressed. The findings revealed that while veterans face unique needs when entering higher education, they also possess a maturity level that helps them overcome challenges associated with higher education. Findings also revealed that peer-to-peer support is crucial to veterans successfully completing college. As the number of veterans in college continues to increase, so does the need for university administrators to gain a deeper understanding of their issues.

Keywords: Veterans, Military, Transition Theory, Networking, GI Bill, College

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Research

For their service and sacrifice, warm words of thanks from a grateful nation are more than warranted, but they aren't nearly enough. We also owe our veterans the care they were promised and the benefits that they have earned. We have a sacred trust with those who wear the uniform of the United States of America. It's a commitment that begins at enlistment, and it must never end. But we know that for too long, we've fallen short of meeting that commitment. Too many wounded warriors go without the care that they need. Too many veterans don't receive the support that they've earned. Too many who once wore our nation's uniform now sleep in our nation's streets. (Obama, 2009, para. 1)

The above words echo in the hearts of millions of Americans. For decades, young men and women have joined the military with a desire to serve their country or with a dream of achieving a college degree. As World War II (WWII) came to a close in 1945, the nation was flooded with returning veterans (Greenberg, 2008). Fearing an increasingly saturated workforce, Congress enacted the original GI Bill of Rights, prompting millions of veterans to enter colleges and universities around the country and forever changing the landscape of higher education in the United States (Olson, 1974). The original GI Bill of Rights is often considered one of the most successful and transformational pieces of legislation in American history (Lackaye, 2011). Now, nearly seven decades later, a transformational new version of the GI Bill is bringing that same realization to Post 9/11 service-members transitioning from military to civilian life. Through the voice of veterans, this narrative research focuses on the needs and challenges of Post 9/11 veterans as they left the military and entered colleges and universities around the country.

Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the United States launched the Global War on Terror (GWOT) and once again the men and women of the military

were called upon to serve on the nation's behalf. The GWOT began with Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan and subsequently expanded into Iraq with the launch of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). As of 2014, millions of men and women have deployed in support of the GWOT. According to U.S. Department of Defense data, 400,000 of these service members have served three or more combat deployments (Adams, 2013). As of 2013, there were still nearly 1.5 million service personnel deployed to combat zones around the world (Roberts & Knight, 2013).

In 2008, as more veterans returned from deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan, Congress introduced the Post 9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act commonly referred to as the Post 9/11 GI Bill. The Post 9/11 GI Bill is the most comprehensive piece of veteran's educational legislation since WWII (Greenberg, 2008). Unlike its predecessor, the Montgomery GI Bill, the Post 9/11 GI Bill pays the full amount of tuition at any public university in the country. In addition, it provides a lucrative monthly stipend and money for books and supplies. As of November 2014, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has provided educational benefits to 773,000 Veterans or their family members distributing over \$20 billion in benefits (Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs, 2014). Service members leaving the service, coupled with the downsizing of the military, make it more likely that veterans will continue to utilize the Post 9/11 GI Bill for the foreseeable future (Cook & Kim, 2009).

The new GI Bill is producing a substantial number of student veterans who may not have entered college without the educational benefit (Grossman, 2009; Morreale 2011). "Student veterans possess unique characteristics stemming from personal experiences that few college administrators, faculty members, campus staff, or

traditionally aged students can claim for themselves or, perhaps, empathize with or relate to” (DiRamio & Jarvis, 2011, p. 1). Many veterans are first-generation college students and most are adult learners (Cook & Kim, 2009; Morreale, 2011, p. 1).

Veterans returning to college are bringing a number of experiences, concerns, and injuries, both physical and mental that college administrators will need to address (Murphy, 2011). According to Morreale (2011) veterans face four academic issues: (a) funding their education, (b) identifying and using services available to them, (c) being academically prepared and engaged, and (d) meeting academic success expectations. Other issues faced by veterans may range from mild transition issues to more serious conditions such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). A study by the Wounded Warrior Project cited 75% of injured post-9/11 veterans have PTSD and roughly the same number suffer from major anxiety disorders (Kime, 2013).

Little is currently known about the expectations and experiences veterans bring to tertiary education (DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchell, 2008). Some higher education institutions are creating specific programs for student veterans; however, most are not fully aware of all their transitional needs (Lopez, 2013). While awareness of student veterans’ needs has become a prominent source of discussion on college campuses and research done by college administrators is beginning to emerge, it is unclear if institutions are well-equipped to address the questions, issues, and needs many veterans will bring to campus (Barr & Desler, 2000; Murphy, 2011).

Statement of the Problem to Be Researched

Despite increased enrollment of veterans in higher education, many college faculty and staff do not fully understand the needs and challenges faced by Post 9/11 veterans as they exit the military and enter higher education.

Purpose and Significance of the Problem

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative narrative research study was to examine the transitional issues faced by veterans entering higher education and explore how colleges can provide support services that promote a positive and rewarding college experience.

Significance of the Problem

Student veterans are a unique population that adds to the richness and diversity of the college experience. However, they also bring unique issues for university faculty and staff. “Veterans present a special problem to colleges and universities, not only because of their large numbers and their differences from ordinary students, but also because of the special characteristics associated with their military experiences and maturity” (Donahue & Tibbitts, 1946, p. 131). Donahue and Tibbitts (1946) also contended that veterans are older than traditional college students and possess particular characteristics such as personal values, visions for the future, motivation, emotions, responsibility, and the desire for independence. Joining the military is a life-changing act that immerses young men and women in military culture, often influencing their self-perception and understanding of society (Siebold, 2007). Leaving a structured life driven by discipline, rules, and compliance to orders, where everyday decisions may have lifelong

implications, can lead to external demands including emotional and social difficulties adjusting to civilian life (Cornell-d'Echert, 2012).

Rumann and Hamrick's (2010) study of six student veterans illustrated four emerging themes regarding the transition into college: "1) role incongruities; 2) maturity; 3) relationships; and 4) identity redefinitions" (p. 445). They reported transitional concerns related to university infrastructure and policies that impeded or complicated enrollment. Ford, Northrup, and Wiley (2009) suggested that veterans are more successful in college if faculty and staff are able to build strong partnerships and connections with them. This can be difficult, as the United States has an all-volunteer military that has led to contemporary faculty and staff being less likely than previous generations to have directly served in the military (Rumann & Hamrick, 2009). This leads to a lack of military understanding, making it more difficult for college administrators to relate, further adding to the challenge of veterans seamlessly entering higher education.

Rumann and Hamrick (2010) posited that future research on the experiences of student veterans is critical as trends in the military evolve. With more veterans returning to college, it is increasingly appropriate for higher education staff to be understanding, flexible, and innovative in meeting the demands of student veterans. The goal of this research was to add to the growing body of literature addressing the needs of veterans in higher education.

Research Questions

1. How do veterans describe their transition from the military into higher education?

2. What stories do Post 9/11 veterans tell about their experiences in higher education?
3. What can university administrators do to better serve the needs of student veterans?

Conceptual Framework

Researcher's Stance

This research on student veterans entering higher education is grounded in social constructivist and ontological stances. As a social constructivist, I believe by gathering information through multiple interview sessions, I can collect insights from student veterans that may be useful to others. This research also emphasizes and highlights the nature of being a student veteran from a social and societal perspective. I believe that each student veteran has a unique reality that is socially constructed. I approach my research from an ontological perspective. I believe that while veterans share similar experiences, such as deployments, their realities and perceptions of that phenomenon may differ dramatically.

My lived experiences also shaped this research. Following high school, I lacked direction, struggled with work, and bounced from one community college to another. One evening while driving home and after much discussion about our current financial and marital situation, my wife turned to me and said, "I think you need to go see a recruiter and join the military." The following day, I took a leap of faith and joined the United States Air Force, a decision that positively changed the course of my life. On October 12, 1999, I arrived at basic training and immediately felt my life change for the better as I immersed myself in the transformational and unique experience of military

service. Following technical training, I was assigned to Mountain Home Air Force Base in Idaho where I forged relationships that last to this day. Within weeks of the attacks on 9/11, I deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. This was another watershed moment in my life. This period cemented my empathy and passion for helping military members and their families.

Like many veterans leaving the military, returning to civilian life proved to be a challenging endeavor for me. I left a structured life and was thrust into the unknown of being a civilian. Where would my wife and I work when returning to California? Where would we live? Where would my son go to school? How would we afford the new baby on the way? These were all questions that needed to be answered. Using the resolve I developed over the previous four years in the military, I successfully sought to become the first in my family to finish college.

I attribute my academic success to two factors, both of which will be addressed in this research. First, the GI Bill served as the financial mechanism that allowed for the feasibility of attending school. Secondly, the skills I learned in the military, such as discipline and maturity, served to help me achieve my goal.

At the time I attended college, there was little in the way of support services for veterans at the university I was attending. This made the transition into school far more difficult than it should have been. In 2005, I began working at the Veterans Center at California State University, Sacramento, a small process-driven office within the University Registrar's Office. The main duty of the office was to process military and veterans' educational benefits. I saw countless students go through the same struggles I did upon entering college. Over the course of the next several years, our office was

transformed from a small process-driven cubicle into a full-fledged center. The center now offers veterans orientations, workshops, scholarships, mentoring, and a host of other services to ease the transition from combat to college. I have seen firsthand the transformational effects a robust campus veterans center can have on student veterans and it is my hope this research can help colleges and universities develop similar centers.

Conceptual Framework of Three Research Streams

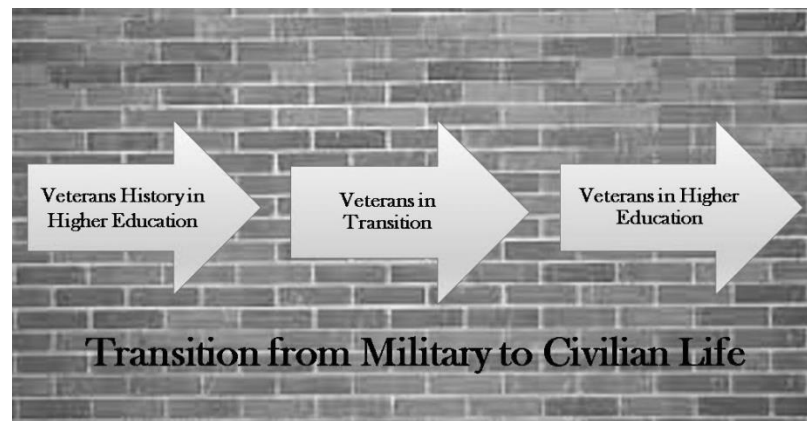


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of research streams.

Illustrated in Figure 1, the conceptual framework for this research is based upon three research streams: (a) the history of veterans in higher education, (b) veterans in transition, and (c) the issues of veterans in higher education. The three streams combine to provide a framework that promotes academic success and aids college faculty and staff working with student veterans.

History of veterans in higher education. The first research stream analyzes the historical and contemporary history of veterans in higher education. In the years

following WWII, the first educational benefits to veterans post-military service were provided. During WWII, we sent over 16 million young Americans to war and established an educational benefit that would help change the landscape of higher education in America (Cohen, 1998). As veterans reintegrated back into society, Congress implemented the Servicemen's Readjustment Act, known as the GI Bill of Rights (GI Bill). The robust nature of this new GI Bill enticed over one-third of eligible veterans to enter college (DiRamio et al., 2008). Due to this increased enrollment, colleges paid special attention to the growing amount of veterans on their respective campuses (p. 74). By the end of the original GI Bill in 1956, millions of veterans received education and training. Now, more than 70 years after WWII, the United States has been embroiled in more than a decade of military conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. As such, millions of service members have returned to civilian life from deployments overseas. Many have left the military and are entering colleges and universities around the country. The study of past transitional issues of veterans returning to college may inform current college administrators and lead to a significant shift in campus policies and services.

Veterans in transition. A transition is the way individuals cope with inevitable and unpredictable change (Schlossberg, 1984). "It is a three-phase process that people go through as they internalize and come to terms with the details of the new situation that the change brings about" (Bridges, 2004, p. 3). The transition out of the military is a major life change for a veteran that can pose significant challenges. "Military members, especially those who have experienced combat, make up a special population with special needs that college administrators need to take into account" (Ackerman, DiRamio, &

Garza-Mitchell, 2009, p. 5). Sustained combat has exposed military personnel to a plethora of military and war-related stressors. In addition to the visible wounds of war, veterans can be exposed to such issues as PTSD and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). Through the lens of adult transition theory, including Schlossberg (1981), and Bridges (1980), the second research stream explores the impediments veterans face when leaving the service and identifies potential practices and policies to ease a veteran's transition.

Veterans in higher education. The final stream of research focuses on veterans entering higher education, the barriers they face, and institutional factors that promote their academic success. The term "veteran friendly" has become a widely used term throughout higher education. The term refers to a concerted effort by individual campuses to promote a smooth transition into college and remove barriers commonly faced by veterans entering higher education (Lokken, Pfeffer, McAuley, & Strong, 2009). There are no set rules as to what makes a campus "veteran friendly," but according to Lokken et al. (2009), there are emergent factors to consider when building a campus veterans program. Research indicated that campus programs assisting student veterans in transition are critical, especially during the first semester (Ackerman et al., 2009). The support can be implemented through veteran services staff and, more importantly, through other veterans on campus going through similar transitional experiences (Ackerman et al., 2009).

Definition of Terms

The following terms are used throughout the remainder of this study and are defined to provide clarity to the research questions being investigated.

Active Duty

A military member “considered full-time duty in the active military service of the United States. This includes members of the Reserve Component serving on active duty or full-time training duty, but does not include full-time National Guard duty” (U.S. Department of Defense, 2014, p. 2).

Adult Learner

“Non-traditional students meet one of the following criteria: delayed enrollment; attends part-time for at least part of the academic year; works full-time (35 hours or more per week) while enrolled; is considered financially independent for purposes of financial aid eligibility; has dependents other than a spouse (usually children, but sometimes others); is a single parent; and/or, does not have a high school diploma.” (Powers, 2010, pp. 20-21)

Deployment Order

“A planning directive from the Secretary of Defense, issued by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, that authorizes and directs the transfer of forces between combatant commands by reassignment or attachment” (U.S. Department of Defense, 2014, p. 72).

Morrill Act of 1862

An Act signed into law allowing states to build universities dedicated to agricultural, mechanical, and military education (Abrams, 1989)

Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF)

U.S. military operations in Afghanistan and other nations that began in 2001 as part of the search for al Qaeda leaders in response to the attacks on September 11, 2001 (Torreon, 2011)

Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF)

U.S. military operations in Iraq began in 2003 to overthrow the regime of Saddam Hussein. In 2010, OIF was renamed Operation New Dawn to signify the shift from military operations to one of support. The war in Iraq ended in 2011 (Torreon, 2011).

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

PTSD develops after a terrifying ordeal that involved physical harm or the threat of physical harm. The person who develops PTSD may have been the one who was harmed, the harm may have happened to a loved one, or the person may have witnessed a harmful event that happened to loved ones or strangers (National Institute for Mental Health, n.d.).

Post 9/11 GI Bill

The Post 9/11 GI Bill provides financial support for education and housing to individuals with at least 90 days of aggregate service after September 10, 2001, or individuals discharged with a service-connected disability after 30 days. You must have received an honorable discharge to be eligible for the Post 9/11 GI Bill. Certain reservists who were activated for at least 90 days after September 11, 2001 may be eligible for the benefit (Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs, 2014).

Re-enrollment

A student veteran who began their college career, had their attendance interrupted by a military deployment or training, and subsequently returned to college upon their return (Livingston, 2009)

School Certifying Official

The person(s) designated to sign enrollment certifications and other documents relating to VA educational benefits. The Certifying Official can also: answer general questions about federal VA Education Benefits, assist students with completing VA Forms, submit forms to the VA, and contact the VA on behalf of a student with specific benefit-related issues (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2013b).

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

A TBI can occur when the brain has been damaged by a blow or injury to the head. This injury can result in both physical and mental trauma. Physical symptoms may include clumsiness, dizziness, headaches, and fatigue. Behavioral symptoms may include irritability, outbursts, and changes in personality. Other symptoms can include difficulty with finding the correct word, difficulty with memory and with learning new skills, reduced concentration, slowed thinking, slowed reading and slowed speaking (NC Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.).

Veteran

For the purpose of this research study, a veteran is someone who has served on active or reserve duty in one of the five branches (Air Force, Army, Coast Guard,

Marines, Navy) of the United States Armed Forces or National Guard and received any discharge other than dishonorable.

Veteran-Friendly Campus

The term refers to the marked effort by colleges and universities to identify and remove barriers to the educational goals of student veterans and to create an atmosphere that promotes a smooth transition from military to college life (Lokken, et al., 2009).

Assumptions and Limitations of the Study

Assumptions

Based on this researcher's experience of being a veteran and working in the field of veterans education, several assumptions were made relative to this study. Based on the researcher's experience, it was assumed that colleges and universities are making some progress toward helping veterans succeed academically. The progress ranges from long-term strategic planning to the creation of actual programs that aid veterans in transition. Furthermore, it was assumed that due to the nature of military service, veterans possess traits and needs that are unique to other college students. Lastly, this researcher assumed that because the Post 9/11 GI Bill offers increased benefits over its predecessor, the Montgomery GI Bill, more veterans who are less academically prepared will apply to colleges and universities in order to receive the lucrative stipend.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this research. Only four (Air Force, Army, Marines, Navy) of the five branches of service are represented in this study. It is important to note that each branch has its unique responsibilities, protocols, and

traditions. Given that, while there are many similarities between branches of service, each individual branch brings their own unique experiences and challenges relevant to their own branch of service.

The conducted research was limited to graduates of one public 4-year university in Northern California. While the university does have a diverse veteran population consisting of all branches of service, it may not be indicative of all college campuses. The research presented will provide a clear picture of student veterans at this institution; however, given this limitation, further research is warranted.

Summary

As student veterans begin their lives after the military, it is important for higher education administrators to meet their needs. Research shows that many veterans go through a transitional phase in the days and months after leaving the military, likely due to the stressful and structured life in the military. Veterans also tend to be older and more likely to have more external demands than the average student, thus making the transition into college tougher than that of their non-veteran counterparts. A review of the literature demonstrates that veterans bring unique and dynamic experiences and contribute to the diversity of the campus climate (Ackerman et al., 2009). Research also shows that veterans, like many special populations, bring with them special needs that university administrators should address (Barr & Desler, 2000). As increasing numbers of student veterans re-enroll or enter college following active duty, college and university officials must prepare to help facilitate their transition. The myriad of issues student veterans face include academic reclamation, knowledge of contractual and financial matters and the need for advising and counseling assistance (Rumann & Hamrick, 2009).

This research is intended to provide insight into the transitional experiences of veterans leaving the military and entering higher education. This narrative research sought to gain rich information illuminating the need for specific services veterans require to successfully transition from military service to institutions of higher education.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction to Chapter 2

Veterans are entering college at an increased rate that is expected to continue for the foreseeable future (Hamrick & Rumann, 2013; McBain, Kim, Cook, & Snead, 2012). According to Cook and Kim (2009), higher education institutions are seeing the biggest resurgence of veterans on campus since WWII. The most significant reason for the increase in student veterans is the enactment of the Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008, commonly referred to as the Post 9/11 GI Bill. The Post 9/11 GI Bill is considered to be the most significant piece of educational legislation for veterans since the original 1944 GI Bill of Rights (Cook & Kim, 2009). As of 2013, in excess of \$25 billion in GI Bill payments has been paid out to nearly one million Post 9/11 veterans (Zoroya, 2013).

Despite the increase in student veterans on college campuses, there is scarce literature available from a theoretical and research perspective that addresses this population (Morreale, 2011). According to Cook and Kim (2009), “despite the long history of veterans’ educational benefits and the presence of veteran students on campus, little research has been conducted on effective campus programs and services that successfully aid veterans in their college transition” (p. 1). Faculty and staff are still learning about the educational and personal needs of veterans in higher education (McBain et al., 2012).

Research suggests contemporary faculty and staff are not prepared to address the needs and challenges of student veterans. Chapter 1 introduced three research streams

(see Figure 2): veteran's history in higher education, veterans in transition, and veterans in higher education. This literature review further ties together these three closely related research streams. Historically, military members and veterans have played a large role in shaping the landscape of post-secondary education in America.

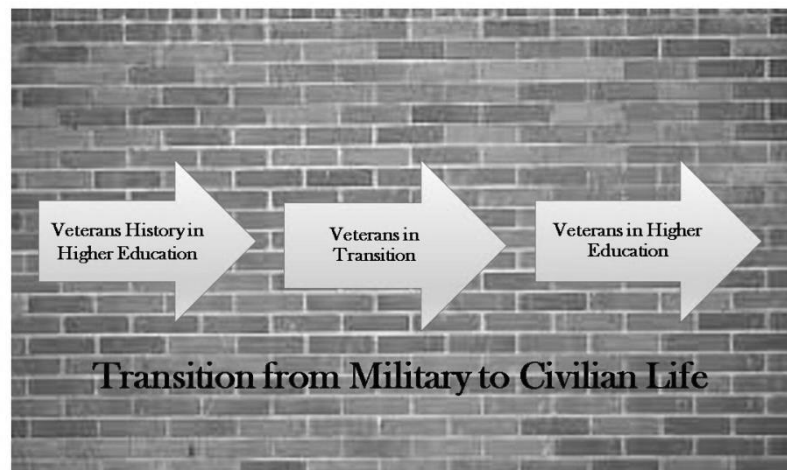


Figure 2. Conceptual framework of research streams.

The first stream of literature examines how veterans have impacted higher education and presents evidence on what services were made available to them. Leaving the military can be daunting for many veterans. The transition to civilian life often causes a high level of stress and a period of uncertainty. To this end, the second stream of literature focuses on this transitional period. The work of several researchers who presented theories of adult transition, including Lewin (1947), Schlossberg (1981, 1984), and Bridges (1980, 2001, 2004, 2009), will be reviewed, compared, and contrasted.

Similar to the transition out of the military, entering higher education can be a difficult time for veterans. The final research stream highlights factors that can make the transition into college smoother both socially and academically. Lastly, this chapter looks at the characteristics of student veterans who have matriculated into higher education and the role faculty and administrators can play in increasing retention and lowering attrition rates.

Literature Review

Research Stream I: Veterans History in Higher Education

To better understand the needs of Post 9/11 veterans, it is important to examine previous versions of the GI Bill and the historic needs of student veterans. The United States government has called upon its citizens to fight on the nation's behalf since the country's inception (Korb, Duggan, Juul, & Bergmann, 2009). The formal relationship between the United States military and higher education began with President Lincoln's signing of the Morrill Act of 1862, which required newly established land grant universities to provide training in agriculture, mechanics, and military education (Abrams, 1989; Alexander & Thelin, 2012; Key, 1996; Neiberg, 2000). The provisions for military training were largely based on the outbreak of the Civil War and outside threats from foreign countries (Duemer, 2006). The lack of knowledge and experience on issues related to military strategy and training was evident in the Northern Union Army resultant increased casualties on the battlefield (Duemer, 2006). There is speculation that the military training provision of the Morrill Act was to counter the number of West Point graduates defecting to the Confederate States of America Military Service (Alexander & Thelin, 2013). Senator Justin Morrill, who authored the bill,

argued that the Civil War would have gone much better for the North and fewer lives would have been lost if officers had received formal training on matters related to military strategies (Duemer, 2006).

The National Defense Act of 1916 (later amended in 1920 and 1933) introduced the National Guard and implemented the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC). ROTC was established to provide students a commission as a reserve officer following their training in military studies (Alexander & Thelin, 2013). As of 2009, 30% of all military officers earned their commission through ROTC.

The United States' entry into World War I and the subsequent implementation of the draft in 1917 led to 4.7 million Americans serving during the War. This led to a sharp decrease in male college enrollment. The shrinkage of enrollment caused governmental fears that many institutions would have to close (Levine, 1987). In response to these concerns, legislators created a series of War Department training units on college campuses. In 1918, the government introduced the Student Army Training Corps (SATC), which established training units at over 525 colleges across the country (Alexander & Thelin, 2012; Levine, 1987). It is widely accepted that prior to WWII, little educational support was offered to veterans returning from war, illustrated in a 1943 speech by President Franklin D. Roosevelt:

Laying plans for the return to civilian life for our gallant men and women in the armed service. They must not be demobilized into an environment of inflation and unemployment... We must, this time, have plans ready-instead of waiting to do a hasty, insufficient, and ill-considered job at the last moment. (Internet Archive, 1943, July 28, para 15)

Prior to World War II (WWII), the relationship between the military and higher education was primarily to produce a well-trained military. This relationship changed

drastically after WWII with the advent of the original GI Bill of Rights. WWII was the government's first attempt to formulate a plan to help veterans reintegrate into society (Juul, 2009). Four out of five men born in the 1920s served in the military (Mettler, 2012). The majority of young service members entered the military because of the draft and most lacked civilian work experience. WWII sent 16 million of those Americans to war. The sudden end to the war brought home millions of troops in a short period of time. Moreover, only 23% of WWII service members possessed a high school diploma and just 3% a college degree (Greenberg, 2008). The veterans, now civilians, sought to find a place in America's new peacetime society (Livingston, 2009).

Government officials were unsure how to deal with this sudden influx of veterans returning back to civilian society in an already oversaturated job market (Greenberg, 2008). To address the need, Congress passed the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (Public Law 78-346), known as the GI Bill of Rights (GI Bill). Greenberg (2008) asserted the original GI Bill was a political response to legitimate fears about the sudden return to civilian life of nearly 16 million veterans, most of whom had been drafted. According to Toven (1945), one of the most effective methods to help veterans adjust to civilian life is to provide educational benefits.

The original GI Bill offered both a financial incentive for veterans to attend college and a mechanism for America to produce an educated workforce (Greenberg, 2008). The GI Bill provided returning veterans with \$500 a year for tuition, fees, and books. To illustrate the robust nature of this benefit, the tuition received was enough to attend Harvard University, the nation's most expensive university at the time (Camire, 2008; Persky, 2010). Student veterans also received a stipend of up to \$75 a month. At

the time, the GI Bill was the federal government's largest investment in military student veterans (Strach, 2009).

Following WWII, many economists forecasted a return to the depression, which the country had suffered for 12 years before the war. This served as an added incentive for veterans to attend college (Alexander & Thelin, 2012). Veterans saw the GI Bill as a viable option for upward mobility and a chance to become part of the American middle class. An early survey of the GI Bill estimated only 7% of veterans would utilize the benefit (Humes, 2006; Livingston, 2009; Olson, 1974). However, at its height, nearly 70% of all males attending college were veterans (Bound & Turner, 2002; Livingston, 2009).

College administrators were unprepared and nearly overwhelmed with the sheer number of veterans enrolling (Livingston, 2009; Rumann, 2010). There was a fear by many in higher education that student veterans would enter college ill-prepared for the rigor of academics (Rumann, 2010). This belief prompted many in academia to seek ways to provide support services for enrolling veterans. Hadley (1945) conducted a study of 22 student veterans enrolling for the first time at Ohio State University to learn more about the veteran academic transition. The study developed an "academic success laboratory," a course specifically designed to assist in study skills and prepare veterans academically. Through interviews with student veterans several themes emerged. The veterans had set very high standards for themselves and expected to graduate quickly (Hadley, 1945). The returning veterans also possessed unique needs, desires, and characteristics decidedly different from non-veteran students (Clark, 1998; Rumann, 2010).

Also, at Ohio State, Hadley (1945) administered a psychological examination of veterans participating in the aforementioned academic success laboratory. Many reported feeling inferior and lacked confidence in their academic ability. Some reported feeling out of place and many had difficulties identifying with their classmates. The most identifiable reason for not connecting with peers was due to the dramatic and life-altering experiences of serving during a war (Hadley, 1945). The sweeping GI Bill legislation changed the nature of the higher education student, as a large number of people who would not likely attend college were able to enroll (Rumann & Hamrick, 2010). According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (2013a), the original GI Bill is one of the “most significant pieces of legislation ever produced by the federal government—one that impacted the country not only socially, but had a major impact economically and politically” (para. 1). Now, decades later, numerous research studies have demonstrated the positive and transformational effects the original GI Bill had, not only on returning war veterans, but on the nation as a whole (Ford & Miller, 1995).

In 1950, the United States entered the Korean War, once again sending the nation’s youth to war. Over 5.7 million people fought in the Korean War, some of whom were WWII veterans (Bound & Turner, 2002). Insufficient literature exists on student veterans returning from Korea and entering college (Livingston, 2009). During the Korean War, the Veterans Readjustment Act of 1952 (Public Law 550), known as the Korean GI Bill, was signed into law. This version of the GI Bill offered benefits similar to the original; however, it offered less financial incentive. Veterans were afforded 36 months of educational benefits and received \$110 per month that was to cover both educational costs and subsistence (Juul, 2009).

In 1966, the Vietnam-era GI Bill (Public Law 89-358) was signed into law. This version of the GI Bill offered a \$100 monthly stipend for every month of service. Vietnam veterans tended to enroll in occupational and vocational education programs, which were in contrast to WWII veterans' favorite associate and bachelor's degrees (Caspers & Ackerman, 2012). Arnstein (1981) argued that it is unclear if this shift was due to the difference in the two versions of the GI Bill or because of the nature of the veterans entering higher education.

The Vietnam War was very unpopular and marshaled in the most controversial time for student veterans in higher educational history. Waves of antiwar sentiment rippled throughout the country and could be felt very strongly on college and university campuses (Cohen, 1998; DeBenedetti, 1990). Unlike WWII, which saw millions of veterans entering higher education in a short period of time, Vietnam veterans trickled in over an extended period of time. This led educators to be less aware of their presence and needs on campus (Stephens & Stenger, 1972). Based on a survey conducted by the Veterans Administration, Stephens and Stenger (1972) determined Vietnam veterans possessed characteristics similar to those of other college students; however, their military service created additional needs. Many veterans were unable to shed the experiences they faced while in Vietnam and suffered from PTSD (Hendrix & Anelli, 1993). It is estimated that nearly 1.7 million Vietnam veterans exhibited some sort of significant stress reaction during their military service (Hendrix & Anelli, 1993). The lasting impression the war left on the veterans complicated their college experience. Facing the emotional struggles of life after Vietnam, many service members returned to higher education and, as in Vietnam, faced a situation that would change their lives.

Student veterans of the Vietnam era reported feeling unwelcome on campuses and did their best to keep a low profile by not identifying themselves as veterans (Rumann & Hamrick, 2009).

More than 8.5 million servicepersons served in the United States military during the Vietnam War years of 1964-1975. Of that number, close to 4 million left the United States to serve in South East Asia. A large portion of those serving overseas saw combat or was exposed to highly threatening or stressful situations. While the United States military withdrew from Vietnam in 1975, the impact it made on the troops and the people at home that followed the war on television still resonates in the American and higher education consciousness today (Hendrix & Anelli, 1993). Like WWII, the Vietnam War shaped the landscape of higher education and provides today's educators with a plethora of lessons when dealing with veterans.

The passage of the 1984 Montgomery GI Bill (Public Law 110-252) marked the beginning of using the GI Bill as a recruitment tool (White, 2004). Congress cited two reasons for the passage of the Bill. First, it was to serve as a way to improve the retention of service personnel and secondly, it would produce a more highly qualified and productive workforce (Beatty, 2013). The benefit offered financial incentives to veterans attending college or technical programs. Since its enactment, millions of veterans including those who served overseas in Panama, Somalia, Kosovo, the First Gulf War, and, most recently, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, have used the Montgomery GI Bill for educational purposes. As of 2014, the Montgomery GI Bill is still in effect; however, it has largely been replaced by the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the United States launched the GWOT. The GWOT began with OEF in Afghanistan and subsequently expanded into Iraq with the launch of OIF. As of 2012, more than 2.5 million service members have deployed in support of the GWOT. According to U.S. Department of Defense data, 400,000 of these service members have served three or more combat deployments (Adams, 2013). As of 2013, there are still nearly 1.5 million service personnel deployed to combat zones (Roberts & Knight, 2013).

The Post9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 (Public Law 100-48) was introduced by Congressman and Marine Corps veteran Jim Webb (D-Va.). The lucrative nature of the Post-9/11 GI Bill coupled with the downsizing of the military have led colleges and universities to see the largest increase of student veterans since WWII. The Post 9/11 GI Bill is an educational benefit for individuals who served on active duty on or after September 11, 2001. According to Dortch (2012), there are four main objectives to the Post 9/11 GI Bill: “(1) provide a parity of benefits for reservists and members of the regular Armed Forces; (2) ensure comprehensive educational benefits; (3) meet military recruiting goals; and (4) improve military retention through transferability of benefits” (p. 1). The Post 9/11 GI Bill is considered the most financially generous GI Bill since the original version in 1944.

The Post9/11 GI Bill is divided into three separate categories that address specific college expenses. The benefit pays the full amount of tuition and fees at any public college or university in the country. In addition, it pays up to \$17,500 per year at private institutions (Caspers & Ackerman, 2012). Student veterans also receive a robust monthly

stipend based on the zip code of the college being attended (Eckstein, 2009). Lastly, veterans receive up to \$1000 a year for books and supplies.

To be eligible for the Post9/11 GI Bill, the student must have served as a member of the Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, or Navy including their reserve components on or after September 11, 2001. Service members must have at least 90 days of aggregate active duty service after September 10, 2001, or if you are an honorably discharged Veteran, or were discharged with a service-connected disability after 30 days (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2014).

The success of the original GI Bill of Rights is a testament to the importance of educating our nation's veterans. Student veterans have played a major role in higher education since the earliest land-grant universities. Each generation of veteran has brought with it unique needs and experiences from which contemporary educators can learn. This research stream aimed to provide a historical framework that educators working with veterans could use to increase their effectiveness when working with student veterans. Providing a historical perspective was important for laying a foundation for the reader to better understand the needs of today's veterans.

Research Stream II: Veterans in Transition

The transition out of the military can be challenging and is unique to every veteran (Morreale, 2011). The conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan are the longest contingencies in American history. Military members are exposed to multiple deployments that make them vulnerable to combat stress. Other factors that create stress and unique circumstances for combat veterans are the fact the GWOT is unpredictable, as there are no "front lines" (Zinger & Cohen, 2010). During their transition, veterans can

experience a range of emotions including vulnerability and uncertainty (Leibowitz & Schlossberg, 1982). Cognitive dissonance, physical and psychological issues, and general readjustment issues are a few of the experiences veterans may face (Cook & Kim, 2009). Some veterans face more serious transitional issues including PTSD and TBI. The National Center for PTSD cites an array of feelings that accompany veterans as they leave the service including excitement, relief, anxiety and even a sense of fear.

Zinger and Cohen (2010) conducted an exploratory study of 10 veterans to better understand their transitional needs. All participants stated they were changed after military service. The challenges included coping with PTSD, depression, physical injury, lack of structure in civilian life, difficulties with personal relationships, and social functioning. While deployed, the participants reported forming self-protective mechanisms and became numb and desensitized to their surroundings. When asked about emotional issues, one respondent of the study stated:

Readjustment has been difficult because I still have vivid memories and trouble sleeping. For years, the only noise I heard was noise from combat, so when I got home the silence bothered me. When I am in a crowded area I feel nervous and on guard waiting for something bad to happen. (Zinger & Cohen, 2010, p. 43)

Another participant in the study spoke about the difficulty in readjusting to social and personal relationships:

I felt awkward around my civilian friends and when I came back I thought that they had changed, but I later realized that I had changed. I had certain expectations about how my friends should act around me and I was often disappointed. I felt uncomfortable at times when they focused their attention on my military experiences. (p. 43)

Veterans in transition experience a wave of challenges but it is also an opportunity for growth. The military is a very structured and rule-driven organization.

When exiting the military, veterans are forced to become familiar with the rules, regulations, and expectations of civilian life (Lifton, 1992). Research describing the transitional issues of veterans returning from war to an academic setting is limited; however, it does show that people serving in the military experience major life transitions when returning home (Beatty, 2013; Bliese & Stuart, 1998; Foster, 2009; Hammelman, 1995).

Transition theory. Understanding the experiences and learning perspectives that student veterans bring to campus can be strengthened by drawing on relevant transition theories (Minnis, Bondi, & Rumann, 2013, p. 202). Transition theory attempts to explain how individuals cope with inevitable and unpredictable change (Schlossberg, 1981, 1984). Schlossberg (1984) pointed out that some authors used the term crisis, transformation, or change to describe transition. For example, Moos and Tsu (1976) used the term crisis to describe a period of time when people are faced with problems and have to work out ways to resolve them.

Crisis theory asserts that people generally operate in consistent patterns, in equilibrium with their environment, solving problems with minimal delay by habitual mechanisms and reactions. When the usual problem solving mechanisms do not work, tension arises and feelings of discomfort or strain occur. The individual experiences anxiety, fear, guilt, shame, feelings of helplessness, and some disorganization of function, and possibly other symptoms. Thus crisis is essentially a disturbance of the equilibrium, an upset in a steady state. (Moos & Tsu, 1976, p. 13)

Parkes (1971) described change or transitions as the “abandonment of one set of assumptions and the development of a fresh set to enable the individual to cope with the new altered life space” (p. 103). Lewin (1947) contended there are three aspects to the change process: unfreezing, moving, and refreezing. Lewin believed that, during the

first “unfreezing” stage a person must experience a destabilization before old behaviors can be discarded and new behaviors adopted. Lewin referred to the “moving” phase as a change process that is more than gathering new information, habits, and social skills. It is a chance to change self-perception and overcome inner resistance. As quoted directly from Lewin (1945/1948):

It is a process in which changes of knowledge and beliefs, change of values and standards, changes of emotional attachments and needs, and changes of everyday conduct occur not piecemeal and independently of each other, but within the framework of the individual’s total life in the group. (Lewin, 1945/1948, p. 58)

The final stage of Lewin’s change model is the process of refreezing. “Refreezing refers to attempting to stabilize a group or individuals in order to ensure new behaviors are safe from regression” (Burnes, 2004, p. 986).

Bridges (1980) described transition as “the natural process of disorientation and reorientation that marks the turning point of growth” (p. 5). While many researchers consider “change” and “transition” to be interchangeable, Bridges distinguishes between the two. Bridges (2009) considers change situational. Examples include the move to a new site, reorganization of the roles on the team, or the retirement of a founder or CEO. Like Lewin, Bridges declared transitions are physiological and consist of a three phase process: *letting go, the neutral zone, and a new beginning*.

Letting go can be a challenging time for people as they must learn to cope with loss. “A range of emotions can be experienced including anger, bargaining, anxiety, sadness, disorientation, and depression” (Bridges, 2009, pp. 29-30). The “neutral zone” is an in-between time when the old way is gone but the person has not come to grips with the new way of doing things. While in the neutral zone it is typical for anxiety to rise and

for motivation to fall (Bridges, 1980). People can be resentful and self-protective. According to Bridges (2001, 2009), given the ambiguity of the neutral zone, people tend to become polarized. It is also a time to break old habits, routines, and roles (Bridges, 1980; Bridges & Mitchell, 2000). The last stage in the process is the new beginning. It is a time when “people develop a new identity, experience new energy, discover a new sense of purpose, and the change begins to work” (Bridges, 2009, p. 5). “To become something else, you have to stop being what you are now; to start doing things the new way, you have to end the way you are doing them now; and to develop a new attitude or outlook, you have to let go of the old one you have” (Bridges, 2009, p. 80).

Schlossberg’s transition theory. The transition from the military can be a stressful time for veterans. Schlossberg (1984), Schlossberg, Waters, and Goodman (1995), and Anderson, Goodman, and Schlossberg (2012) presented an adult theory of transition that is an examination of what constitutes a transition, different forms of transition, the transition process, and factors that influence transitions (see Figure 3). Schlossberg’s theory is a systematic framework for counselors, psychologists, social workers and others who help adults (including veterans) in transition (Anderson et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 1981, 1984). Schlossberg defined a transition as any event or nonevent that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles (Schlossberg, 1984, p. 43).



The Transition Process changing reactions over time

Adapted from Anderson et al. (2012, p. 39)

Figure 3. Schlossberg's transition theory.

A transition occurs if an event or nonevent results in a change about oneself and the world, requiring a corresponding change in one's behavior or relationships (Schlossberg, 1981). Sargent and Schlossberg (1988) cited "the more the event alters the more he or she will be affected by the transition" (p. 58). Transition, Schlossberg (1984) pointed out, includes not only obvious life changes (e.g., leaving the military), but also subtle changes or non-events (e.g., a deployment that never happened). Schlossberg's framework is based on three premises:

(1) adults continuously experience transitions; (2) adults' reaction to transitions depend on the type of transition, their perceptions of the transition, the context in which it occurs, and its impact on their lives; and (3) a transition has no end point; rather, a transition is a process over time that includes phases of assimilation and continues appraisal as people move in, though, and out of it. (Anderson et al., 2012, p. 59)

Schlossberg's theory begins by identifying three ways to approach transition classified as (a) anticipated; (b) unanticipated; or (c) non-events (Chickering & Schlossberg, 1995; Schlossberg, 1984; Schlossberg et al., 1995). Anticipated changes are

expected major life events, such as graduating from high school or becoming a parent. Anticipated transitions are “gains, losses or major alterations of roles that predictably occur in the unfolding life cycle” (Pearlin & Lieberman, 1979, p. 220). Unanticipated transitions are non-scheduled events that occur suddenly or with little to no warning. Examples given by Pearlin and Lieberman (1979) include being fired from a job or a sudden death in the family. The final type of transition is nonevents. Nonevents are expected events that fail to occur. Examples include a marriage that never happened or a promotion that never arose.

Schlossberg’s theory clusters change into four categories, referred to as the 4-S system: (a) situation, (b) self, (c) support, and (d) strategies (Schlossberg, 2008). The factors describe how individuals cope with change (Anderson et al., 2012). The model is a partial answer to the question of why people react differently to the same type of transition. The 4-S system features the strengths and weaknesses an individual brings to each transition (Guichard & Lenz, 2005; Harley, Beach, & Alston, 2008).

Situation. Refers to the individual’s situation at the time of the transition. Are there other stressors the individual is facing? For example, if a service member is facing a deployment at the same time her or his partner is critically ill, that may change how the service member copes with the deployment. According to Anderson et al. (2012), the situation variable addresses seven questions:

- (1) trigger – what set off the transition?;
- (2) timing – how does the transition relate to one’s social status?;
- (3) control – what aspects of the transition can one control?;
- (4) role change – does the transition involve role change?;
- (5) duration – previous experience with similar transition?;
- (6) concurrent stress – what and how great are the stresses facing the individual now, if any?;
- and (7) assessment – does the individual view the situation positively, negatively, or as benign? (pp. 67-68)

Self. Refers to the individuals' inner strength and ability to cope with transition (Harley et al., 2008). Is the individual optimistic, resilient, and able to deal with ambiguity (Schlossberg, 2008)? Anderson et al. (2012) described 10 characteristics that are of particular relevance to individuals in the midst of change:

(1) socioeconomic status; (2) gender and sexual orientation; (3) age and stage of life; (4) ethnicity/culture; (5) psychological resources; (6) ego development; (7) outlook-optimism and self-efficacy; (8) commitment and values; (9) spirituality; and (10) resilience (p. 73)

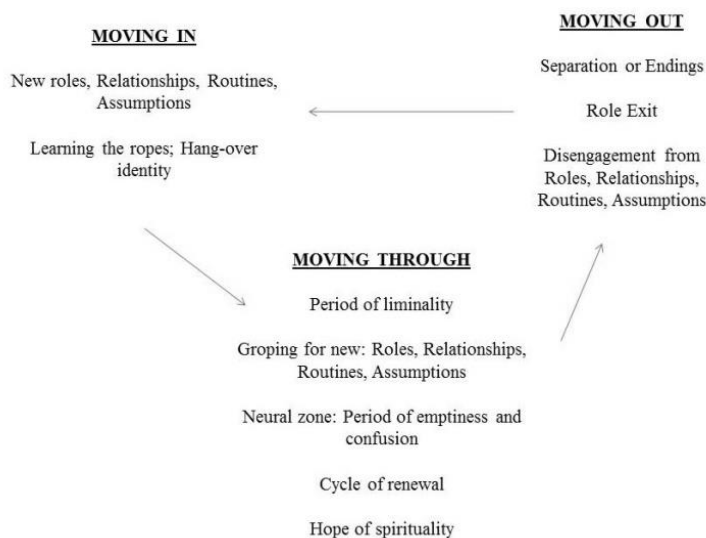
Support. It is important to consider the support network that an individual has during transition. Examples of social support include family members, partners, friends and community support. According to Kahn and Antonucci (1980), there are three key areas of support: (a) affect, (b) affirmation, and (c) aid. Affect deals with expressions such as admiration, respect, and support. Affirmation refers to "expressions of agreement or acknowledgement of the appropriateness or rightness of some act or statement of another person" (Anderson et al., 2012, p. 85). Aid includes the exchange of things such as money or time.

Strategies. Pearlin and Schooler (1978) defined coping strategies as the things people do to avoid being harmed by life's strains. The same researchers offered three types of coping strategies:

1. "Responses that modify the situation" (such as negotiation in marriage, discipline in parenting, optimistic actions in occupation, and seeking advice in marriage and parenting);
2. "Responses that...control the meaning of the problem" (such as responses that neutralize, positive comparisons, selective ignoring, substitutions of rewards); and

3. Responses that help to manage stress after it has occurred (such as “denial, passive acceptance, withdrawal, hopefulness, avoidance of worry, and relaxation). (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978, pp. 6-7)

Goodman, Schlossberg, and Anderson (1997) further explained Schlossberg’s theory by introducing “moving in,” “moving through,” and “moving out” (see Figure 4). During the first phase, “moving in,” the individual takes on new roles and begins to identify the change. The second phase, “moving through,” individuals begin looking for ways to adjust and cope with the change. The final phase, “moving out,” happens when a person ends the transition and begins to look ahead (Chickering & Schlossberg, 1995).



Adapted from Anderson et al. (2012, p. 39)

Figure 4. Schlossberg’s moving out, moving through, and moving in.

Upon leaving the military, veterans face multiple and often simultaneous transitions such as adjusting to civilian life and entering higher education. This research stream encapsulated a theoretical framework that administrators working with veterans

can utilize to better meet their needs. The use of transition theory allows practitioners and researchers alike to better understand the needs of student veterans.

Research Stream III: Student Veterans in Higher Education

The transition from military to civilian life can be challenging. The transition into higher education can be equally daunting. Student veterans vary from other undergraduate students in significant ways (Radford, 2009). They are more likely to have past experiences such as trauma, isolation, or financial difficulties (Diamond, 2012) than their civilian counterparts. Military life encompasses clear chains of command, which are less apparent in university systems.

Veterans as non-traditional students. Important to the discussion of today's student veterans is they are typically older than their non-veteran counterparts (Ackerman et al., 2009). Nearly 85% are 24 or older with 53.1% being at least 30 years old. As such, student veterans are typically considered adult learners (Wilson & Smith, 2012). According to Powers (2010), adult learners usually fit into one or more of the following categories:

1. Experiences delays in enrollment;
2. Attends college part-time for at least part of the academic year;
3. Works full-time (35 hours or more per week) while enrolled;
4. Is financially independent for purposes of financial aid eligibility;
5. Has dependents other than a spouse (usually children, but sometimes others);
6. Does not have a high school diploma. (pp. 20-21)

Compton, Cox, and Laanan (2006) stated that nontraditional students are more likely to be pursuing a vocational certificate or degree, have focused goals for their education

(primarily to enhance their work skills), are more likely to enroll in distance education courses, and view education as a means of moving into another life phase.

Mental health and the returning student veteran. The GWOT is the first conflict that has seen more instances of psychological trauma than physical injuries or deaths. As such, there is more attention being paid to the psychological issues of returning veterans than at any point in American history (Sammons & Batten, 2008). PTSD is an anxiety disorder that causes an emotional reaction due to being in a terrifying, uncontrollable, or life-threatening situation. During this type of event, a person thinks they or someone close to them is in danger. The Department of Veterans Affairs identified four types of symptoms: reliving the event, avoidance, numbing, and feeling keyed up. Other signs a veteran might be facing PTSD are that he or she can suddenly become angry or irritable, have a hard time sleeping, have trouble concentrating, begin drinking or have drug problems, or experience feelings of hopelessness or shame, employment problems, relationship problems, and often depression. A study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* provided information relating to the mental health of members of the Army and Marine Corps who were involved in combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan (Hoge et al., 2004). The findings indicated that there is significant risk for returning veterans to develop mental health problems. Active members of the military are at increased risk for not getting help for PTSD due to a number of factors, including feeling stigmatized and a fear they will be administratively discharged from the service if they seek help.

The DVA estimated that 23% of veterans have received a preliminary diagnosis of PTSD compared to an estimated 4% in the civilian population. According to Reno

(2012), nearly 30% of Post 9/11 veterans received a diagnosis for PTSD. This is a large percentage compared to the non-veteran population, which stands at 7-8% (National Center for PTSD, 2014). Their part-time status makes issues of PTSD more prevalent especially in those who have been involved in at least one deployment.

TBI has become a national issue due to widespread injuries in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is caused by a blow or jolt to the head or a penetrating head injury that disrupts the normal function of the brain. Many veterans experienced multiple concussions during their time in the military and each concussion increases the chances for permanent damage and the requirement for extensive medical care. Estimates show that between 11 and 28% of returning veterans suffer from some variation of TBI, most often caused by being near large explosions such as mortar fire, roadside bombs, and suicide bombers (Zoroya, 2007). According to Foster (2009), of the millions of veterans who have served in OEF and OIF, an estimated 360,000 veterans experienced some type of brain injury. Of that number, 90,000 veterans have needed long-term or extended care. Over the past several decades, there have been huge advances in protective military equipment such as increased body armor and improved helmets that have decreased the likelihood of death. The quality of health care has also improved due to advanced medical techniques. In previous wars, explosions and accidents that often resulted in death are now injuries with which veterans survive. PTSD and TBI are two of the most widely diagnosed illnesses of today's returning veterans and are now referred to as the signature wounds of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars. It is important to note that although PTSD and TBI are serious concerns, most service members are very resilient and return to civilian life able to function without notable problems (Sammons & Batten, 2008).

Tinto's Integration Model. Colleges and universities are seeing an increase in public accountability and a decline in federal funding. Therefore, looking at ways to limit attrition (dropouts) and increase retention in all students (including veterans) is of the utmost importance to colleges and universities around the country. Tinto (1975) constructed a model to explain how colleges can increase retention and limit attrition.

In order to persist in college, a student must do more than merely adjust to the university environment and meet certain academic performance standards. Generally, in regards to collegiate experiences, students that adapt to university life typically complete their education (and/or persist to graduation) while students that are not properly integrated dropout. The two specific concepts that are thought to influence integration are isolation and incongruence. While incongruence is commonly unavoidable and refers to a student not fitting into an institution, isolation, which refers to a lack of interactions while in college, is preventable. But isolation and incongruence commonly influence student dropout. (Tinto, 1993, pp. 48-50)

Historically, research on why students drop out of college fails to distinguish whether the student did or did not leave voluntarily (Tinto, 1975). The model identified two contributing systems: social and academic. The social system consists of peer, faculty, and staff interactions while the academic system refers to a student's academic ability (Tinto, 1975). Tinto argued that these two factors are the major contributors to increasing student retention. Voluntary departures can be attributed to such behaviors as the inability to adjust to college, a change in goals, financial difficulties, a failure to acclimate to college life, or boredom (Guthrie, 2013). Involuntary departures are typically a result of academic difficulty or student conduct issues. Tinto (2007) identified five conditions to limit attrition and promote academic success: (a) consistent expectations for achievement, (b) academic support connected to students' daily learning needs, (c) ways to identify students struggling in the first few weeks of the semester, (d)

involvement with faculty and peers in learning activities, and (e) relevant learning that connects to students' values.

Numerous research studies have identified important factors related to veterans as they transition into college (Ackerman et al., 2009; DiRamio & Jarvis, 2011; Livingston, 2009). Tinto called these factors “attributes” and they are present when students first enter college. Many characteristics are present in veterans and non-veterans alike. They include family background, socioeconomic factors, prior schooling, skills, and abilities (DiRamio & Jarvis, 2011). Students who have served in the military have additional attributes that college faculty and staff need to consider.

Elements to creating a “veteran friendly” campus. The term “veteran friendly” has become a widely used term throughout higher education. The term refers to a concerted effort by individual campuses to promote a smooth transition into college and to remove barriers commonly faced by veterans entering higher education (Lokken et al., 2009). Cook and Kim (2009) identified five elements that help create a campus climate that induces a “veteran friendly” atmosphere:

- (1) Provide a strong communication mechanism for veterans to reach out to administration and other students;
- (2) Provide opportunities to build a sense of community among campus veterans which includes workshops and student organizations;
- (3) Assist veterans in navigating university processes, academic advising, and educational benefits with the Department of Veterans Affairs;
- (4) Provide numerous co-curricular learning opportunities outside of the traditional classroom setting; and
- (5) Build sustainable campus and community awareness about the issues veterans face upon exiting the military and entering higher education. (pp. 28-29)

Research indicates that campus programs assisting student veterans in transition are critical, especially during the first semester (Ackerman et al., 2009). The support can be implemented through veteran service staff and, more importantly, through other

veterans on campus who are going through similar transitional experiences (Ackerman et al., 2009). Ackerman et al. (2009) also indicated the need for an orientation program specifically geared toward student veterans. Colleges and universities have a longstanding tradition of building a strong sense of community between the campus and its student population; however, like many special populations, veterans do not always feel they have a place on campus.

It is widely accepted that learning does not just take place in the classroom. A successful veterans program would ideally talk with veterans soon after leaving the military or prior to beginning their first term at the university. The earlier faculty and staff interact with a veteran, the more likely he or she will make informed decisions regarding both academics and the use of their educational benefits.

McBain et al. (2012) conducted a study to identify positive changes in the types of programs and services colleges and universities have implemented for student veterans since September 11, 2001. Moreover, the study sought to identify ongoing challenges. The study identified six areas in which college campuses were meeting the needs of student veterans:

(1) Acknowledging the importance of serving military members and veterans in long term strategic plan; (2) Offering programs and services for veterans; (3) Recognizing prior military experience; (4) Assisting military and student veterans with finding appropriate counseling services; (5) Providing financial accommodations for military students who are called to active duty; and (6) Assisting veterans with their education benefits. The same study also identified four areas that higher education needs to improve upon: (1) Assisting military and veteran students with their transition to the college environment; (2) Providing professional development for faculty and staff on the transitional needs of military students; (3) Raising faculty and staff's sensitivity to the unique issues faced by military and student veterans and their family members; and (4) Streamlining campus administrative procedures for active-duty military students returning from deployments. (p. 47)

Through research methods such as roundtable discussions, conferences, and focus groups, O'Herrin (2011) developed seven recommendations that have been implemented at many institutions to help veterans acclimate to the college environment:

- (1) Establish specific points of contact within campus offices.
- (2) Create a campus working group that spans multiple departments.
- (3) Collaborate with community organizations to provide comprehensive services.
- (4) Ensure veterans receive a thorough introduction to the university through orientation.
- (5) Improve the campus climate by establishing a student veterans group, educating faculty and staff about veteran-specific issues, and if possible, creating a veteran specific resource center or designated space.
- (6) Investigate the possibility of creating veteran specific learning communities on campus.
- (7) Streamline disability and veterans services. (p. 16)

Palm (2008) provided five areas that contribute to a veteran-friendly campus atmosphere. First, provide faculty and staff with sensitivity training on issues pertaining to veterans. Secondly, be cautious and only thank a veteran for their service when you know them. Do not assume veterans have a stereotypical political view. Next, do not ask a student veteran what they did during "the war." Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, have the expectation that veterans will succeed in the classroom.

Veterans are a diverse subpopulation of students on campus, resulting in the need for unique services traditional students might not need (Vacchi, 2012). Moreover, there

is a long and storied history of student veterans attending college. Despite this, Rumann (2010) put forth that literature is limited on the programs and services provided to veterans in transition to higher education. As such, it is imperative that college faculty and staff are prepared to meet their unique needs and to promote a positive academic climate. This stream is best summed up by the following student veteran quote:

It would be a great help not to just be thrown into college. All the paperwork and whatnot I have to go through, they could offer a little more help as far as that and other veterans programs. I'm probably eligible for things I am not aware of. And I have no one here to go and talk to [to] find out about [them]. I'd like to see them actually have a veterans department here. Because when I walked in, they just tossed a piece of paper at me and said, "Oh, here, fill this out." That does not help. [Regular Army serviceperson]. (Ackerman et al., 2009, p. 8)

Summary

The purpose of this literature review was to present three distinct research streams aimed at improving the educational experiences of student veterans as they leave the military and enter higher education. The first stream explored the historical and contemporary issues of veterans in higher education and the significant role they have had on the American educational system. The transition from military to civilian life can be challenging. The transition into college can be equally arduous. Through the lens of adult transition theory, the second stream addressed how college administrators can help ease the transition. Lastly, the third research stream examined the challenges of student veterans and presented evidence on programs and service that can increase the likelihood for academic success.

Veterans bring with them the maturity, skills, and drive to succeed in the college classroom. The generous benefit of the Post9/11 GI Bill makes it likely that the number of veterans on college campuses will continue to increase. Implementing a robust and

service-orientated veterans program can help veterans seamlessly transition from the military to the classroom, thus, increasing retention and lowering the attrition rate of student veterans on campus. A review of the literature demonstrates it is widely accepted that most veterans go through a readjustment process that can be difficult and stressful (Lokken et al., 2009). A survey of 801 adults conducted by bi-partisan research teams Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research and Public Opinions Strategies found that 86% of respondents considered veterans as very valuable assets to the nation. To this end, it is especially timely for faculty and staff to understand the needs of veterans in an academic setting.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Introduction

Building on the research presented in Chapter 2, this study examined the transitional issues faced by Post9/11 veterans who have successfully completed college post-military service. It explored how veterans described their transition from military to civilian life. The study further sought to provide a framework for how college faculty and staff could provide support services that promote a positive and rewarding college experience for those who have served in the military.

This chapter is devoted to describing how this research study was conducted. An overview of the population and research site is presented along with the research methods, design, and rationale. Lastly, a timeline of the study as well as ethical considerations are discussed. Using a qualitative narrative research design (Merriam, 1998; Riessman, 1993), the following questions guided the research:

1. How do veterans describe their transition from the military into higher education?
2. What stories do Post 9/11 veterans tell about their experiences in higher education?
3. What can university administrators do to better serve the needs of student veterans?

Research Design and Rationale

By way of interviews, this qualitative narrative study provides a detailed picture of student veterans, their needs, motivations, and obstacles when entering college. This

study sought to understand the transition of veterans as they leave the military and enter higher education. The researcher sought to understand how former service-members transferred their skills from the military to the classroom environment. Veterans, including those who served in the Iraq and/or Afghanistan conflicts have unique lived experiences. Telling their stories facilitates a better understanding of how they view their world (McEwan & Egan, 1995). A qualitative narrative research design seemed appropriate for this study. According to Creswell (2011), qualitative research is “an inquiry approach useful for describing trends and explaining the relationship among variables found in the literature” (p. 626). Narrative research is “qualitative procedures in which researchers describe the lives of individuals, collect and tell stories about these individual lives, and write narratives about their experiences” (Creswell, 2011, p. 624). Furthermore, “telling stories is a natural part of life and captures data that is familiar to individuals” (Creswell, 2011, p. 502). A narrative study can bring to life the real world experiences of veterans that translate into greater support from faculty and staff members. A narrative research design serves as an appropriate method because it focuses on a single group, in this case, veterans (Riessman, 1993). In the words of veterans, this narrative research design study explored Post 9/11 veterans’ perceptions of their college readiness and potential barriers that impeded academic success.

Site and Population

Population Description

The target population was veterans who successfully graduated from California State University, Sacramento (Sacramento State). As of fall 2014, Sacramento State enrolled 802 student veterans. Approximately 77% of student veterans attending the

university are male and 58% identify as white. Through purposeful sampling, 13 former Sacramento State student veterans were identified and interviewed.

Site Description

Participants were all alumni of Sacramento State, a major public four-year university in Northern California. Established in 1947, Sacramento State is the sixth largest university within the 23-campus California State University system. The university has a student body of more than 28,000 students and confers over 6,500 degrees annually. Sacramento State offers 58 undergraduate majors, 41 master's degrees and two doctoral degrees and is fully accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC).

Site Access

To conduct research, consent must be granted through Drexel University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to ensure the research is compliant with campus policy. The IRB process is in place to provide protection to human subjects participating in the research. Upon obtaining IRB approval, the researcher worked with Sacramento State staff and student leaders to identify potential study participants. The researcher was a full-time staff member at Sacramento State within the Division of Student Affairs. The position allowed the researcher to have widespread access to both current and former Sacramento State student veterans.

Research Methods

Description of Methods Used

Each student veteran brings unique views and experiences that add to the richness of the data. As such, this study used a qualitative research design to capture the stories

and “generate data in rich detail embedded in context” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 149). The research of 13 former student veterans is based upon semi-structured interviews, observations, and artifact collection.

One-on-one, semi-structured interviews.

Instrument description. Thirteen one-on-one interviews were conducted with veterans who had successfully persisted to degree completion at Sacramento State. One-on-one interviews are “the data collection process in which the researcher asks questions of and records answers from only one person at a time” (Creswell, 2011, p. 624). A semi-structured interview “involves a few predetermined areas of interest with possible prompts to help guide the conversation” (Petty, Stew, & Thomson, 2012, p. 380). The interview, at 15-60 minutes consisted of 20 open-ended questions (see Appendix A).

Participant selection. The population selected for this study consisted of veterans who had successfully completed their bachelor’s degree at Sacramento State. Thirteen veterans were selected using purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling employs a qualitative sampling procedure in which researchers intentionally select individuals to learn or understand the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2011, p. 626). Samples are often selected purposefully because they can contribute to the phenomenon being investigated (Livingston, 2009). To be considered, all participants must have been: (a) a veteran of one of the five branches of service, (b) a full-time college student, and (c) a willing participant in the study. Potential participants were identified through referrals from Sacramento State staff or from the leadership of Sacramento State’s Student Veteran Organization. A letter was sent to potential participants to determine eligibility for the study (see Appendix B).

Identification and invitation. Several mechanisms by which to identify and secure participants were employed. Participants were identified and secured through referrals from the Sacramento State Veteran's Success Center, Veterans/ROTC Alumni Chapter, and leadership of the campus Student Veterans Organization. Using the script provided in Appendix B, the researcher initially sent an invitation to participate to interested veterans. Interested veterans were then contacted by the researcher via telephone. Prior to the interview session, participants signed an informed consent form (see Appendix C).

Data collection. Prior to the interview, participants were informed of the interview protocols (see Appendix C). During the interview, data were collected using two audio devices (a computer and an iPad). After completion of each interview, the researcher transcribed the interview verbatim. All audio and interviewer notes were backed up and are locked in a secure cabinet within a locked office.

Observational data. Collecting observational data is the process of gathering firsthand information by observing people and places (Creswell, 2011). "Observation involves observing all relevant phenomena and taking extensive field notes without specifying in advance what is to be observed" (Johnson & Christensen, 2008, p. 212). During each interview, the researcher took note of both non-verbal cues and participant body language.

Instrument description. All observational data were recorded using a T-chart.

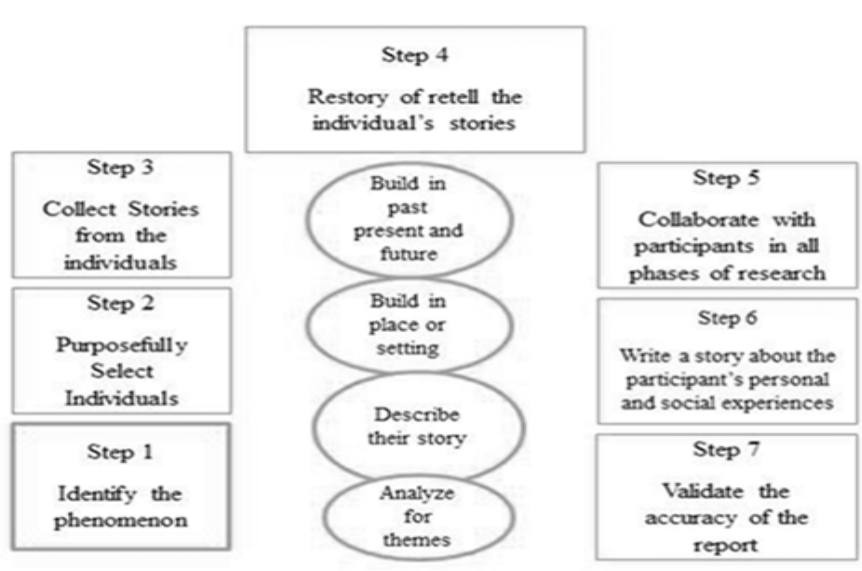
Participant selection. The veterans participating in the interview portion of the study were also the population observed.

Identification and invitation. Identification took place at the time veterans committed to participating in the interview process.

Data collection. Observational data were collected during all interactions with study participants, including telephone conversations, emails, and during the interview process. A T-chart was used in all phases of the observation process to record the observations.

Data Analysis Procedures

“Data analysis is ultimately about capturing the meaning or essence of the phenomenon and expressing it so it fits into a larger picture” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 134). Creswell (2011) described data analysis as part of a seven-step process (see Figure 5).



Adapted from Creswell (2011, p. 514)

Figure 5. Steps of conducting narrative research.

Before transcription, the researcher listened to the audio recordings as an initial layer of analysis (Maxwell, 2005). While listening to the interview, additional field notes and observations were made. Each interview was then transcribed verbatim.

Transcription helps the researcher develop a deeper understanding of the issues discussed during the interview sessions. The transcription process also helps the researcher develop a greater theoretical sensitivity (Livingston, 2009). Theoretical sensitivity refers to the researcher's knowledge of the subject being investigated (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Data were triangulated to verify the reliability of the collected data. Triangulation is the process of corroborating evidence from the interview data, observations, and the collection of artifacts.

Coding

Qualitative research generates an enormous amount of data. In order "to make the data more readily accessible and understandable, words and phrase need to be broken down to what is most important" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 137). This is done through coding. "Coding is the process in which the researcher makes sense out of text data, divides it into text or image segments, labels the segments, examines codes for overlap and redundancy, and collapses these codes into themes" (Creswell, 2011, p. 618). The goal of qualitative coding is to fracture the data and rearrange them into categories that aid in the development of a theoretical framework (Maxwell, 2005). The interview, observational, and artifact data were summarized in categories using short phrases or single words. This researcher employed both descriptive and open coding. During the open coding phase, the researcher read through the data many times looking for primary themes and summarizing various categories. Open coding is the process of forming

initial categories of information about the topic being studied (Creswell, 2011). Upon completion of the open coding phase, the researcher used descriptive coding to summarize themes into single words or short phrases (Saldana, 2009).

Ethical Considerations

This qualitative study required the researcher to spend a considerable amount of time with veterans. Veterans, especially those who have seen combat, are a special population within higher education (Ackerman et al., 2009). Before collection could begin, explicit authorization had to be granted through Drexel Universities IRB office. Moreover, participants were required to read and sign a consent form before taking part in the study. As part of the consent, the researcher explicitly explained the following to participants:

- The purpose of the study;
- The methods and processes used to collect and analyze data;
- How the results will be used;
- Any anticipated impacts of the study on the subjects' own professional careers or the future success of their organization; and
- The participants could cease their participation in the study at any time.

(Ellis, 2012, p. 49)

Another ethical consideration concerns the nature of narrative research. Narrative research is the personal account and stories of individuals. Recalling stories from memory can prove challenging. Because the stories are often historical accounts, it is difficult to discern if the information provided is completely accurate. To address this

concern, triangulation of data including interviews, observations, and artifacts was employed.

In summary, a qualitative research method will enable student veterans to tell their lived stories. Because of the nature of military service, these stories often produce sensitive issues, making confidentiality of the utmost importance. To this end, steps were taken to ensure confidentiality including using pseudonyms and storing information in a secure location. With participant consent, pseudonyms were assigned to ensure the privacy of each individual participating in the study. All information, including transcripts, audio recordings, and artifacts, is stored in a secure locked cabinet only accessible by the researcher. Consent forms are secured at Drexel University, Sacramento.

Chapter 4: Findings, Results, and Interpretations

Introduction

The implementation of the Post 9/11 GI Bill has prompted a surge in veterans entering higher education. This study utilized a qualitative, narrative focused design to examine the transitional issues faced by veterans returning to postsecondary education. It also sought to explore what college administrators can do to better meet their needs. This chapter is framed by the following research questions:

1. How do veterans describe their transition from the military into higher education?
2. What stories do Post 9/11 veterans tell about their experiences in higher education?
3. What can university administrators do to better serve the needs of student veterans?

The chapter opens with a reintroduction of the study design. A short introduction to each of the 13 study participants is then provided. Next, the findings discovered from 13 in-depth, semi-structured interviews are discussed and analyzed. Finally, results and interpretations that tie the major findings to relevant research are highlighted.

Sampling and Overview of Interview Questions

The researcher interviewed 13 veterans who successfully persisted to college graduation. Each interview consisted of 20 questions, not including follow-up questions, and lasted from 15 to 60 minutes. Interviews took place in multiple locations based on convenience for the participants and included the researcher's home, participant's home,

coffee shops, and a public library. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Each interview began with questions aimed at gathering general demographic information.

These questions included:

What was your Branch of service?

What was your college major?

Several questions then focused on the participant's time in the military and how it shaped their worldview. These questions included:

Where and how many times did you serve in Iraq and/or Afghanistan?

What was your main motivator for joining the military?

Describe your transition into the military.

The interview then shifted to discovering what factors affected the participants as they transitioned out of the military and entered higher education. These questions included:

Please describe your transition out of the military.

What was your main motivator for entering college?

What was the transition like for you when entering higher education?

The final set of questions were designed to illuminate the challenges and barriers faced by student veterans entering higher education and to highlight what college faculty and staff could do to better address their needs. These questions included:

What barriers do you think veterans face when entering higher education?

In your college experience, how effective are/were existing college programs and services geared towards student veterans?

What campus programs and services were most effective in helping you transition into college?

What barriers and obstacles have you experienced during your time in college?

Study Design

This narrative study utilized qualitative methods to identify the transitional issues faced by veterans entering higher education and sought to provide information to college administrators on how to better meet the needs of this unique population. Through purposeful and snowball sampling, 19 veterans were invited to take part in this study. Thirteen agreed to participate and took part in a 20-question semi-structured interview. Prior to the interview and again upon the conclusion of the interview, participants were reassured that strict confidentiality would be maintained throughout the study.

Data Analysis

Analysis of participants' raw data was done in two phases of coding as outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1998): (a) open coding and (b) descriptive coding. Open coding is the process of forming initial categories of information about the topic being studied (Creswell, 2011). During the open coding phase, the researcher went line-by-line through the text data to highlight key words or phrases. Upon completion of the open coding phase, the researcher used descriptive coding to summarize themes into single words or short phrases (Saldana, 2009). These methods of data analysis allowed for a deeper immersion into and better understanding of the data.

Table 1

Example of Coding for Initial Concepts

Concept	Initial Quote
Difficulty transitioning into higher education	<p data-bbox="630 432 1414 632">“Very challenging, just starting at the bottom. I had to start at bottom math and when I say bottom math, I mean math 10, like the lowest of lowest math. Like 2 plus 2. So you’re in there and you’re feeling like—what was I, 26 at the time? And I’m doing 2 plus 2. And I’m like, “Are you serious?” You’re starting over, it’s a humbling experience. I felt stupid.” (Clint)</p> <p data-bbox="630 653 1414 783">“I got out of the Marine Corps on a Friday and was sitting in a classroom that next Monday. It was pretty intense but I had it in my mind to make it happen. It wasn’t the easiest thing to do but I was going to make it happen, you know?” (Jaime)</p> <p data-bbox="630 804 1414 1100">“Even though you bring like some maturity, all the discipline, and things like that, just having the sheer separation of how you learn in the military for that many years versus how you learn in college, it’s a complete 180. It’s so weird, the way you test, the way you learn. It’s nothing like it. So I think definitely getting going in college was much more challenging than getting into the military. In the military you’re almost spoon-fed, not in a way like easy but you’re kind of told what to do and you just follow and you excel or you don’t.” (Brian)</p>
Difficulty transitioning to civilian life	<p data-bbox="630 1121 1414 1320">“It was miserable, just miserable. I have to admit I had a lot of trouble adjusting to the civilian world. You know, you go into boot camp and it takes three months for you to get through and you do another six months of training just to be ready for your first assignment or to go to war right. But then you get out and it’s like see ya, good luck.” (Jayden)</p> <p data-bbox="630 1341 1414 1541">“Well, I was about to get out and they had this program called TAPS. It was sort of a joke I thought. I spent almost four years becoming a soldier and they gave me like a week, I think, to learn the civilian ropes again. I think we talked about college, but am not sure. It seems like they just wanted me to reenlist. Kind of a waste of time.” (Haley)</p> <p data-bbox="630 1562 1414 1717">“As soon as I turned down my orders to do an instructor upgrade, I kind of got the cold shoulder from everybody. It was actually like I was airman of the year and I got all these awards and I’d gotten several air medals and after that, I kind of just got stuck in a corner office.” (Amy)</p>

Participant Profiles

During scheduled interviews, 13 veterans shared their stories about life in the military and their journey to successfully completing college. The interviews were semi-structured in nature and allowed for follow-up questions by the researcher as needed.

Ten participants identified as male while three identified as female. The age of participants ranged from 26 years to 46 years old with the mean age being 31.

Specifically, two participants were 26, one was 27, one was 28, one was 29, one was 30, two were 31, one was 32, two were 34, one was 35, and one was 46 (see Table 2).

Table 2

Demographic Data of Study Participants

Pseudonym	Sex	Branch of Service	College Major	Age
Aiden	M	Army	Communications	31
Amy	F	Air Force	Psychology	27
Brian	M	Air Force	Biology	34
Clint	M	Navy	Public Relations	31
Emma	F	Marine Corps	Sociology	26
Ethan	M	Army	Communications	34
Haley	F	Army	Engineering	26
Jackson	M	Navy	Kinesiology	32
Jaime	M	Marine Corps	Government	30
Jayden	M	Marine Corps	Business	28
Rob	M	Marine Corps	Sociology	29
Steve	M	Air Force	Government	46
Tim	M	Air Force	Secondary Education	35

Four branches of the military were represented in this study. Four participants served in the United State Marine Corps, four in the United States Air Force, three in the United States Army, and two in the United States Navy. Of the 13 participants, seven served at least one deployment in Iraq or Afghanistan following the attacks of 9/11. The deployments ranged from 6 to 12 months. All participants had a service connected disability as a result of their military service.

Ten participants attended community college prior to entering their graduating institution. Ten different college majors were represented in this study. Two students majored in communications, one in psychology, one in biology, one in public relations, two in sociology, one in engineering, one in kinesiology, two in government, one in business, and one in secondary education.

Participant 1: Aiden

Aiden is a married 31-year-old who served in the Army from 2002 until he was injured in 2007. He originally was going to join the Air Force but chose the Army because of a desire to jump out of planes. He recalled, “I thought if I am going to join, I am going to join to do something crazy like jump out of planes or any of the other crazy stuff the Army does.” After basic training, he was assigned to be an Airborne Radioman Infantryman. In his five years on active-duty, he served two tours in Iraq. Speaking of his first deployment, he said:

We deployed for the invasion. We met in Baghdad and then worked our way north up to Tikrit. I spent a lot of time in Tikrit and then came back down into Fallujah and spent the remainder of the deployment in Baghdad. The night everyone watched the invasion on tv, you know the shock and awe stuff, well I was there getting ready to parachute in.

Aiden contemplated making the military a career, but that changed on August 15, 2005, during his second deployment to Iraq. During this deployment, he was injured.

Speaking about the night he was hurt, he offered:

We were out there supporting Special Forces whose unit was getting fired upon like crazy. So we went out there to answer the call as a QRF [Quick Reaction Force] and took care of that. So on the way back, we were ambushed by well I don't even know who. I just remember I was running across from truck to truck to a house with the rest of the team for cover and everything else. I was lucky enough to be the first one to the door and so I kicked it in. As soon as the door opened he was right behind the door. Next thing I know I am being airlifted out.

Aiden was medically separated from the Army in 2007 following months of hospitalization. Using his GI Bill, he entered community college to study communications. After a year, he transferred to a 4-year university where he received a bachelor's degree in communications. After finishing his undergraduate work, he was accepted to Penn State where he earned a master's degree in International Affairs and Public Policy.

Participant 2: Amy

Amy is a 27-year-old Air Force veteran who comes from a military family. She has two brothers who are Air Force veterans and one is still serving as a military police officer. This played into her decision to enlist: "My brothers played a big part in me joining. They made the Air Force seem like a lot of fun." She did very well in high school and always planned to go to college but was very open that she was not emotionally ready for college straight out of high school.

To be totally honest with you I wanted to party and hang out with friends and I knew if I went to college that is all I would do. School came easy to me but I wasn't very mature back then. It wasn't fair to me or my parents to go to college and not do good, so I went to the Air Force instead. It worked out.

After completing Air Force basic training, she was sent to Altus Air Force Base in Oklahoma to be trained in in-flight refueling. She loved the job and fondly remembered spending months at a time traveling throughout Europe and the Middle East. She deployed to four undisclosed locations in support of OEF and OIF.

Amy separated from the military in 2009 after serving four years. After leaving the military, she began studying psychology at Sacramento State. Two years later, she received her bachelor's degree with honors. Amy is currently pursuing a master's degree in school psychology at California State University, Sacramento.

Participant 3: Brian

Brian is a native of Juarez, Mexico and spent his teenage years in El Paso, Texas. He credits moving to the United States with giving him opportunities he would not have had if he never left Mexico. This was the biggest factor for joining the Air Force.

Honestly, it was a combination between curiosity because nobody in my family ever joined and also patriotism because I wanted to give back to the country. Coming from another country, you just want to give something back. So, it was a combination of being curious and wanting to pay back so I figured that would be the easiest way. (Brian)

Brian spent 10 years in the military as a Clinical Laboratory Technician. In 2005, Brian was sent to Iraq for six months, which had a powerful impact on him. "My deployment [to Iraq] was a very humbling experience and it made me realize how much I take for granted here in the States." In addition to deployments in Iraq and Qatar, he also went to 14 countries throughout South America on humanitarian missions. After leaving the military, Brian attended community college. After a year, he finished his general education and transferred to Sacramento State. He studied biology and graduated in

2014. After struggling to adjust, Brian enjoyed college, remembering it as a very special time.

Participant 4: Clint

Clint grew up in a rough part of Stockton, California. Talking about his younger years in Stockton, “It was rough, man, I mean really rough. I had to find a way to get out.” While not the only reason, this did play into his decision to join the Navy. Clint also joined the military for family reasons, to get away from his stepfather. In his own words, Clint described his reason for joining: “To be completely honest, I didn’t like my stepdad and just had to get out, so I went to see a recruiter, took the ASVAB [Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery], and said see ya.”

In the Navy, Clint was an operational specialist stationed on the USS McClusty (FFG41), a frigate based out of San Diego, California. After five years, he decided to leave the military but was unsure of what he wanted to do. Unlike most other participants, he initially did not plan to enroll in college but decided to because of the post 9-11 GI Bill.

That was it. No other reason. I had no plans to go to college. To be honest with you I didn’t want to go to college. It wasn’t until I found out they were going to pay me that I decided to go. I’m glad I did now obviously but at the time it was just for the money.

After his first semester, college “stuck,” he said. He attended community college before transferring to Sacramento State because he lacked the prerequisites to go straight to the 4-year. Clint studied communications and earned his degree in 2014.

Participant 5: Emma

Emma is a 26-year-old Marine Corps veteran from Sacramento, California. The youngest of three children, Emma decided to follow in her father's footsteps and join the Marines Corps.

I don't know. I always have looked up to my dad and thought the best way to show him that was to be a Marine. It's all he talked about and I wanted to experience it, you know. Looking back, I don't quite think I was ready for college and that was a way to postpone it without disappointing my parents.

Following basic training, she attended MOS school where she trained as a combat medic. Emma served one deployment in Afghanistan and was stationed at Twenty-Nine Palms, a Marine Corps base in Southern California. She remembered her time in the Marines fondly, telling of how much she "loved it." When asked if she also loved her deployment, she answered back with a resounding, yes, "I loved all of it even the deployment."

Like most participants, she attended community college after she left the service to originally study criminal justice. After taking a particular general education course in sociology, she changed her major. After completing her undergraduate work, she started pursuing a master's degree and she hopes to graduate next year. Her plan is to obtain a Ph.D. and become a college professor.

Participant 6: Ethan

Ethan is a 34-year-old Army veteran who grew up in Glendale, Arizona. He planned on going to college after completing high school but decided to join the military after the 9/11 attacks.

I never saw myself going into the military but I watched those planes hit and man, something just went wild inside me. I was shocked and sad but most of all angry. I thought about it for a couple of days and then just went and joined the Army.

Not long after leaving basic training, Ethan was deployed to Afghanistan in support of OEF. He remembered it being a very emotional time.

I was scared, I'm not gonna lie. I remember getting word we were going and I thought how the hell did I get myself into this. The only good part was my whole unit was going, so I didn't feel alone.

After his four years on active duty, Ethan used the GI Bill to enter community college. Originally, he studied business but changed his mind after taking a general elective course in communications. After community college, he transferred and started working through his major courses. In 2012, he received his Bachelors of Arts degree in communications. He plans to pursue a career as a campaign manager.

Participant 7: Haley

Haley, 29, grew up in Sacramento, California. She has two brothers who are active-duty Army, which were her primary reasons for joining. "I love my brothers and they love the Army, so I wanted to be like them," she stated. Like her brothers, she was a military police officer.

After MOS school, she was stationed at Fort Carson in Colorado Springs, Colorado. She was ultimately sent to Iraq. Within three months of being there, Haley was part of a convoy that was hit by an Inordinate Explosive Device (IED). "My plan was to serve 20," she said, "but after that happened I started second guessing reenlisting." After more than a year of struggling to make a decision, she decided to leave the Army. She served six years.

After leaving the military, she entered community college to take general education courses. After completing her lower division courses, she transferred to Sacramento State as a Mechanical Engineering student. After two years, she graduated with honors. Her goal is to continue her post-graduate education as a mechanical engineering student.

Participant 8: Jackson

Jackson was born in Burma and moved to San Francisco at the age of eight. Now 34, he spent five years in the Navy as an Electricians Mate (AE2) assigned to the USS Kitty Hawk, a now de-commissioned aircraft carrier. Jackson joined the military mostly because of a desire to “give back.”

Because I immigrated here I had a strong desire to serve my country. I got here when I was about eight and I know my family and I had opportunities we wouldn't have gotten back in Burma. My parents weren't too happy about me joining, but I just felt this duty to serve, um, I just felt this duty to give back to a country that gave me so much.

After leaving the Navy in 2007, Jackson began the prerequisites to become a nursing student. Despite completing all the entry requirements, he was not selected into the nursing program so he switched his major to kinesiology. After two and a half years, he received his Bachelors of Science degree. He currently plans to pursue a Doctorate in physical therapy.

Participant 9: Jaime

Jaime spent four years as an engineering heavy equipment operator in the Marine Corps. Jaime cited the biggest motivator for joining the military was 9/11. He stated, “I saw the attacks and I knew I had to join. It wasn't a choice anymore. I had to join. I may have joined anyway, but who knows; 9/11 took away my choice.” A secondary

factor for joining was opportunity as Jaime described, “I was at a point in my life that I just needed to find new opportunities and to do more with my life than I was doing.”

During his enlistment Jaime was sent to Iraq once where he spent nine months in an area he would only call “the triangle.” After leaving the Marines, he entered college to study political science. Jaime ultimately earned a bachelor’s degree in government. He then went on to receive a master’s degree in public policy and administration. Jaime is currently a first-year law student in Sacramento.

Participant 10: Jayden

Jayden served in the Marine Corps from 2007 to 2010 as an Anti-Tank Missile Man (0352) and Joint Fires Observer. Since childhood, Jayden knew he was going to be in the Marine Corps. He recalled, “I always knew, man. I don’t have any other family in the Marines but I was drawn to it anyway. I guess it’s in my blood.” When asked why he chose his particular MOS, he replied:

I wanted to do something—whenever I thought about the military I didn’t think about the support roles, I thought about the front line kind of thing. So whenever I thought about joining the military it wasn’t really an option for me to do some type of support task. I wanted to be out on the front lines.

Jayden utilized the Post 9/11 GI Bill to go back to community college after getting out. He studied business administration, earning an associate’s degree before transferring to a 4-year university and earning a bachelor’s degree in business administration.

Participant 11: Rob

Rob served in the Marine Corps as part of the infantry. When asked his motivation for joining, Rob said, “My parents. Both of my parents served in the army; my mom actually retired out as a first sergeant and my dad did about eight years.” Rob

was in the military for five years and spent two and a half of them in Iraq. Rob first deployed to Iraq in 2004 where he was in Fallujah for nine months. He was sent back to Iraq in 2006 and was subsequently sent a third time in 2007. When asked if each deployment got a little easier Rob responded:

Yeah, it got better. The first deployment, it was psychological – it was draining. Being on deployments and being out for so long, away from everything, especially your family and everything. It drains you emotionally, physically and mentally. But after my second and third deployment, it was really calming down out there and it was a lot easier than it was my first time.

After separating from the Marine Corps, he entered community college and earned an associate's degree in psychology. After leaving community college, he entered a 4-year university where he received a bachelor's degree in sociology. Rob is currently finishing up a master's degree in vocational rehabilitation counseling.

Participant 12: Steve

Steve is a 46-year-old veteran who spent 20 years in the Air Force as an in-flight refueling operator. Steve did not intend to serve 20 years.

My intention was to serve four years but I just couldn't get out. My job let me travel and fly all over the world so I was just like I am not leaving this. I mean I went to over 56, or 57, countries. How can you leave that? It was just an amazing opportunity.

After retiring, Steve began studying business at a local community college, but quickly realized he wanted to study political science. He sought to “better understand the world and why I served in the military.” In 2007, he earned his bachelor's degree in government.

Participant 13: Tim

Tim is a 35-year-old Air Force veteran from Boston, Massachusetts. After basic training, he was trained as a surveillance operator at Shepherd AFB (Texas) and Keesler AFB (Louisiana) and then trained as a search and evasion training (SERE) at Fairchild AFB (Washington). He deployed four times to Saudi Arabia and Southern Turkey and received two Aerial Achievement medals (for flying in or near hostile territory). He also served two years in the Peace Corps in the Republic of Moldova. Tim graduated with a bachelor's degree in secondary education in 2007.

Findings

The lived experiences of those who have served in the military make veterans a unique subset of the college population. Given this, it is imperative that contemporary faculty and staff receive information to help them make informed decisions when working with student veterans. Five findings emerged from this study from the collective experiences and perceptions of the participants.

1. All participants possessed a higher level of maturity resulting from military service, which they believed helped them succeed in college but also made it difficult to connect with non-veteran students;
2. Many participants felt their separation transition program out of the military did not fully prepare them for civilian education;
3. Most study participants did not feel academically prepared when entering higher education post-military service;
4. The majority of participants felt that spending time and hanging out with other student veterans was a key component of successful college completion.

5. All participants identified a strong need for a campus veterans center with a single point of contact for veterans' issues.

Finding One: All participants possessed a higher level of maturity resulting from military service, which they believed helped them succeed in college but also made it difficult to connect with non-veteran students.

All veterans in this study had a perceived higher level of emotional maturity than non-veteran students. This was largely due to two contributing factors. One, all participants were considered adult learners and were typically older than their non-veteran student peers. Secondly, participants gained a significant amount of life experience as a result of military service. All participants were considered combat veterans (OEF and/or OIF) and seven served directly in Iraq or Afghanistan.

The increased maturity had both positive and negative effects on their college experiences. On one hand, veterans felt their maturity helped them overcome the challenges and obstacles presented throughout college. Conversely, some reported that their increased maturity made it difficult to relate to non-veteran students. Some reported they felt faculty and staff "treated them as kids" or "like any other 18-year-old."

Academic Focus

The increased maturity made participants more focused on successfully completing college and beginning a meaningful career. "I was more determined, more focused," Steve shared, adding, "I had been there, done that. I was ready to buckle down and finish school." This sentiment was echoed by Jaime:

The Marine Corps made me appreciate my future. All the stuff I saw when deployed made me appreciate the opportunity I had. I needed to focus on my future and take advantage of what was given to me.

Jackson, a Navy veteran reinforced this, by saying:

Before I went into the Navy, I took some college courses but didn't really take it seriously. I guess I didn't really care. But when I left the Navy I was so focused. The Navy gave me the maturity and drive to get it done, to finish school.

Discussing the difference in his maturity level following his military service, Aiden offered:

Before the Army, I guess I was just like every other 18 or 19 year old. But when I came back I was ready. I was mentally ready for whatever college had in store for me. I had such a different level of maturity than I had before I entered. It wasn't just because I was older but also because of all the stuff I went through in the Army.

When asked, Ethan described how his maturity helped him when entering college after his time in the Army:

No doubt. No doubt, my time in the Army helped me grow up. It helped me put things in perspective. It helped me approach things in a different way than before the Army. Before that I was reactive and not very disciplined. After I got out and started school I was able to assess situations and react to them in a really mature way. Helping me grow up was probably the most important thing the Army did for me.

A greater level of maturity was also a big factor in Amy's college success following the Air Force. In her interview, Amy talked about her lack of readiness for college before the military because she would "party" and "screw around." Her perspective following her four years on active duty was completely different: "It was only four years but it might as well been a decade because I was a different person," she recalled.

Rob's time in the Marine Corps included three tours in Iraq. "The maturity I gained in the Marines made college pretty easy," he stated. He added, "I mean if I can survive Iraq three times, I can survive college."

Clint, who had a difficult transition into higher education, said it was his maturity that saw him through.

Getting to college was tough for me. Especially because of my math and English. I needed to take a bunch of remedial classes. Before the military there is no way I would have stuck around but because I was more mature I saw that in the long run I needed to stick it out.

Trouble relating to other students. Brian served in the Air Force for 10 years and served in multiple locations including Iraq and Qatar. He said he would get frustrated with his classmates because they appeared to not be taking classes seriously. “I was there to learn, not laugh and giggle,” he explained. He expanded on the thought:

I felt old and not just age wise. I was in Iraq, Qatar, and all over South America so I had a lot of life experience. It was frustrating when I was sitting in a government class to hear these 18-year-old kids talking shit about a bunch of stuff they know nothing about. I got that a lot.

Haley, 26, had completed a good amount of her general education requirements prior to leaving the service and entered college as an upper division transfer student. She thought because she was not that much older than other students, she would not have trouble fitting in. She said:

I did a lot of college while I was in so I wasn't really that much older than other students on campus. I thought I would get there and fit right in. It didn't turn out to be the case. I guess it wasn't just about my age it was about my experiences. I had a lot of trouble relating to the other girls in the class. I mean I guess what I was going to wear or where I was going to go out was just not as important to me as it was to them.

During her interview, Emma made it clear that on some level, her maturity made college more difficult. I asked her to provide me an example and she said, “I didn't like being treated like I was an 18-year-old who just got out of high school.” She further explained:

That may have been the hardest part. I was older than the other girls in class and had trouble relating. I was at a point in my life that I was focused on getting

through school and not what I was going to wear tonight or where I was gonna go party.

Steve was the oldest participant in this study, having served 20 years in the Air Force. As a follow-up question, he was asked what it was like not only being quite older than other students but also having 20 years' worth of military experience. "It was difficult because it made me question if I belonged. When you are in a classroom where you are older than the professor, it can be hard," he said. When questioned further, he stated:

When you are 40 years old and sitting in a class with 18- to 20-year-olds it is challenging. The first couple of semesters I really let it bother me, you know. After a while I stopped letting it bother me. Once I did that it got better. I think I thought about it more than others in the class did. I actually made some pretty good friends even though I was like 15 years older than them.

Finding Two: Many participants felt their separation transition program out of the military did not fully prepare them for civilian education.

Participants had a variety of experiences when exiting the military. Some made the decision to leave almost as soon as they entered basic training. Others anguished over the decision to not reenlist. All participants had different expectations of what the return to civilian life would be like.

Leaving the military can be difficult under any circumstance, but for those who served in combat, the transition can be even harder. The transition out of the military was difficult for Jayden. He served two deployments to Iraq, which caused him a great amount of stress. He started thinking about leaving the military after his first deployment, but did not make the decision to leave until he started experiencing symptoms of PTSD. After his second deployment, he began experiencing chronic back pain and found it hard to talk or relate to people. Shortly after leaving Iraq the second

time, he decided not to reenlist. After making this decision, he felt abandoned by his unit. This was hard on Jayden because after two deployments to Iraq, he felt very close to the people with whom he had served. When asked about what he meant by feeling abandoned, he said:

After that (deciding to get out) I basically was just kind of thrown to the wolves. It was total—like, I was the golden boy, I could do no wrong. And then all of the sudden I became like the company fuck-up. Because like every single thing that I did wrong I was being noted for and it just became a real horrible thing because they didn't want me anymore. It was like, oh, you don't want us? Fuck you. Get the hell outta here.

Aiden had had a great transition into the Army. He was overwhelmed when he first arrived at basic training but it did not take long for him to enjoy it. When talking about his transition into the service, he said “and one day I just woke up and thought this is awesome.” Soon after basic training, he was sent to Iraq for the first time. Speaking of his first deployment to Iraq, he said:

We deployed for the invasion. We met in Baghdad and then worked our way north up to Tikrit. I spent a lot of time in Tikrit and then came back down into Fallujah and spent the remainder of the deployment in Baghdad. The night everyone watched the invasion on television, you know the shock and awe stuff, well I was there parachuting in.

Aiden contemplated making the military a career but that changed on August 15, 2005 during his second deployment to Iraq. During this deployment, he was injured. He spoke of the night he was hurt:

We were out there supporting Special Forces whose unit was getting fired upon like crazy. So we went out there to answer the call as a QRF [Quick Reaction Force] and took care of that. So on the way back, we were ambushed by well I don't even know who. I just remember I was running across from truck to truck to a house with the rest of the team for cover and everything else. I was lucky enough to be the first one to the door and so I kicked it in. As soon as the door opened he was right behind the door. Next thing I know I am being airlifted out.

Rob, a veteran of the Marine Corps, served in Iraq three times. The first deployment in 2004 lasted 10 months and was the most difficult for Rob.

Being on deployments and being out for so long away from everything, especially your family and everything. It drains you emotionally, physically and mentally.

He remembered, after his second deployment in 2006, the stress of being out on patrol in areas surrounded by IEDS. He was sent to Iraq a third time in 2007, where he spent 13 months close to the Syrian border. During his third deployment, he had had enough and decided to get out. For a short time, he changed his mind about reenlisting, but found out his unit at Camp Lejeune was preparing for a deployment to Afghanistan. He was also manifesting symptoms of PTSD. He then made the final decision to get out.

I was done; emotionally, physically and mentally. I was drained. After my last deployment, I was so tired because it was 13 months and I just couldn't do it anymore.

Unlike Jayden, Rob found his unit very supportive when he got out. He remembered they were upset at first and pressured him to reenlist. "They were really pushing me to reenlist since I was one of the most experienced guys on the deployments." Once he made it clear he was getting out, he said his chain of command supported him.

Because of her experience in Iraq, Haley had a difficult transition out of the military. She had spent six years in the Army and planned on making it a career. She changed her mind when the convoy she was in was hit by an IED. While not physically injured, it caused a lot of emotional stress.

It changed my whole perspective on the Army. Before my deployment, the Army felt sort of like college. I had friends I always hung out with and it was a lot of fun, but after Iraq it changed. I just didn't want to be there anymore.

The transition into the military is a long process that starts at basic training and continues for the duration of enlistment. Participants felt there was not that same level of dedication to preparing veterans for exiting the military. Many participants brought up the Department of Defense's Transition Assistance Program (TAP). TAP is designed to provide job assistance and separation counseling services for military members and their families during the transition away from active service (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.). TAP workshops include transition information and counseling for pre-separation, employment assistance, relocation, education and training, health and life insurance, finances, and retirement (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.). The majority of participants felt their TAPS class failed to meet their expectations. Some participants cited they felt TAPS was more focused on getting them to reenlist than on preparing them for life after the military.

TAPS. What can I say about TAPS. It fell way short. I couldn't tell you anything I learned. I just remember being told over and over, "It's not too late to reenlist." At that point I just wanted out and the people kept telling me it's not too late to reenlist. It shut me down, you know. At that point it didn't matter what they said, I was checked out. (Ethan)

Brian, who served in the Air Force for 10 years, shared a similar view. He was originally going to get out at four years, but pressure to stay in during his TAPS class prompted him to reenlist.

I wanted out at four years. I was dead set on leaving, but at TAPS this one guy convinced me that the civilian world sucked. I didn't think I was going to get a job and he made me feel school wasn't going to happen. So finally I just reenlisted. (Brian)

Toward the end of his second enlistment, he was again pressured to reenlist and was constantly reminded he was halfway to retirement and by leaving he would “be throwing it all away.”

Haley experienced the same thing. “It was brought up over and over again,” she remembered about being pressured to reenlist. “I wanted out, but they almost convinced me to stay,” she said.

Most participants were satisfied with TAPS in areas such as employment services, but felt the education portion fell short.

The TAPS program did not prepare me for the transition from military to civilian life, especially in regards to becoming a student veteran; it seems that their main focus was to compress the most amount of information into the smallest amount of time and very little effort was placed into preparing the veterans who are not going into the workforce immediately after the military. (Brian)

“The focus was on the GI Bill and not how to actually get into school,” one participant explained. This was shared by Haley, who found many elements of TAPS useful, such as the workshops on resume writing and employment, but was fairly critical of the information she received about education. When asked what more could have been done, she explained that college is not just about receiving the GI Bill.

They helped me get my GI Bill started, which was good, but I didn’t get much about actually getting into school. It would have been nice if someone had covered stuff like how to apply to schools or even what the difference is between like UCs [University of California] and the CSU [California State University]. That’s why I ended up at community college.

Haley was not alone in wishing there was more information given on higher education. Amy had a difficult time figuring out if she should attend a community college or if she was eligible for a 4-year university.

I had a difficult time figuring out where I was going to go to school, whether I was going to start at a JC or a 4-year university. I wish TAPS had given me information about that. They told me about applying for my GI Bill, but didn't say much about how to get into college. I think that would be helpful.

Similarly,

I left the military from Twenty-Nine Palms, but wanted to go to school up here. They were not able to tell me anything about how to apply to schools up here. That would have helped a lot to have someone from a school tell us how to apply. (Emma)

The readjustment to civilian life was difficult for most study participants. Eleven participants found the transition out of the service more difficult than the transition in.

For example:

The readjustment to civilian life was hard. It was much harder than going in. Basic you just keep your mouth shut and your head down and before long you learn the ropes. But when it was time to go back to being a civilian it was much harder. I had a hard time readjusting. (Jayden)

Ethan added,

Basic training I had nothing to think about. Everything moved fast. I don't even remember the first two weeks it went so fast. Really my whole Army enlistment was like that. I left basic, then AIT [Advanced Individual Training] and not too long after that I was in Iraq. By the time I knew it, it was time to get out. The Army went so fast I never stopped to think what I would do when I separated.

Finding Three: Most study participants did not feel academically prepared when entering higher education post-military service.

Many participants did not feel academically prepared when entering college.

Most participants attended community college prior to entering their graduating institution. While some participants chose community college because of the flexibility in class scheduling and the increased access to online and night classes, the majority attended community college because they lacked the admissions requirements to be accepted to a 4-year university. Eight of the thirteen participants said they would not

have entered college without the GI Bill. Many participants had attempted classes at a community college prior to enlisting with minimal success.

Jayden was the first interviewee and the first to stress he did not feel he was “college material.” Jaden made this point, “I definitely did not see myself as college material. In fact, my dad even told me, yeah I don’t think you’re meant for school.” In high school, Jayden was not very dedicated. He hung out with a crowd of friends that did not take education seriously. After graduating high school, he attended community college for half a semester before dropping out and joining the Marine Corps. During his enlistment, he started thinking more about college. When he got out of the military, he enrolled at a local community college and had to start with basic math and English. “That was hard, starting at the bottom,” he said. “It sort of shook my confidence and made me question whether I should be there.”

Steve was the only participant to serve 20 years in the military. When he got out, it had been more than 20 years since he had taken a college class. This large educational gap made it tough for Steve. When asked how this gap affected him, he said, “It was hard you know. I hadn’t taken a college class for 20 years. I really struggled to adjust, especially in math.” Brian, who spent 10 years on active duty, had a similar experience. He said, “I hadn’t stepped foot in a class for 10 years, it was difficult.” After 20 years, Steve felt he had lost much of what he learned in high school. He explained:

I was going on 40 when I got out and entered college. Everything I learned in high school was gone. I mean I didn’t remember all the math. It was like starting from scratch. In the military we learn but it’s a different kind of learning. We learn about the military and we learn to do our jobs but we don’t spend any time learning to do college math.

Rob, a sociology major, also had a difficult time adjusting academically. At the community college he attended, he had to take a math and English placement test. He did well in English but was placed in remedial math. When asked about how it felt to take remedial math, he said:

I was in for about five years and spent half of that in Iraq. It didn't give me much time to study math or write essays, you know. When I got to ARC [American River College] I had to kind of start from the bottom up. It wasn't as hard as it was frustrating. I remember sitting in my first math class, like elementary algebra, and I was surrounded by kids that were way younger than me.

Aiden did well in high school: "High school wasn't hard for me. I didn't take it too seriously, but I did ok." He thought when he entered college after the Army it would be like picking up where high school left off. It was not. Aiden, who entered college with both physical and mental health issues, found he was not academically prepared:

I was so focused on my injuries and PTSD that I didn't take the time to prepare for the academic part of college. I thought I would put in for my GI Bill, start going to class and everything would be alright.

No participant felt more academically challenged than Clint. He had a very difficult time transitioning to community college. In high school, Clint struggled academically, especially with math. He served in the Navy for five years. His only reason for entering college was the GI Bill. "They were paying us BAH [Basic Allowance for Housing]. That's the only reason," he remembered. He further explained:

Very challenging, just starting at the bottom. I had to start at bottom math and when I say bottom math, I mean math 10, like the lowest of lowest math. Like 2 plus 2. So you're in there and you're feeling like—what was I, 26 at the time? And I'm doing 2 plus 2. And I'm like, "Are you serious?" You know, you're reading. So, because you're starting over, it's a humbling experience. I felt stupid. Because I'm like, I'm in college but I'm doing elementary work. So it was hard because I didn't feel like I was a college student. I felt like just a dumb kid trying. Once I knew that you had to get to math 100—because, like I said, I'm starting at 10. And I'm like, "Oh, my God!" I didn't think I was ever going

to make it out of Sac City. But I was just like, ugh, this is hard. So, it's tough. It was tough."

A difficult transition. All participants had feelings of excitement when entering college, but soon many began experiencing difficulty with the transition. Nine of the thirteen participants found the transition into college more difficult than the transition into the military. Jackson made this point:

It was so different you know. It was like culture shock. I spent all those years on the Kitty Hawk and everything was so structured and regimented. I knew when to eat, when to sleep, and always knew where I needed to be. All of a sudden I am on this campus with 30,000 other people and I was just lost. Definitely harder than going in the military.

The participants had to adjust to a civilian life that lacked the clear-cut policies and procedures they were used to in the military. The military environment is very structured and many participants found the college environment to be the opposite. "It [college] lacked the structure I took for granted in the Marine Corps," asserted Jayden. This lack of structure posed significant challenges. The college environment is often just the opposite and operates in much more of a grey area. For some, that excitement turned to anxiety as they realized how different college was compared to the military. Most agreed the military was nothing like college.

As a follow-up question, all participants were asked what was more difficult, the transition into the military or the transition into higher education. Brian offered:

Oh, easily, higher education. Because in the higher ed part, even though you bring like some maturity, all the discipline, things like that, just having the sheer separation of how you learn in the military for that many years versus how you learn in higher education, it's a complete 180. It's nothing like it. It's kinda, like I said, it's so weird, the way you test, the way you learn. It's nothing like it. So I think definitely getting in to higher ed was much more challenging than getting into the military. In the military you're almost spoon-fed, not in a way like easy but you're kind of told what to do and you just follow and you excel or you don't.

The transition to college was very difficult for Jayden. While he was in the Marine Corps, he served in Iraq twice. This made it difficult for him when he entered college:

So, when I came home, it was like culture shock. I found it really hard to talk to people. My anxiety levels were really high. I couldn't relate to anybody. College kids either annoyed the crap out of me or I viewed them as children. I didn't have any friends. I had huge financial problems because it took me six months to get my first payment from them [VA].

Rob, who served three tours in Iraq, offered the following about his initial college experience:

You know, it was difficult because just getting to understand the whole process of applying for benefits is a whole monster in itself. I never really knew I had to fill out all that paperwork just to utilize my benefits. And I didn't understand what I needed to do. So when I first started out, I started off at the community college here at American River College. I didn't really know my first step. All I was told was I needed to go to the veterans' office. That's it. And I didn't even know where that was at. So trying to locate the veterans' office and then telling me the steps I needed to do. So basically I was like what am I doing here? I was kind of lost at first. I had to go take assessments and go to the orientation and then go see a counselor. And I had to follow the educational plan or I wasn't going to get paid. And not knowing and understanding those steps was kind of difficult for me at first. So it took a while for me to transition into that because just trying to get to use to the right plan, and make sure I was in the right classes, just to make sure I was going to get paid, that I was receiving those benefits at the time.

Amy had a fairly seamless transition into higher education. She was one of three participants who did not begin their post-military academic career at a community college. She credited her easy transition to the large array of services offered at her university:

I don't think the transition into higher education was as difficult as the transition out of the military. Because coming here I felt that with the vet center I got a lot of assistance. The office, the vet center, really put me at ease as far as applying for the GI bill and using my benefits every semester and giving me a space to

hang out. So that was really easy. It was leaving the military and the culture and the lifestyle that I had become so accustomed to that was most difficult.

Finding Four: The majority of participants felt that spending time and hanging out with other student veterans was a key component of successful college completion.

Participants spoke of a bond between veterans that helped them as they entered and navigated higher education. Eleven of the thirteen participants felt that networking and interacting with other veterans was one of the most important factors in their college transition. This included peer-to-peer support and working with faculty and staff that identified as veterans. Clint felt that having relationships with other veterans helped him recreate the bond he had with fellow sailors in the Navy. This was also true for Spencer, who spent 20 years in the Air Force. He spoke of a level of trust with other veterans that he at least initially did not have with non-veteran students.

Some participants relied more upon fellow student veterans than they did on campus services. Clint said the majority of his academic advising came from fellow veterans in his major:

After I got involved in the SVO [Student Veteran Organization] that sort of took over for me. I didn't really see a need to go to offices except to get my GI Bill going. The vets in my major knew the professors and stuff so I just talked to them.

Many participants thought it was important that the staff in the campus veterans office were veterans. This point was highlighted by Spencer:

The staff at the vet's office were both vets which I thought helped. I felt more comfortable around them because they were vets. One was in the Marines and the other Air Force. I liked that both of them went to college on the GI Bill so they knew the process really well. It also made it more comfortable to hang out in the vet's office because I felt comfortable talking like in the military.

Participants felt the campus Student Veterans Organization (SVO) was integral to their academic and social transition into college. Summerlot, Green, and Parker (2009)

described a SVO as somewhere that “provides student veterans with a relatively risk-free atmosphere in which to interact with peers who are familiar with the language and culture of the military” (p. 74). Being involved in the SVO allowed participants to recreate the comradery they were accustomed to in the military. This was important to

Ethan:

When I got to Sac State I didn't really connect with anyone. I thought it was going to be like my community college. The second week of school I was walking through the quad and the SVO was passing out flyers. The guy, Andrew that gave me the flyer, was also an Army vet so we talked for a few minutes. I ended up going to a barbeque they had a couple of weeks later and it was cool. It was like in the Army when you have parties with all your buddies. It was cool to be a part of that again.

Spencer also connected with the campus SVO and felt it gave him a stronger campus connection citing, “Being like forty I wasn't going to join a fraternity or anything like that, but with the SVO I didn't feel out of place. It was the opposite, you know, I felt like one of the guys.” Brian was at two colleges that had an SVO and credits being active in the group with improving his college experience. Participants got different needs met by being active in the SVO. As a government major, Spencer enjoyed the advocacy aspects of the group:

Being in government it was cool to do advocacy work in the SVO. Back then we were able to get priority registration on campus and tuition deferment(s) from the school. We also got to do forums with assembly members and Congresswoman Matsui. I met so many people when I was in the SVO. Without it, I don't think I would have got my job after graduation.

For many participants, the SVO changed the campus climate. Many did not feel connected to the campus before they got involved in the group. Some said they went out of their way to avoid being labeled a veteran, but due to the SVO they were more open because they realized they were not alone on campus: “It was cool four or five of us

walking around campus with our SVO shirts on, it was like wearing the uniform again.” The greatest important factor of having an SVO is the group recreates the comradery and fellowship of the military. Participants were adult learners that were financially independent and many had family obligations. “Being part of the SVO was like getting a second chance to be in a fraternity,” Spencer said.

Finding Five: All participants identified a strong need for a campus veterans center with a single point of contact for veterans’ issues.

One of the goals of this study was to discover the types of college services, programs, and practices that benefit veterans. All participants cited the need for a veterans center on campus that is staffed by at least one full-time administrator who could address an array of needs faced by veterans. Interestingly, 69% of interviewees felt the administrator should have prior military experience. Every campus eligible to administer the GI Bill has a “veterans certifying official.” The veterans certifying official is tasked with processing the VA educational paperwork needed for student veterans to receive their GI Bill. In the experience of many veterans that attended the community college before their graduating institution, most certifying officials did not offer additional counseling or handling of other services such as admissions or financial aid counseling. The effectiveness of this role is crucial to the success of the veteran.

Participants attended a combined total of six community colleges after leaving the military. Only one community college had a veterans center. While some of the campuses were working to develop a center, others had simply a customer service window that took in VA educational paperwork and certified the GI Bill.

Spencer had a good experience at one of the community colleges he attended, but a lackluster one at another. The first community college he attended did not provide adequate guidance to help him be successful. This was a direct reason why he transferred to another college. When asked what made the community college ineffective, he said:

The military offers more guidance in the way that they train you to do what you're supposed to do. In college—you come from off the street—it's sometimes difficult to understand the system. At my first school after the military I couldn't ever get a hold of the guy. I went to the student services counter like ten times before I finally got to talk to him. Well I say talk to him but it was more me just dropping off the paperwork. That semester I pretty much wasted my GI Bill because the classes didn't go towards my degree and nobody told me.

He went on to say:

I felt like a lot of my time at the junior college was just wasted. And when I got to the four-year school, they were more direct on what I needed to do, their counselors, and it probably would have saved me a lot of time.

Each participant was asked what he or she considered a “veterans center.”

Veterans described a “veterans center” as an office that is a one-stop shop and offers services such as VA benefit counseling, financial aid advising, admissions advising, and academic advising. It is often also a place for veterans to gather and network.

Many of the participants started at community college and were on campuses that did not have a veterans center. This led respondents to make comments such as, “I was given the runaround and asked to go to one office or the next to get anything done.”

Clint was very frustrated by his community college experience:

It sucked. There was no center like we had at Sac State. It was a total free-for-all and I never knew where to go to get anything done. To get my GI Bill going I had to wait in a long line to see someone from financial aid at a window. Usually they would send me somewhere else. It was awful.

Brian had a similar experience when he began attending college after the military:

My first school did not have a vet's center. There was a Certifying Official that helped with the GI Bill but that was it. There was no center or place to go it was just a front counter.

Ultimately, each participant transferred to California State University, Sacramento (Sacramento State), a large public university in Northern California. The Veterans Success Center (VSC) at Sacramento State has elements of a "one-stop" shop where students can get a variety of services such as, applying for college admission, accessing educational benefits, and withdrawing from college if called to active-duty. The center also connects student veterans with career services as they approach graduation. The center offers space for veterans to "hang out" or work on computers and is home to the campus Student Veterans Organization (Veterans Success Center, 2014). The veterans center at the university offered two main services that made it useful to students: (a) Student Services and (b) a veterans community.

Brian discussed the need to have a central office to address the multiple needs he had when arriving to college. This was very important to him stating, "I wanted things to be solved all in one spot, he said, "I knew that that wasn't always going to happen because there are so many moving parts but I guess I liked the effort they gave it at Sacramento State. When I was at the JC they didn't even try." Steve was also happy with his experience at Sacramento State:

When I went through orientation at Sac State I was happy because they had three full-time people and I think they were all vets. They were pretty knowledgeable too. I think that first time on campus they solved at least half my questions. I had other questions they weren't able to answer but that was more about classroom stuff.

Throughout his interview, Clint was very critical of his experience with the veterans office at the community college he attended. This prompted me to ask him to describe the differences in experiences from the community college to Sacramento State.

The differences? It was night and day. I mean I guess I can't even compare the two. At the community college when I got there, there was a window you could go to and ask questions. That usually led to you being sent to another line. After a while they opened what they called a resource center but it was more an office with a student worker in it. There was still no one there to really help and so I was still shuffled from place to place. And the room was too small to really hang out or spend time in. When I got to Sac it was cool. They had two guys that worked full time in the office and both were veterans. By the time my first semester started I pretty much had everything ironed out with my GI Bill and financial aid so I was able to just think about school. The other thing that was good about the center was that it was a place to hang out. Besides the rec center I had nowhere to go on campus besides the vet's center. I spent most of my time there and made some really good friends.

For Steve, the oldest of the participants, it was less about getting questions answered than it was about having a place to be around other veterans.

It was tough being the old guy in college. After 20 years away from school I just didn't feel like a part of the campus. That never changed at the JC. I got through it but was never comfortable or met anybody. When I got to CSUS it was different. When I started going to the center there were other vets there and a lot of them were older. Not as old as me usually because I retired but older. They were also vets so I guess it was easier for me to relate to them. Before long I was in the center all the time and even became president of the SVO.

Results and Interpretations

This research provided insight into the successes and challenges of student veterans as they made the transition from the military to life as a college student. This section presents the results and interpretations of the study along with a discussion of how they relate to relevant literature and studies. The two results that emerged from the data are: (a) student veterans face unique challenges and (b) peer-to-peer support is

important for veterans throughout their academic career. These results will be used to make recommendations in the following chapter.

Student Veterans Face Unique Challenges

There is a perception that the transition into college should be easy for veterans because of their extensive military and combat training (Pamphile, 2013). The reality is that the transition from military to civilian life can be challenging because of the switch in roles from military to civilian life. Veterans in this study highlighted that the transition into higher education can be a daunting endeavor. They each left a life in the military that had clear-cut rules and regulations and a rigid chain of command. They were considered non-traditional students and tended to be older than non-veteran students. Many participants had external demands such as financial and family obligations further complicating their transition.

Veterans, especially those who have served in combat, are more likely than other students to have past experiences such as trauma, isolation, or financial difficulties (Diamond, 2012). Many veterans are exposed to multiple deployments that make them vulnerable to combat stress. In this study, seven participants served at least one combat deployment and several served two or more.

A study conducted by Zinger and Cohen (2010) found that veterans entering higher education often face issues such as PTSD, depression, physical injury, lack of structure in civilian life, difficulties with personal relationships, and lack of social functioning. The findings of this study support Zinger and Cohen's study. While deployed, the participants reported forming self-protective mechanisms and becoming

numb and desensitized to their surroundings. When asked about emotional issues, one respondent stated:

Readjustment has been difficult because I still have vivid memories and trouble sleeping. For years, the only noise I heard was noise from combat; so when I got home the silence bothered me. When I am in a crowded area I feel nervous and on guard waiting for something bad to happen. (Zinger & Cohen, 2010, p. 43)

Another participant in the study spoke about the difficulty of readjusting to social and personal relationships:

I felt awkward around my civilian friends and when I came back I thought that they had changed, but I later realized that I had changed. I had certain expectations about how my friends should act around me and I was often disappointed. I felt uncomfortable at times when they focused their attention on my military experiences. (p. 43)

Veterans in transition experience a wave of challenges, but it is also an opportunity for growth. The military is a very structured and rule-driven organization. When exiting the military, veterans are forced to become familiar with the rules, regulations, and expectations of civilian life (Lifton, 1992). Research describing the transitional issues of veterans returning from war to an academic setting is limited; however, it does show that people serving in the military experience major life transitions when returning home (Beatty, 2013; Bliese & Stuart, 1998; Foster, 2009; Hammelman, 1995).

It would be great not to just being thrown into college. All the paperwork and whatnot I have to go through, they could offer a little more help as far as that and other veterans programs. I'm probably eligible for things I am not aware of. And I have nobody here to go and talk to [to] find out about [them]. I'd like to see them actually have a veterans department here. Because when I walked in, they just tossed a piece of paper at me and said "Oh here, fill this out." That does not help. (Ackerman et al., 2009, p. 8)

The above quote is from an Army veteran who took part in a research study on the transitional issues of veterans returning to higher education. His sentiment was echoed in this study. Many participants felt that a lack of services was provided when they entered their respective institutions. Cook and Kim (2009) identified five elements that help create a campus climate that induces a “veteran friendly” atmosphere:

(1) Provide a strong communication mechanism for veterans to reach out to administration and other students; (2) Provide opportunities to build a sense of community among campus veterans which includes workshops and student organizations; (3) Assist veterans in navigating university processes, academic advising, and educational benefits with the Department of Veterans Affairs; (4) Provide numerous co-curricular learning opportunities outside of the traditional classroom setting; and (5) Build sustainable campus and community awareness about the issues veterans face upon exiting the military and entering higher education. (pp. 28-29)

Peer-to-Peer Support is Important for Veterans Throughout Their Academic Career

The military bond is strong and many veterans seek that same level of comradery when entering college. This idea is highlighted by Junger (2011):

Brotherhood has nothing to do with feelings; it has to do with how you define your relationship to others. It has to do with the rather profound decision to put the welfare of the group above your personal welfare. In such a system, feelings are meaningless. In such a system, who you are entirely depends on your willingness to surrender who you are. Once you’ve experienced the psychological comfort of belonging to such a group, it’s apparently very hard to give up. (pp. 276)

The military promotes an environment of teamwork, interdependence, and connectedness. These values remain present when veterans return to college. Many participants started their academic career at a community college that lacked services which connected student veterans outside of the classroom. This had a profound negative affect on their educational experience. Research studies, including this one, suggest that

connecting with peers (other veterans) is an important initial phase to the academic journey and a key component to future academic success (Allen & Haynie, 2008).

Veterans in this study understood the importance of peer-to-peer interaction and routinely stressed the need to form substantive relationships with other veterans.

Throughout the history of veterans in higher education, student veteran clubs and organizations have played a key role in helping veterans succeed in college (Summerlot et al., 2009). “Research suggests student veteran organizations allow men and women to interact with each other and to form professional, academic, and social bonds” (Lopez, 2013, p. 50). Participants in this study overwhelmingly found that joining a Student Veteran Organization (SVO) was an important component to their successful completion of college. Some felt they would not have persisted to degree completion if not for connecting with other veterans through their SVO. Participant Clint found that connecting with other student veterans through the SVO was similar to connecting to other sailors on his ship in the Navy.

Being connected with other campus veterans brought a sense of belonging to participants that made them feel connected to the campus community. This is illustrated in a study conducted at Clemson University, which found participants considered the campus student veterans club an important avenue for social support (Livingston, 2009). In the same study, one participant, an Army combat veteran offered the following on the importance of having a SVO:

Yeah but we know how hard it is for people coming back...it's pretty disorienting so it's really important to find these people and let them have people around them who are like them, you know. They may not know us, but we're like them. They are in the same situation and we're fellow veterans...we're not the kid who just came from High School who doesn't know a thing about anything. I'll tell you

now, we try to be a kind of support group. That's why people ask us a lot... 'What do ya'll do?' 'Do ya'll do community service?' 'No, we do soldier service,' you know...we try to be there for people like us to help them come back into school because we've figured it out by now, hopefully.

This is supported by Rumann's (2010) study of veterans returning to community college. In the study, participants needed a veterans student association for support, community, and comradery. One Rumann participant, Paul, attended a university that did not have an active student association, but he spoke of its importance:

A student veteran association would be great to have to bring people together to talk and share experiences. Plus somebody more about this program that is available or that program from the state of federal governments program...to make sure everyone is getting what they earned and deserve. (p. 125)

Prior research, coupled with the findings of this study, show the importance of connecting student veterans as they leave the military and enter college. The more student veterans connect with other veterans, the higher the probability that they will successfully transverse college.

Summary

This chapter provided a detailed look into the experiences, challenges, and successes of student veterans as they transitioned from military to civilian life in higher education. From the raw data, seven findings were presented, including the transition into and out of the military, the transition into college, and the major obstacles and barriers that veterans face as they proceed through higher education. Also presented in this chapter were two results that emerged from the data: (a) student veterans face unique challenges and (b) peer-to-peer support is important for veterans throughout their academic career. The findings and results of this chapter were used to make

interpretations, conclusions, and recommendations in the subsequent chapter.

Additionally, the result of this chapter can be used by college administrators to develop appropriate support services for veterans entering their institutions.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative narrative study was to discover the needs of student veterans as they leave the military and transverse higher education. An additional component was to examine what faculty and staff could do to better meet their unique needs. The study was conducted with 13 veterans who had all successfully completed their college degree at California State University, Sacramento a large metropolitan university in Northern California. The study sought to answer three research questions:

1. How do veterans describe their transition from the military into higher education?
2. What stories do Post 9/11 veterans tell about their experiences in higher education?
3. What can university administrators do to better serve the needs of student veterans?

To answer the above questions, an analysis of relevant literature was coupled with 13 in-depth interviews to provide answers to how college faculty and staff might better meet the needs of veterans in post-secondary education. The study revealed the following five findings:

1. All participants possessed a higher level of maturity resulting from military service, which they believed helped them succeed in college but also made it difficult to connect with non-veteran students.

2. Many participants felt their separation transition program out of the military did not fully prepare them for civilian education.
3. Most study participants did not feel academically prepared when entering higher education post-military service.
4. The majority of participants felt that spending time and hanging out with other student veterans was a key component of successful college completion.
5. All participants identified a strong need for a campus veterans center with a single point of contact for veteran's issues.

Conclusions

Like other students, many veterans have the desire to obtain a college degree. However, the unique challenges and experiences of military service can make this difficult. The purpose of this study was to produce research on how people who work with student veterans can be better positioned to help them succeed. This section explores the relationship of the study findings to the three research questions.

How do veterans describe their transition from the military into higher education?

This study showed that the transition from the military into civilian education can be one of the most challenging times a veteran can face. All participants in this study felt the transition into college was more difficult than their transition into the military. Entering higher education is a time of uncertainty and confusion for veterans. It presents challenges that are difficult to overcome. When leaving the military, there is no “going back” as one participant put it. It is a confusing time with many questions to be answered: Where will I work? Where will I live? How do I get into school and use my GI Bill? Veterans in this study had various experiences as they left the military and

entered higher education. Many found the transition posed significant challenges and many felt the transition was more difficult than entering basic training. Conversely, participants thought their military experience equipped them with the maturity and tools to address these challenges. A primary finding of the study was that while obstacles and barriers posed a risk to student veterans, their military experience helped them overcome them.

As veterans leave the military there is often little information provided about transitioning into college. The information provided mainly had to do with the Post 9/11GI Bill and how to utilize benefits. What was lacking was information on the actual college transition. How to choose a school, the application process, and what credit would be granted for military service were some of the questions participants would have liked answered. This caused extra anxiety for participants as they were left to fend for themselves when entering college.

This research showed that the time between after being accepted to college and completion of the first semester was the toughest part of the transition. This was a time of uncertainty for student veterans as they tried to adjust to life as a college student, which is often at odds with the civilian world.

What stories do Post 9/11 veterans tell about their experiences in higher education?

In many ways, the college experiences of a veteran are just like that of other student populations. They face periods of excitement and times of stress. They worry about finals and getting into the right classes. However, veterans also have unique experiences resulting from their military service.

Many in the study reported feeling isolated when they first entered higher education. Time and time again, participants cited they missed the comradery of the military and it left them feeling isolated. “I never got that level of comradery in college. Even when I got involved in the SVO [Student Veterans Organization] at Sac State it wasn’t the same. It took me awhile to accept that it would never be the same” (Jayden).

The rigorous academics of college were difficult for many participants. As outlined in Chapter 4, many participants almost left college because they felt overwhelmed by the courses they were expected to take. The most powerful story told by the veterans in the study is one of perseverance. While some had academic problems and others felt isolated, all had an intrinsic motivation to move forward and complete their education.

What can university administrators do to better serve the needs of student veterans?

As veterans continue to enter colleges and universities around the country, educators have a responsibility to facilitate meeting their needs. To this end, there are a number of things administrators can do to maximize a veteran’s chance for college success. It is not uncommon for institutions to have policies and practices related to veterans services that have been in place for years and may be outdated. University administrators should look at these policies and practices to determine if they meet the needs of today’s post 9/11 veterans. This study showed that university administrators need to address whether they are putting adequate resources toward veterans support services.

Recommendations

Post-secondary institutions around the country are continuing to see an influx of student veterans. This study showed that as they leave the military and return to campus, they are likely to need additional support services to successfully persist to college completion. As such, the following recommendations are made to help college administrators better serve student veterans:

1. Provide a faculty and staff training program focusing on issues pertaining specifically to student veterans.
2. Develop a veteran-to-veteran peer mentoring program to ease a veteran's transition into higher education.
3. Implement a specific orientation program for veterans newly admitted to the university.
4. Develop and maintain a campus student veteran organization to recreate the comradery experienced in the military.
5. Create a veterans center on campus to act as both a one-stop shop for student services and a place for veterans to gather together.

Recommendation for Further Study

Over the past several years, the amount of literature on veterans in higher education has grown as college administrators have recognized the need to better serve this population of non-traditional students. Despite the growth of literature and research, there is still a need for additional studies to be conducted that address the transitional needs of veterans entering college. The following recommendations for further research are based on this study's findings.

The scope of this study was limited to a population of 13 veterans who had educational experiences limited primarily to Northern California colleges. It is recommended a broader national study be conducted to reach a larger number of veterans from multiple geographical locations. The findings within the study found that participants had a perception of a lack of academic readiness when entering college. Therefore, it is recommended that further research be conducted to study the phenomenon of veterans and their academic preparation. This study only looked at veterans who successfully persisted to degree completion and were college graduates, so it is limited in terms of comparisons with veterans who were not successful in their attempts to transition from the military into college.

Summary

Since September 11, 2001, millions of our country's citizens have answered the nation's call to serve in the military. As they return from service, many are taking advantage of the robust nature of the Post 9/11 GI Bill and returning to colleges and universities around the country. This study sought to contribute to the growing body of literature on how to effectively work with these student veterans and help them successfully transition into college. This study found that as veterans leave the military and transition into life as college students, they face a myriad of challenges. However, the study also found veterans are a mature and determined student population and have an inherent work ethic that makes it likely they will be successful in college. Through the voices of 13 veterans, three research questions were answered and a series of recommendations were made to help educators more effectively work with student veterans.

List of References

- Abrams, R. M. (1989). The U. S. military and higher education: A brief history. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 502, 15-28.
- Ackerman, R., DiRamio, D., & Garza-Mitchell, R. (2009). Transitions: Combat veterans as college students. *New Directions for Student Services*, 2009(126), 5-14.
- Adams, C. (2013). *Millions went to war in Iraq, Afghanistan, leaving many with lifelong scars*. Retrieved from www.mcclatchydc.com
- Alexander, D., & Thelin, J. R. (2013). The military and higher education in the United States. In F. A. Hamrick & C. B. Rumann (Eds.), *Called to serve: A handbook on student veterans in higher education* (pp. 1-19). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Allen, D., & Haynie, J. (2008). Beyond yellow ribbons: Higher education comes to the aid of veterans. *Student Affairs Leader*, 36(23), 1-5.
- Anderson, M. L., Goodman, J., & Schlossberg, N. K. (2012). *Counseling adults in transition: Linking Schlossberg's theory with practice in a diverse world* (4th ed.). New York: Springer.
- Arnstein, G. (1981). *The vocational education study: Report on veteran's education*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Education.
- Barr, M. J., & Desler, M. K. (2000). *The handbook of student affairs administration* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Beatty, P. J. (2013). *The transition experiences of re-enrolling student veterans at a public four-year university* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (Umi No. 3565080)
- Bliese, P. D., & Stuart, J. A. (1998). The long-term effects of operation desert storm on the psychological distress of U.S. Army reserve and National Guard veterans. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 28(1), 1-22.
- Bloomberg, L. D., & Volpe, M. (2012). *Completing your qualitative dissertation: A road map from beginning to end* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Bound, J., & Turner, S. (2002). Going to war and going to college: Did World War II and the G.I. Bill increase educational attainment for returning veterans? *Journal of Labor Economics*, 20, 784-815.
- Bridges, W. (1980). *Transitions: Making sense of life's changes*. New York: Addison-Wesley.

- Bridges, W. (2001). *The way of transition: Embracing life's most difficult moments*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus.
- Bridges, W. (2004). *Transitions: Making sense of life's changes* (2nd ed.). Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press.
- Bridges, W. (2009). *Managing transitions: Making the most of change* (3rd ed.). Philadelphia, PA: Da Capo Press.
- Bridges, W., & Mitchell, S. (2000). Leading transition: A new model for change. *Leader to Leader, 16*, 30-36.
- Burnes, B. (2004). Kurt Lewin and the planned approach to change a re-appraisal. *Journal of Management Studies, 41*, 977-1002.
- Camire, D. (2008, March 30). Boosting GI Bill benefit may hit a military snag. *USA Today*. Retrieved from http://usatoday.com/news/washington/2008-03-29-gi-bill_N.htm
- Caspers, S., & Ackerman, R. (2012). Contemporary political and legislative frameworks for serving veterans and service members. In F. A. Hamrick & C. B. Rumann (Eds.), *Called to serve: A handbook on student veterans and higher education* (pp. 20-38). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Chickering, A. W., & Schlossberg, N. K. (1995). *Getting the most out of college*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Baker.
- Clark, D. A. (1998). The two Joes meet-- Joe college, Joe veteran: The G.I. Bill, college education, and postwar American culture. *History of Education Quarterly, 2*, 165-189.
- Cohen, A. M. (1998). *The shaping of American higher education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Compton, J. I., Cox, E., & Laanan, F. S. (2006). Adult learners in transition. *New Directions for Student Services, 2006*(114), 73-80.
- Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (2000). Stories of experiences and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher, 19*(5), 2-14.
- Cook, B. J., & Kim, Y. (2009). *From soldier to student: Easing the transition of service members on campus*. Washington, D.C: Lumina.
- Cornell-d'Echert, B., Jr. (2012). Beyond training: New ideas for military forces operating beyond war. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 2012*(136), 17-27. doi: 10.1002/ace.20032

- Creswell, J. W. (2011). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- DeBenedetti, C. (1990). *An American ordeal: The antiwar movement of the Vietnam War*. New York: Syracuse University Press.
- Diamond, A. M. (2012). *The adaptive military transition theory: Supporting military students in academic environments* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Johnson and Wales University, Ann Arbor, MI.
- DiRamio, D., & Jarvis, K. (Eds.). (2011). Veterans in higher education: When Johnny and Jane come marching to campus [Entire issue]. *ASHE Higher Education Report*, 37(3).
- DiRamio, D., Ackerman, R., & Mitchell, R. L. (2008). From combat to campus: Voices of student veterans. *National Association of Student Affairs Professionals*, 45(1), 73-102.
- Donahue, W. T., & Tibbitts, C. (1946). College and university procedures in the reorientation of veterans. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 2(2), 131-139.
- Dortch, C. (2012). *The Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 (Post 9-11 GI Bill)* (Primer and Issues 7-5700). Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.
- Duemer, L. S. (2006). The fusion of military education and the citizen soldier: Origins of the Morrill Land Grant of 1862. *American Educational History Journal*, 33(2), 7-15.
- Eckstein, M. (2009, April 17). Colleges cite inequities in new benefits for veterans. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from <http://chronicle.com/article/Colleges-Cite-Inequities-in/14008>
- Ellis, A. L. (2012). *Unheard and unseen: A narrative study of African American adolescent's experiencing homelessness* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Drexel University, Sacramento, CA.
- Ford, B. J., & Miller, M. T. (1995). *The GI Bill of rights to American colleges*. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED390345)
- Ford, D., Northrup, P., & Wiley, L. (2009). Connections partnerships, opportunities, and programs to enhance success for military students. *New Directions for Student Services*, 2009(126), 61-69.

- Foster, L. K. (2009). *California's woman veterans: The challenges and needs of those that served*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Goodman, J., Schlossberg, N. K., & Anderson, M. L. (1997). *Counseling adults in transition: Linking practice with theory*. New York: Spring Publishing.
- Greenberg, M. (2008, July 21). The new GI Bill is no match for the original. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from <http://chronicle.com/article/The-New-GI-Bill-Is-No-Match/5088>
- Grossman, P. D. (2009). Forward with a challenge: Leading our campus away from the perfect storm. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability*, 22(1), 4-9.
- Guichard, J., & Lenz, J. (2005). Career theory from an international perspective. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 54, 17-28.
- Guthrie, W. S. (2013). *Revisiting Astin and Tinto: An integrative review to identify instructional best practices that have a positive effect on students' academic success* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3575232)
- Hadley, L. S. (1945). Scholastic adjustment problems of the returning veterans. *Educational Research Bulletin*, 24(4), 87-92.
- Hammelman, T. L. (1995). The Persian Gulf conflict: The impact of stressors as perceived by Army reservists. *Health and Social Work*, 20(2), 140-145.
- Hamrick, F. A., & Rumann, C. B. (2013). *Called to serve: A handbook on student veterans in higher education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Harley, D. A., Beach, D., & Alston, R. J. (2008). Using Schlossberg's transition model in response to natural disasters for people with disabilities. *Journal of Applied Rehabilitation Counseling*, 39(3), 40-47.
- Hendrix, C. C., & Anelli, L. M. (1993). Impact of Vietnam War service on veterans' perception of family life. *Family Relations*, 42(1), 87-92.
- Hoge, C. W., Castro, C. A., Messer, S. C., McGurk, D., Cotting, D. I., & Koffman, R. L. (2004). Combat duty in Iraq and Afghanistan, mental health problems, and barriers to care. *The New England Journal of Medicine*, 351(1), 13-22.
- Humes, E. (2006). *Over here: How the GI Bill transformed the American dream*. Orlando, FL: Harcourt.
- Johnson, B., & Christensen, R. (2008). *Educational research: Quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Junger, S. (2011). *War*. New York: Twelve Books/Hachette Book Group.
- Juul, P. M. (2009). *The history of veteran's affairs*. In L. J. Korb, S. E. Duggan, P. M. Juul, & M. A. Bergmann (Eds.), *Serving America's veterans: A reference handbook (contemporary military, strategic, and security issues)* (pp. 15-49). Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Security International.
- Kahn, R. L., & Antonucci, T. E. (1980). *Convoys over the life course: Attachment, roles, and social support*. New York: Academic Press.
- Key, S. (1996). Economics or education: The establishment of American land-grant universities. *Journal of Higher Education*, 2(67), 196-220.
- Kime, P. (2013). *New survey: 3 of 4 post-9/11 vets have PTSD, anxiety*. Retrieved from <http://www.navytimes.com/article/20130913/BENEFITS06/309130033/New-survey-3-4-post-9-11-vets-PTSD-anxiety>
- Korb, L. J., Duggan, S. E., Juul, P. M., & Bergmann, M. A. (2009). *Serving America's veterans: A reference handbook (contemporary military, strategic, and security issues)* (Introduction, pp. 1-13). Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Security International.
- Lackaye, B. (2011). *In country, on campus: A study of combat veteran integration into higher education* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations. (UMI No. 3490398)
- Leibowitz, Z. B., & Schlossberg, N. K. (1982). Critical career transitions: A model for designing career services. *Training and Development Journal*, 36(2), 12-18.
- Levine, D. O. (1987). *The American college and the culture of aspiration, 1915-1940*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Lewin, K. (1945/1948). *Conduct, knowledge and acceptance of new values* (Edited ed.). New York: Harper & Row.
- Lewin, K. (1947). *Frontiers in group dynamics* (Edited ed.). London: Social Science Paperbacks.
- Lifton, R. J. (1992). *Home from the war: Learning from Vietnam veterans*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Livingston, W. G. (2009). *Discovering the academic and social transitions of re-enrolling student veterans at one institution: A grounded study* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3355150)

- Lokken, J. M., Pfeffer, D. S., McAuley, J., & Strong, C. (2009). A statewide approach to creating veteran-friendly campuses. *New Directions for Student Services*, 2009(126), 45-54.
- Lopez, E. S. (2013). *The effectiveness of university programs, services, and practices in training student veterans transitioning to higher education: Voices of student veterans-A case study analysis approach at two universities* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3599497)
- Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- McBain, L., Kim, Y. M., Cook, B. J., & Snead, K. M. (2012). From soldier to student II: Assessing campus programs for veterans and service members. *American Council on Education*, 1-70.
- McEwan, H., & Egan, K. (1995). *Narrative in teaching, learning, and research*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study application in education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mettler, S. (2012). *How the G.I. Bill built the middle class and enhanced democracy*. Retrieved from http://www.scholarsstrategynetwork.org/sites/default/files/ssn_key_findings_mettler_on_gi_bill.pdf
- Minnis, S., Bondi, S., & Rumann, C. B. (2013). Focused learning environments for student veterans. In L. J. Korb, S. E. Duggan, P. M. Juul, & M. A. Bergmann (Eds.), *Serving America's veterans: A reference handbook (contemporary military, strategic, and security issues)* (1st ed., pp. 201-220). Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Security International.
- Moos, R. H., & Tsu, V. (1976). *Human competence and coping: An overview*. Lexington, MA: Heath.
- Morreale, C. (2011). *Academic motivation and academic self-concept: Military veteran students in higher education* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Database. (UMI No. 3460783)
- Murphy, P. M. (2011). *Military veterans and college success: A qualitative examination of veteran needs in higher education* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Database. (UMI No. 3490565)

- National Center for PTSD. (2014). *How common is PTSD?* Retrieved from <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/PTSD-overview/basics/how-common-is-ptsd.asp>
- National Institute of Mental Health. (n.d.). *Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)*. Retrieved from <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/index.shtml>
- NC Department of Health and Human Services. (n.d.). *Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)*. Retrieved from <http://www.ncdhhs.gov/mhddsas/services/TBI/index.htm>
- Neiberg, M. S. (2000). *Making citizen soldiers: ROTC and the ideology of American military service*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- O'Herrin, E. (2011). Enhancing veteran success in higher education. *Association of American Colleges & Universities*, 15-18.
- Obama, B. (2009, March 19). *Obama Administration record for veterans and Wounded Warriors*. Retrieved from http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/veterans_and_wounded_warriors_record_0.pdf
- Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs. (2014). *VA and the Post 9/11 GI Bill*. Retrieved from http://www.va.gov/opa/issues/post_911_gibill.asp
- Olson, K. W. (1974). *The G.I. Bill, the veterans, and the colleges*. Lexington, KY: Kentucky Press.
- Palm, E. F. (2008, September 19). The veterans are coming! The veterans are coming! *Inside Higher Education*. Retrieved from <http://www.insidehighered.com/views/2008/09/19/palm>
- Pamphile, M. F. (2013). *Military-veteran students' perceptions of college transition and support systems* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3601433)
- Parkes, C. M. (1971). Psycho-social transitions: A field for study. *Social Science and Medicine*, 5, 105-115.
- Pearlin, L. I., & Lieberman, M. A. (1979). Social sources of emotional distress. *Research in Community and Mental Health*, 1, 217-248.
- Pearlin, L. I., & Schooler, C. (1978). The structure of coping. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 19, 2-21.

- Persky, K. R. (2010). *Veteran's education: Coming home to the community college classroom* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3403862)
- Petty, N. J., Stew, G., & Thomson, O. P. (2012). Ready for a paradigm shift? Part 2: Introducing qualitative research methodologies and methods. *Manual Therapy*, 378-384.
- Powers, M. J. (2010). *Applying Schlossberg's Transition Theory to nontraditional male drop-outs* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. (UMI No. 3397864)
- Radford, A. W. (2009). Military service members and veterans in higher education: What the new GI Bill may mean for postsecondary institutions. *American Council on Education*, 1-29.
- Reno, J. (2012). Coming home. *The Daily Beast*. Retrieved from <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/10/21/nearly-30-of-vets-treated-by-v-a-have-ptsd.html>
- Riessman, C. K. (1993). *Narrative Analysis*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Roberts, A., & Knight, L. (2013). *By the numbers: Memorial Day and veterans*. Retrieved from <http://www.cnn.com/2012/05/25/politics/numbers-veterans-memorial-day/>
- Internet Archive. (1943, July 23). *Full text of "The Fireside Chats of Franklin Delano Roosevelt"*. Retrieved from <http://archive.org/stream/franklindelanoro00104gut/fdrfc10.txt>
- Rumann, C. B. (2010). *Student veterans returning to community college: Understanding their transitions* (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and These database. (UMI No. 3403830)
- Rumann, C. B., & Hamrick, F. (2009). Supporting veterans in transition. *New Directions for Student Services*, 2009(126), 25-32.
- Rumann, C. B., & Hamrick, F. A. (2010). Student veterans in transition: Re-enrolling after war zone deployments. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 81, 431-458.
- Saldana, J. (2009). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Sammons, M. T., & Batten, S. V. (2008). Psychological services for returning veterans and their families: Evolving conceptualizations of war-zone experiences. *Journal of Clinical Psychology, 64*, 921-927. doi: 10.1002/jclp.20519
- Sargent, A. G., & Schlossberg, N. K. (1988). Managing adult in transitions. *Training and Development Journal, 41*, 58-60.
- Schlossberg, N. K. (1981). A model for analyzing human adaptation to transition. *The Counseling Psychologist, 9*(2), 2-18.
- Schlossberg, N. K. (1984). *Counseling adults in transition: Linking practice with theory*. New York: Springer Publishing Company.
- Schlossberg, N. K., Waters, E. B., & Goodman, J. (1995). *Counseling adults in transition* (2nd ed.). New York: Springer.
- Siebold, G. L. (2007). The essence of military group cohesion. *Armed Forces and Society, 33*(2), 286-295.
- Stephens, E. R., & Stenger, C. A. (1972). The opportunity and challenge of the Vietnam era veteran to American educators. *The Journal of Higher Education, 43*, 303-307. Retrieved from JSTOR.
- Strach, P. (2009). Making higher education affordable: Policy design in postwar America. *The Journal of Policy History, 21*(1), 61-86.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Summerlot, J., Green, S., & Parker, D. (2009). Student Veterans Organizations. *New Directions for Student Services, 2009*(126), 71-79. doi: 10.1002/ss.318
- Tinto, V. (1975). Dropout from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research. *Review of educational research, 45*(1), 89-125.
- Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Tinto, V. (2007). Research and practice of student retention: What's next? *Journal of College Student Retention, 8*(1), 1-19.
- Torreón, B. S. (2011). *Department of Defense instruction number 1235.12*. Retrieved from United States Department of Defense: <http://ra.defense.gov/documents/rmt/123512p.pdf>

- Toven, J. R. (1945). College counseling for the war veteran. *Journal of Educational Sociology*, 18, 331-339. Retrieved from JSTOR.
- U.S. Department of Defense. (2014). *Dictionary of military and associated terms* (Joint Publication 1-02). Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.
- U.S. Department of Labor. (n.d.). *Transition Assistance Program (TAP) Information*. Retrieved from <http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/tap/>
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. (2013). *GI Bill history and timeline*. Retrieved from <http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/history.asp>
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. (2013). *School certifying official handbook* [Policy Handbook]. Retrieved from Department of Veteran Affairs: http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/docs/job_aids/SCO_Handbook_v3.pdf
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. (2014). *The Post 9/11 GI Bill*. Retrieved from http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/post911_gibill.asp
- Vacchi, D. T. (2012). Considering student Veterans on the twenty-first-century college campus. *About Campus*, 15-21. doi: 10.1002/abc.21075
- Veterans success center. (2014). *About us*. Retrieved from www.csus.edu/vets
- White, J. B. (2004). The G.I. Bill: Recruiting bonus, retention onus. *Military Review*, 84(4), 83-85.
- Wilson, K., & Smith, N. (2012). Understanding the importance of life mission when advising soldiers. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 2012(136), 65-75. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/ace.20036>
- Zinger, L., & Cohen, A. (2010). Veterans returning from war into the classroom: How can colleges be better prepared to meet their needs. *Contemporary Issues in Educational Research*, 3(1), 39-51.
- Zoroya, G. (2007, March 3). Military prodded on brain injuries. *USA TODAY*. Retrieved from http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2007-03-07-brain-injuries_N.htm
- Zoroya, G. (2013, July 3). Post-9/11 G.I. Bill nears 1 million veterans with benefits. *USA TODAY*. Retrieved from <http://www.usatoday.com/story/nation/2013/07/03/new-gi-bill-nears-one-million-enrollments/2486891/>

Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Research Study Topic: The Greatest Generation II: A Narrative Study of Veterans in Higher Education

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study.

I seek to better understand the needs of student veterans in higher education. The information you provide will help me offer recommendations to college administrators in order to enhance support services provided to veterans.

My interview questions are as follows:

1. Please state your branch of service.
2. What was your MOS/AFSC?
3. What was your college major?
4. Where and how many times did you serve in Iraq and/or Afghanistan?
5. Do you have a service connected disability?
6. What was your main motivator to joining the military?
7. Please describe your transition into the military.
8. Please describe your transition out of the military.
9. What was your main motivator to entering college?
10. Would you have entered college without the Post 9/11 GI Bill?
11. What was the transition like for you when entering higher education?
12. What barriers do you think veterans face when entering higher education?
13. How can university outreach counselors attract more veterans to campus?
14. In your college experience how effective are college programs and services geared towards student veterans?
15. What campus programs and services were most effective in helping you transition into college?
16. How well has colleges you attended been prepared for the increased number of veterans on campus?
17. What barriers and obstacles have you experienced during your time in college?

18. Do you think your military service better prepared you for higher education?
19. How can college faculty and staff better serve the needs of student veterans?
20. Do you have any additional information you would like to add?

Appendix B: Invitation to Participate

Dear (Participant),

My name is Jeffrey Weston and I am a doctoral candidate at Drexel University studying Educational Leadership and Management. This letter serves as an invitation to participate in a research study I am conducting as part of my graduation requirement. The topic of my dissertation research is “The Greatest Generation II: A Narrative Study of Veterans in Higher Education”.

My objective is to interview veterans that have successfully graduated from Sacramento State. The outcome of the interview aims to increase college faculty and staff’s ability to understand and provide adequate support services to veterans leaving the military and entering higher education.

Participation in this study is voluntary. It will involve an interview approximately 60 minutes in length to take place in a mutually agreed upon location. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so choose.

With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded and later transcribed for analysis. Shortly after the interview has been completed, I will send you a copy of the transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to follow-up with any additional information you see fit.

All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in the results from this study, however, with your permission, a pseudonym will be used. Data collected during this study will be securely retained in my locked office. No one else will have access to any material related to your participation.

A \$15 dollar gift card will be provided to you upon completion of your interview.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Weston
4213 El Macero Dr.
Davis, CA 95618

Email: jweston4@live.com
Phone: 916-505-9453

Appendix C: Informed Consent

Please consider the following information carefully before agreeing to your participation:

Purpose of the research: The purpose of this research is to better understand the needs of veterans leaving the military and entering higher education.

Time required: This interview will consist of 20 open ended questions and will last approximately 60 minutes.

Collection of Data: The interview will be audio taped and transcribed verbatim.

Risks: Due to the nature of the questions you may have feelings of discomfort at certain points during the interview. If this occurs, please notify the researcher immediately and you will be provided an appropriate referral for assistance. For online support and to locate your nearest VA facility you may visit www.mentalhealth.va.gov.

Confidentiality: Your participation in this study will remain completely confidential. The transcription and audio recording of your interview will be kept in a locked cabinet within a locked room in which only the interviewer will have access. There will be no link between your responses and your identity.

Participation and withdrawal: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you may stop the interview at any time. You may withdraw from the interview by informing the researcher that you no longer wish to participate and no further questions will be asked.

How to contact the researcher: If you have questions or concerns about your participation in the study, please contact the researcher, Jeffrey Weston at: (916) 505-9453 or via email at jweston4@live.com. Additionally you may also contact Dr. Salvatore Falletta who is supervising the study at: salhrd@drexel.edu

Agreement:

The nature and purpose of this research have been sufficiently explained and I agree to participate in this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name (print): _____