

2013

# Do Military Personnel Feel Excluded and Ignored in Post-Secondary Education

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## Suggested Citation

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DO MILITARY PERSONNEL FEEL EXCLUDED AND IGNORED IN POST-  
SECONDARY EDUCATION

By

Clark Ryan-Gonzalez

A thesis submitted to the Department of Psychology  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in General Psychology

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

July 2013

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## **Acknowledgements**

I gratefully acknowledge my thesis advisor, Dr. James Wirth, for his guidance during the research process and numerous suggestions throughout the development of this thesis. I am equally grateful to Dr. Marsha Lupi, who provided much insight and assistance in the culmination and completion of this project. Also, I am thankful of the Military and Veteran Resource Center at the University of North Florida for its ongoing support and committed to military and veteran students. Specifically I recognize Director Ray Wikstrom and Veterans Transition Coach Rich Carey, who provided the time and advice that necessary for this study to be successful. Finally, I am thankful of Dr. Gerard Hogan, Lt. Col. USAF, for providing his invaluable insight into this area of study.

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### Abstract

The present study was conducted to investigate whether returning veterans feel ostracized (excluded and ignored) and if they experience its immediate negative impact (reflexive pain response and thwarted basic needs) on university campuses. Additionally, this study was designed to investigate veteran students' feelings of perceived burdensomeness, and three caveats of student engagement: student faculty engagement, community-based activities, and transformational learning opportunities. Participants in the study were 118 civilian and veteran students at the University of North Florida. All data were collected through a world wide web surveying program that allowed each participant to respond on computers from any location. Both veteran and civilian participants recorded the interactions and feelings they recalled experiencing in the classroom during the month prior to participating in the study. The surveys administered were the Needs Threat Scale, the Numeric Rating Scale (NRS-11), the Wong Baker Faces Pain Rating Scale, the Interpersonal Needs Questionnaire (INQ), the Student Faculty Engagement (SFE) scale, the Community Based Activities (CBA) scale, and the Transformational Opportunity (TLO) scale along with a demographics questionnaire. Results show that participants in the veteran group reported greater thwarted belongingness than civilian students. Military service was also associated with less engagement in CBAs and TLOs. The association with less engagement in CBAs explained the impact of military service on thwarted belongingness.

*Keywords:* Veterans, Ostracism, Burdensomeness, Student Engagement

## **Do Military Personnel Feel Excluded and Ignored in Post-Secondary Education**

Veterans returning home to family and friends often characterize their initial welcome home as a relief, an experience filled with the joy of being reunited with loved ones. Unfortunately, this is often only the initial phase of their return home, one that precedes the long and strenuous readjustment back into civilian life. Often veterans who finish their deployment in the armed forces return home to face varying degrees of interpersonal conflicts. Many of these are examples of being excluded and ignored and illustrate the thwarted belongingness veterans feel between themselves and the individuals they return to (Batten, Drapalski, Decker, Deviva, Morris, Mann, & Dixon, 2010; Calhoun, Beckham, & Bosworth, 2002; Moore & Kenedy, 2011). These challenges facing returning military troops may originate from a range of physical disabilities and mental illnesses, and may lead to difficulties expressing their feelings to family members (US Department of Veteran Affairs, 2010). The same interpersonal difficulties that have been found to exist in veterans' home have the potential to arise on university campuses and similarly influence their interactions with professors and classmates. The rapidly growing number of veterans on college/university campuses has placed greater attention on the diverse needs of student veterans, specifically attention to the impacts on student engagement, such as student faculty interactions and enriching educational experiences.

### **Veterans' Return Home**

The experiences of veterans while deployed lead to difficulties at an interpersonal level resulting from acquired injuries and an inability to relate to others. According to the Veteran Affairs National Center for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder's (NCPTSD) guide



for families with returning veterans, *Returning from the War Zone* (2010), a large number of military service members will experience some form of emotional, physical, and/or behavioral change as a result of their experiences during their deployment period.

Common reactions for veterans following demobilization include exhibiting aggressive behavior, experiencing a loss of sleep and frequent unwanted memories (Dr. Gerard Hogan, Lt. Col. USAF, personal communication, May 26, 2013; NCPTSD, 2010). Many of these changes directly result from the traumatic events that are inextricably linked with the war zone and service members' occupational responsibilities. United States military serving in Iraq reported in 2006 that 60% of them had been attacked or ambushed, and 86% reported receiving incoming fire (NCPTSD, 2010). The majority of service members in Iraq reported witnessing the death or injury of military personnel, civilians, or enemy combatants. Others may have themselves received serious injuries as a result of a bombing, mine blast, improvised explosive device (IED), or accident. Each of the challenges that arise as a result of the events experienced in the war zone presents a danger long after the initial event.

### **Burdensomeness**

Alarming, since the army began tracking suicide rates in 2002, the number of suicide attempts has increased from 350 to 2,100 in 2007, with the highest amount of confirmed suicides, 102, occurring in 2006 (Lorge, 2008). Many of the difficulties facing veterans such as suicide, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and poor general mental health are highly correlated with one another, and one variable of particular interest closely associated with these mental, physical, and emotional changes, is perceived burdensomeness, which the Interpersonal Theory of Suicide defines as an individual's

belief that others would be better off if he or she were gone (IPTS; Joiner, 2005). Among those veterans suffering from PTSD, the symptom of re-experiencing traumatic events through intrusive recollection has been shown to increase soldiers' acquired capability for suicide mediated by symptoms of mental illness such as hopelessness, depressed mood, and sleep loss (Bryan & Anestis, 2011). In this same study Bryan and Anestis reported that intrusive recollection directly influenced the amount of perceived burdensomeness veterans reported feeling. Additionally, Calhoun, Beckham, and Bosworth (2002) reported that the severities of the veterans' PTSD symptoms are related to the amount of caregiver burden and distress experienced by the spouse. Although the process by which perceived burdensomeness affects individuals is clearly outlined (Joiner, 2005), it should be noted that there is conflicting evidence concerning the amount of burdensomeness military service members reported feeling. In a study conducted in 2010, a sample of active duty United States Air Force personnel who completed basic training exhibited significantly less perceived burdensomeness than a nonclinical sample of U.S. undergraduates (Bryan & Anestis, 2011). However, in a qualitative study conducted amongst Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) veterans, Brenner, Gutierrez, Cornette, Betthausen, Bahraini, and Staves (2008) reported repeated instances of perceived burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness.

### **Ostracized Veterans**

In both OIF and OEF, the survival of military personnel and their fellow service members is dependent on the way each individual approaches the effects of unfamiliar challenges inherent in being deployed to a warzone, such as estrangement from family, job insecurity, hostile and unfamiliar surroundings (Dr. Gerard Hogan , Lt. Col. USAF,

personal communication, May 26, 2013). In an effort to contend with the unfamiliar challenges in a warzone, veterans engage in a military mindset that aims to force self-defeating thoughts or perceptions out of conscious awareness. Oftentimes this same mindset adversely reinforces a belief among veterans that reactions to stress or seeking out help are signs of weakness or personal failure (Lorge, 2008). Whereas this way of thinking is necessary to the survival of themselves and fellow service members while deployed, it makes it difficult to revert to a “civilian” mindset upon returning home.

Although the importance of family members’ involvement in mental health care for serious mental illness has gained increased recognition, a review of materials designed to help troops transition from military to civilian life suggests returning soldiers may have difficulties with interpersonal relationships (e.g. among family, friends, and co-workers). In a recent study 86% of veterans attributed their PTSD as a source of family stress, and 79% of those veterans wanted greater family involvement in their care (Batten et al, 2010).

Belonging to a community when returning home is essential for veterans to maintain a sense of security and mental health (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Smith, Murphy, & Coats, 1999). However, many of the experiences veterans describe after finishing their deployments are examples of ostracism, being excluded and ignored. For instance, oftentimes troops returning to America are immediately served with divorce papers by their spouses (Moore & Kennedy, 2011). Others return home after hearing rumors that their spouses were unfaithful, and still more come home to find that their family units have become completely self-sufficient (Bell & Schumm, 2011; Dr. Gerard Hogan, , Lt. Col. USAF, personal communication, May 26, 2013). Veterans frequently

feel as though they no longer belong and are not as close to the relatives they are returning to as to those with whom they served in combat (Ellison, Mueller, Smelson, Corrigan, Stone, Bokhour, Drebing, 2012). In addition, oftentimes their children are avoidant, having a sense of obligation to the parent who remained in the household (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2010). From the perspective of family members and the returning service members, the primary care providers may be reluctant to expose their children to the impacts of parental mental illness/PTSD (Sherman & Fischer, 2012). An inability to relate their expectations to family members has been shown to delay veterans' seeking help, in turn perpetuating a cycle of exclusion (Hoge, Castro, Meeser, McGurk, Cotting & Koffman, 2004). Each of these instances creates opportunities for the returning service member to feel the full range of sequelae of ostracism.

### **Effects of Ostracism**

When individuals report being ostracized they experience the following series of pathological conditions: reflexive pain response, thwarted basic needs (i.e., need for belonging, need to have high self-esteem, need to perceive control over social environment, and need for a meaningful existence), and increased sadness and anger (Williams, 1997; Williams & Zadro, 2005). The reflexive response to being excluded and ignored underlies many social species dynamic interpersonal relationships as both a functional and an adaptive tool (Barner-Barry, 1986).

Ostracism has the potential to cause a variety of aversive consequences, the first activating regions of the brain that are associated with physical pain (Lieberman, 2007). This reflexive pain response is impervious to situational or individual differences (Williams, 2007). A neuroimaging study showed more activation in the dorsal anterior

cingulate cortex (dACC) and amygdala during exclusion than inclusion and that the activation of this area was positively correlated with self-reported distress and social disconnectedness (Eisenberger, Lieberman, & Williams, 2003; Eisenberger, 2006). The painful effect of being ostracized serves to drive individuals toward others and in turn increases their chances for survival (Williams & Zadro, 2005).

In addition to the feeling of pain, ostracized individuals report elevated levels of distress due to experiencing less satisfaction of basic needs and more negative affect (Smith & Williams, 2004; Williams, 2007). In relation to feeling a thwarted sense of control as a result of feeling ostracized, individuals often experience a loss of self-regulation (Oaten et al., 2008) and an increased desire to aggress (Wirth et al., 2010). Particularly, individuals who find themselves in social interactions with a thwarted feeling of control will be more likely to behave inappropriately and often in a hostile manner if they also demonstrate a high sensitivity to rejection. This response described by Warburton, Williams, and Cairns (2006) is utilized as a means for ostracized individuals to fortify their need for control over their social environment. Aggressive tendencies along with other maladaptive or risky behaviors have been shown to be more prevalent among veterans, particularly among those with symptoms of PTSD (NCPTSD, 2010). The occurrence of anxiety and depression along with ostracism's effect of decreasing self-regulation leaves veterans with a vulnerability towards substance abuse, rule breaking, and unsafe sex (Borders, McAndrew, Quigley, & Chandler, 2012; Oaten, Williams, Jones, & Zadro, 2008). These behaviors are often seen as burdensome by society, leading groups across both generations and cultures to ostracize burdensome or

deviating members to insure greater security and reproductive opportunities (Gruter & Masters, 1986).

### **Veterans' Educational Engagement**

As a result of the post 9/11 G.I. Bill passed into legislation in 2008, veterans' educational tuition and related benefits have greatly increased, as has the number of applicants for G.I. Bill benefits (Department of Veteran Affairs, 2011; Sabo, 2010). Proportionally with this increase of veterans in higher education, the number of veterans with psychological disabilities has also grown on college and university campuses (Vance & Miller, 2009). Previous research has indicated that many student veterans report experiencing numerous barriers while pursuing their educational goals, including challenges reintegrating into civilian life and coping with pre-existing mental illness and physical disabilities (Ellison et al., 2012).

Research conducted on a focus group of 31 veterans assessed the educational needs of returning military participants and found veterans lack the skills necessary for living independently as civilians. Veterans expressed a concern that there was no "basic training" for reintegrating back into civilian life (Ellison et al., 2012). A recurring concern among the young veterans in this group was difficulty adjusting to the many choices inherent in civilian life without the structure of military organization, which fosters an environment devoid of questions or options. Specific to the challenges posed by symptoms caused by experiencing traumatic events, veterans indicated discomfort in the classroom due to anxiety brought on by large class sizes and loud or sudden noises. As a consequence of veterans feeling overwhelming anxiety, the focus group reported

either using substances to reduce anxiety or moving themselves to the back of the classroom to gain a clear view of the exit.

From the point of view of civilian students, veterans exhibit behavior inside the classroom that sets them apart. A failure to relate to fellow classmates and professors originates from veterans experiencing a variety of life-changing events. Ostracism's effect of thwarting feelings of belongingness has the potential to decrease student-faculty interactions at the collegiate level, thereby limiting the engagement and success of veterans in the classroom.

Engagement on university campuses allows for student-faculty relationships, which are among the most impactful contributing factors to students' success during their academic careers. Faculty who have a strong orientation toward students have important effects on students' satisfaction with the institution, the curriculum, and academic development (Astin, 1993). Astin defines student involvement as the quantity and quality of the energy students invest in the college experience. The energy referred to focuses on a behavioral component. Astin (1985) states that it is not what the individual thinks or feels but what the individual does and how he or she behaves that identifies involvement. Highly involved students devote substantial energy to academic work, actively participate in student organizations, and interact regularly with faculty members, institutional personnel, and other students.

In an effort to investigate the effectiveness of universities and the relationship between student engagement and academic success, The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE; 2008) was created as a standardized measurement to investigate students' levels of engagement in educationally-relevant activities inside and outside the

classroom setting (Carle, Jaffee, Vaughan, & Eder, 2009). For this measurement, Kuh (2003) defines student activities and engagement as “the time and energy students devote to educationally sound activities inside and outside the classroom.” Carle, Jaffee, Vaughan, and Eder (2009) developed the following three student engagement scales using items exclusively from the NSSE to measure these particular aspects of academic engagement. These three scales are the Student Faculty Engagement (SFE) scale, the Community Based Activities (CBA) scale, and the Transformational Learning Opportunities (TLO) scale. Through the use of confirmatory factor analyses for ordered-categorical measures, previous research supports these three scales as related but separable constructs, reporting correlations of  $r_{TLO/SFE}=.5$ ,  $r_{TLO/CBA}=.43$ , and  $r_{CBA/SFE}=.74$  (Carle et al., 2009).

The Student-Faculty subscale measures the extent to which students engage with faculty in various forms of interactions (e.g., used email to communicate with an instructor). Frequent student-faculty interaction in and outside of the classroom is the most important factor in motivating students to be actively involved, and the concern shown by faculty members helps students continue working through difficult circumstances (Astin, 1993). Relating to a few faculty members throughout the course of their time spent on campus improves students' academic commitment and encourages them to think about their future plans (Chickering & Gamson, 1987).

The Community Based Activities subscale measures the extent to which students engage with their community and the Transformational Learning Opportunity subscale measures the extent to which students engaged in enriching educational opportunities (e.g., internships). Students who have demonstrated a deep engagement in community-



based activities and transformational learning opportunities have higher graduation rates, better grades, better retention, and reported greater educational satisfaction levels (Astin & Sax, 1998; Astin et al., 2000; Kuh et al., 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

### **Current Investigation**

The present investigation was designed to examine the differences between veteran and civilian students regarding feelings of ostracism and the accompanying immediate negative impact, perceived burdensomeness, and student engagement. Based on past research as outlined earlier, it is hypothesized that civilian and veteran student groups will score differently on ostracism, social pain, thwarted basic needs, perceived burdensomeness, and student engagement measures. It was expected that the veteran student group would report experiencing more ostracism and its immediate negative impact (reflexive pain response and thwarted basic needs), more perceived burdensomeness, and less engagement with faculty, community-based activities, and transformational learning opportunities.

In summary, I examined the following hypotheses (Hs) within this study:

**H1:** Veteran students would feel more ostracized (excluded and ignored) by faculty and fellow students inside the classroom as compared to civilian students.

**H2:** Veteran students would feel the negative impact of ostracism (reflexive pain response and thwarted basic needs) to a greater extent as compared to civilian students.

**H3:** Veteran students experienced greater perceived burdensomeness as compared to civilian students.

**H4:** Veteran students engaged less in student-faculty interactions, community-based activities and transformational learning opportunities as compared to civilian students.

Lastly, an explanatory analysis was conducted to investigate whether the relationship between military service and thwarted basic needs is accounted for by student engagement. Given the abundance of literature on war-related trauma and the subsequent impairments hindering reintegration and educational attainment, it is expected that the lack of engagement partially accounts for thwarted basic needs satisfaction.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

The University of North Florida's (UNF) Office of Institutional Research contacted participants on my behalf to ask if potential participants would complete a study concerning their educational experiences at UNF. I specifically targeted military veteran students as well as civilian students enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences (COAS) at this midsize Southeastern public university. The term *veteran students* is used to describe all those who have served in the military, whereas the term *civilian students* is used to describe those individuals who have never been affiliated with the military in either active duty or reserves. Veteran participants were recruited from a pool of 757 students registered with the UNF Military Veterans Resource Center as members of the armed forces. The researchers specifically targeted civilian students from the College of Arts and Sciences because 37.67% of UNF veterans are enrolled with this College and, therefore, represent a comparable sample population. The civilian participants were

recruited from a pool of 6,560 students enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences at UNF.

Data were collected from 121 undergraduate participants. The researchers omitted 3 participants' data due to missing portions of the study including questionnaire items and/or the recall prompt. All participants who completed the survey received a \$15 Amazon gift card.

The final sample of 118 undergraduates included 73 females (61.9%) and 45 males (38.1%) ranging in age from 18 to 62 years ( $M = 26.13$ ,  $SD = 9.75$ ). Two participants (1.7%) declined to indicate their age. The age of the civilian participants ( $n = 76$ ) ranged from 18 to 52 ( $M = 22.12$ ,  $SD = 4.9$ ) and age of the veteran participants ( $n = 42$ ) ranged from 21 to 62 ( $M = 33.75$ ,  $SD = 11.95$ ). The racial and ethnic composition of the sample was 79.7% ( $n = 94$ ) White, 11.1% ( $n = 13$ ) African-American, 1.7% ( $n = 2$ ) Asian or Pacific Islander, and 6.8% ( $n = 8$ ) other; 14.4% ( $n = 17$ ) indicated their ethnicity as Hispanic or Latino. One participant (0.8%) declined to indicate their race. The sample selected is representative of this College population in terms of racial diversity and gender (University of North Florida, 2013).

## **Procedures**

After participants opened the recruitment email from the UNF Office of Institutional Research, they read a brief invitation to participate in a survey about students' experiences at the University of North Florida. The email read as follows:

“Come participate! As UNF students you are asked to complete an online survey about your experience at UNF for the Department of Psychology and earn an Amazon.com gift card worth 15 dollars. The study will take no more than 15

minutes to complete. To participate, you need to be a student at the University of North Florida and over the age of 18. Responses to this survey will be used for research purposes. If you have any concerns please contact Dr. Wirth at [j.wirth@unf.edu](mailto:j.wirth@unf.edu). To access the survey please click the link below.”

Participants accessed the survey through a link to Qualtrics, web-based survey software which collected data and enabled participants to complete the survey on computers from any location. Participants who clicked on the survey link were redirected to the online consent form that provided an overview of what the study required, relevant contact information, and guidelines for receiving compensation. Participants were informed they could skip any questions or withdraw from the study at any time by closing their internet browser.

Participants who elected to take part in the study first self-identified as either veteran of the armed forces or civilian. Participants who indicated they were veterans also reported their branch of service, military occupational specialty, and dates of deployment if applicable. Immediately afterwards, all participants completed a two-part recall prompt.

Participants recorded in detail the interactions they recalled experiencing in their classrooms at UNF during the month prior to participating in the study. The researchers chose to focus on the students' experiences during the past month so the time period participants recalled would be consistent and recent. Validating this recall approach, previous research demonstrates individuals can successfully recall and re-experience times when they were ostracized (e.g., Riva, Wirth, & Williams, 2011). The initial prompt read as follows:

“Take a moment and recall what your learning environment was like at the University of North Florida during the past month.

In the space provided below, describe three to four interactions you had during the past month with professors and fellow students. Please take your time when explaining what your interactions were like with these individuals and be as detailed as possible.”

Participants recorded their responses to the initial portion of the recall task in a large textbox on the computer screen directly below the prompt. To encourage participants to recall their previous month, they experienced a one minute delay before they could advance. After participants were finished, they continued on to the next screen page to elaborate on the how the interactions made them feel. Participants responded to this prompt: “In the space provided describe how these interactions made you FEEL. Please be as specific as possible. Take as much time as you need.” Again, participants responded using a large textbox directly below the prompt and were prohibited from moving forward in the survey until at least one minute had passed.

### **Dependent Measures**

Following the completion of the recall task, participants responded to six self-reported measures based on how they felt *during the past month*. Students reported, in a single order, feelings of being ostracized (excluded and ignored); feelings of basic needs satisfaction (i.e., belonging, control, self-esteem, meaningful existence); and feelings of social pain, perceived burdensomeness and mood. Participants then completed measures indicative of academic successes, specifically their level of engagement with faculty, community-based engagement (e.g., volunteer work), and engagement in

transformational learning opportunities (e.g., study abroad). This order was established so that the measures designed to examine ostracism had the greatest chance of being affected by the experiences reported in the recall prompt.

Participants were presented with a brief explanation of the instructions at the beginning of each questionnaire followed by the accompanying randomized items. At the bottom of each section, they submitted their data, and if all items were not answered, participants were reminded to respond to those particular items before resubmitting.

**Basic needs.** Participants reported their basic needs during the time they recalled using the Needs Threat Scale (Riva, Wirth, & Williams, 2011;  $\alpha = .94$ ). This is a 20-item self-report questionnaire that assesses participants' level of fundamental basic needs: need for belonging (e.g., "I felt rejected";  $\alpha = .80$ ), self-esteem (e.g., "I felt good about myself";  $\alpha = .88$ ), control (e.g., "I felt I had the ability to significantly alter the course of the interactions I recalled";  $\alpha = .74$ ), and meaningful existence (e.g., "I felt useful";  $\alpha = .86$ ). Participants responded using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*Not at all*) to 5 (*A great deal*).

**Ostracism.** Along with the basic needs, participants completed two-items investigating how excluded and ignored individuals felt during their recalled interactions, (i.e., "I felt ignored," and "I felt excluded"). Participants responded using a 5 point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*Not at all*) to 5 (*A great deal*).

**Pain.** Participants reported their feelings of social pain using the Numeric Rating Scale (NRS-11; Hartrick, Kovan, & Shapiro, 2003). This is a two-item measure that assesses the intensity (i.e., "How much pain did you experience?") and unpleasantness (i.e., "How unpleasant was your experience?") of social pain caused by interactions.

Participants rated the intensity of their pain using a sliding scale ranging from 0 (No pain) to 10 (Worst pain imaginable) and the unpleasantness of their pain using a scale ranging from 0 (Neutral) to 10 (Extremely unpleasant).

In addition, participants completed the Wong Baker Faces Pain Rating Scale a one-item scale to assess participants' level of discomfort (Tomlinson et al., 2010).

Participants were instructed as follows: "Choose a face that best describes how you felt overall during the interactions you recalled." Participants chose between a series of six faces, each depicting an increase in pain that ranged from 0 (*No hurt*) to 5 (*Worst hurt*).

**Burdensomeness.** Participants reported their perceived burdensomeness during the time they recalled using a nine-item version of the Interpersonal Needs Questionnaire (INQ; Van Orden et al., 2008;  $\alpha = .83$ ). This self-report questionnaire assesses the degree to which a participant believes others would be better off if he or she were gone, and was adapted to fit a classroom scenario (e.g., "During the interaction I recalled, my classmates and professors would have been happier without me."). Participants responded on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*Not at all true for me*) to 7 (*Very true for me*). Similar to my findings, a factor analysis conducted by Bryan and Anestis (2011) indicated the scale reliability coefficient was .81 for perceived burdensomeness.

**Student engagement.** The following three subscales were developed by Carle and colleagues using items the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE, 2008), a standardized measurement of students' levels of engagement in educationally-relevant activities inside and outside the classroom setting (Carle et al., 2009). The instructions to the following three subscales were modified to focus on the month participants recalled.

*Student faculty engagement scale* (SFE;  $\alpha=.8$ ) Participants reported their engagement with faculty during the time they recalled using the SFE scale. This is a 5-item subscale that assesses the extent to which students engaged with faculty in various forms of interaction (e.g., used email to communicate with an instructor). Participants responded using a four-point polytomy ranging from 1 (*Very often*) to 4 (*Never*). In previous research, the Cronbach's alpha was reported at .68 (Carle et al., 2009).

*Community-based activities* (CBA;  $\alpha=.54$ ). Participants reported their engagement with their community during the time they recalled using the CBA scale. This is a 4-item self-report questionnaire measuring the extent to which students engaged with their community. Participants responded using 3 different 4-point polytomies. For the first item, "Based on the interactions you recalled, how often would you likely participate in a community-based project as part of a regular course?" participants used a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (*Very often*) to 4 (*Never*). Students responded to the next two items, (i.e., "Based on the interactions you recalled, which of the following do you plan to do before you graduate from UNF; practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment?") on a different scale ranging from 1 (*Done*) to 4 (*Have not decided*). The final item of this subscale was, "Based on the interactions you recalled, to what extent will your experience at this institution contribute to your knowledge, skills, and personal development with regard to contributing to the welfare of your community," using a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (*Very much*) to 4 (*Very little*). The Cronbach's alpha in previous research (Carle et al., 2009) was reported as .68, whereas ours is somewhat less reliable at .54.



*Transformational Learning Opportunities* (TLO;  $\alpha=.65$ ). Participants reported both their prior decisions and future intentions to engage in activities such as internships during the time they recalled based on the TLO scale. This is a 5-item scale measuring the extent to which students had engaged, or intended to engage, in transformational learning opportunities: “Based on the interactions you recalled, which of the following do you plan to do before you graduate from UNF: independent study or self-designed major?” Participants responded using a 4-point polytomy ranging from 1 (*Done*) to 4 (*Have not decided*). Previous research using this subscale reported a Cronbach’s alpha of .58 (Carle et al., 2009).

### **Imagery Task/Debriefing**

At the completion of the dependent variables, all participants were given a positive imagery task to complete to help participants finish the study with a positive feeling. This task prompted participants to reflect on a time they felt especially successful. Previous research indicates that reflecting on positive imagery leads to an increased positive mood (Holmes et al., 2006)

Participants then read a short debriefing page with a description of the purpose of the research and what the experimenters hoped to learn. Lastly, participants were thanked for their participation and presented with a series of resources designed to increase awareness of post-traumatic stress disorder and to provide numerous sources for short-term and long-term support for both civilians and veterans. In a separate survey, participants completed basic contact information questions so they could receive an electronic Amazon.com gift card as compensation for their participation.

### **Analytic Strategy**

I first sought to establish the reliability of each scale by using Cronbach's alpha to measure the internal consistency of each dependent measure. All analyses investigated the outcome variables and military service (veteran = 0, civilian = 1) and the interaction between these two groups. In the face of significant Pearson coefficient correlations, I conducted independent samples t-tests to establish a difference in means among groups. Each dependent measure was examined to satisfy statistical assumptions of variance. Using Levene's test of homogeneity the assumption of equal variance was assumed for all variables between each condition.

To test the explanatory hypothesis, the best practices outlined by Preacher and Hayes (2008) were used, which conceptualize the test of mediation as a test of the indirect effect (path from predictor variable through the confounding variable to the dependent variable) based on a formal statistical test of the multiplicative path of the two regression parameters, "a" and "b" (see Fig 1). I utilized Preacher and Hayes (2008) SPSS macro syntax for calculating regression parameters and bootstrapping coefficients with a 95% confidence interval. Based on Baron and Kenny (1986) criteria, a perfect or

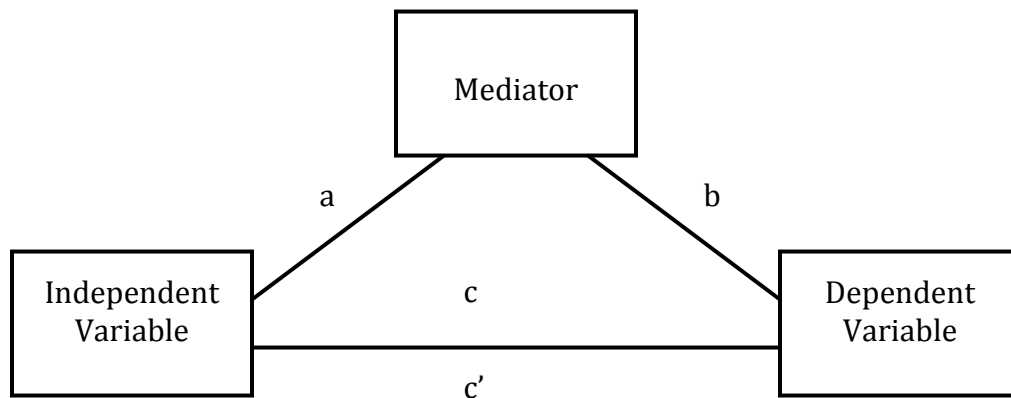


Figure 1. Illustration of the mediation model of direct and indirect effects. *Note.* In model 1, the independent variable was University Students, the mediator was Community Based Activities, and the dependent variable was Belongingness. In model 2 the mediator and dependent variable were reversed.

complete mediation effect may be claimed if path “c” (slope of dependent variable regressed on the predicting variable controlling for the confounding variable) is not statistically different from zero (Preacher and Kelly, 2011). The bootstrapping approach does not require the assumption of symmetry or normality of sampling distribution, therefore it is preferred over traditional methods (Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

## **Results**

Means, standard deviations, and correlations for the variables utilized in these analyses can be found in Table 1. Participants in this study were 118 students varying in years of enrollment at the University of North Florida. The final sample consisted of 76 civilian students and 42 veteran students. The sample of veterans included 25 (21.2%) military personnel who were deployed, and 17 non-deployed veterans. Of those that were deployed, 22 (88%) of had been deployed during or since OEF or OIF. Those students in the veteran group spent an average time of 6 minutes and 40 seconds on the recall prompts whereas participants in the civilian group spent an average time of 4 minutes and 38 seconds on the recall prompts.

### **Bivariate Relationships**

Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to assess the relationship between military service and each outcome variable (Ostracism, Basic Needs Satisfaction, Burdensomeness, Pain, and the three Student Engagement subscales: Student-faculty Engagement, Community Based Activities, and Transformational learning Opportunities) to test relationships with one another. Additionally, the items used to create the Ostracism scale and the subscales used to create the Basic Needs Satisfaction scale were analyzed independently against military service (Ostracism: average of excluded and ignored;

Basic Needs Satisfaction: average of Belonging, Control, Self-esteem, and Meaningful existence).

Military service was correlated with feelings of Belonging [ $r(118) = .194, p < .05$ ], Community Based Activities [ $r(118) = .191, p < .05$ ] and Transformational Learning Opportunities [ $r(118) = .194, p < .05$ ]. Overall service in the military was correlated with greater thwarted belongingness and with less engagement in community-based activities and transformational learning opportunities.

The analysis indicated that several demographic variables, such as age [ $r(116) = .57, p < .001$ ] and gender [ $r(118) = -.33, p < .001$ ], along with the average time participants spent on the recall prompt [ $r(118) = .25, p < .001$ ] were correlated with military service. However, because none of these variables was correlated with any dependent variables, and because including them would lower the statistical power for subsequent analysis, these variables were omitted as covariates.

### **Independent Samples t-tests**

Three separate independent-samples t-tests were conducted to compare belongingness, engagement in community-based activities, and engagement in transformational learning opportunities among military personnel and civilian participants. There was a significant difference in the scores of belonging for veterans ( $M = 3.66, SD = .949$ ) and civilians ( $M = 4.03, SD = .899$ ) groups;  $t(116) = 2.125, p = .036$ . There was also a significant difference in military personnel and civilians for two of the three types of engagements (CBA & TLO). There was a significant difference in the scores of student engagement in community-based activities for military personnel ( $M = 2.59, SD = .641$ ) and civilian ( $M = 2.84, SD = .598$ ) groups;  $t(116) = 2.091, p = .039$ .

There was also a significant difference in the scores of engagement in transformational learning opportunities for military personnel ( $M = 2.27$ ,  $SD = .495$ ) and civilian ( $M = 2.50$ ,  $SD = .591$ ) groups;  $t(116) = 2.126$ ,  $p = .036$ . These results suggest there is an effect between military service and feelings of thwarted belongingness, as well as military service and engagement in both CBA and TLO. Specifically the results suggest that veterans at UNF feel less belonging and engage less in CBAs and TLOs.

Table 1.

*Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations for All Variables. (n = 118)*

	Zero-order correlations												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Univ. students	1.00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
2. Ostracism	-.138	1.00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
3. Basic needs	.113	-.734**	1.00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
4. <i>Belongingness</i>	.194*	-.705**	.889**	1.00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
5. <i>Control</i>	.078	-.525**	.838**	.596**	1.00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
6. <i>Self-esteem</i>	.069	-.704**	.912**	.781**	.667**	1.00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
7. <i>Meaningful</i>	.059	-.682**	.937**	.782**	.756**	.813**	1.00	—	—	—	—	—	—
8. Social pain	-.104	.619**	-.675**	-.636**	-.509**	-.630**	-.633**	1.00	—	—	—	—	—
9. Pain face	-.106	.700**	-.816**	-.743**	-.614**	-.791**	-.764**	.636**	1.00	—	—	—	—
10. Burden	-.013	.378**	-.576**	-.469**	-.473**	-.506**	-.612**	.472**	.537**	1.00	—	—	—
11. SFE	.157	-.274**	.359**	.308**	.332**	.350**	.295**	-.144	-.297**	-.069	1.00	—	—
12. CBA	.191*	-.347**	.461**	.380**	.358**	.472**	.439**	-.281**	-.414**	-.213*	.524**	1.00	—
13. TLO	.194*	-.090	.198*	.154	.139	.211*	.207*	-.116	-.193*	-.185*	.248**	.520**	1.00
M	0.64	1.69	3.85	3.90	3.48	3.96	4.06	1.48	2.25	1.91	2.68	2.75	2.41
SD	0.48	1.09	0.78	0.93	0.83	0.85	0.88	2.31	1.05	0.89	0.71	0.62	0.56

*Note.* University students (0 = Veteran, 1 = Civilian). Basic needs = basic needs satisfaction; meaningful = meaningful existence;

burden = perceived burdensomeness; SFE = student-faculty engagement; CBA = community-based activities; TLO =

transformational learning opportunities. \*  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*  $p \leq .01$

Table 2.

*Belonging, Community Based Activities, and Transformational Learning Opportunities means for Veteran and Civilian Students*

	University Students		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>
	Veteran	Civilian		
Belonging (1-5)	3.66 (.949)	4.03 (.899)	2.125*	116
Community Based Activities (1-4)	2.59 (.641)	2.84 (.598)	2.091*	116
Transformational Learning Opportunities (1-4)	2.27 (.495)	2.50 (.591)	2.126*	116

*Note.* \*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*  $p \leq .01$ . Standard Deviations appear in parentheses below means.

Table 3  
*Coefficients for Direct and Indirect Effects of all Mediation Analyses*

Model	Independent variable	Dependent variable	Direct effects				Indirect effects				
			Path	Coefficient	SE	p	Bootstrap coefficient	SE	95% CI lower	95% CI upper	
1	Univ. Students	Belonging	a	0.2469	0.1180	0.0387	a*b	0.1315	0.0701	0.0052	0.2798
			b	0.5328	0.1302	<0.0001					
			c	0.3749	0.1764	0.0357					
			c'	0.5328	0.1687	0.1517					
2	Univ. Students	CBA	a	0.3749	0.1764	0.0357	a*b	0.0894	0.0474	0.0058	0.1909
			b	0.2384	0.0583	<0.0001					
			c	0.2469	0.1180	0.0387					
			c'	0.1575	0.1129	0.1658					

*Note.* SE = standard error; CI = confidence interval; CBA = community-based activities. In model 1, CBA score was entered as the mediator. In model 2, Belonging score was entered as the mediator.



### **Moderated Multiple Regression Analyses**

Military service was significantly associated with one of the four Basic Needs Satisfaction subscales, thwarted belongingness ( $c = .3749, p = .0357$ ), with veterans being associated with less feelings of belonging. Military service was also significantly associated with the mediating variable, engagement in community based activities ( $a = .2469, p = .0387$ ) with military service being associated with less engagement in community-based activities. The mediating variable CBA, was significantly associated with belongingness ( $b = .5328, p < .001$ ). The indirect effect of engagement in CBA on military personnel with thwarted belongingness was significant:  $a*b = .1315, (.0052, .2798)$ , suggesting a mediating effect. Because the total effect of belongingness was reduced to nonsignificance ( $c' = .2434, p = .1517$ ), this explanatory hypothesis was supported. The indirect effect of engagement in community-based activities accounted for approximately 13.15% of the variance in belongingness.

It must be noted that the direction of causation between the mediator and the outcome variable cannot be determined by statistical analysis. However to support the direction of the previous mediation pattern, an additional mediation analysis was conducted to analyze the reverse model where the mediating variable (CBA) and the outcome variable (belongingness) were switched. Results indicated that military service was significantly associated with CBA ( $c = .2469, p = .0387$ ) and belongingness ( $a = .3749, p = .0357$ ). Belongingness was significantly associated with CBA ( $b = .2384, p < .001$ ). The indirect effect of belongingness on military service with engagement in community-based activities  $a*b = .0894, (.0058, .1909)$  was significant. However, this effect accounted for only 8.94% of the variance in CBA. These results indicate that the

correlation coefficients and size of the indirect effect decrease from the original mediation pattern outlined in model 1.

### **Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to clarify the state of interpersonal relationships veterans experience on university campuses. I hypothesized that veterans would report being ostracized (excluded and ignored) more than civilian students, and that veteran students would experience ostracism's negative impacts (reflexive pain response and thwarted basic needs). I also hypothesized that veterans feel greater perceived burdensomeness than civilian students. Additionally, I anticipated that military service would indicate a significant, negative correlation with student engagement, and that these relationships would partially statistically account for the negative effects veterans feel.

Inconsistent with the prediction (H1), that veterans did not report being excluded and ignored more than civilian students. Also inconsistent with the prediction (H2), that military service did not correlate with the full sequelae of ostracism. However, veteran students did report experiencing greater feelings of thwarted belongingness than did civilian students. It should be noted that previous research on ostracism attributes thwarted basic needs satisfaction to individuals being excluded and ignored (Williams, 2009). In this study, military service was not correlated with being excluded and ignored by faculty or students. As such, the thwarted belongingness veteran students reported feeling cannot be attributed to ostracism originating from faculty or fellow students during the month prior to veterans participating in the study. Additionally inconsistent with my hypothesis (H3), veterans did not report greater perceived burdensomeness than did civilian students. In other words, veteran students do not view themselves as a burden

on others as compared to civilian students. Bryan and Anestis (2011) reported in previous research that among a sample of deployed military personnel examined for traumatic brain injury, perceived burdensomeness was mediated by mental illness. My findings indicating that there is no significant difference between veterans and civilian students are consistent with the high-functioning caliber of veteran students able to achieve admission into a post-secondary institution.

Hypothesis four (H4) was partially supported; military service was negatively correlated with two of the three student engagement scales. Military service was significantly and negatively correlated with engagement in CBAs and TLOs but not statistically correlated with SFE. Results indicated that the relationship between military service and engagement in TLO remained significant even when controlling for other correlated variables (i.e., thwarted belongingness). In other words, students' status as veterans appeared to have a direct negative impact on their level of engagement in TLO. The importance of increasing this particular form of engagement could not be overstated due to the associations established in previous research with higher graduation rates, better grades, better retention, and greater educational satisfaction level (Astin & Sax, 1998; Astin et al., 2000; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Kuh et al., 2005).

Although military service was correlated with CBA, the relationship was more complicated than zero-order correlations. Partially consistent with predictions, the relationship between military service and the particular effects of ostracism (i.e., thwarted belongingness) was accounted for by engagement in community-based activities. In other words, although veterans were less likely to feel as though they belonged, this relationship was best explained by veterans reporting less engagement in community

based activities. It appears that military service is related to thwarted feelings of belongingness; however, military service is not the mechanism through which their belongingness is thwarted. Instead, it appears that military service might lead to or at least correspond with less engagement in community-based activities, which makes a more direct contribution on limiting their feelings of belongingness.

Ultimately these findings represent preliminary evidence that a direct effect of military service is a decreased level of engagement in community-based activities and transformational learning opportunities. These findings also indicate that although military service is relevant to their feelings of thwarted belongingness, veteran status is not the factor through which belongingness is decreased. As indicated by these results, efforts to increase veterans' engagement in CBA would provide beneficial results for increasing veterans' feelings of belongingness. There are several possible contributing factors to these findings. The 11-year discrepancy in the mean age between civilian ( $M = 22$  yrs. old) and veterans ( $M = 33$  yrs. Old) may play a considerable role in explaining why veterans are not engaging in CBA and feel less belonging on the college campus. With any nontraditional age student there are mitigating circumstances that require considerable time and effort, such as, providing for their families and greater financial responsibilities. These added pressures and time-consuming responsibilities might be the reasons why these older veterans are not as engaged as their younger civilian counterparts.

In considering these results there are several limitations to be aware of. Because of the quasi-experimental design of the study, the predictor variable could not be manipulated, therefore, these findings are unable to support any causal inferences. Also

the recall prompt that was used to prime participants about their previous month's interactions relied heavily on the honesty and recollection of the participants. The focus of the recall prompt on only a single month reduces the understanding of the universities' influence on students' condition between their first and final years of enrollment. Additionally, all of the measures were self-reported, which opens the possibility for bias. Finally, because of the large age range of the veteran sample population that typifies non-traditional students, it is unclear to what extent the results from this study can be generalized beyond the sample of military personnel enrolled at UNF.

Due to the concerns of these limitations, a future direction of research could be to clarify the role that universities play in influencing student development; a cross-sectional study design aimed at analyzing time veterans have already spent on college campuses would help parse out the differences between new students and those who may have already been acclimated to faculty, the community and the transformational learning opportunities necessary for academic achievement.

## Appendices

- A) Recall Prompt
- B) Basic Needs Satisfaction (Ostracism items/ Needs Threat Scale)
- C) Numeric Rating Scale (NRS-11)
- D) Wong Baker Faces Pain Rating Scale
- E) Interpersonal Needs Questionnaire (INQ)
- F) National Survey Student Engagement (NSSE)
- G) Manipulation Check
- H) Demographic Information
- I) Positive Recall Prompt
- J) Recruitment E-mail
- K) Consent Form
- L) Debriefing Paragraph

## **Appendix-A**

### Recall Prompt

1. Take a moment and recall what your learning environment was like at the University of North Florida during the past month.

In the space provided below, describe three to four interactions you had during the past month with professors and fellow students. Please take your time when explaining what your interactions were like with these individuals and be as detailed as possible.

2. In the space provided describe how these interactions made you FEEL. Please be as specific as possible. Take as much time as you need.

### Appendix-B

Basic Needs Satisfaction questionnaire -This measure will determine if the interaction the participants recalled affected their feelings of belonging, control, self-esteem, and meaningful existence.

<b>Basic Needs (Williams, Cheung, &amp; Choi, 2000) –</b>						
<b>Please select the rating that best describes how you felt during the time that you recalled.</b>						
		Not at all				Great deal
<b>1</b>	I felt "disconnected."	1	2	3	4	5
<b>2</b>	I felt rejected.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>3</b>	I felt like an outsider.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>4</b>	I felt I belonged to a group.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>5</b>	I felt other people interacted with me a lot.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>6</b>	I felt good about myself.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>7</b>	My self-esteem was high.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>8</b>	I felt liked.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>9</b>	I felt insecure.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>10</b>	I felt satisfied.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>11</b>	I felt powerful.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>12</b>	I felt I had control over the course of the interactions I recalled.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>13</b>	I felt I had the ability to significantly alter the course of the interactions I recalled.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>14</b>	I felt I was unable to influence the action of others.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>15</b>	I felt the other people decided everything.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>16</b>	I felt invisible.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>17</b>	I felt meaningless.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>18</b>	I felt non-existent.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>19</b>	I felt important.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>20</b>	I felt useful.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>21</b>	I felt ignored.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>22</b>	I felt excluded.	1	2	3	4	5



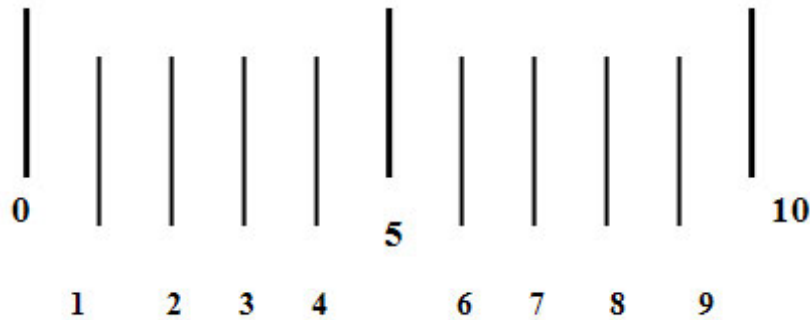
### Appendix-C

Numeric Rating Scale (NRS-11) - A two-item measure will assess the magnitude and unpleasantness of any potential discomfort the participant may have felt during the time participants recalled in response to the prompt.

#### NRS-11 Scale

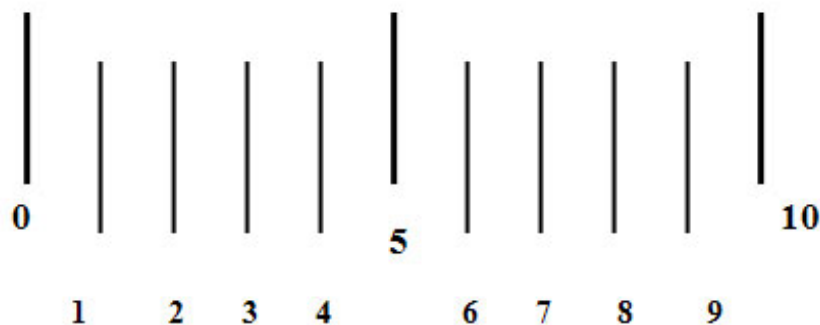
How much pain did you experience **during the time I recalled**?

Use the scale below to rate your pain (0 means "no pain" and 10 "worst pain imaginable").



How unpleasant was the pain you experience **during the time I recalled**?

Use the scale below to rate your pain (0 means "neutral" and 10 "extremely unpleasant").



### Appendix-D

Pain Faces Scale - A one-item measure will evaluate the amount of subjective discomfort participants experienced.

#### Pain Faces Scale

Choose a face that best describes how you felt **during the time you recalled**.



### Appendix- E

Interpersonal Needs Questionnaire (INQ) -This is a nine-item version of the INQ that will assess the degree to which respondents perceive themselves as a burden on other individuals.

#### INQ

The following questions ask you to think about yourself and other people. Please respond to each question by using *your* beliefs and experiences, NOT what you think is true in general, or what might be true for other people. Please base all of your responses on the time that you recalled. Use the rating scale to find the number that best matches how you felt and circle that number. There are no right or wrong answers: we are interested in what *you* thought and felt.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all true for me			Somewhat true for me			Very True for me

During the time I recalled, my classmates and professors would have been happier without me.

During the time I recalled, I thought I had failed my classmates and professors.

During the time I recalled, I thought I was a burden on my classmates and professors.

During the time I recalled, my classmates and professors would have been better off if I were no longer part of the class.

During the time I recalled, I thought I contributed to the well-being of my classmates and professors.

During the time I recalled, I felt like a burden on my classmates and professors.

During the time I recalled, I thought my classmates and professors wished they could be rid of me.

During the time I recalled, I thought I made things worse for my classmates and professors.

During the time I recalled, I thought I mattered to my classmates and professors.

### Appendix-F

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) - Sections of this questionnaire will be used to investigate student-faculty engagement, the level of support among the college environment, and students' educational experiences.

<b>National Survey of Student Engagement- Section 1</b>					
<b>Please select the rating that best describes how you felt during the time you recalled.</b>					
		Very Often	Often	Some- times	Never
<b>1</b>	Asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions	1	2	3	4
<b>2</b>	Made a class presentation	1	2	3	4
<b>3</b>	Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in	1	2	3	4
<b>4</b>	Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources	1	2	3	4
<b>5</b>	Included diverse perspectives (different races, religions, genders, political beliefs, etc.) in class discussions or writing assignments	1	2	3	4
<b>6</b>	Came to class without completing readings or assignments	1	2	3	4
<b>7</b>	Worked with other students on projects during class	1	2	3	4
<b>8</b>	Worked with classmates outside of class to prepare class assignments	1	2	3	4
<b>9</b>	Put together ideas or concepts from different courses when completing assignments or during class discussions	1	2	3	4
<b>10</b>	Tutored or taught other students (paid or voluntary)	1	2	3	4
<b>11</b>	Participated in a community-based project (e.g., service learning) as part of a regular course	1	2	3	4
<b>12</b>	Used an electronic medium (listserv, chat group, internet, instant messaging, etc.) to discuss or complete an assignment	1	2	3	4
<b>13</b>	Used e-mail to communicate with an instructor	1	2	3	4
<b>14</b>	Discussed grades or assignments with an instructor	1	2	3	4
<b>15</b>	Talked about career plans with a faculty member or advisor	1	2	3	4
<b>16</b>	Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class	1	2	3	4

17	Received prompt written or oral feedback from faculty on your academic performance	1	2	3	4
18	Worked harder than you thought you could to meet an instructor's standards or expectations	1	2	3	4
19	Worked with faculty members on activities other than coursework (committees, orientation, student life activities, etc.)	1	2	3	4
20	Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, co-workers, etc.)	1	2	3	4
21	Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own	1	2	3	4
22	Had serious conversations with students who are very different from you in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values	1	2	3	4

### Section- 2

**During the time you recalled, how much has your coursework emphasized the following mental activities?**

		Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
1	Memorizing facts, ideas, or methods from your courses and readings so you can repeat them in pretty much the same form	1	2	3	4
2	Analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory, such as examining a particular case or situation in depth and considering its components	1	2	3	4
3	Synthesizing and organizing ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships	1	2	3	4
4	Making judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods, such as examining how others gathered and interpreted data and assessing the soundness of their conclusions	1	2	3	4
5	Applying theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations	1	2	3	4

### Section-3

**During the time you recalled, about how much reading and writing have you done?**

1	Number of assigned textbooks, books, or book-length packs of course readings	None	1-4	5-10	11-20	More than 20
2	Number of books read on your own (not assigned) for personal enjoyment or academic enrichment	None	1-4	5-10	11-20	More than 20
3	Number of written papers or reports of 20	None	1-4	5-10	11-20	More

	pages or more					than 20		
4	Number of written papers or reports between 5 and 19 pages	None	1-4	5-10	11-20	More than 20		
5	Number of written papers or reports of fewer than 5 pages	None	1-4	5-10	11-20	More than 20		
<b>Section-4</b>								
<b>In a typical week during the time you recalled, how many homework problem sets did you complete?</b>								
1	Number of problem sets that take you <b>more</b> than an hour to complete	None	1-2	3-4	5-6	More than 6		
2	Number of problem sets that take you <b>less</b> than an hour to complete	None	1-2	3-4	5-6	More than 6		
<b>Section-5</b>								
<b>Mark the box that best represents the extent to which your examinations during the time you recalled have challenged you to do your best work.</b>								
				Very Little			Very Much	
1	Mark the box that best represents the extent to which your examinations during the time you recalled have challenged you to do your best work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Section-6</b>								
<b>During the time you recalled, about how often have you done each of the following?</b>								
		Never	Some-times	Often	Very often			
1	Attended an art exhibit, play, dance, music, theater, or other performance	1	2	3	4			
2	Exercised or participated in physical fitness activities	1	2	3	4			
3	Participated in activities to enhance your spirituality (worship, meditation, prayer, etc.)	1	2	3	4			
4	Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views on a topic or issue	1	2	3	4			
5	Tried to better understand someone else's views by imagining how an issue looks from his or her perspective	1	2	3	4			
6	Learned something that changed the way you understand an issue or concept	1	2	3	4			
<b>Section-7</b>								
<b>Which of the following have you done or do you plan to do before you graduate from your institution?</b>								
		Have not	Do not	Plan to	Done			

		decided	plan to do	do	
1	Practicum, internship, field experience, co-op experience, or clinical assignment	1	2	3	4
2	Community service or volunteer work	1	2	3	4
3	Participate in a learning community or some other formal program where groups of students take two or more classes together	1	2	3	4
4	Work on a research project with a faculty member outside of course or program requirements	1	2	3	4
5	Foreign language coursework	1	2	3	4
6	Study abroad	1	2	3	4
7	Independent study or self-designed major	1	2	3	4
8	Culminating senior experience (capstone course, senior project or thesis, comprehensive exam, etc.)	1	2	3	4

### Section-8

**Mark the box that best represents the quality of your relationships with people at your institution.**

		Unfriendly, Unsupportive, Sense of alienation				Friendly, Supportive, Sense of belonging			
1	Relationships with <b>other students</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
		Unavailable, Unhelpful, Unsympathetic				Available, Helpful, Sympathetic			
2	Relationships with <b>faculty members</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
		Unhelpful, Inconsiderate, Rigid				Helpful, Considerate, Flexible			
3	Relationships with <b>administrative personnel and offices</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

**Mark the Box that best represents your feelings of exclusion or inclusion with people at your institution**

	<b>Excluded</b>	<b>Included</b>
--	-----------------	-----------------

<b>4</b>	<b>Relationships with other students</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	
		<b>Excluded</b>					<b>Included</b>		
<b>5</b>	<b>Relationships with faculty members</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	
		<b>Excluded</b>					<b>Included</b>		
<b>6</b>	<b>Relationships with administrative personnel and offices</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	
<b>Section-9</b>									
<b>During the time you recalled, about how many hours do you spend in a typical 7-day week doing each of the following?</b>									
1	Preparing for class (studying, reading, writing, doing homework or lab work, analyzing data, rehearsing, and other academic activities)	0	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	More than 30
2	Working for pay <b>on campus</b>	0	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	More than 30
3	Working for pay <b>off campus</b>	0	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	More than 30
4	Participating in co-curricular activities (organizations, campus publications, student government, fraternity or sorority, intercollegiate or intramural sports, etc.)	0	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	More than 30
5	Relaxing and socializing (watching TV, partying, etc.)	0	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	More than 30
6	Providing care for dependents living with you (parents, children, spouse, etc.)	0	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	More than 30
7	Commuting to class (driving, walking, etc.)	0	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	More than 30
<b>Section-10</b>									
<b>To what extent does your institution emphasize each of the following?</b>									
					Very little	Quite a bit	Some	Very much	
1	Spending significant amounts of time studying and				1	2	3	4	



	on academic work				
2	Providing the support you need to help you succeed academically	1	2	3	4
3	Encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds	1	2	3	4
4	Helping you cope with your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)	1	2	3	4
5	Providing the support you need to thrive socially	1	2	3	4
6	Attending campus events and activities (special speakers, cultural performances, athletic events, etc.)	1	2	3	4
7	Using computers in academic work	1	2	3	4
<b>Section-11</b>					
<b>During the past month, to what extent has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas?</b>					
		Very little	Some	Quite a bit	Very much
1	Acquiring a broad general education	1	2	3	4
2	Acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills	1	2	3	4
3	Writing clearly and effectively	1	2	3	4
4	Speaking clearly and effectively	1	2	3	4
5	Thinking critically and analytically	1	2	3	4
6	Analyzing quantitative problems	1	2	3	4
7	Using computing and information technology	1	2	3	4
8	Working effectively with others	1	2	3	4
9	Voting in local, state, or national elections	1	2	3	4
10	Learning effectively on your own	1	2	3	4
11	Understanding yourself	1	2	3	4
12	Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds	1	2	3	4
13	Solving complex real-world problems	1	2	3	4
14	Developing a personal code of values and ethics	1	2	3	4
15	Contributing to the welfare of your community	1	2	3	4
16	Developing a deepened sense of spirituality	1	2	3	4
1	<b>During the past month, how would you evaluate the quality of academic advising you have received at your institution?</b>	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
2	<b>How would you evaluate your educational experience at this institution</b>	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent

	<b>during the time you recalled?</b>				
3	<b>If you could start over again, would you go to the same institution you are now attending?</b>	Definitely yes	Probably yes	Probably no	Definitely no



## Appendix-H

Additional Demographic Questions - This is a collection of descriptive details concerning the veteran participants' service history

### Demographics Questionnaire

Instructions: We would now like to ask you some questions about yourself. Please fill in or circle the most accurate answer.

1. Age \_\_\_\_\_
2. Gender (Male / Female)
3. Race/Ethnicity
  - a) American Indian or Alaska Native
  - b) Black or African American
  - c) White
  - d) Asian
  - e) Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islanders
  - f) Other or Unknown \_\_\_\_\_
6. Are you Hispanic or Latino? (YES / NO)
7. What is your Nationality?
  - a) US citizen
  - b) Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
10. What language do you mostly speak?
  - a) English
  - b) Spanish
  - c) Chinese
  - d) French
  - e) Japanese
  - f) German
  - g) Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Current History:

11. What is your current marital/relationship status?
    - a) Married
    - b) Single
    - c) Divorced
    - d) Widowed
    - e) Engaged
    - f) None
    - g) Other ( please specify long/short term relationships)
- 
-

12. What is your current employment status?

- a) Full time
- b) Part time
- c) Unemployed

Service history:

18. Branch of service and MOS:

---

19. Highest rank attained:

---

20. Rank at time of discharge:

---

21. Dates of service (beginning date/end date):

---

22. Type of discharge (optional):

---

23. Deployment dates (beginning date/end date). If applicable, indicate all deployments and if these were combat deployments \_\_\_\_\_

Military & Veteran Resource Center:

24. How often do you use resources provided from University of North Florida's Military Veteran Resource Center?

- |       |                              |                 |                      |                |                     |       |
|-------|------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|----------------|---------------------|-------|
| 1     | 2                            | 3               | 4                    | 5              | 6                   | 7     |
| Never | Less than<br>once a<br>month | Once a<br>month | 2-3 times a<br>month | Once a<br>week | 2-3 times a<br>week | Daily |

25. How often do you attend events held by the University of North Florida's Military Veteran Resource Center?

- |       |                              |                 |                      |                |                     |       |
|-------|------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|----------------|---------------------|-------|
| 1     | 2                            | 3               | 4                    | 5              | 6                   | 7     |
| Never | Less than<br>once a<br>month | Once a<br>month | 2-3 times a<br>month | Once a<br>week | 2-3 times a<br>week | Daily |

26. How often do you speak with an individual working for the University of North Florida's Military Veteran Resource Center?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	All the time

27. How often do you interact with others who utilize the University of North Florida's Military Veteran Resource Center?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	All the time

28. How often do you attend an event with others who utilize the University of North Florida's Military Veteran Resource Center?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	All the time

29. How often do you have contact with the Military Veteran Resource Center?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	All the time

30. How often do you check updates from the Military Veteran Resource Center's social media sites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter)?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	All the time

31. How often do you use resources provided by University of North Florida's Military Veteran Resource Center?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	All the time

32. How often do you attend events held by the University of North Florida's Military Veterans Resource Center?

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	All the time

## **Appendix- I**

### Positive Recall Prompt

1. We want you to take a moment and recall a time you felt especially successful – this can be any type of success. In the space below type what your experience was like (step-by-step, in order as it happened). Take your time when explaining what your successful moment was like.
2. In the space provided describe how this successful moment made you FEEL. Please be as specific as possible. Take as much time as you need.

## **Appendix- J**

### **Recruitment e-mail**

Come participate! As UNF students you are asked to complete an online survey about your experience at UNF for the department of psychology and earn an Amazon.com gift card worth 15 dollars. The study will take no more than 15 minutes to complete.

To participate, you need to be a student at the University of North Florida and over the age of 18.

Responses to this survey will be used for research purposes. If you have any concerns please contact Dr. Wirth at [j.wirth@unf.edu](mailto:j.wirth@unf.edu).

**To access the survey please click the link below:**



## Appendix-K

### RESEARCH PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Students' Experience at UNF

James Wirth

University of North Florida

Department of Psychological Sciences

Purpose of Research: This study will investigate the experiences students have at the University of North Florida. You will be asked to think of some moments you have had in the classroom while at UNF and then complete several psychology measures recording your responses about your experiences.

Specific Procedures to be Used: You will be asked to complete a recall prompt. This prompt will ask you about some of the interactions you experienced during the past month. You may also be asked to answer questions that appear on your computer screen pertaining to your experience.

Duration of Participation: Your participation should take no more than 15 minutes.

Benefits to the Individual: You have the opportunity to learn about psychological research and contribute to research pertaining to UNF students' experiences. Further, after successfully completing the study you can receive compensation in the form of an Amazon.com gift card. This will require submitting your name, UNF N-number, and the email address where you wish to receive your compensation.

When analyzing the data the researchers will not be able to directly identify individuals based on their responses.

Risks to the Individual: Minimal- Risks are not greater than those encountered in daily social interactions. You may, however, feel emotionally uncomfortable in various stages of the experiment.

Confidentiality: Strict confidentiality of all data will be upheld. Your responses will remain confidential and will not be associated with any identifying information. Your signed informed consent and information regarding compensation will be kept separate from your responses to the questionnaires. The project's research records may be inspected by the University of North Florida Institutional Review Board or its designees to ensure participants' rights are being protected.

Voluntary Nature of Participation: Your participation in this research project is strictly voluntary. You do not have to participate. If you agree to participate you can withdraw at any time, [but you will not receive the gift card if you do not finish the entire survey and include your UNF N-number and email address to receive the compensation electronically.] You do not have to answer any question you find objectionable.

Human Subject Statement: If you have any questions about this research project, you can contact Dr. James Wirth, (904) 620-1613, [j.wirth@unf.edu](mailto:j.wirth@unf.edu). If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or concerns about the treatment of research participants, you can contact the

chair of the UNF Institutional Review Board by calling (904) 620-2498 or emailing [irb@unf.edu](mailto:irb@unf.edu). If after participating you feel as though you have suffered emotionally or psychologically please visit the Counseling Center here on campus, Bldg 2, Founders Hall, Room 2300 where services are free and strictly confidential (904) 620-2602.

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---  
I ATTEST THAT I AM AT LEAST 18 YEARS OLD. I HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO READ THIS CONSENT FORM, ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE RESEARCH STUDY & I AM PREPARED TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

BY CLICKING ON THE LINK AND COMPLETEING THE SURVEY, THESE ACTIONS WILL SERVE AS EVIDENCE THAT THE PARTICIPANT HAS GIVEN CONSENT TO ALLOW THEIR RESPONSES TO BE USED FOR RESEARCH

To print this informed consent page, look for a Print icon at the top of the web browser. If you do not see a Print icon, right click anywhere on the informed consent text and select "Print" from the menu that appears.

**[CONTINUE]**  
**(THIS IS A BUTTON THAT TAKES RESPONDENT TO SURVEY)**

## Appendix-L

### Debriefing Paragraph

Thank you for participating! We are investigating if returning veterans feel ostracized (excluded and ignored) in classroom environments. Ostracism is typified by feelings of helplessness or alienation that may arise from exclusion. Ostracism often occurs without explicit explanation. While we are focused on how veterans feel in the classroom, we will also examine how veterans' involvement with the Military Veteran Resource Center affects these feelings. Ultimately, we will examine if ostracism of veterans in the classroom affects veterans' academic engagement.

All participants completed several measures pertaining to ostracism (being excluded and ignored) and burdensomeness, the degree to which respondents believed that their class would benefit if they were not part of it. We will examine if the interaction you recalled caused any discomfort, or affected your feelings of belonging, control, self-esteem, and meaningful existence. You also completed measures intended to investigate your level engagement in the classroom.

If you have any questions concerns about this project, or if you want to know how the results turn out, please contact Dr. James Wirth, [j.wirth@unf.edu](mailto:j.wirth@unf.edu), or Clark Ryan-Gonzalez, [c.ryan-gonzalez.155598@unf.edu](mailto:c.ryan-gonzalez.155598@unf.edu).

Thank you again for your participation. Below is a list of available resources for those seeking information about short-term crisis counseling along with additional sources for veterans and their families.

#### UNF Counseling Center

Spring/Fall Hours: Monday and Thursday

8:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday

8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Telephone: (904) 620-2602

Location: Founders Hall, Building 2, Room 2300

#### Short-term counseling and National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Phone: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

#### 2-1-1 Information and referral service

Phone: 2-1-1

<http://www.211us.org/>

#### VA Caregiver Support Line

Phone: 1-855-260-3274

**Veteran Resources**

Veterans Crisis Line

Phone: 1-800-273-TALK (8255) and press 1

VA National Center for PTSD

Phone: 1-802-296-6300

Email: [ncptsd@va.gov](mailto:ncptsd@va.gov)

[www.ncptsd.va.gov](http://www.ncptsd.va.gov)

Wounded Warrior Resource Center

Phone: 1-800-342-9647

Veterans Benefits Administration

Phone: 1-800-827-1000

[www.vba.va.gov](http://www.vba.va.gov)

Veterans Health Administration

Phone: 1-877-222-8387

[www1.va.gov](http://www1.va.gov)

Department of Veterans Affairs

Phone: 1-800-827-1000

[www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)

VA Contacts for Information on Specific Issues

Education (GI Bill):

Phone: 1-888-442-4551

Health Eligibility Center

Phone: 1-800-929-8387

Life Insurance

Phone: 1-800-669-8477

Special Issues: Gulf War Syndrome/Agent Orange/Project Shad/  
Mustard Agents/Lewisite/Ionizing Radiation

Phone: 1-800-749-8387

National Call Center for Homeless Veterans

Phone: 1-877-4AID-VET (424-3838)

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## Clark Ryan-González

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### Education

#### **University of North Florida**

Jacksonville, Florida

Master of Arts in General Psychology

Currently Enrolled | Anticipated Graduation Date Summer 2013

#### **The Florida State University**

Tallahassee, Florida

Bachelor of Arts in Psychology | August 2010

#### **University of North Florida**

Teaching English as a Foreign Language certificate (TEFL) | June 2010

### Work

#### **Student Wellness Complex Building Operations Manager | August**

### Experience

**2012- Present**

#### **University of North Florida**

Jacksonville, Florida

Responsibilities include:

- Keeping track of all events and programs being held in the SWC
- Maintaining an orderly, clean, and safe environment for the facility
- Giving tours of the facility
- Enforce facility rules and policies
- Assist students, parents, faculty, and community guests
- Training new employees

#### **English as a Foreign Language Teacher | September 2010- July 2011**

#### **Taiyuan University of Science and Technology**

Taiyuan, Shanxi province, Peoples Republic of China

Responsibilities include:

- Teaching full time college level English to first and second year students
- Teaching Western Cultural, and English Film classes to second, third and fourth year level students
- Developing course curriculums
- Creating lesson plans

- Evaluating students' academic performance
- Conducted disciplinary intervention
- Advise individual students on personal development and academic growth
- Provided opportunities for leadership development

**The Leach Center Front Desk Assistant | May 2009- August 2010**  
**Florida State University**

Tallahassee, Florida

University Student Recreation Center

Responsibilities included:

- Details surrounding access
- Renting equipment and monitoring control
- Registering new members
- Recording and collecting fees
- Troubleshooting complaints

**Youth Sports and Fitness Camp Counselor | Summers 2006, 2007 & 2008**

**University of North Florida**

Jacksonville, Florida

Responsibilities included:

- Supervising and organizing 30-50 campers while teaching teamwork and sportsmanship
- Instructing campers on correct sports techniques and methods and ensuring camper's safety

**Research/ Volunteer Research Assistant | December 2011- present**  
**Experience University of North Florida**

Jacksonville, Florida

Under the supervision of Dr. James Wirth

Responsibilities include:

- Meeting with, organizing, and advising undergraduate research assistants
- Programming survey material
- Conducting pilot studies
- Presenting relevant research developments
- Working with the University of North Florida's Military Veteran Resource Center

Master's thesis work developing methodology and research protocol used to determine essential information regarding ostracism among military veterans

**Research Assistant | August 2008- March 2010**  
**Florida State University**

Tallahassee, Florida

Under the supervision of Dr. Thomas Joiner and Dr. Michael Anestis  
Responsibilities included:

- Conducting UPPS-R Semi-structured interviews
- Administering physiological pain tolerance and threshold tasks
- Assessing individuals for suicide risk
- Data entry

*Crisis Hot Line Volunteer Team| 2009*

**Helpline 2-1-1**

Tallahassee, Florida

Received 70 hours of training for 24-Hour counseling, suicide prevention, community information, and referrals hotline.

Responsibilities include:

- Providing short-term crisis counseling
- Making referrals to appropriate community services
- Suicide intervention

**Presentations/**

**Society of Southeastern Social Psychologists (SSSP) |October 2012**

**Other experiences**

University of Florida  
Gainesville, FL

Poster Session: Returning Troops May Feel Ostracized and Burdensome, Especially if Experiencing PTSD

**Veteran Suicide and Prevention Summit |April 2013**

University of North Florida  
Jacksonville, FL

Break out Session Facilitator: Cause and Effect- Why does it happen and who does it affect?

**Awards and Activities**

Florida State University Dean's List  
Florida State University Honors Program  
Florida State University National Honor Society | Phi Eta Sigma  
Florida Bright Futures Scholarship  
Florida State University Kappa Sigma Fraternity  
University of North Florida Psychology Graduate Fellowship  
University of North Florida Graduate Student Government Scholarship  
Society for Southeastern Psychologists (SSSP) conference poster presentation 2012

**Skills/ Certifications**

Microsoft Office applications  
SPSS Statistics Software  
Qualtrics Survey Software  
Teaching English as a Foreign Language certification (TEFL)  
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative Certification (CITI)  
CPR/First Aid Certification