THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL SATISFACTION AMONG

POST-9/11 VETERANS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

by

William Alton Hammac

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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APPROVED BY:

Joseph Fontanella, Ed.D., Committee Chair

Andrea Lee, Ed.D., Committee Member

Debra Chisenhall, Ed.D., Committee Member

ABSTRACT

This study examined reintegration of Post-9/11 military veterans into higher education as measured by their satisfaction with a private southeastern university. This research was accomplished through the study of the potential relationship between the academic satisfaction and social satisfaction of Post-9/11 military veterans attending a private southeastern university and how they felt about their overall educational experience. The research questions were derived from the Ruffalo Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory which was administered by the university, surveying the quality of student life, and serving as a national benchmark comparison for educational institutions nationwide. This research was a non-experimental, *ex post facto* correlational design that utilized preexisting data with a total sample size of 86 military veterans who are seeking a degree at the university in this study. The study found student-veterans transitioned from military service with a good degree of satisfaction with their academic educational experiences. This correlates with the happy-productive student theory by Cotton, Dollard, and De Jonge (2002) showing satisfaction with the learning environment can influence performance. However, student-veterans were less satisfied with their social experiences as they transitioned into the civilian educational institution which is explained through the Schlossberg's transitional theory where student affairs were better prepared to transition traditional students, however less so for servicemembers who may be suffering from wartime physical or psychological trauma. This study provides data that support the importance for a professional military affairs department that is available to evaluate and assist student-veterans succeed in their pursuit of higher education.

Keywords: educational experience, Post-9/11, higher education, retention, student satisfaction, student-veteran, transition, veteran services.

Dedication

I dedicate this manuscript to the brave men and women who have fought alongside me in combat. Many were good friends, and some have died in my arms. To my *Desert Storm* unit, the 475th Quartermaster Group, which suffered the largest number of casualties: Corporal Stanley Bartusiak, Corporal Rolando Delagneau, Specialist Steven Farnen, Specialist Glen Jones, Specialist Duane Hollen, Jr., Specialist Steven Mason, Specialist Michael Mills, Specialist Adrienne Mitchell, Specialist Ronald Rennison, Private First Class Timothy Shaw, Corporal Brian Simpson, Specialist James Tatum, Private First Class Robert Wade, Corporal Jonathan Williams, Specialist James Worthy, Specialist Steven Atherton, Specialist John Boliver, Jr., Sergeant Joseph Bongiorni III, Sergeant John Boxler, Specialist Beverly Clark, Sergeant Allen Craver, Specialist Frank Keough, Specialist Anthony Madison, Specialist Christine Mayes, Specialist Steven Siko, Specialist Thomas Stone, Sergeant Frank Walls, and Specialist Richard Wolverton. To my fellow aviators during *Operation Iraqi Freedom I*: Specialist Rodrigo Gonzalez-Garza, Chief Warrant Officer Timothy Moehling, Chief Warrant Officer John Smith, Specialist William Tracy, and Specialist Paul Bueche. To my good friend and stick-buddy from flight school who lost his life in Afghanistan, Chief Warrant Officer Christopher Allgaier. To my fellow aviators during *Operation Enduring Freedom VI*, the crew of Mustang 22: Chief Warrant Officer John Flynn, Warrant Officer One Adrian Stump, Sergeant Tane Baum, Sergeant Kenneth Ross, and Sergeant Patrick Stewart. To my fellow airborne Soldier during *Operation New Dawn*, Specialist David Hickman, whom I had the honor to serve with on an "Advise and Assist" mission in Al Anbar province, Iraq.

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There are many friends who have assisted me on my educational journey. However, this journey would not be possible without the love, care, and support of my wife, Deborah, who has stuck with me through my highs and lows and has encouraged me to become a better man. As I continue to heal and work my way through the darkness, she will always be the light that guides me from the shadows and the encouraging strength that I can draw from when times seem hopeless.

I would like to offer thanks to Liberty University, who is a strong supporter of the U.S. military. To the Liberty University staff that has mentored, provided guidance, and brought the Lord Jesus Christ into my life again. After my multiple wartime deployments, the loss of good friends, and seeing human suffering in-person, I had grown apart from God. Through this doctoral journey I have grown closer to the Lord and now understand His plan for me.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Abbreviations

Global War on Terrorism (GWOT)

Improvised Explosive Device (IED)

National Center of Education Statistics (NCES)

Operation Tempo (OPTEMPO)

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Research and Development Corporation (RAND)

Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC)

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)

Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI)

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ)

Veterans Affairs (VA)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Many American veterans who have served in combat during the Global War on Terror (GWOT) are either integrating back into society or continuing their military career which often requires more schooling. Despite their long period of sacrifice, Iraq and Afghanistan veterans who have fulfilled their service to the nation are now flooding educational institutions across the United States. Many educational institutions recognize that the veteran students' transition from a military-life to the college community can bring certain challenges. One of the challenges is the transition from military service into a classroom setting (Jones, 2017; Moore, 2015; Sayer, Carlson, & Frazier, 2014; Tinoco, 2014). There have been considerable strides with educational institutions veterans' affairs departments to help in the transition and bring a sense of belonging and satisfaction with their educational experience (Robertson & Brott, 2014; Vacchi, 2016). This chapter looks at the historical challenges of men and women who serve in the military and potential reintegration difficulties faced by military veterans.

Background

Warfare is not a new phenomenon for the history of mankind. Even today, despite our advances as a civil society, we are not immune to conflict and war. Since April 19, 1775, the start of the American War of Independence from the British Empire, the United States has been involved in a multitude of armed conflicts around the world. The longest armed conflict in U.S. history is the most recent and enduring Global War on Terror which has spanned well over a decade and a half. As of 2018 there have been over 2.77 million U.S. service men and women deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan in support of these efforts (Wenger, O'Connell, & Cottrell, 2018). The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) reports the veteran population in the U.S. is

nearing 22 million with one million from the Global War on Terrorism now enrolled in colleges and universities, constituting nearly 4% of the student population nationwide (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2016). However, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has made significant efforts to help veterans reintegrate into society by providing improved medical and service benefits along with increased educational benefits. One of the purposes of the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill is to assist veterans and to help with their transition into society (Snider, 2015). Because of recently improved government education and training benefits, there has been a surge of U.S. veterans from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars that are enrolling into degree programs. Some scholars argue that there are significant differences between a student who is a veteran and a student who has never deployed to war that needs to be considered. The student-veteran population can exhibit physical, cognitive, social, and personality differences versus the traditional educational community (Aikins, Golub, & Bennett, 2015; Feldman, 2016; Stein, 2015). These differences have manifested in some positive and negative outcomes in veteran transition into the classroom (Olsen, Badger, & McCuddy, 2014). Many veterans come from a large organization that structured to receive a mission and to achieve its goals, all the while operating within a demanding environment ranging from a state disaster relief mission to a far-away combat operation (Anderson, 2016; Baiocchi, 2013). They develop a driven discipline to meet or exceed on their assigned tasks. Their training focuses on leadership, initiative, and teamwork and infusing military values of duty, honor, loyalty and commitment to their unit and nation. However, the loss of a regimented schedule was found to be an item of stress for student veterans (Jones, 2017). Not only do these individuals bring emotional burdens with them, they tend to be older than the traditional college student and are more likely to have external obligations such as being married or raising children (DiRamio & Jarvis, 2011). There is much

discussion on the current group of student veterans' success in post-secondary programs. Of the tens of thousands of Iraq and Afghanistan War veterans presently enrolled in college, it was estimated 44% are utilizing their VA Education benefits (Cate, 2014). However, of those enrolled in post-secondary programs, 88% of them will drop out and not complete a degree program (Student Veterans of America, 2013).

DiRamio and Jarvis (2011) determined of the many societal life transitions an individual may experience, veterans face one of the biggest challenges when leaving service and adapting to civilian life. Nancy Schlossberg, whom is a professor of counseling, studied various transitions experienced by people. Over time, the original context of her theory had changed, however what remained is the focus on the individual and transition points throughout each of their lives (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2012). This research study utilizes the Schlossberg's transition theory as a theoretical framework to understand veteran transitions out of military service and into the classroom. Schlossberg (2011) defines a transition as a key event, or non-events that has an output that results in changes in roles, assumptions, routines, and relationships. This is important as for the most part, a traditional student would experience a non-event as they transition from high school into college. On the other hand, a veteran's transition into college can be categorized as an anticipated change or an unanticipated change due to an unexpected discharge or inability to find employment after their military service. Depending on the type of transition experienced, the Schlossberg (2008) transition process can create liabilities which can create concurrent stress and psychological challenges which can lead to different coping methods. In comparison to traditional students, there are considerable events that a student-veteran deals with during their transition to their new role as a non-traditional student (Vacchi, 2016). It may be possible to see through data analysis of the satisfaction survey

instrument the social satisfaction challenges that may not be met through assistance from their college's student affairs; more specifically, the military affairs section whose aim is to facilitate the successful transition into their degree program. It is worth a look at student veterans' strategy, or their coping responses during their transition to the classroom to determine if their needs are being met, and if there is an opportunity to improve their satisfaction with the transition to higher learning. According to Schlossberg's theory, there are multiple forces that influences a person's ability to cope and the transition process can be grouped in the "4-S's" of situation, self, support, and strategies (Griffin & Gilbert, 2015). Understanding a student veteran's satisfaction in each area can help educational administrators assess the specific needs required to ensure success.

This research aimed to understand how to help military veterans reintegrate by looking at student satisfaction within an educational institution as a measure of the students' willingness to remain within the school. Over a life span, developmentalists believe that every period of a person's life contains the potential for both growth and decline in a person's ability (Feldman, 2016; Sarno, 2014). These periods of life experiences can affect cognitive, social, and personality development which can create substantial individual differences from other groups of people who lack such experiences (Feldman, 2016). A review of the literature reveals no clear measure between a student-veterans' academic performance compared to their traditional-student population regarding completion of a degree program. Although many researchers claim that veterans faces considerable challenges when enrolling into higher education, they infer as their opinion that these challenges can create a higher drop-out rate than their civilian cohorts (Barry, Whiteman, & Wadsworth, 2014; DiRamio & Jarvis, 2011; Gwin, Selber, Chavkin, & Williams, 2012; Heineman, 2016; Moore, 2015; Sayer et al., 2014; Tinoco, 2014; Vacchi, 2016). The only

recent study to conduct a quantifiable analysis of the lower-than-average student-veteran graduation rates was through analysis of VA data by the Student Veterans of America (Cate, 2014). There can be assumed bias as this is a non-profit organization that focuses on addressing the needs and concerns of student-veterans in higher education. Therefore, this research study adds to the body of knowledge through scientific analysis of a student-veteran's performance in a civil higher educational institution through a survey of the student-veterans' satisfaction with their program and their overall experience at their educational institution. The research data can be used to determine if a variation exists between the populations of student-veterans and traditional students in regards to satisfaction with their educational institution. Researchers remain interested in why veterans choose to pursue a higher education to better themselves and how satisfied they are as a student and as a person within society (Mollica & Mitchell, 2013). This research seeks to understand the challenges that veterans face during transition from military service to the classroom and the impact of satisfaction with their overall educational experience.

This research further expands a theoretical framework beyond Schlossberg's transition theory by utilizing the happy-productive worker theory to understand veteran satisfaction. Initially, the happy-productive worker theory proposed by Wright and Staw (1999) examined relationships between alternate measures of affect and supervisory performance ratings as a means to measure satisfaction. However, there was a theoretical flaw as it did not account for a worker's disposition influencing their evaluations; that is, a charismatic or outgoing worker who may be a mediocre performer could potentially receive a performance rating higher than a co-worker who is equally satisfied, however who may not be as engaged with their supervisor (Wright & Staw, 1999). Three years later, happy-productive worker theory was reexamined by

Cotton, Dollard, and de Jonge (2002) using a population of undergraduate second-year students and the effect of satisfaction output in comparison of the events demand, one's control over it, and the college's social support. Their quantitative study showed "evidence appears to be stronger for the association between more effective measures of well-being and performance" (Cotton et al., 2002, p. 150). More clearly, it suggests that the data correlate psychological well-being with satisfaction. Understanding veterans' satisfaction with the institution they are enrolled with can potentially provide insight into veteran's willingness to stay and graduate from their respective colleges (Khurshid & Arshad, 2013). Conversely, when there is a high level of unhappiness, the corresponding dispiriting effect of low satisfaction can lead to underachievement and a withdrawn student; the happy-productive worker theory is significant when dealing with student-veterans success and their transition into college as "a strong link was found between satisfaction and GPA performance" (Cotton et al., 2002, p. 159). Moreover, researchers have discovered and argued that a positive correlation links student satisfaction to their educational performance and overall success (Cotton et al., 2002; Fox Valley Technical College, 2012; Khurshid & Arshad, 2013; Roszkowski, 2003). Therefore, to support this study, the research will conduct an examination of data acquired from a nationally administered satisfaction survey instrument of student-veterans academic and social satisfaction in contrast to their overall educational experience, as defined within this manuscript. Higher education has been administering satisfaction surveys and using the results to give insight to the administrators on campus to help focus and meet the needs of their students. The development of educational satisfaction surveys dates to the 1960s, and the satisfaction survey has continued to expand its scope of understanding students' helping educational institutions make decisions about their future (Oja, 2011).

According to Rowntree (2015), educational institutions have found it important to administer student satisfaction surveys so they can remain at the cutting edge of improving their programs and help give insight on areas of improvement. Another very important point for these studies is that dissatisfied students are dispirited from their chosen program of study and are likely to leave the program before being granted a degree. Studies show that higher education institutions exhibiting higher satisfaction from their student population tend to enjoy a higher retention and graduation rate over their peers (Carroll, 2015; O'Keeffe, 2013; Schreiner & Nelson, 2014). While many of the student veterans were able to handle the academic rigor and are satisfied with their educational journey, many of these students admitted to the difficulties of finding co-curricular programs on campus (Jones, 2017). They were aware of how much older they were compared to the general student population and that they were a non-traditional student. Satisfaction surveys look at also a student's fulfillment with the activities in addition to the normal course of study (Ruffalo Noel Levitz, n.d.). When seeking to be more involved with participating in campus social programs they tended to check out the veteran's programs first (Jones, 2017). Therefore, it can be expected that a university that does not have a military affairs office or a veteran support program will endure a higher attrition rate of veterans (Ahern, Foster, & Head, 2015; Jones, 2017). A study from the Department of Social Work in California State University at Northridge on veteran social support and campus climate concluded that,

> colleges can be a meaningful pathway from combat to recovery[…]by providing social opportunities to facilitate mutual Veteran support: training to educate faculty, civilian student and staff experiences and challenges of [combat veterans], and evidence-based interventions to alter the psychological impact of combat. (Love, Levin, & Park, 2015, p. 921)

Therefore, finding ways to retain and graduate veterans within higher education will benefit them and society. Understanding the needs of student veterans and addressing them is an important move towards improving veteran graduation rates.

Problem Statement

There is a lack of understanding of military veterans' specific needs associated with their transition into higher education. Much of the research conducted on veteran transition is oriented on challenges associated with reintegration back into society (Barry, 2015; Jones, 2017; Sayer et al., 2014; Tinoco, 2014). However, there has been very little scholarly research on healthy reintegration programs designed specifically for military veterans who are transitioning out of the military and into higher education (Blevins, Roca, & Spencer, 2013; Jones, 2017; Vacchi, 2016). This research void is significant if higher educational institutions are looking to improve retention and graduation rates of at-risk non-traditional student-veterans.

A disproportionate number of veterans are leaving colleges and universities before completing their degree programs; Post-9/11 veterans are dropping out of higher educational institutions at a higher rate than non-veterans (Vacchi, 2016) despite veterans' enrollment currently at an all-time high (DiRamio & Jarvis, 2011). A recent study shows that student-veterans who pursue an academic degree utilizing the GI Bill from 2012–2013 have a four-year degree completion rate of 51.7% which was lower than the completion rate of non-veteran peers at 59% (Cate, Lyon, Schmeling, & Bogue, 2017). While increased enrollment is an indicator of a collective desire to improve oneself and to reintegrate into society, the disproportionate dropout rate indicates an impediment to their goals.

The challenge of successfully integrating veterans into higher education experience has not escaped educational institutions and there are studies and proposals on developing 'military

friendly' schools "that explores the unique needs of student-veterans and focuses on the ways that practitioners can support student-veteran on their college campuses" (Heineman, 2016, p. 219). However, the efficacy of reintegration programs and student-veteran satisfaction as it impacts retention and graduation rates is not well understood (Blevins et al., 2013; Jones, 2017; Vacchi, 2016). An approach by Khurshid and Arshad (2013) explained that considerable insight can be discovered by understanding student-veterans' satisfaction with the institution they are enrolled with. There are college administrators who have heeded this insight and have been using satisfaction surveys to help focus the needs of their students (Ruffalo Noel Levitz, 2016) and it is continually used today to expand their understanding of students and to help make decisions about their future (Oja, 2011). However, the challenge is that there has been very little scholarly research on healthy reintegration programs designed specifically for military veterans who are transitioning out of the military and into higher education (Blevins et al., 2013; Jones, 2017; Vacchi, 2016).

As pointed out in the theoretical framework, veterans transitioning out of the military, especially into college, faces a considerable amount of stress and changes to their routine (Anderson et al., 2012). Whereas, Schlossberg's transition theory applies to the traditional students who incur a 'non-event' as they move from their high-school classroom into a college classroom (Schlossberg, 2008) the student-veteran can expect to have a considerably different transitional experience than their traditional-student counterparts. Moreover, there is a significant difference in the cultures of military comradery and a colleges academic culture which can prove considerably foreign to the student-veteran (Selber, 2012; Tinoco, 2014). As pointed out in the happy-productive worker theory where Cotton et al. (2002) examined university student satisfaction output in comparison of well-being and performance, the non-

traditional student veterans who have little support from the college or if they are dissatisfied with the academic or social aspects of their school of enrollment, there can be reasonable expectations of poor performance. The unique student-veteran population has multiple needs that need to be met through various physical, mental, social, and academic programs provided through the government, state, and educational institution to ensure a successful reintegration of this student population from combat duty to society.

The problem is that there is little evidence of the relationship between student-veteran academic and social satisfaction, and broader overall educational experiences that impact retention and graduation. Understanding student-veteran satisfaction may offer evidence to veterans, faculty, educational leaders and policymakers that could enable them to uphold and support the needs of student-veterans in decision making. This problem is especially significant, given the large number of veterans currently enrolled and expected to enroll in higher education in the future (DiRamio & Jarvis, 2011). Moreover, research aimed at understanding student satisfaction is also important because it enables colleges and universities the ability to continue to develop and refine initiatives aimed at improving the success of all students.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study is to investigate the relationships between the social and academic satisfaction and the student-veterans' overall educational experience at their educational institution of enrollment. The study's predictor variables are "academic satisfaction" and "social satisfaction" of various aspects of their academic experience as identified and measured by student-veteran responses on a nationally administered Ruffalo Noel Levitz (n.d.) Student Satisfaction Inventory. The study's criterion variable is "overall educational experience" based on identified willingness to repeat the educational experience with

the same institution, as identified and measured by student-veteran responses on the same nationally administered student satisfaction inventory responses from Likert questions #96, on their college experience meeting their expectation, #97 overall satisfaction with their college experience, and #98, if they had the opportunity to do it over, would they reenroll (Ruffalo Noel Levitz, n.d.).

This research contributes to the current body of knowledge oriented on understanding the successful transition and success of student-veterans who are enrolled in college by looking at problem areas which has affected their satisfaction to stay enrolled with a particular educational institution. This is important as there are considerable government and institutional assistance offered to student-veterans towards their endeavors of successfully pursuing a college degree. Also, there is considerable research which has focused on the effects of wartime deployments, both physically and mentally, on veterans' today (Herrmann, Hopkins, Wilson, & Allen, 2009; Love et al., 2015; Resick, Savak, Johnides, Michell, & Iverson, 2012). However, this study fills the gap on the understanding of student-veterans' successful transition into higher educational and furthermore there is no standard or model for the school's student affairs to meet the needs of veterans. As the literature clarifies, schools are having problems identifying why there are transitional problems and low graduation rates of the student-veteran population.

As of October 2017, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs quick facts reports the current total veteran enrollment in higher education across the United States sits at 946,829 (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2017). For this study, participants are military veterans, typically many experienced deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, serving since September 2001 and were enrolled at a private southeastern university. Of the 5,019 students who participated in the school's Ruffalo Noel Levitz (n.d.) Student Satisfaction Instrument, there were 86

participants who identified themselves as a veteran as derived from the SSI population

questionnaire. This research sought to gain insight into veteran academic and social satisfaction

which was defined as a subjective evaluation of the whole educational experience and

expectations regarding their perceived reality (Roszkowski, 2003) at a given institution can help

influence student-veterans who enroll in higher education institutions and successfully graduate.

Furthermore, this study utilized this information through statistical analysis to fill the knowledge

gap of understanding student-veteran satisfaction in various areas within the academic and social

aspects of their school of enrollment. The outcome of this research can be utilized by

educational institutions to meet the needs of this veteran population and provide a stepping-stone

for further research.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to add to the empirical knowledge

regarding predictors for the successful retention and graduation of U.S. military veterans in

higher education. It is important that schools satisfactorily meet the needs of military veterans

returning to the classroom. As educational institutions experience an increasing number of

student veterans' it can be expected that some veterans were exposed to traumatic events from

war. Schools with students enrolled with these issues may not be adequately prepared to deal

with these a student demographic with special needs. The enrollment numbers will continue to

grow as veterans leave military service and use the generous educational benefits provided by the

government. In a recent Research and Development Corporation (RAND) study, researchers

projected that there will be more than 600,000 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans who will return

from war with varying levels of mental or physical trauma leading to depression, PTSD, TBI, or

any combination of the three (Wenger et al., 2018). Herrmann et al. (2009) determined that there

currently are 41.9% of veterans who are or who will be using their earned educational benefits. Therefore, within the last decade there has been a major influx of students with war-trauma and the challenge of this has put significant pressure on schools to accommodate them. This research study approaches the problem by evaluating if veterans are satisfied with their experience at college or if they are dissatisfied with the school in meeting their needs.

Another quantitative correlation research study from the *Journal of Social Sciences* looked at veteran social support and campus climate in the context of recovery from disabilities. It was noted that "financial needs of post 9/11 [veterans] have begun to be addressed," and that "the majority of returning students are doing well…36.1% reported a high level of stress, 15.1% reported a high level of anger, 17.3% reported active symptoms of PTSD, and 27.1% screened positive for alcohol problems" (Love et al., 2015, p. 909). They concluded that social networks reduce stress and are found to be the most salient factor in veteran recovery from trauma. A veteran's social network is a good start for further development; however, there is very little understanding of how to use this information to improve graduation rates of military veterans. The research did not give any insight as to improvements schools were making to social media for veterans to meet their needs, or whether there was any impact upon retention of troubled veterans.

Though there are unknowns about veterans suffering from trauma and how schools can meet their needs, there are attempts by colleges to address these issues and help with veteran transition. Research by Ahern et al. (2015) titled *Salt Lake Community College Veteran Services: A model of serving veterans in higher education*, examines their veterans' program and points out how they are meeting success by addressing challenges faced by veterans in higher education. They point to other findings in the literature as potential areas to assist veterans

pursuing their educational goals. However, the first sentence of their conclusion states, "There is much more to be done to serve student veterans in community college," (Ahern et al., 2015, p.84) acknowledging a lack of understanding of how to promote success of military veterans in education.

The bottom line is that the U.S. government allocates a considerable amount of federal funding towards military educational benefits as a means to help veterans' transition from the military to society. However, much of this is wasted if veterans are not able to complete their education due to the inability to successfully reintegrate and complete their education program. Research is lacking on this phenomenon of below-national-average graduation rates for military veterans. According to Barry et al. (2014), there are a "small number of data-based, peer-reviewed [veteran] pieces studying student veteran reintegration which is pale in comparison to the vast number of commentaries, editorials, and organizational reports" (p. 29).

Research Questions

The research questions for this study are:

RQ1: Is there a relationship between student-veterans' academic satisfaction as measured by the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory and overall educational experience at their educational institution of enrollment as measured by the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory?

RQ2: Is there a relationship between student-veterans' social satisfaction as measured by the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory and overall educational experience at their educational institution of enrollment as measured by the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory?

Definitions

1. *Academic satisfaction*: The subjective evaluation of the whole educational experience and expectations regarding their academic reality (Roszkowski, 2003). (Predictor variable 1) For purposes of this study *academic satisfaction* is measured by the level of a student's overall educational feelings or perceptions of academic satisfaction categorized from SSI questions #2, 6, 12, 18, 25, 32, 40, 46, 50, 52, 54, 55, 58, 65, 69 which are rated by a seven-point Likert scale that ranges from Very Satisfied to Not Satisfied at All (Ruffalo Noel Levitz, n.d.).

2. *Armed Forces*: Federal military service for the United States. Individuals who serve in the Armed Forces are referred to as service members (Hogan & Seifert, 2012).

3. *Chain of command*: A hierarchy of authority where the top of the organization has direct control of the activities below it (Blaauw-Hara, 2016).

4. *Higher education*: Formal learning from universities, colleges, seminaries, institutes of technology, and college-level vocational and trade schools (Vacchi, 2016).

5. *Montgomery G.I. Bill:* Introduced in 1985, it provides education benefits and training payment for eligible service-members once they complete a minimum service obligation (Jones, 2017).

6. *Overall educational experience*: (Criterion variable) For this study it is the bottomline on student's perception of their experiences at their college of enrollment, as indicated by the responses from SSI Likert questions #96, on their college experience meeting their expectation, #97 overall satisfaction with their college experience, and #98, if they had the opportunity to do it over, would they reenroll (Ruffalo Noel Levitz, n.d.).

7. *Post-9/11 veteran*: Service-members who served in the armed forces after September 11, 2001 (Anderson, 2016; Love et al., 2015).

8. *Post-9/11 G.I. Bill*: The Veteran Education Assistance Act of 2008 expanded educational benefits for veterans who served after September 11, 2001 where the Department of Veterans Affairs could cover up to $17,500 a year in educational expenses (Love et al., 2015).

9. *Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)*: Also known as battle fatigue syndrome or shell shock. This is a serious condition of persistent mental and emotional stress triggered by a major traumatic event (Resick et al., 2012).

10. *Service member*: Refers to a person who serves in the United States Armed Forces, i.e., Army, Navy, Marine, Air Force, and Coast Guard (Hogan & Seifert, 2012).

11. *Social satisfaction*: A subjective evaluation of one's quality of life and personal life satisfaction (Roszkowski, 2003). (Predictor variable 2) For purposes of this study *social satisfaction* is measured by the level of a student's overall educational feelings or perceptions of social satisfaction categorized from SSI questions #1, 16, 22, 27, 28, 31, 36, 38, 44, 45, 67, 68, 70 which are rated by a seven-point Likert scale that ranges from Very Satisfied to Not Satisfied at All (Ruffalo Noel Levitz, n.d.).

12. *Student-veteran*: Refers to a population that includes graduate and undergraduate students who currently serve, or have ever served, and those who are separated from the military, such as retirees or service members who left the military after an enlistment or service obligation (Griffin & Gilbert, 2015; Vacchi, 2016).

13. *Traditional student*: Students generally between the ages of 18-24 attending college on a full-time basis (Feldman, 2016).

14. *Transition*: A key event or non-events that has an output that results in changes in roles, assumptions, routines, and relationships (Anderson et al., 2012).

15. *Veteran*: A person who has served in the Armed Forces (Jones, 2017).

16. *Veteran-friendly campus*: Educational institutions that have removed barriers for military and veteran students and have systems in place to help them transition into college life (Heineman, 2016).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Since the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 there have been more than 2.6 million service-members deployed to combat in either Iraq or Afghanistan with more than 700,000 of them deploying multiple times. Many would soon realize America was not the only thing that had changed, but the character of the veteran population itself; a hybrid warfare of conventional and guerrilla tactics stretched over a decade has had a profound affect upon its veteran population (Anderson, 2016). Due to the decade plus conflict, recently there has been a significant increase of combat veterans using educational benefits at universities and colleges. With a continued drawdown of forces since the peak of the recent war, there will be millions of veterans looking for new opportunities after their service to help them gain employable skills. Many will turn to higher educations as a means to improve employment prospects, gain employable skills, and achieve their career goals and use as a conduit for their civilian life transition (Heineman, 2016). With considerable attention to the emotional and physical traumas, unemployment, and homelessness experienced by some veterans, there is an opportunity to realign resources to meet the needs of today's veterans. Understanding their educational needs is imperative to ensure success as they seek higher education from civilian institutions.

Many historians would argue that veterans are the backbone of our country. Without them, America would not have the freedoms that it has today and more importantly there would be no United States of America. Throughout history, veterans have fought to ensure our rights for freedom and ensured that the dreams of our Founding Fathers remain. Through the actions of generations of servicemen and women, they have set the standards for the country. The actions of veterans have shaped America into what it is today, and they will continue to influence

America's future for the generations to come. Although each veteran experiences will be

different, and their reaction to combat will produce challenges to those who serve that are not

well-known or understood. However there have been considerable efforts to understand military

veterans as many Americans know those who served, have family that served, or know relatives,

friends, or neighbors that have served in the military. Nearly every American high school has

students who graduate and soon are off to boot-camp or basic training. Good, bad or indifferent,

the majority of Americans are connected to people who have served in the military. Student

veterans represent a microcosm of American society, expressive of a diversity of ethnicity,

gender, religion, economic background and people with ability (Head, 2014). Those who know a

veteran understands the sacrifice to family, putting their lives on hold and the risks in the defense

of the country. During wartime deployments, both the veteran and their family endure many

emotions and concerns of their service. Although war is horrific and inevitable within humanity

and it is a violent practice that is won by soldiers, there will be future veterans who answer the

call to protect the American motherland and our way of life.

So, one wonders what obligations there are for the American society to support veterans?

There are special national and state government departments established for taking care of the

special needs of veterans. Veterans enjoy programs that the government offers for job

placement, improved health care facilities, and even the private sector giving military discounts

or preferences for military service. High-minded ideals date as far back Lincoln's Second

Inaugural Address given on 1865 by President Lincoln with his words, "To care for him who

shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan" (White, 1992). Lincoln's

immortal words were adopted as the VA motto in 1959 and adorn the entrance to the Washington

D.C. headquarters (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, n.d.). This country to this day

continues to fulfill its commitment to veterans. As cited in Langley and Parker (2014), President Obama stated, "The bond between our forces and our citizens has to be a sacred trust, and that for me, for my administration, upholding our trust with our veterans is not just a matter of policy, it is a moral obligation." Over time, as a country, it is engrained that it is the country's obligation to honor, serve and support veterans when they come home. With the moral and financial support, it is upon the scholars to understand the unique challenges that military veterans face after conflict.

As the war in Afghanistan and Iraq is now known as the longest war in U.S. history, historians would agree that every war is fought differently than previous wars which created a new set of unique and challenging problems for the service-members and the U.S (Alfano, Balderas, Lau, Bunnell, & Biedel, 2013; Jones, 2017). Also, throughout time, the demographic of service-members changes enough to create its own challenges. With the shift to today's professional military, service-members no longer has the option to only do a single tour of combat duty which were an option for Korean and Vietnam veterans. Today's military can face multiple deployments with very little say on their duration away from home. Since the onset of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, there has been much attention given to the effects of war on service-members who have now been serving in combat for over thirteen years (Rossiter, D'Aoust, & Shafer, 2016). There continues to be research by many different professions who are looking at the long-term effects of war-zone deployments have upon U.S. military veterans. The multiple combat deployments will have effects upon family, the service-members mental and physical health, financially, and for the reserve components, on their civilian jobs and livelihoods.

Military personnel who deploy to Iraq and Afghanistan experience combat trauma in much greater numbers and variety than those endured by veterans of earlier wars (Kinney, 2012). This can be attributed to advances in medical science and technology. Veterans of previous high-intensity such as World War II in the 1940's, Korea in the 1950's and Vietnam in the1960's that suffered severe combat wounds would simply die because they contemporary medicine and technology of that time was not advanced enough to improve mortality. Also, a difference is the enemy's tactics used to in inflicting injury in Iraq and Afghanistan, which comprises of very little direct action with small arms, is more focused on an unseen enemy using improvised explosive devices or suicide bombers which can be very mentally stressful. To note, during the Vietnam War the wounded to killed ratio was 2.6 to 1, the Afghanistan and Iraqi War veterans is 15 to 1 (Kinney, 2012). Today's survivors of severe combat injuries from Iraq and Afghanistan have the benefit of well-trained field medics, forward deployed medical doctors and rapid aeromedical evacuation out of theater. However, with improved survival from severe combat wounds today manifested a new type of injury rarely seen in previous war veterans (Johnson, 2011). Today, survivors exhibit a multifaceted injury called poly-trauma. Poly-trauma is where a person who suffers through a traumatic event and incurs a severe injury tends to have injuries that have components of each; physical, psychological, mental or psychosocial (Johnson, 2011; Scott, Belanger, Vanderpeog, Massengale, & Scholter, 2006). This new round of injuries has brought the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to the forefront in meeting the demands to care for today's war veterans. And the understanding of both visible and invisible wounds presents challenges for providing the proper care that is needed by combat veterans.

The War on Terrorism today and in the foreseeable future has opened a new chapter on the U.S. military's history. To date, the war in Iraq and Afghanistan is the longest enduring

conflict in American history. The U.S. deployed millions of all volunteer troops to meet this challenge, avoiding the use of a conscripted force. This professionalized force required recruiting tools to attract volunteers and to maintain the total force end strength. Demand on Active Duty, Reserve, and National Guard created recruiting challenges and required incentives for service which often included education benefits, for example, some states offering free in-state tuition for National Guard members. The incentives to recruit the all-volunteer force was important as there was no congressional appetite to institute a draft as the military lost confidence in the draft as discipline problems among draftees mounted in Vietnam (Kissinger, 1994). The all-volunteer military force of today is highly specialized and professionalized where more than half of the U.S. military is married with over 75% having dependent children and with these increased burdens there has been a considerable increase of recorded psychological toll upon the service member and their families (Alfano et al., 2013). A recently discovered after-effect of protracted war is behavioral health problems for veterans who have been exposed to a combat environment for prolonged periods of time. Over the last decade there have been considerable efforts focused on understanding the psychological damage caused by prolonged deployments. Sizeable government funding has been made available to scientific research on the effects of emotional trauma, from PTSD to suicide experienced by recently deployed veterans. However, a literature review reveals that there has been very little scholarly research devoted to understanding the educational needs of combat veterans who are transitioning into the classroom (Blevins et al., 2013; Jones, 2017; Vacchi, 2016).

There are existing opportunities for veterans to pursue an education to help them pursue a career after military service. With financial benefits to relieve the monetary burden, is there enough being done to ensure the success of veterans within the classroom? There is a shift of

national attention to veteran disabilities and recovery strategies of student veterans. The Post-9/11 Veteran Education Assistance Act of 2008 was passed as our country's promise of a quality college education for the courageous men and women who have voluntarily served since September 11, 2001. This bill funds in-state tuition when enrolled in public institutions of higher learning and matches such tuition against private schools (Love et al., 2015). The educational benefits do come with some educational ceilings. Due to the GI Bill tuition cap, private four-year institutions have far fewer veterans enrolled compared to the state institutions (Hart & Thompson, 2016). Despite the drawbacks, the Post 9/11 educational benefits have provided opportunities to many veterans who could not afford an education. The Post 9/11 Bill is a positive wartime contract to those who served in combat. However, as claimed by some veterans' organizations, the Post 9/11 benefits may not be sustainable without changes. There is currently a congressional proposal to make veterans to "buy in" to maintain the program (Shane, 2017). The requirement for veterans to pay up front for the benefit may close educational doors for some, especially for those who could be at risk due to immediate financial challenges; therefore, opting out of these benefits which potentially takes away a transitional option. To ease the government's financial burden to provide these educational benefits for veterans, finding effective programs to promote a smooth social and academic transition will increase the graduation rates of our veterans within the higher educational institutions.

The increasing number of veterans enrolling to use their military educational benefits has created a proliferation of for-profit schools that are vying for veteran funds. From the July 30, 2014 report from the U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Majority Committee Staff reported concerns of for-profit institutions receiving a highly disproportionate amount of funding from the veterans' Post-9/11 G.I. Bill. Since its implementation in 2008, there has been

over $3.2 billion funneled to these schools (U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pension Committee, 2014). This has raised federal scrutiny and lawsuits against some for-profit schools. The Senate report points out that despite doling out huge sums of money in federal education for veterans, there are many cases where veterans attending these schools have low graduation rates and are dropping out of school with considerable debt (U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pension Committee, 2014). The Department of Defense has been cracking down on the aggressive recruiting methods of for-profit schools, administering restrictions, and even putting on probation such schools as University of Phoenix (Snider, 2015).

The targeting of veterans as future enrollees can be contributed to a financially secure student demographic that provides considerable revenue and improves the institutions diverse spread of students. Student veterans provide schools looking to enroll qualified applicants a strong pool of high school (or higher) graduates with government monies available to pay their tuition. Higher education has become an increasingly competitive market over the past several decades and many institutions utilize business models to organize and operate in today's complex market. With today's young adults being much better educated than earlier generations, post high school educational programs have become a lucrative business. Because of this, higher educational institutions utilize student satisfaction as a measure of quality. From the institutional viewpoint, understanding veterans' needs and ensuring satisfaction will improve retention by improving the success of the veteran student.

There continues to be studies devoted to identifying and implementing programs to help veterans adjust to their new educational environment. Patton and Renn (2016) points out the study of student development theory in the 1970s as an investment of higher education institutions to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population. Patton and Renn

(2016) explains that there were significant changes in student affairs; where students were no longer from the upper-middle-class, but were now comprised of "women, veterans, and students of color from all social class backgrounds" (p. 12). Today, we see educational institutions investing in understanding the needs of veterans as they transition into the classroom. This inclines one to think that there is something different needed to meet the needs of veterans who enter college. Despite some of the negative light about veterans suffering from PTSD and problems adjusting into society, there are also strong points that veterans bring to higher education.

At a quick glance, there appears to be notable differences between veterans and the traditional student. It would seem that veterans would have an advantage as college students. For example, it is reported that veteran students are more goal-orientated compared to their non-military service counterparts. Also, as a demographic they report more confidence and better decision-making skills (Rumann & Hamrick, 2010). Other studies have found that military experience can shape a veteran's worldview and increase their awareness of the world around them. This has many positive effects as it helps create a greater understanding of world and cultural experiences, and veteran students felt they were more mature and better focused than the traditional college student (Murphy, 2012). Despite the advantages of their established experience, veterans have reported a feeling of not belonging or being an alien within the college culture, and further reported that there is little focus in on-campus programs dealing with veterans' needs (Murphy, 2012). Hanafin (2011) pointed out that the faculty and staff of higher education institutions tended to lack employees with military backgrounds or training to understand the challenges that veteran students may face during their transition into college (p. 2). It was found in a population-based study of effects of one-year deployments that "19.1% of

Iraq veterans and 11.3% of Afghanistan and other combat veterans met full diagnostic criteria for

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder" (Love et al., 2015, p. 911). Furthermore, it was found that

27.4% screened positive for mental health risk with more positive screens for aggression

ideation, interpersonal conflict, suicidal ideation, PTSD, and depression (Love et al., 2015).

Although many combat veterans experience some sort of stress from a deployment, many

reported no problems and have had success converting these experiences as learning and

teaching points. These are unique experiences that this demographic of non-traditional students

bring that makes them more unique than that of the traditional student.

One of the research areas focused on understanding veterans' needs that has been picking

up interest within educational institutions is student satisfaction. Many are finding measurable

rewards when focusing efforts to including student into the educational community which has

shown improvements with their retention, especially with student veterans (Hammond, 2016;

Hart & Thompson, 2016; Mollica & Mitchell, 2013; Robertson & Brott, 2014). However, there

are many challenges to understand veterans with disabilities. Beyond the funding given to

schools to educate veterans, there are some combat veterans with combat related disabilities

which can stymie a smooth transition to college. A quantitative study from the *Journal of*

College Student Retention showed from an *N* = 5,107 freshmen sample size that there is a 35%

increased likelihood of students who were very satisfied with their school, when given another

opportunity to revisit their college enrollment decision, would choose the same educational

institution (Schreiner & Nelson, 2014). Programs that improve student veteran's satisfaction

with a school builds a notable connection that increases their desire to return. The researchers

acknowledged an understanding that the model is complex when attempting to capture the many

facets of satisfaction "influenced by the students' socioeconomic, family, and educational

background, psychological attributes, college experiences in and out of class, institutional features, perceptions, and attitudes" (Schreiner & Nelson, 2014, p. 103). Noteworthy is that combat veterans also have multiple factors that influence their retention within a particular school. One area of interest is with how satisfied they are with fitting in, and whether or not a school understands the problems they are overcoming. These factors have a significant effect on veteran's retention rates within a particular school. Some schools approach their student population as one large diverse pool of people; however, veterans who have experienced psychological or physical trauma from combat may not be one of the groups considered. There are schools struggling to understand what programs are needed to address the needs of veterans. Many schools tout that they are military friendly without really understanding what programs are needed as there is little scholarly research determining what veterans truly need to succeed (Blevins et al., 2013; Jones, 2017; Vacchi, 2016).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical background for this research is grounded in understanding of student-veteran satisfaction with the higher educational institution. However, it is important to point out how other influences affect the veterans' ability to succeed. It is of interest to understand how behaviorism or how the experience of prolonged combat and possibly of mental or physical trauma, affects the way the veteran student interacts in a new environment. Another area of theoretical interest is the understanding of the student-veterans' transition experience from military service to the classroom. The theoretical frameworks will examine student satisfaction, behaviorism and adult transition as a means to develop an understanding of veteran students and how they succeed in higher education.

Student Satisfaction's Role in Retaining Student Veterans

Over the past decade, higher education institutions have found themselves in a highly competitive market. One of the areas of interest to improve enrollment and retention and to essentially improve the quality of the institution is to ensure student satisfaction. Bestcolleges.com (2016) has a guide for colleges with the highest student satisfaction rates, explaining that certain statistics "can be used to determine which schools seem to produce the highest number of 'satisfied' students" (p. 2). From data on faculty members, facilities, population diversity, services, tuition, and clubs and organizations, the report calculates what the researchers analyze as important to the students' retention. Due to the increased competitiveness of recruiting and retaining students, many higher education institutions allocate funds to improve aspects that create a sense of belonging for prospective students. In *A Sense of Belonging: Improving student retention*, O'Keeffe (2013) explains that one of the major challenges facing colleges today is the wide diversity of students. This creates difficulty for educational institutions that are trying to create solutions for a caring, supportive, and welcoming environment for all. After recruitment, student retention essentially comes down to the students' satisfaction in the institution's commitment to meeting their needs to help lower attrition.

An unfavorable or negative student satisfaction with their school experience has consequences both for the veterans and to the student body as a whole. A failure to meet the needs of student veterans can affect retention and graduation rates which negatively impact the school. Absence of balancing campus programs will satisfy certain populations and neglect others. It is important for colleges and universities to ensure their students are satisfied with the institution, as that satisfaction has an impact upon the school's reputation and financial position. An educational institution is enhanced when its students are satisfied and graduating, and the

institution exhibits a high level of continued enrollment, i.e., retention of its students. In the marketing of the institution, satisfied graduates are very effective agents of success and are effective public relations representatives (Martinez & Toledo, 2013). Therefore, the more satisfied students are with their educational institution, the higher the likelihood that the organization will attract and retain quality students who will, in turn, also serve to increase the educational institution's standing and reputation.

It can be reasonably expected stressors are associated with change. Where some welcome it, many resist it. As for veterans, a change in the combat environment or something out of the ordinary can be quite stressful. A research from 136 respondents looking at veteran career transition and life satisfaction, it was found that "control was the primary variable connected to life satisfaction among transitioning military members" (Robertson & Brott, 2014, p. 144). There are many examples where a deployment can cause a feeling of losing control. This could be as simple as a service member coming down on deployment orders, all the way up to a combat engagement or "fire fight" against the enemy which are chaotic and unpredictable. Therefore, loss of control of a situation leads to fear. School counselors play a key role or important role in assisting the veterans' transition from the military to the school, giving tools to maintain control and confidence throughout the transition (Robertson & Brott, 2014). Satisfaction will play a major role in the veteran students' success both academically and socially. Understanding what the veterans affairs programs offer that impacts the veteran student's ability to remain confident and in control of their educational experience can serve as a way to improve retention and graduation rates.

One of the important goals of educational institutions is the maintaining and improvement of student satisfaction of its program, with an assumption that institutional

effectiveness is linked to student satisfaction (O'Keeffe, 2013). Universities are using satisfaction surveys to assess students' satisfaction so that they can focus on the issues deemed most important and develop a quality program, ensuring that educational standards remain high. The Ruffalo Noel-Levitz (n.d.) Student Satisfaction Inventory has been established as the national standard in satisfaction assessment to allow educational institutions to analyze a broad spectrum of issues and assist in identifying and developing programs to meet student needs and concerns. Fox Valley Technical College (2012) has had success through the analysis of its student satisfaction against the national existing data from Noel-Levitz. The college utilizes information from the SSI to develop a student affairs operations model that allocates resources to underperforming departments to improve overall student satisfaction. There is considerable potential for improving student satisfaction in schools by utilizing these data to further understand veterans, and especially veterans who may have suffered trauma from combat.

Student Satisfaction Theories

The research is best explained through two chosen theories on relations of the veteran and student satisfaction by looking at the interaction between social and psychological factors. The factors focus on how the veteran transitions into the new educational environment and how the effects of war changes, if at all, the way they can interact within the school. Initially, the happy-productive worker theory proposed by Wright & Staw (1999) who looked at worker outcomes based measuring satisfaction against supervisory performance. The researchers discovered that happiness and contentment reflected a very significant shift in positive satisfaction, whereas depression and loneliness had sizable negative satisfaction effects. As an organizational behavior study, the importance was to determine if there were indicators that could be seen as predictors in rated performance for businesses who manages workers. However, from a study of

veteran career transitions, Robertson and Brott (2014) found a strong correlation of confidence and control in veterans and their satisfaction with their transition. Therefore, veterans will present themselves as a challenging subject when determining what they find as satisfactorily important. Also, a theory focus on worker satisfaction does not align with student satisfaction, as there has been no scholarly research available to clearly understand student satisfaction.

Three years later after Wright and Staw (1999), researchers looked at re-engineering the design of the student work environment as a means to improve performance outcomes, i.e., student grades through improving satisfaction. Cotton et al. (2002) proposed a theory called the happy-productive student theory, which suggests that satisfaction of students is ruled by the three categories of coping, well-being, and stress. These three areas serve as measurable means of student satisfaction, and the study assessed the relationship of the three categories from a survey sample of N = 176. Results indicated that high levels of psychological distress and low levels of satisfaction are linked to the perceived high demands upon the individual, combined with low control of the environment around them. In the happy-productive student hypothesis, the research showed a clear correlation of satisfaction to performance (Cotton et al., 2002, p. 155). Although there have been no applicable comparisons of the happy-productive student theory in productivity with veterans in the armed forces, due to the considerable differences in culture and work environment, what may hold true for civilian workers may not be true motivators of veterans. As discovered by Robertson and Brott (2014), "For military members transitioning to the civilian sector, controlling their own career decisions can be a new and challenging concept" (p. 144). Both confidence and control in a student-veterans transition would play a major role in their satisfaction with their new educational environment. However, in comparison of student-veterans and traditional students, there is no indication that the application of the happy-

productive student theory would have any different outcome when comparing the two populations.

Hatcher, Kryter, Prus, and Fitzgerald (1992) conducted a widely cited study that examined the ability to predict college student satisfaction, commitment, and attrition. This quantitative study proposed an investment model to explain the relationship between academic performance and overall student satisfaction with the educational institution. With a sample survey of N = 172, they investigated how the reward of study, i.e., increased grades, correlated with student satisfaction and its effects on attrition. The research found that higher grades from rigorous study produced a very high level of satisfaction with oneself and with the institution. This is an important study as combat veterans who may have problems with focusing, concentrating, or understanding how to study can benefit from effective learning that produced higher grades which ultimately lead to a high level of satisfaction. Counselors can evaluate and provide a means of intervention with student veterans who may be at risk for dropping out of school. The investment model may prove to be a useful tool in understanding student veterans' satisfaction with the institution and curriculum. A watchful eye on performance can further assist schools evaluate their veteran programs to meet their needs and improve retention and graduation of veteran students.

There are challenges to meet the needs of veterans through on-campus social programs offered to them. A considerable amount of student veterans does not take part in school sponsored veteran programs (Jones, 2017). This new demographic of nontraditional students transitioning into a radically different atmosphere tend not to engage with the traditional students. This lack of engagement between the two groups shows a need of an acculturation experience with the traditional students as the veteran students start their transition from the

military to the traditional academic realm (Jones, 2017). This is particularly important for those who have experienced direct combat. It is important to get the two demographics engaged "as a student's most important teacher is often another student" (Patton & Renn, 2016, p. 301). Development of student veterans as a satisfied and successful student is to encourage meaningful friendships and co-existence of diverse student communities (Patton & Renn, 2016). Counselors can address how confidence, control and readiness as a way to help ease the transition and help make the veteran student feel welcomed into the student communities. Also, counselors must be aware that much of today's training for faculty and staff focuses on the potential deficits of the student veteran rather than building on exclusive strengths and skills that they bring from their military service. Programs that are task oriented, or team oriented such as sports may reduce apprehension when working with other social groups. Reducing the anxiety and helping build confidence is a way to improve satisfaction of the transitioning military member (Robertson & Brott, 2014). There can be an elevated level of anxiety when veteran students leave the accustomed military culture while trying to fit in with a new social group.

Behaviorist Theory

In more mainstream traditional theories, understanding changed behavior due to combat experience is best understood by behaviorism. This systematic study of learning is relatively new, and it wasn't unit the late 19th century that behavioral learning was studied at a scientific level (Slavin, 2014). Learning behavior came about through the study of the physical sciences, where researchers began to conduct experiments on how animals and humans learn. Notable among the most important early researchers are well-known behavioral psychologists and theorists B.F. Skinner, Albert Bandura, Lev Vygotsky, and Abraham Maslov. All make points to explain how the environment affects learning and behaviors from their respective theories, there

is no in-depth exploration on the effects of psychological trauma and learning. Outside of the scope of this research there are many applications of behavioral theories to explain differences caused by psychological problems, e.g., PTSD of women who suffered from a sexual assault. However, the research does not clearly correlate to the psychological trauma experienced from combat.

First, B.F. Skinner theorized operant conditioning, where a learned behavior is controlled by consequences (Gutek, 2012). Simply put, experiences from action that have an unpleasant or pleasant consequence causes changes to one's behavior. Veterans who experience combat tend to be passive learners, actions experienced in combat, subsequently which can only affect and be felt by combat veterans, leads to some sort of consequence which essentially the environmental stimuli shapes who they are. Often, their actions in combat are outside their control, however they are mentally conditioned through severe acute or chronic psychological trauma, which can create adverse learning conditions. Linking of operant conditioning to PTSD goes back to 1947, when Hobard Mowrer proposed war trauma was involved in the development of fears. He suggested that anxiety develops by a particular kind of conditioning where a neutral stimulus is paired with a fear-producing stimulus (Zayfert & Becker, 2007). Today, there is research ongoing within the medical field utilizing Skinner's theory on behavior to understand PTSD; an example includes the use of cognitive-behavioral therapy as a treatment for mental trauma and exposure therapy, which looks at reminders of their traumatic events and how to cope with them. Stress-Inoculation training helps veterans gain confidence in their ability to cope with fear and anxiety, which stems from traumatic reminders, and Cognitive Processing Therapy looks at PTSD symptoms stemming from a conflict between pre-trauma beliefs about the self and the world (Resick et al., 2012).

In Albert Bandura's (1997) model of learning, he describes three types of environments. First, it is useful to understand how an *imposed environment*, which is thrust upon a person, is reacted to by an individual. In the case of combat veterans, this can include the psychological trauma of killing others, the death of friends, or constant fear for one's life. Second is a *selected environment*, or an environment where people have influence but may not have total control over their experiences. This is where one can choose his course of action and is where one responsible for the outcome of their actions. The action can have an enduring effect upon veterans who had chosen an accomplishment that did not have a favorable outcome. Last, there is the *created environment*, where individuals construct their behavior. Whereas the example from Miller (2011) discusses how a child who watches a great deal of television "exposes themselves to a different set of models from that of children who usually play with friends instead" (p. 240). As for the combat veteran, their created environment is not with the traditional student, but with other veterans, where there is a strong sense of community. Recent research has shown that veterans tend seek out other veterans to help ease their transition as they are able to relate to their experiences (Heineman, 2016; Minnis, Bondi, & Rumann, 2013; Vacchi, 2016)

Developmental psychologist Lev Vygotsky looked at the effects of war upon children, which manifested deep and hidden suffering. Vygotsky (1962) reported that psychological war trauma caused anxiety, fear, nightmares, loneliness, stifled imagination, and their lack of discovering the surrounding world. He theorized that behaviors of individuals are affected by their environmental surroundings and their social and cultural experiences. Known for his sociocultural approach, Vygotsky believed higher psychological functions to be formed by relationships of the social and cultural events in one's development of their personality. Military combat veterans who had experienced a physical or psychological disorder will have problems

assimilating within a school and have difficulties with their academic performance because of this. That these veterans may not work or relate well with their non-military classmates can be explained by Vygotsky's theories of cultural mediation, which suggests that after psychological trauma there will be changes to the veteran's self-esteem and self-identification (Vygotsky, 1962).

As pointed out by the changes of behaviors due to trauma, we also can see that satisfaction with a particular task or event can influence motivation. Abraham Maslow (1943) explained that integrated wholeness of the organism is the foundation of motivation. Society seeks to improve itself through higher education so that one can achieve a higher level of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, that is, one's motivation towards an unconscious desire or reward. Schools are starting to learn that motivation is not just from a student's needs, or rather, that motivation is not totally inherent, but it is influenced by one's environment and experiences. Well prepared veteran programs provided by their school can highlight their path to success and reinforce their motivation to achieving their goal, which is graduating.

Schlossberg Transition Theory

The Schlossberg's theory of transition examines transitional experiences that affect a person's social and societal roles. This theoretical framework is important in understanding the veteran student's transitioning into the classroom. Schlossberg theory is relevant for transitioning veterans by facilitating "an understanding of adults in transition and aid them in connecting to the help they needed to cope with the 'ordinary and extraordinary process of living" (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010, p. 213). The psychosocial model examines people's transitional experiences and their perception of that transition as it changes their life. Schlossberg (2011) points out that there are various types of transitions that affect a

person's life. For veterans leaving military service they may experience easily identifiable transitions such as anticipated, unanticipated, and acute or chronic changes. Life after the military is anticipated and is predictable in the service-member's life. Many veterans enlist for educational benefits, or as they prepare to depart service look towards using the educational benefits as a means to acquire a degree useable in the civilian world. The veteran will often experience a chronic transition, as defined as long-term or permanent changes in one's routine or role due to the transitional event. The impact of the change from a military setting to a higher educational institution will significantly alter the veteran's life and lifestyle. There are both positive and negative experiences with coping with the phases of the transition, that is moving to, through and out of (Heineman, 2016; Schlossberg, 2011). The educational institutions can use the Schlossberg theory to understand the challenges of the entire transitional process for the veteran as the student develops the skills to cope and conquer the challenges of becoming an adult learner.

The adaptation to civilian life is one of the major challenges that veterans face as they leave military service. The transition is significant as the military is a hierarchical organization with another set of rules such as the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), garrison policies, and superior officer rules that service-members must follow. Leaving this unique military culture poses a significant challenge for the veteran as they transition to the civilian world (Jones, 2017). However, while serving in the military does not mean service members following blindly and are robots, they learn to do critical thinking, learn leadership, develop positive standards of behavior, and have the ability to take the initiative in the absence of orders (Vacchi, 2016). While the military offers assistance with planning and overall logistics during transition throughout their military career, such programs tend not to be

available when they are no longer in the military. It's the lack of order, or an unregimented schedule that can leave veterans feeling unprepared to manage a transition to the civilian life (Robertson & Brott, 2014). During a veteran's transition, there is a lack of understanding of the departure of military life, coping with change, and reintegration into society and higher education. In this area, the schools' military affairs department can develop and integrate programs that addressed the various stages of the veteran's transition into their school.

Related Literature

Early History of Combat Trauma Experiences

What makes a combat veteran different from a student that has not deployed to war? They walk the same, talk the same, and look the same, therefore there should be no difference, right? In fact, there are hundreds of thousands of combat veterans who successfully reintegrate into society and have been quite successful in life after military service. However, many veterans who deployed to war and had actual combat experiences have endured experiences that are unfathomable to the civilian populace. There is countless recording through stories, books, and movies that there is presence of psychological trauma that occurs from war which can be dated back to the beginning of warfare. The idea of PTSD was not seriously looked at until 1678, when Swiss military physicians started characterizing psychological problems from war-stress as *nostalgia*, as these soldiers exhibited melancholy, desire to return home, insomnia, anxiety, and many other ailments (Stein, 2015, p. 11). Around the same time, German doctors called the symptoms *heimweh*, French doctors called it *maladie du pays*, both of which mean "homesickness," and the Spanish called it *estar roto* or "to be broken" (Stein, 2015, p. 12). In the United States, military physicians started documenting the incidences of acute fears and stresses manifesting during soldier performances of military duties. Jacob Mendez da Costa

(1871) published the clinical findings of his observations of afflicted soldiers. He correlated that

the industrial revolution of the late 19th century created a rapid modernization of warfare,

heightening the ability of armies to bring massive destructive power onto the battlefield. The

carnage created was at a scale never seen by mankind before. This had devastating effects that

left numerous surviving soldiers with psychological trauma, for which there was no known

treatment (Stein, 2015). In 1864, U.S. Assistant Surgeon General Robert C. Wood attributed the

symptoms as "a lack of discipline, confidence, and respect," portraying soldiers suffering from

psychological trauma as weak or malingering (Stein, 2015, p. 14). This perception of war-

traumatized soldiers remained as the primary sentiment of injured soldiers for a long time.

       During World War I, the disorder became associated with the explosion of artillery shells

and the belief that the concussion "disrupted the brain" and caused shell shock which was

characterized as "the dazed, disorientated state many soldiers experienced during combat" (Scott,

1990, p. 296). The idea was that psychological problems manifested during trench warfare where

soldiers were continually bombarded by artillery fire. However, soon after the psychological

trauma of battlefield experiences it was coined shell shock. Smith and Pear (1918) claimed that it

was a symptom of "war strain," believing shell shock was "a popular but inadequate title for all

those mental effects of war experience which are sufficient to incapacitate a man from the

performance of military duties" (p. 2). Even during this time, Sigmund Freud proposed the

problem as "war neurosis" and wrote the introduction to the book *Psycho-analysis and the War*

Neurosis (Ferenczi, Abraham, Simmel, & Jones, 1919, p. 31). Freud was called upon by the

Austrian War Ministry to give an expert opinion. He later submitted a memorandum to the

commission giving his observations and analysis of psychological trauma caused by war

experiences. By the end of WWI, there was a consensus by psychiatrists that the psychological

trauma experienced during war is attributed to an emotional problem and not a physical injury to the brain.

World War II, however, was different from all wars before it. Now the battlefield spanned the globe, and weaponry and bombs had become more devastating. In an attempt to reduce the number of soldiers entering the military with psychological issues, processing into the military required a psychiatric screening. However, it did not reduce the psychological afflictions imparted upon soldiers; psychological trauma accounted for 25% of the post-war casualties, and this rate was higher for soldiers who fought in prolonged intense battles (Marlowe, 2000). Because of the effects upon so many soldiers, psychiatrists started to refer to it as combat exhaustion or battle fatigue (Stein, 2015). After the war, the U.S. Army (1947) released a documentary on battle fatigue titled *Shades of Grey: Army Psychology & War Fight Tension* which addressed the causes and treatment of the psychological trauma suffered during WWII. The consensus was that no one was immune to mental illness and being within a stressful environment can have an effect upon everyone who experienced it. Although there were medical advances in the understanding of war stress, there was still a wide consensus amongst soldiers that servicemen who claimed psychological problems were "yellow bellied" (Axelrod, 2009, p. 172). Even U.S. Army General George Patton had a notable lack of empathy for soldiers recuperating from non-physical trauma. During a visit at a medical hospital, he was said to have slapped a soldier and yelled at a medical officer "Don't admit this yellow bastard; there's nothing the matter with him. I won't have the hospitals cluttered up with these sons of bitches who haven't got the guts to fight" (Axelrod, 2009, p. 173). After the incident, thousands of letters were sent to President Roosevelt, most of them indicated support for General Patton.

However, President Roosevelt ultimately reprimanded Patton. He was ordered to apologize and was relieved of command of the Seventh Army (Magee, 2006).

Post-World War II, the government devoted a considerable amount of effort to understanding the new phenomenon of psychological distress during combat. Officials looked at it as a disease; medication was used to treat patients, and many regarded it as the role of biology. A neurologist, Harold Wolff, presented a holistic model of evolutionary biology and stress: "[…]man is further vulnerable because he is so constituted that he reacts not only to the actual existence of danger, but to threats and symbols of danger experienced in his past which call forth reactions little different from those to the assault itself" (as cited in Marlowe, 2000, p. 7). This created more research not only within psychology but also in neurology. During this time, there were improved Department of Veterans Affairs services to assist veterans in their pursuit of a college degree through the 1944 Montgomery G.I. Bill. Due to the introduction of the G.I. Bill there was a dramatic increase of veterans enrolling into college. By 1947, there was upwards of 49% enrollment with 7.8 million veterans receiving an education from various colleges, schools and vocational programs (Jones, 2017).

More wars followed, including the Korean War and Vietnam War. Although there were only minor improvements in treating psychological trauma, there were major advances in the ability to provide medical treatment to injured soldiers. However, the military was cognizant of the psychological aspect of warfare. During the start of the Vietnam War, each battalion was assigned one medical officer to help treat psychological disorders (Scott, 1990). Even with frontline treatment, the war produced a high number of combat fatigued and psychologically damaged soldiers. With the improvement of MEDEVAC helicopters and field surgical facilities, and with better training of medics, there was a significant decrease in combat mortality. Soldiers

were quickly stabilized and transported to field hospitals, and skilled doctors were able to provide treatment. With improvements to antibiotics, quick treatment, and skilled surgeons in the field, wounds that had previously been lethal were now actually survivable. However, this added to a growing number of soldiers surviving grievous wounds that would have led to death, now many survived the horrific experiences which increased the likelihood of a psychological disability. With more focus on treating soldiers, at the end of the war there was a better understanding of the psychological trauma of combat. Towards the end of the Vietnam War, the term PTSD was conceptualized.

The U.S. was involved in conflict in the 1990s, which included the Persian Gulf War, Mogadishu Somalia, and many other smaller conflicts. These armed conflicts continued to produce combat veterans who suffered various sorts of trauma. Other categories of disabilities arose such as the "Gulf War syndrome," where toxic effects of environmental hazards such as pesticides or depleted uranium from armor-piercing munitions caused various unexplained illnesses (Merriman & Winter, 2006, p. 2703). Other psychological effects were examined, such as mental trauma caused by friendly fire which resulted in fatalities.

There are many aspects of trauma that a soldier may bring with them to a college or university. Most have no problems reintegrating, some relying on VA assistance, however, there are a few who fail to seek help or do not know they need help.

Military Veterans Today

War and conflict are constant companions for mankind; even within our recent history, since 2001, there have been over 2.6 million U.S. troops engaged in the decade-and-a-half war in Iraq and Afghanistan. Throughout time, as people are exposed to war and conflict, they have never been immune to the lingering effects caused by it, and many combat veterans today

returning home has experienced mental or physical trauma in the recent war on terrorism. The visible wounds have changed with the tremendous advances in body armor and emergency medical care; there is a very high survivability rate of physical injuries that were considered mortal injuries just a few decades ago. However, since physical injuries are survivable, there is an increased manifestation of the disabilities related to PTSD, traumatic brain injuries, major depression, and also reliance on adverse coping mechanisms such as alcohol and drugs.

Traditionally, Americans have shown servicemen great respect and supported those in uniform. During the World Wars soldiers were given ticker-tape parades and recognized for their defense of the nation. Additionally, those returning from the Korean War were treated as heroes. Unfortunately, that was not the case for Vietnam veterans who had a misperception that they did not measure up to their predecessors. This generation of veterans endured a treatment far less respectable than previous veterans of war. Contrary, today's generation have experienced perhaps the most pro-veteran environment seen since World War II. Many businesses offer military discounts, companies actively employ veterans, and there are government sanctioned training to help veterans transition into society. Part of this motivation to embrace veterans today is perhaps guilt of how the previous generations of war veterans were treated (Yuengert, 2016). However, today's veterans do not have it easy. Since 1973 when the Army eliminated the draft and focused on developing an all-volunteer force, recruiting efforts increased on marketing skills from military service and government benefits for serving. The initiative had been a success with the swift win during Desert Storm, however today there are many challenges with repeated deployments, a grueling operation tempo (OPTEMPO), and a lethal environment of guerrilla tactics using improvised explosive devices (IED) and unimaginable use of suicide bombers. This has had an effect upon a population of volunteers

who are enticed into service due to military training or education benefits. A Netflix original movie, *Sand Castle* (Roessner & Coimbra, 2017), portrays an Army National Guard soldier who enlisted for education benefits but soon after was deployed to Iraq. There is a stigma that veterans today were enticed by such benefits, and through trauma experienced during war has made transition difficult.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs provides educational benefits to help re-educate and re-integrate veterans into society (Snider, 2015). Some argue there is a considerable difference between a combat veteran student and a student who never deployed to war (Olsen et al., 2014). Evidence shows war's propensity for causing psychological damage: well documented cases of World War II, Korean War, and Vietnam War veterans show mild to severe PTSD (Barry, 2015; Boden, Bonn-Miller, Vujanovic, & Drescher, 2012). Now there are tens of thousands of Iraq and Afghanistan War veterans enrolled in colleges and universities as a result of the benefits of the G.I. Bill, although 88% of these veteran students will drop out by next summer (Wood, 2015). Today, there are considerable efforts to assist veterans with PTSD. This is fortunate, as incidents of PTSD has persisted from combat deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan and affects about 20% of military veterans (Haveman-Gould & Newman, 2018).

One of the amazing things about humans is their resilience in dealing with trauma, and many veterans who have experienced combat have been able to adapt and integrate successfully into society and the classroom (Barry, 2015). Student-veterans are classified by the National Center of Education Statistics (NCES) as a subpopulation of non-traditional adult learners (Heineman, 2016) where college life can be quite foreign to them. There are some special considerations and challenges that combat veterans face when they enter into a degree program that a traditional student may not understand. The Americans with Disabilities Act has identified

vulnerable people, populations, and groups who are more susceptible to disability challenges, and they have identified the combat veteran as a vulnerable group (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2012). Research has shown that wartime veteran cultures are often dealing with both visible and invisible scars from their experiences in combat (Brown, 2009). The U.S. government recognized similar psychological trauma patterns from previous wartime historical data invested into veterans of World War II by introducing the G.I. Bill of 1944. The educational benefits allowed veterans to learn skills that were useful in society and being in a classroom setting allowed the slow transition from military to civilian life. By 1956, there were over three million service-members who used these educational benefits, and the G.I. Bill was successful in educating and reintegrating veterans (Altschuler & Bumin, 2009). Later, for jobless Vietnam War veterans, there was the introduction of the veteran hiring preferences by government agencies. Therefore, the U.S. government made steps to improve benefits for combat veterans and offered educational opportunities, job preference, and better-quality medical programs to address behavioral problems.

The current Global War on Terrorism has brought up questions about the mental trauma veterans have suffered in combat, subsequently opening up media scrutiny and forcing a hard look at PTSD. To help veterans reintegrate within the 21st century, there has been an introduction of the new 9/11 G.I. Bill (Jenkins, 2014), and President Obama has decided to award tax credits to companies who hire veterans. However, the massive flood of veterans into the college classroom has proven to be a challenge to higher education institutions. In *Clash of Cultures*, Hanafin (2011) writes about his experiences as a Vietnam War veteran and the challenges being a veteran who later pursued graduate degree in his era. As an academic himself, Hanafin examined the differences between the military culture and educational

institutions in relation to the values, organization, and societal behaviors. What he found was that military culture aligned people toward a more structured system with values of loyalty, respect, honor, selfless service, and disciplined organization that operates differently than society. On the other side are the academic institutions that were less structured, being more liberal and willing to question beliefs (Hanafin, 2011). So, this difference has created a sense for combat veterans that they do not fit in or belong to higher education. Compared to Hanafin's time during the Vietnam War, higher education today has presented a challenge of dealing with a higher level of enrollment of combat veterans who have suffered some traumatic event.

Effects of War

Although most combat veterans reintegrate into civilian life without long-lasting problems, a sizable minority return from deployment with psychiatric or physical injuries that warrant medical attention (DiRamio & Jarvis, 2011). Even in the absence of diagnosable disorders, many experience functional problems that impede full reintegration into civilian life (Sayer et al., 2014). Military veterans come from a culture where personal strength and courage is important and that mission accomplishment is paramount over all other things. Many who have served in combat do not like showing weakness and are reluctant to receive outside help. It is not always clear for anyone to see and recognize the impact of PTSD, depression, or TBI, as declines in cognitive abilities or one's behavioral health are not physical and cannot be spotted by the naked eye. Some may not know they are afflicted by a mental illness and do not realize they need help. Such occurrences can lead to devastating results. With veteran unemployment rates at twice the national average, veterans accounting for 41% of the homeless population (Beckman, Elbogen, Johnson, Newton, & Wagner, 2012), and low graduation rates from higher education institutions (Minnis et al., 2013), continued research to help veterans is warranted.

It is important to show the societal impact from combat veterans who have suffered war trauma and failed to succeed in their reintegration into society. Although it can be argued that the veteran educational benefits are quite generous, the cost of supporting veterans over their lifespan can be far greater, especially considering the sheer number of veterans with disabilities that a war spanning over a decade can produce. In 2019, the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) produced the U.S. military casualties - GWOT casualty summary by casualty type, showing some alarming numbers. It shows that there have been 59,840 casualties reported. This shows known casualties that are defined by the military as a person who is lost to the organization due to reasons of having been declared dead, missing, or injured. The DMDC reports as of 2019 the wounded in action were 20,103 during Operation Enduring Freedom, 422 during Operation Freedom Sentinel, 31,958 during Operation Iraqi Freedom, 79 during Operation Inherent Resolve, and 296 during Operation New Dawn. The total of reported combat wounded or injured was a total of 52,858 service-members (Defense Manpower Data Center, 2019). However, what is more important is that it does not show the extensive number of psychological casualties that were the result of the war on terrorism.

One can only imagine, beyond the reports of physical trauma, the amount to be calculated when considering the psychological effect of war on veterans who experienced the loss of a comrade, who have had to kill an enemy combatant, had to live in constant fear during combat missions over hostile territory, or suffered chronic fear of nightly mortar attacks. A RAND study titled *Invisible Wounds of War* shows that approximately 300,000 veterans suffer from symptoms of PTSD, TBI, or major depression (Tanielian, 2008). Review of literature revealed numerous organizations that assist combat veterans to successfully reintegrate into society with an eye towards recovery. Some of these organizations have completed studies which can help guide

and give insights to universities and colleges as they usher in veterans seeking degrees at their institutions. These education institutions should embrace the idea of furthering the understanding of the needs of combat veterans to further improve their military affairs programs.

Way Ahead: Efforts to Shape the Environment

A social identity theorist explained since the 1990s there is a more diverse population of students with different backgrounds entering higher education (Patton & Renn, 2016). Educational institutions found it increasingly important to cater to the non-traditional students and to relook at their current programs. One of the non-traditional student populations is veteran students, and a way to prepare to receive veterans is to reflect that they are veteran-friendly. There are efforts by these institutions to be an attractive option for veterans to transition from the military into their classrooms in their pursuit for higher education (Heineman, 2016). The literature review points out many problems that higher education institutions face with this surge of combat veterans returning from war into the classroom. There are many ongoing and developing efforts to help address veteran concerns. Most, if not all universities and colleges have an office to advocate for veterans within the student affairs department. Schools with a veterans' affairs office offers programs to help veteran students who may feel uncomfortable being on a campus, helping their transition through the culture shock of going from the military to a campus community. Vacchi (2016) explains that research and anecdotal observation suggests that there is a clash of cultures between veterans and colleges. This is created from the vast differences of discipline, focus, commitment, age, and experiences compared to the traditional student. However, Vacchi points out the importance of not generalizing what is typical military service due to the wide array of experiences that a military service member may experience in their career. He expresses the importance of open dialogue and including veterans

in discussions when the school creates a welcoming environment for veteran students. Vacchi

was not alone, other veterans expressed that there is some difficulty connecting with the

nonmilitary peers, however, they showed an interest to connect and fit in (Blaauw-Hara, 2016).

There are efforts over the last decade by a majority of schools to address the veteran

population. This has been a positive step forward. Schools continue to look at ways of

improving relations and shaping programs to be inclusive of student veterans. However, this

may require specialists to develop the programs rather than making it an additional duty for

existing staff. One of the most common complaints from veterans transitioning into a higher

educational institution is that there is often a lack of staffing or adequate veterans' assistance

program at their school (Jones, 2017). Between all the colleges and universities across the

United States, the military affairs department and programs vary widely without any

standardization between them all. Although some schools have invested a considerable amount

of effort to meet the needs of veterans, there are many schools that lack the knowledge of

veterans' problems and issues. Often the administrative and financial bureaucracy accounted for

much of the frustration as often they are not up to date on current laws, government benefits and

governmental programs for incoming veterans. Navigating through the "institutional

bureaucracy" of the various institutional departments and gathering information on academic and

financial programs can be challenging. The initial transition can be exasperating as these

programs can be fraught with red tape and antiquated procedures (Jones, 2017; Heineman, 2016).

This poses initial dis-satisfaction with the educational transition process as ineffective and

inconsistent staff/faculty counseling and advising can have a negative effect on the student

veterans success (DiRamio & Jarvis, 2011; Vacchi, 2016). Students have voiced the importance

of having a mentor while in the final transitional stage. The student veterans valued their

relationship and connection to the professors, this was regardless if their instructors had served in the military (Blaauw-Hara, 2016). These student-instructor interactions helped veterans feel less isolated and lead to a more engaging relationship leading to success.

It cannot be discounted that there are government efforts to improve opportunities and for higher educational institutions to embrace student veterans. As pointed out earlier, there are many generous education benefits to help veterans to afford an education and gain employable skills after their military service. There are also initiatives by the U.S. government to provide opportunities for veterans to succeed. In 2013, the Presidential Executive order 13607 took effect in an attempt to support veterans who wished to pursue an education (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). It mandated a joint effort from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Department of Education to develop a program called Eight Keys to Veterans' success. Coining the term 'military-friendly,' it encouraged colleges and universities to meet these eight goals to assist veterans and to become registered as military friendly.

According to the community colleges' and universities' efforts to implement eight keys to veterans' success; the eight keys are as follows:

1. Create a culture of trust and connectedness across the campus community to promote well-being and success for veterans.

2. Ensure consistent and sustained support from campus leadership.

3. Implement an early alert system to ensure all veterans receive academic, career, and financial advice before challenges become overwhelming.

4. Coordinate and centralize campus efforts for all veterans, together with the creation of a designed space (even if the space is limited in size).

5. Collaborate with local communities and organizations, including government agencies, to align and coordinate various services for veterans.

6. Utilize a uniform set of data tools to collect and track information on veterans, including demographics, retention and degree completion.

7. Provide comprehensive professional development for faculty and staff on issues and challenges unique to veterans.

8. Develop systems that ensure sustainability of effective practices for veterans.

(U. S. Department of Education, 2013)

This program was a step in the right direction in synchronizing efforts and establishing a framework for educational institutions to address the needs of student veterans. Educational institutions that meet the needs of veterans by establishing themselves as veteran-friendly provides an attractive option for student veterans which can lead to expected increased enrollments, improved retention, and enhanced graduation rates (Heineman, 2016).

How we approach the veteran transitional challenge my lay with preparatory courses that realign skills to ensure success within the classroom. For example, many who serve in the military can attest to a whole new language. Veterans may carry over writing skills that are filled with military jargon or use of acronyms that can obscure an academic paper. Faculty and staff are not knowledgeable about the unique military culture which includes its language. A study conducted in 2015 looked at writing programs as a way to help veterans transition. Introductory level first-year writing courses are usually small one-on-one classes allowing a considerable amount of time with their instructor and opportunities to collaborate with classmates (Hart & Thompson, 2016). They concluded that because reflective and expressive writing theories shape a first-year student's writing experience, writing classes provides a

transitional space between the military and the veteran student's college experiences (Hart & Thompson, 2016). Research as such is important in addressing the fundamental shift that student veterans are undertaking. From military to civilian, veterans were a professional soldier/sailor/airman/marine who is transitioning to student, entry writing courses provide a rich opportunity to ensure a successful transition. As Figure 1 shows, the veteran population has a higher number of high school graduates than non-veterans, 36.6% has some college or an associate degree over 28.2% of non-veterans, however veterans fall short by nearly 3% on achieving a bachelors or higher (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2016). Programs like the first-year writing, when brought together as a whole of other successful programs can improve the veteran students ability to achieve their educational goals, especially a bachelors or beyond.

Level of Educational Attainment	Veteran Population	Non-Veteran Population
Less than high school diploma	7.4%	14.4%
High school diploma (includes GED)	29.3%	27.9%
Some college OR associate degree	36.6%	28.2%
Bachelor's degree or higher	26.6%	29.5%

Figure 1. Education Attainment Levels (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2016, p. 12).

Summary

The U.S. military and higher education has a long history educating servicemen and women which traces back to the Morrill Act of 1862, which mandated military training to be part of the academic curriculum for all colleges and universities. The Morrill Act paved the way for the National Defense Act of 1916 which established the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) at a majority of colleges and universities across the nation (Jones, 2017). Service-members have been an integral part of professional military and civilian education. In many

ways, veterans are ideal students. They tend to have the best classroom attendance, have leadership training to be effective leaders and are mutually trustworthy team members. Many veterans are more developed and mature with a nuanced worldview than the traditional student. Often because of the experience of working with a diverse group of people in the military and having experienced different cultures from around the world, student veterans bring these experiences into the classroom which enriches class discussions and assignments (Morrow & Hart, 2014).

Despite many of the strengths that veterans bring, student veterans frequently find the transition from military service to the classroom can be one of the most difficult challenges that student veterans face. Coming from multiple deployments and prolonged combat engagements, the transition with combat experience is even harder. While combat veterans adjust from abnormal life experiences, student veterans are "undergoing a constant dynamic tension as they transition from a previous state (service member), to several simultaneous current states (college student, civilian, employee), which moving forward to a future state (college graduate, new job)" (Jones, 2013, p. 12). There is a lack of sufficient research to understand the effects of prolong conflict upon student veterans (Blevins et al., 2013; Jones, 2017) and to ensure to maximize the future success of combat veterans, there needs to be a review of ways to meet the needs of all veterans in higher education today.

The literature reviewed expresses the desire for student veterans to succeed, however, these veterans experience, especially in combat zones, can profoundly affect how they transition into the schools. Many sources reiterate the need for further research and deeper analysis into the needs of veterans as they transition out of the military and into the classroom (Heineman, 2016; Minnis et al., 2013). Theoretically, there are expected behavioral changes with the shaping of

one's worldview through their military training, experiences and service across the world. Where many veterans transition without problem and are able to conform to the new "college culture" there are others who are faced with challenges. These challenges can stem from mental or physical disabilities acquired from their military service. There have been broad studies that looked at the challenges to military veteran's transitions into civil educational institutions; however, there is a lack of understanding the ramifications of their military experiences. Although most, if not all, colleges and universities have a student affairs department to provide services for veterans, there appears to be an unorganized effort for providing services to train faculty and staff on the needs of veterans, and how to retain veterans. This research looks at a means to measure success of educational programs through veterans' satisfaction.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

Chapter Three discusses the processes and procedures used to facilitate this study. This chapter includes an overview of research design, research questions, null hypotheses, participants and settings, instrumentation, procedures, and data analysis. This research examined the topic of academic and social satisfaction in relation to the student-veterans' overall educational experience at their educational institution of enrollment. The researched looked at how military veterans are transitioning from military service, many whom have experienced combat and possibly physical or psychological trauma. This was guided primarily by two theories, first being the Schlossberg Transition theory where students moving from military service, with possible wartime deployments, into a civilian higher educational institution. The second theory is the Cotton et al. (2002) happy-productive worker (student) theory, where we can examine in today's colleges are meeting the needs of veterans who are transition into civilian education. The data utilized were from the Ruffalo Noel Levitz (n.d.) Student Satisfaction Inventory, which was administered from the university of this study. The various questions looked at academic and social aspects of the school and the level of student satisfaction as indicated on a 7-point Likert scale. Utilizing a quantitative correlational design, specifically the Pearson correlation coefficient, the researcher was able to determine the student-veterans' level of academic and social satisfaction through the statistical calculation of the strength of the variables' relationship.

Design

This study involved a quantitative correlation design to analyze both research questions, due to the study involving the investigation of relationships between student-veteran satisfaction (the predictor variable) and the student-veteran's overall educational experience at their educational

institution of enrollment (the criterion variable). The data were collected from an *ex-post facto* satisfaction survey inventory by Noel-Levitz, Inc. Furthermore, this is a non-experimental study, where there was no treatment or control group and where no variables were manipulated. The Pearson correlation coefficient is a parametric correlation statistic that provides information about the strength of a linear association between two variables (Warner, 2013). The Pearson *r* is appropriate for this research study as according to Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007), a correlational technique is best used "when both variables that we wish to correlate are expressed as continuous scores" (p. 347) and that "product-moment correlation is the most widely used bivariate correlational technique because most educational measures yield continuous scores" (p. 347). Also, the importance of a Pearson correlational study allowed the researcher to utilize large numbers of variable data points to depict a clear interpretation of correlation through linearity within the variable relationships and as a measure of reliability (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2010). The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient or Pearson's *r* is an appropriate choice to describe statistically the relationship between student-veteran satisfaction and overall educational experience if certain assumptions are met (Warner, 2013).

Research Questions

This research sought to answer the questions, using the SSI, is there a relationship between veteran's academic satisfaction, and alternately, their social satisfaction, and their overall academic experience at their educational institution of enrollment? These questions were examined based on student-veteran responses on the Ruffalo Noel Levitz (n.d.) SSI administered at a well-established private southeastern university. The research questions for this study are:

RQ1: Is there a relationship between student-veterans' academic satisfaction as measured by the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory and overall educational experience

at their educational institution of enrollment as measured by the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory?

RQ2: Is there a relationship between student-veterans' social satisfaction as measured by the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory and overall educational experience at their educational institution of enrollment as measured by the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory?

Hypotheses

The null hypotheses for this study are:

H$_0$1: There is no statistically significant relationship between a student-veterans' academic satisfaction as measured by the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory and overall educational experience at their educational institution of enrollment as measured by the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory.

H$_0$2: There is no statistically significant relationship between a student-veterans' social satisfaction as measured by the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory and overall educational experience at their educational institution of enrollment as measured by the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory.

Participants and Setting

The participants for this study were drawn from a convenience sample of undergraduate and graduate student-veterans enrolled at a private southeastern university during the 2016-2017 academic year; participants are characterized as military veterans who self-identify as a student with U.S. military service on a nationally administered satisfaction survey, the Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (2017). The site for this study is a single private southeastern university accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on

Colleges that awards associate, bachelor's, master's, specialist and doctoral degrees. The university reported that a large number of its students are enrolled in its more than 280 online degree programs. The university was selected for the number of military veterans who enroll and also for being ranked amongst the top military-friendly schools by onlinecolleges.com, bestcolleges.com, guidetoonlineschools.com, and many others. The site has a dedicated staff that operates a Military Affairs office which is a branch of the campus Student Affairs. A military liaison officer is available to assist with Veteran benefits, acts as a liaison for complex issues, and connects veterans with the university's Student Veterans Association and other military clubs. According to the subject university's quick facts page, the student enrollment at the beginning of the academic year was over 110,000 enrolled which includes its online degree programs with over 30,000 student-veterans and 900 international students.

The Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory is administered typically every five years to its student body by the university used in this study and is used to analyze the quality of student life. This study utilized the SSI data from the 2016-2017 academic year. SSI participation request is sent by the university's Institutional Effectiveness Administration to all students currently enrolled. According to Ruffalo Noel Levitz (n.d.), the total student participation nationally for the 2016-2017 SSI was 332 educational institutions with a total population size of 217,956. For the university utilized in this study, there were a total of 5,019 participants with 86 student-veterans which constitutes 1.7 % of the study's population.

The selection criteria for the participants of this study was the SSI self-identifying responses as Post-9/11 U.S. military veterans of any branch of service who have attended the selected university with assistance of the university's military affairs office in identifying the qualifying participants, the research will use ex-post facto data of participants who are currently

or have attended the university. Of the student-veterans who have completed the Ruffalo Noel

Levitz (n.d.) SSI, there were 86 who were identified as military veterans whom had completed

the survey. The participant sample number exceeded the necessary sample size of 66

participants for statistical power analysis for a correlation coefficient (r) hypothesis test with a

medium effect size and a statistical power of 0.7 at the 0.05 Cronbach's alpha level (Gall et al.,

2007). The university's gender distribution is reported as 42% male students and 58% female

students (Overview of Liberty University, n.d.). The demographic inspection of military veterans

at the university reveals that the participants were 67.4% (n=58) male, 20.9% (n=18) female, and

11.7% (n=10) who did not disclose a gender. However, for this study there is no separation or

consideration of the population's gender.

Instrumentation

The instrument used in this study is the data collated and provided by the Ruffalo Noel

Levitz, Inc. *Student Satisfaction Inventory*™, as one of the Ruffalo Noel-Levitz Satisfaction-

Priorities Surveys which is used as a national benchmark comparison for higher education

nationwide. This national database is readily available for research comparison. As published in

the *Satisfaction-Priorities Assessments* (2016) the Satisfaction-Priorities survey has been taken

by more than 5,500,000 students at 2,700 campuses, providing an exceptionally valid and varied

benchmark (Ruffalo Noel Levitz, 2016). The university used in this research study is a

participant in SSI and its data are available for research. As reported by Ruffalo Noel Levitz,

Inc., the data are readily available and the point of contact at the university to be studied was

provided: more details are outlined in Annex A. As pointed out in the *Student Satisfaction*

Inventory (Ruffalo Noel Levitz, n.d.), the SSI is a tool focused in measuring student satisfaction

along with what issues are important to them. Researchers have used these data for guiding

strategic action planning, strengthening student retention initiatives, meeting accreditation requirements, identifying areas of strength for institutional marketing, and charting progress towards campus goals.

The SSI has tailored questions focusing on college experiences and gives participants an opportunity to rate their levels of satisfaction using a Likert scale. The Likert scale's range of one (1), which represents "not important" or "not satisfied," through seven (7), which represents "very important" or "very satisfied." The SSI has 70 standard questions that can be reviewed at their website. The university version of the SSI is an unabridged 12-scale Form A. The 12 scales as outlined on the Ruffalo Noel-Levitz (2016) website are as follows: 1) *Academic Advising Effectiveness* has seven questions that assess the academic advising program, evaluating advisors and counselors, and their personal concern for students; 2) *Campus Climate* has 15 questions that evaluate the institution's promotion of a sense of campus pride and belonging; 3) *Campus Support Services* consists of seven questions, assessing the quality of support programs and services; 4) *Concern for the Individual* has five questions that assess the institution's commitment to treat each student as an individual; 5) *Instructional Effectiveness* consists of 14 questions that measure students' academic experiences, the curriculum, and the campus's commitment to academic excellence; 6) *Admissions and Financial Aid Effectiveness* consists of six questions that measures the competence of admissions counselors, along with students' perceptions of the financial aid programs; 7) *Registration Effectiveness* consists of nine questions that assess registration and billing, including how smooth the registration process is; 8) *Responsiveness to Diverse Populations* has six questions that assess the commitment to specific groups of students enrolled at the institution (e.g., minorities, veterans, disabled students); 9) *Safety and Security* has five questions focused on students' personal safety and security (Also in

this category is Service Excellence with nine questions measures quality of service and personal concern for students in various areas of campus); 10) *Student Centeredness* has six questions that measure the institution's attitude toward students and the extent to which they feel welcome and valued; 11) *Academic Services* has seven questions devoted to assessing services that students utilize to achieve their academic goals, e.g., library, computer labs, tutoring, and study areas; 12) *Campus Life* consists of six questions assessing the effectiveness of student life programs offered by the institution, ranging from athletics to residence life.

The Ruffalo Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory has been determined to be a highly reliable instrument. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient is 0.97 for the survey instrument's importance scores and is 0.98 for the survey of satisfaction scores Ruffalo Noel-Levitz (2016). It also demonstrates good score reliability over time, however a Cronbach's alpha will be conducted on the sample. The three-week, test-retest reliability coefficient is 0.85 for importance scores and 0.84 for satisfaction scores, as reported by the Ruffalo Noel-Levitz (2016) *Satisfaction-Priorities Surveys Interpretive Guide*.

Prior Instrumentation Use

The Ruffalo Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory has been used by schools in assessing campus programs, meeting accreditation requirements, and helping develop planning efforts to achieve their goals. However, with the extensive base of reliable data, the SSI proves to be a reliable source of data for the academic institutions to conduct research due to it high levels of reliability. A study at LaSalle University used the 11 scales from the SSI in determining the relationship between importance and satisfaction using data. The study showed a V-shaped distribution, such that attributes with high satisfaction received higher importance ratings than the attributes with mid-level satisfaction (Roszkowski, 2003). The researcher

concluded that student satisfaction was better than student importance when used by schools

assessing their programs. This is particularly useful information when looking at what students

are looking at within a school. For returning veterans, being satisfied with the transition and

fitting within an institution will affect their desire to remain and complete their program of study.

In a more recent study published in the *Journal of Applied Research in the Community*

College, titled "Student Satisfaction and Student Performance" (Oja, 2011), the Noel-Levitz SSI

was used to investigate the relationship between student satisfaction in the 12 areas the SSI

utilizes to measure student performance. Students with lower grades were found to be less

satisfied in several areas that they rated as important (Oja, 2011). This again reinforces the

notion that satisfaction is not necessarily related to a student's feeling of a subject's importance.

The SSI has been used as a tool to help identify troubled students. The researcher used the SSI

as a tool to "bring to light" impediments to students' success and happiness that otherwise a

campus may not be aware of (Salas, 2010). Therefore, campuses can benefit by developing

programs that utilize intervention in solving their problems, shaping personal counseling, and

developing a campus support network.

During an analysis of the Noel-Levitz SSI, a cursory evaluation of data can be obtained

for an institution not associated with this study. Available online is a 2012 Noel-Levitz Student

Satisfaction Survey 52-page report completed for Fox Valley Technical College (2012). The SSI

report is significant in initial research as it shows that considerable efforts on capturing student

satisfaction is contained within meeting the needs of this dissertation. The SSI was distributed as

2,432 paper copies with 1,773 (72%) returned completed. This exploratory report shows the

breakdown of key demographics in various categories. Of significance to this study are age,

educational goals, employment, and disabilities. Table 1 was created by the researcher to be an

example of how the SSI report would look as it summarizes key demographics of disabilities.

Table 1

Example of an SSI Key Demographics Category

Disabilities ***	2007	2008	2011
Yes – Disability	9.37%	10.44%	12.06%
No – Disability	90.63%	89.56%	87.94%
A slightly higher percentage of students from 2007 to 2011 are identified as having a disability.			
*** Note. This is fictitious data used for illustration purposes.			

The Noel-Levitz survey instrument asks students to respond to each item on a one to seven

Likert scale, with seven being highest. The table below was created by the researcher to be an

example of how the published SSI report illustrates the increasing satisfaction mean ratings,

along with the rising importance mean rating. A performance gap is calculated by simply

subtracting the satisfaction score from the importance score. The larger the performance gap, the

greater the discrepancy between what students expect and their level of satisfaction with the

current situation. The smaller the performance gap, the better the institution is doing at meeting

the students' expectations.

Table 2

Example of a Summary of the SSI 12 Categories

	2007			2008			2011		
Institutional Summary ***	**Import**	**Satisf**	**Gap**	**Import**	**Satisf**	**Gap**	**Import**	**Satisf**	**Gap**
Student Centeredness	6.09	5.57	0.52	6.18	5.53	0.65	6.28	5.62	0.66
Instructional Effectiveness	5.85	5.50	0.35	5.94	5.50	0.44	6.05	5.59	0.46
Responsiveness to Diverse Populations		5.40			5.49			5.52	
Campus Support Service	5.18	5.03	0.15	5.26	5.04	0.22	5.34	5.15	0.19
Safety and Security	5.67	5.09	0.58	5.76	5.06	0.70	5.85	5.16	0.69
Academic Advising/Counseling	5.89	5.26	0.63	6.06	5.41	0.65	6.14	5.43	0.71
Admissions and Financial Aid	5.69	5.05	0.64	5.88	5.05	0.83	5.99	5.26	0.73
Academic Services	5.85	5.50	0.35	5.94	5.50	0.44	6.05	5.59	0.46
Registration Effectiveness	5.18	5.03	0.15	5.26	5.04	0.22	5.34	5.15	0.19
Service Excellence	5.67	5.09	0.58	5.76	5.06	0.70	5.85	5.16	0.69
Concern for the individual	5.89	5.26	0.63	6.06	5.41	0.65	6.14	5.43	0.71
Campus Climate	5.69	5.05	0.64	5.88	5.05	0.83	5.99	5.26	0.73

*** Note. This is fictitious data used for illustration purposes.

The university used in this study participates with the Noel-Levitz SSI. This study is conducted with data that are *ex-post facto*, where the data are available retroactively. Since the data are *ex-post facto,* the research is a systematic empirical inquiry; the researcher does not have control of independent variables because their indicators have already occurred and are not inherently manipulated. It is expected the 2015 SSI data will be available for assessment.

Procedures

A request was submitted to the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) to be granted permission to implement the research protocol. The request included the research methods and design presented here. After obtaining IRB approval from Liberty University, the researcher obtained SSI data for this study from the chosen university for the school year of 2015. The data were downloaded onto an encrypted and secured hard drive. It is important to note that all data were secured in the researcher's office within a locked filing cabinet, and only

the researcher had the key to access the data. The data were transcribed and entered into

Microsoft Excel®. There were no personal data or identifying information disclosed or

published within this research document ensuring all measures were used to protect

confidentiality and anonymity.

The data was synthesized by transferring the data collected in Microsoft Excel® into the

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 22. A personal IBM PC compatible

computer was used to operate the SPSS statistical analysis software and the statistical data, and

the data was secured by a 256-bit password protected system. Only the researcher had the

password and could access the secured personal computer. Additionally, the data was backed up

onto a dedicated USB portable drive that was secured at the researcher's bank security box,

assessable only to the researcher. It is important to note that the data was not made available for

anyone other than the researcher and the committee. The analysis method of the research data is

discussed in the next section.

Data Analysis

The statistical analyses used to answer the research questions for this study included

correlational analyses. Parametric and non-bivariate correlation analyses were used to evaluate

if a significant association existed between the variables of interest and to determine the strength

of linear association between scores (Warner, 2013). The variables examined in this study

included student-veterans' *academic satisfaction*, *social satisfaction,* and *overall educational*

experience at their educational institution of enrollment, all measured by the Noel-Levitz Student

Satisfaction Inventory (2017). In this study two Pearson's correlation analyses and follow up

Spearman rho's correlation analyses were used to examine the association between the set pairs

of variables; academic satisfaction and overall educational experience, and social satisfaction and

overall educational experience. The follow up non-parametric, Spearman rho's correlation

analyses were conducted due to assumption violations in the data set. This is fully explained in

chapter 4.

Table 3

Research Question 1 and Corresponding SSI Instrument Questions

Research Question	**Instrument** (Corresponding questions from SSI)
Relationship between student-veterans' <u>academic satisfaction</u> as measured by the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Instrument and their <u>overall educational experience</u> at their educational institution of enrollment as measured by the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction instrument.	<u>Academic satisfaction (Predictor variable):</u> Q10. My academic advisor helps me set goals to work towards. Q16. My academic advisor is available when I need help. Q24. I receive the help I need to apply my academic major to my career goals. Q32. Faculty provide timely feedback about my academic progress. Q36. The quality of instruction I receive in most classes is adequate. Q40. Faculty are usually available to students outside of class. Q43. Mentors are available to guide my life and career goals. <u>Overall educational experience (Criterion variable):</u> Q96. So far, how has your college experience met your expectations? Q97. Rate your overall satisfaction with your experience here thus far. Q98. All in all, if you had it to do over again, would you enroll here?

Table 4

Research Question 2 and Corresponding SSI Instrument Questions

Research Question	**Instrument** (Corresponding questions from SSI)
Relationship between student-veterans' <u>social satisfaction</u> as measured by the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Instrument and their <u>overall educational experience</u> at their educational institution of enrollment as measured by the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction instrument.	<u>Social Satisfaction (Predictor variable):</u> Q1. The campus staff are caring and helpful. Q3. The campus is safe and secure for all students. Q22. This campus provides online access to services I need. Q31. Students are made to feel welcome here. Q42. Students are free to express their ideas on this campus. Q44. On the whole, the campus is well maintained. Q54. I can ask other students to help me understand course material. <u>Overall educational experience (Criterion variable):</u> Q96. So far, how has your college experience met your expectations? Q97. Rate your overall satisfaction with your experience here thus far. Q98. All in all, if you had it to do over again, would you enroll here?

Research Assumptions

All analyses have assumptions and need to be tested (Warner, 2013). Several assumptions were tested prior to conducting the planned Pearson correlation analyses. The first assumption, addressed in the design of the study, includes that the pair of variables are independent from each other. Scores must also be quantitative and normally distributed (Warner, 2013). The assumption of normality was tested utilizing the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (KS-test) with the Cronbach's alpha level set at > 0.05 (Warner, 2013). Linearity was tested using a visual inspection of the scatterplot, and box plots were used to detect extreme outliers.

Third, there is an assumption that anonymity is maintained, and no personal information will be published. The participants were contacted by the university institutional effectiveness department and were willing to submit to a voluntary SSI at the request of the university. The participants' information is secure and there is no ability of the participants' personal information being accessible outside the research team.

Last, there are known limits of the methodology. This can be inferred through the use of the ex-post facto data of the SSI which primary focus is to measure student satisfaction and priorities in general. The research identifies the assumption that the questions used in the Tables 3 and 4, guided by the definitions of academic and social satisfaction, are accurate indicators. The SSI student-veteran sample size was smaller than anticipated. The ration of student-veteran versus traditional-student participation was significantly smaller. This brings to question why that population decided not to participate or that population decided not to classify themselves as a student-veteran. Since the SSI is self-reported data, it is limited by the fact that it may not be independently verified, that is the data must be taken at face value. The SSI was developed as a

tool for measuring the entire population, therefore there may be biases in the questions. More

clearly, that the focus of the SSI questions was not specifically made to measure the student-

veteran populations satisfaction and priorities.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

This chapter provides the data from the statistical analyses. The purpose of this correlational study is twofold. The study first seeks to determine if a statistically significant association exists between student-veterans' academic satisfaction and overall educational experience at their educational institution of enrollment. The study also examines if a statistically significant association exists between student-veterans' social satisfaction and overall educational experience at their educational institution of enrollment. The Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (2017) was used to measure all three variables. The academic satisfaction subscale, which consisted of 7 questions (questions 10, 16, 24, 32, 36, 40, and 43) was used to measure academic satisfaction, while the social satisfaction (questions 1, 3, 22, 31, 42, 44, and 54) subscales consisting of 7 items was used to measure social satisfaction. Three items made up the educational experience subscale (questions 96, 97, 98), which was used to measure student-veterans overall educational experience. A detailed discussion about the subscale used to measure each construct is identified in the chapter's subscale section.

The study contributes to the understanding of how student-veteran academic and social satisfaction and their overall learning experience with a learning institution are related and to provide implications for improved retention, improved educational environment, and the schools' ability to meet the needs of student-veterans enrolled at this institution. Chapter 3 introduced the methodology of the study, and the research questions will be answered. A summary of the scale and its reliability for this study sample is discussed followed by a discussion of participant demographics and analysis results. Finally, the chapter's summary will discuss the corresponding null hypotheses tested in this chapter.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study are:

RQ1: Is there a relationship between student-veterans' academic satisfaction as measured by the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory and overall educational experience at their educational institution of enrollment as measured by the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory?

RQ2: Is there a relationship between student-veterans' social satisfaction as measured by the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory and overall educational experience at their educational institution of enrollment as measured by the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory?

Null Hypotheses

The null hypotheses for this study are:

$H_0 1$: There is no statistically significant relationship between academic satisfaction and overall educational experience at their educational institution of enrollment as measured by the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory.

$H_0 2$: There is no statistically significant relationship between social satisfaction and overall educational experience at their educational institution of enrollment as measured by the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory.

The Scale

The data for 86 veterans were collected. Five cases were removed due to incomplete data; therefore, data were analyzed for 81 veterans. The data consisted of questions from the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (2017) that measured veteran's social satisfaction, academic satisfaction, and overall educational experience at their educational institution of

enrollment. The academic satisfaction subscales consisted of seven items which are SSI

questions 10, 16, 24, 32, 36, 40, and 43. More specifically, academic satisfaction was measured

using the seven SSI questions; if their academic advisor helps them set goals to work toward;

their academic advisor is available when they need help; they receive the help needed to apply

their academic major to their career goals; faculty provides timely feedback about their academic

progress; the quality of instruction they receive in most classes is adequate; faculty are usually

available to students outside of class; and, mentors are available to guide their life and career

goals; which creates the academic satisfaction subscale on the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction

Inventory (2017). The social satisfaction subscales consisted of seven items which are SSI

questions 1, 3, 22, 31, 42, 44, and 54. More specifically, social satisfaction was measured using

the seven SSI questions; the campus staff are caring and helpful; the campus is safe and secure

for all students; this campus provides online access to services I need; students are free to

express their ideas on this campus; on the whole, the campus is well maintained; and, I can ask

other students to help me understand course material; which creates the social satisfaction

subscale on the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (2017). The overall educational

experience subscale consisted of three items which are SSI questions 96, 97 and 98. More

specifically, overall educational experience was measured using three SSI questions; So far, how

has your college experience meet your expectations; rate your overall satisfaction with your

experience here thus far; and, all in all, if you had to do over again, would you enroll here; which

creates the overall educational experience subscale on the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction

Inventory (2017).

Scores were calculated on a seven-point Likert-type scale for each item; therefore, scores

for the social satisfaction and academic satisfaction subscales could range from 1 to 49. Scores

on the educational experience subscale could range from 1 to 21. Cronbach's alpha calculated to

assess the internal consistency of an instrument and was used to assess the reliability of each

Noel-Levitz subscale. This reliability analysis is used when items of measure are not scored

dichotomously, and it is a widely used method for computing test score reliability (Gall et al.,

2007). What constitutes a good level of internal consistency differs depending on what source

you refer to, although all recommended values are 0.7 or higher (DeVellis, 2003; Kline, 2005).

A commonly-accepted rule of thumb is that a Cronbach's alpha of 0.7 (some say 0.6) indicates

acceptable reliability, and 0.8 or higher indicates good reliability. Very high reliability (0.95 or

higher) is not necessarily desirable, as this indicates that the items may be entirely redundant.

Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the social satisfaction and academic satisfaction subscales were

.704 and .623, respectively, indicating fair to acceptable internal consistence (DeVellis 2003;

Kline, 2005). The overall educational experience subscale however had good internal

consistency with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.920. Results should thus be interpreted

cautiously considering the fair to acceptable reliability of the social satisfaction and academic

satisfaction subscales.

Descriptive Statistics

Demographics

The study consisted of 86 student-veterans enrolled at a private southeastern university

during the 2016–2017 academic year; participants are characterized as military veterans who

self-identify as a student with U.S. military service on a nationally administered satisfaction

survey, the Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory. Fifty-eight (67.4%) were male, eighteen

(20.9%) were female and ten (11.6%) participants did not indicate a gender. Fifty-six (65.1%)

were registered as undergraduate, twenty-six (32.6%) were graduates, and four (4.6%) were

doctoral students. From the fifty-six undergraduates, there were nine (15.5%) freshmen, three (5.2%) sophomore, seven (12.1%) juniors, and thirty-seven (63.8%) seniors. Thirty-three (38.4%) were transfer students and fifty-three (61.6%) did not transfer to the school. The results of all demographic information of student-veterans provided by the SSI are summarized in Appendix D. Data for 81 student-veterans were complete and analyzed to answer the research questions.

Study Variables

The descriptive statistics presented in Table 5 presents the mean and standard deviation for the variables analyzed.

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics (N=81)

Variable	*M*	*SD*
Educational Experience	16.53	4.41
Social Satisfaction	40.47	6.51
Academic Satisfaction	38.68	7.68

The study variables were measured using the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (2017). The student-veterans' academic satisfaction was measured using the sum of questions 10, 16, 24, 32, 36, 40, and 43, and social satisfaction was measured by the sum of questions 1, 3, 22, 31, 42, 44, and 54. Table 6 shows the descriptive statistics for each of the SSI item used to measure academic and social satisfaction.

Table 6

Predictor Variable Mean and Standard Deviation

Academic satisfaction (Predictor variable)	*Mean*	*Std. Deviation*
Q10. My academic advisor helps me set goals to work towards.	4.91	2.05
Q16. My academic advisor is available when I need help.	5.29	2.06
Q24. I receive the help I need to apply my academic major to my career goals.	5.73	1.58
Q32. Faculty provide timely feedback about my academic progress.	5.62	1.36
Q36. The quality of instruction I receive in most classes is adequate.	6.08	1.30
Q40. Faculty are usually available to students outside of class (during office hours, by phone, by e-mail).	6.22	1.08
Q43. Mentors are available to guide my life and career goals.	5.36	1.66

Social Satisfaction (Predictor variable)		
Q1. The campus staff are caring and helpful.	5.93	1.33
Q3. The campus is safe and secure for all students.	6.28	1.16
Q22. This campus provides online access to services I need.	6.05	1.06
Q31. Students are made to feel welcome here.	6.02	1.36
Q42. Students are free to express their ideas on this campus.	5.59	1.64
Q44. On the whole, the campus is well maintained.	6.41	0.82
Q54. I can ask other students to help me understand course material.	5.48	1.61

The study's variable of *overall educational experience* was calculated using questions 96, 97, 98 on the scale (Noel-Levitz, 2017). Table 7 shows the descriptive statistics for items 96, 97, and 98.

Table 7

Criterion Variable Mean and Standard Deviation

Overall educational experience (Criterion variable)	*Mean*	*Std. Deviation*
Q96. So far, how has your college experience met your expectations?	5.02	1.55
Q97. Rate your overall satisfaction with your experience here thus far.	5.67	1.52
Q98. All in all, if you had it to do over again, would you enroll here?	5.89	1.62

Results

Assumption Testing for Academic Satisfaction

To examine the association between academic satisfaction and educational experience, a Pearson's correlation analysis was planned. Prior to conducting the analysis, assumption testing was conducted. Through visual inspection of the scatterplot, the assumption of linearity was examined. The association between academic satisfaction and educational experience is deemed to be linear based on the scatterplot (see Figure 2).
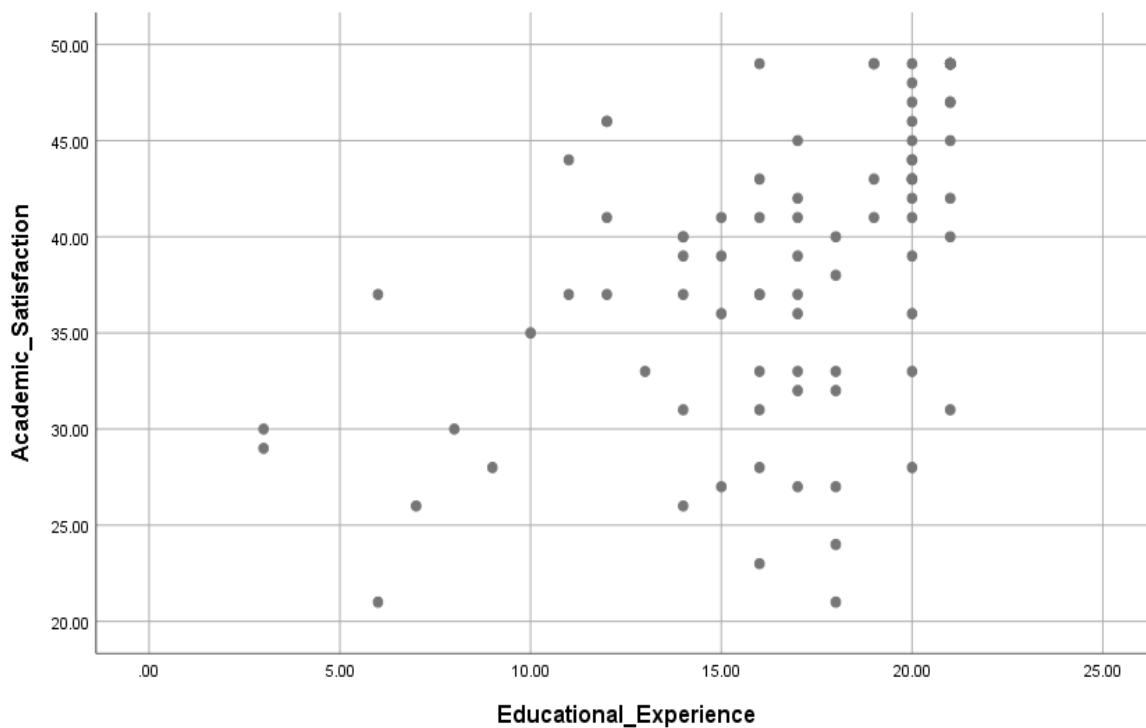

Figure 2. Scatterplot for Academic Satisfaction versus Educational Experience.

The assumption that there were no extreme outliers was evaluated using boxplots. The educational experience data has outliers (participant cases 19, 45, 47, 53); however, no extreme outliers are present (see Figure 3). The academic satisfaction data has no outliers (see Figure 5).
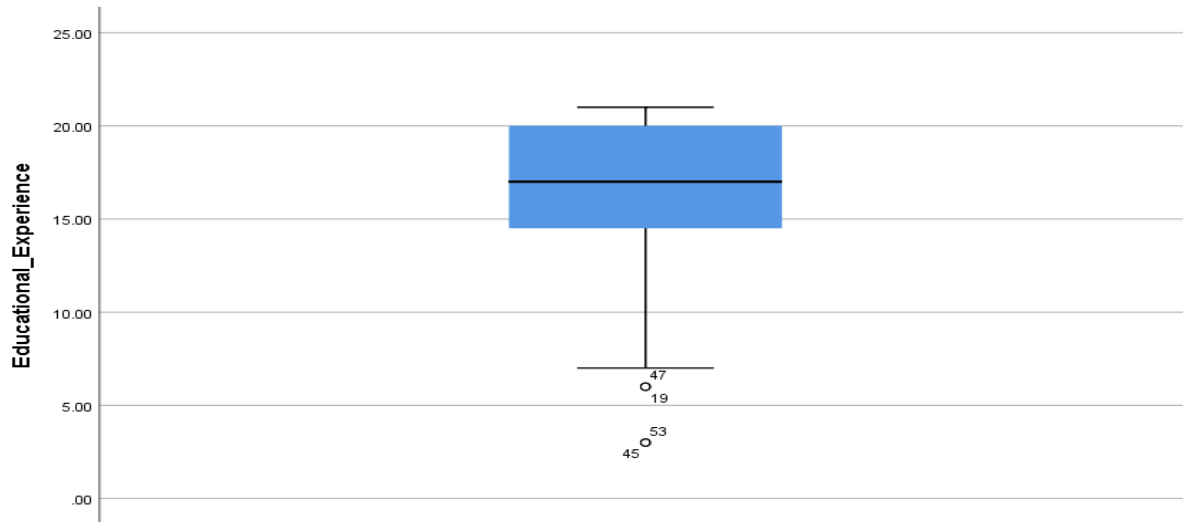
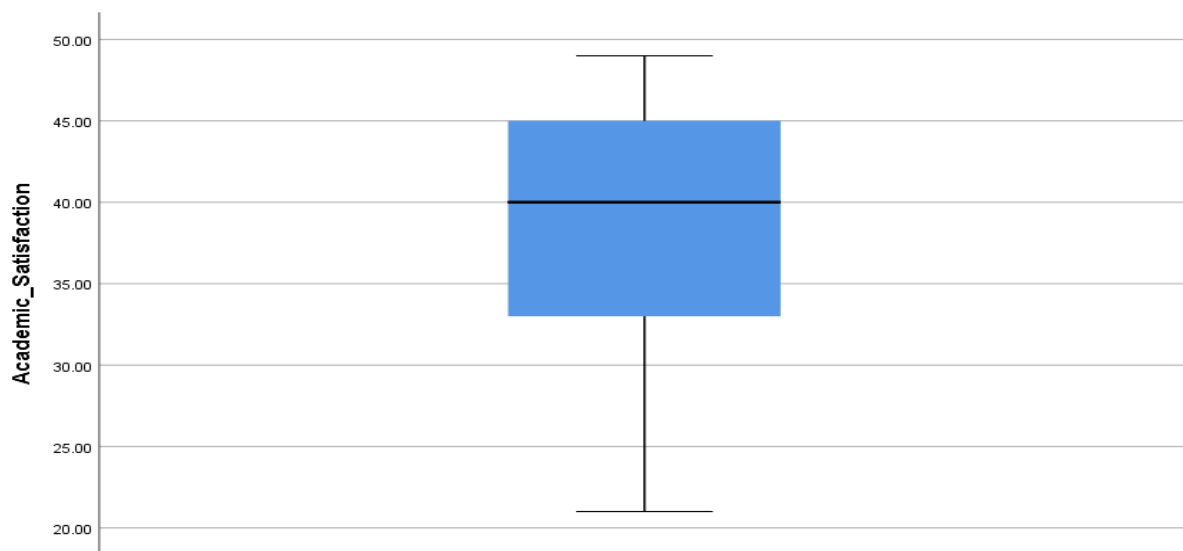*Figure 3*. Boxplot for Educational Experience.

Figure 4. Boxplot for Academic Satisfaction.

The assumption of normality was also evaluated. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) results demonstrates that the academic satisfaction data are normally distributed, while the educational experience data are not normally distributed (see Table 8).

While a Pearson's correlation is somewhat robust to deviations from normality (Warner, 2013), a Spearman's rank-order correlation, in addition to the Pearson's correlation was run and reported to account for the outliers and normality violation.

Table 8

Normality Test Results

	K-S	*p*
Educational Experience	.156	<.001
Academic Satisfaction	.089	.166

Correlation Analyses for Academic Satisfaction

The results of the Pearson correlation analysis demonstrate a statically significant correlation between veteran's academic satisfaction and educational experience, and the correlation coefficient *(r)* demonstrates that the type of relationship of the association is moderately strong and positive, r (80) = .493, $p < .001$. As veterans' academic satisfaction rating increases *(M = 38.68, SD = 7.681)*, their educational experience rating increases (*M* = 16.53, *SD* = 4.41). Academic satisfaction data set spread showed 24.3% of variance in educational experience among the student-veterans in this sample.

Given the outliers in the data as well as normality assumption violation**,** the Spearman's rank-order correlation was used as a follow-up analysis to confirm the Pearson's correlation results. This analysis is considered the nonparametric equivalent to the Pearson's correlation analysis. Results of this analysis also demonstrate that a moderate to strong, positive correlation existed between veteran's academic satisfaction (*Mdn* = 40) and educational experience (*Mdn* = 17), ρ (80) = .548, $p < .001$, confirming the results of the Pearson's correlation results.

Assumption Testing for Social Satisfaction

To examine the association between social satisfaction and educational experience,

another Pearson's correlation was planned. Prior to conducting the analysis, assumption testing

was conducted. The assumption of linearity was evaluated through the visual inspection of the

scatterplot. The association between social satisfaction and educational experience is linear (see
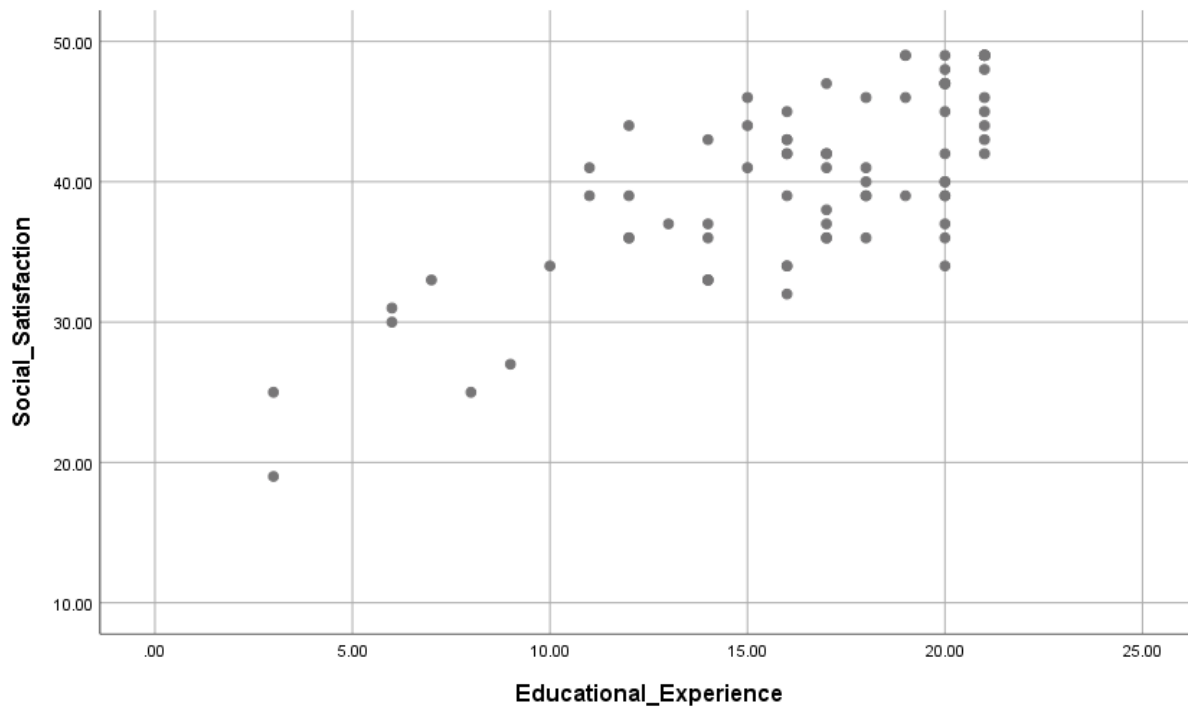
Figure 5).

Figure 5. Scatterplot for Social Satisfaction versus Educational Experience.

The assumption that there were no extreme outliers was evaluated using boxplots. The

social satisfaction and educational experience data has outliers (participant cases 19, 45, 47, 53);

however, no extreme outliers are present in the data (see Figures 6 and 7).
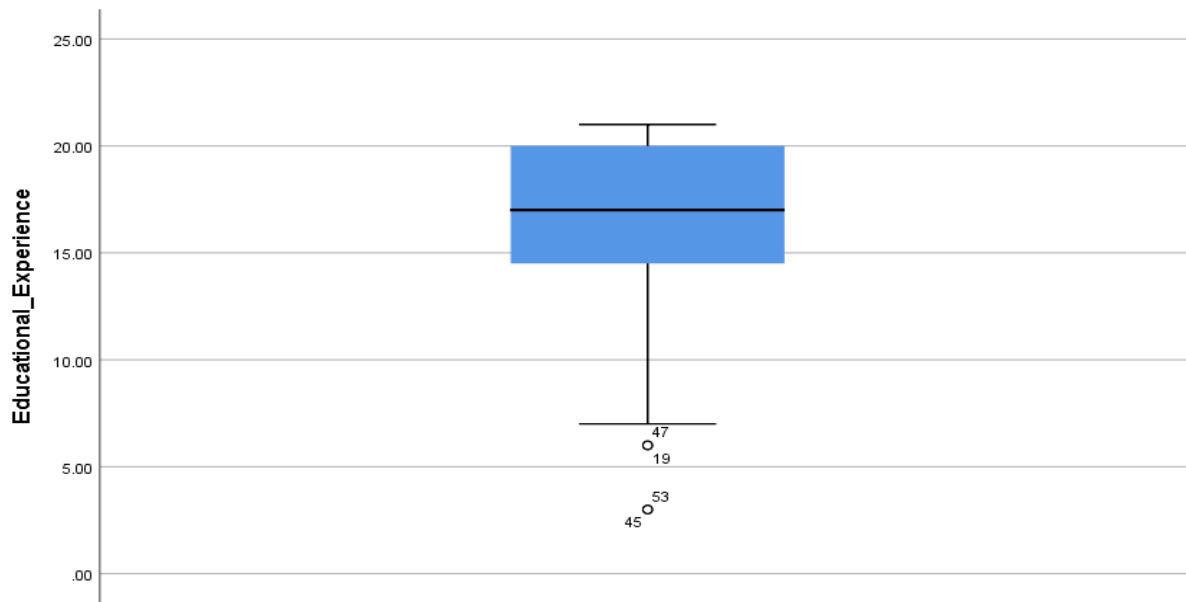
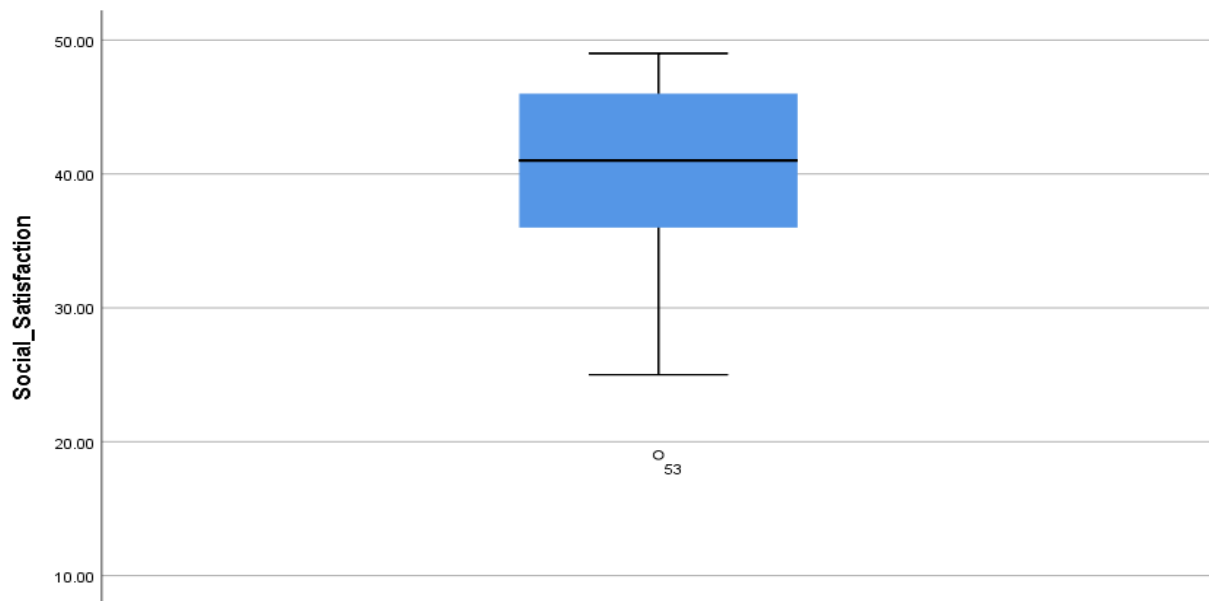*Figure 6.* Boxplot for Educational Experience.

Figure 7. Boxplot for Social Satisfaction.

The assumption of normality was also evaluated. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) results demonstrate that the social satisfaction data are normally distributed, while the educational experience data is not normally distributed, see Table 9. Therefore, a Spearman's

rank-order correlation in addition to the Pearson's correlation was run given the assumption

violations.

Table 9

Normality Test Results

	K-S	*p*
Educational Experience	.156	<.001
Social Satisfaction	.095	.069

Correlation Analyses for Social Satisfaction

The results of the Pearson correlation analysis were statically significant. A strong,

positive correlation exists between veteran's social satisfaction and educational experience, *r*

(80) = .757, *p* < .001. As veterans' social satisfaction rating increases *(M = 40.47, SD = 6.51)*,

their educational experience rating increases (*M* = 16.53, *SD* = 4.41). Social satisfaction data set

spread showed 57.3% of variance in educational experience among the student-veterans in this

sample.

Given the outliers in the data as well as normality assumption violation**,** the Spearman's

rank-order correlation was used as a follow-up analysis to confirm the Pearson's correlation

results. The results of the Spearman's rank-order indicate a moderate to strong, positive

correlation exists between veteran's social satisfaction (*Mdn* = 41) and educational experience

(*Mdn* = 17), ρ (80) = .688, *p* < .001, confirming the results of the Pearson's correlation results.

<div align="center">**Summary**</div>

Based on the statistically significant results of the first Pearson's and Spearman rho's

correlation analyses, the first null hypothesis is rejected. The null hypothesis (H$_0$1), which was

rejected is, "There is no statistically significant relationship between a student-veterans'

academic satisfaction as measured by the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory and overall educational experience at their educational institution of enrollment as measured by the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory." The correlation between student-veterans' academic satisfaction and overall educational experience at their educational institution of enrollment was not only statistically significant but practically significant. The effect ($r = 0.493$, $\rho = .548$) is considered moderately large (Warner, 2013). As veterans' academic satisfaction rating increases *($M = 38.68$, $SD = 7.681$)*, their educational experience rating increases ($M = 16.53$, $SD = 4.41$). The SSI measuring construct of academic satisfaction as a variable was determined to be highly reliable per a Cronbach's alpha showing the reliability of the SSI data as a 0.89 (Gall et al., 2007). Therefore, this researcher found a significant relationship between the variables and was able to reject the null hypothesis. Based on the second Pearson's and Spearman rho's correlation analyses, the second null hypothesis is rejected. The null hypothesis (H_02) reads "There is no statistically significant relationship between a student-veterans' social satisfaction as measured by the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory and overall educational experience at their educational institution of enrollment as measured by the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory." The correlation between student-veterans' social satisfaction and overall educational experience at their educational institution of enrollment is statistically significant. The effect *($r = 0.757$, $\rho = .688$)* is considered large (Warner, 2013). As veterans' social satisfaction rating increases *($M = 40.47$, $SD = 6.51$)*, their educational experience rating increases ($M = 16.53$, $SD = 4.41$). Cronbach's alpha coefficient for social satisfaction in this sample is .623, indicating fair to acceptable internal consistence (DeVellis, 2003; Kline, 2005); thus, these results should be applied with caution.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

This correlational study was designed to investigate the relationships between the student-veterans' social and academic satisfaction in relation to their overall educational experience. The results illustrate the importance of satisfaction in student-veteran's overall educational experience. This chapter contains a discussion of the research questions, the findings of the analysis, and how they relate to the review of literature. Additionally, there is a discussion of limitations, implications as well as recommendations for future research.

Discussion

This quantitative correlational study focused on student-veterans who are pursuing a higher educational degree and any relationship between the social and academic satisfaction and the student-veterans overall educational experience. The study's variables are academic satisfaction, social satisfaction, and overall educational experience. The academic and social satisfaction variables examined the subjective evaluation of the whole educational experience and expectations regarding academic and social reality (Roszkowski, 2003). The overall educational experience identified willingness of student-veterans to repeat the educational experience with the same institution. The three questions measured student-veterans satisfaction with their college experience meeting their expectation, overall satisfaction with their college experience, and if they had it to do over again, would they reenroll (Noel-Levitz, 2017).

The significance of this study lies in its potential to add to the empirical knowledge regarding variables that are associated with the overall satisfaction with the student-veterans educational experience, further understanding the successful integration, retention and graduation of U.S. military veterans in higher education. For the success of this non-traditional

population, it is important that schools satisfactorily meet the needs of military veterans returning

to the classroom. As educational institutions have experienced an increased number of student

veterans' over the last decade and a half, and it can be expected that some of its veteran-students

were exposed to traumatic events from war (Selber, 2012; Vacchi, 2016), it is important to

understand factors associated with this populations' educational experience. As this research has

shown, the student-veteran's satisfaction with their experiences increases the likelihood of

retention of the student. Implementation of military-friendly services and improving student-

veteran satisfaction could be enough to positively change the students overall educational

experience. This research study approached the problem by evaluating if veterans are satisfied

with their experience at college through the associations of their satisfaction to their overall

educational experiences.

The study utilized data drawn from student-veteran participants enrolled at a private

southeastern university during the 2016–2017 academic year; participants are characterized as

military veterans who self-identify as a student with U.S. military service. The participants were

asked by their school if they would voluntarily complete the Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction

Inventory (2017) that was utilized in this study. The site for this study was an accredited private

southeastern university that has a dedicated veterans center, and various veteran partnerships that

include an ROTC program. The total student-veteran participants for this study was 86, with a

total of 81 completing the SSI survey in its entirety. This is in stark contrast to the total

respondents of the SSI who did not identify as a military veteran, which were 5,019 participants.

Only 1.7% of the responding SSI participants were student-veterans at this institution. The

university's quick facts report an enrollment population exceeding 100,000 students with over

30,000 being military students (Liberty University quick facts, n.d.). Although the university's

institutional effectiveness department reports that the SSI survey is sent out to students that attend classes on campus, this researcher and associates who attend the online program reports that they have not received an invitation to participate in a Noel-Levitz survey. Since veteran-students tend to be non-traditional, the ratio of nearly 2% of the population pool is justifiable as the National Center of Education Statistics (U.S. Department of Education, 2015) states that 23% of veterans attend college located more than 100 miles from their home, and 61% took classes online, at night, or on weekends. Therefore, the additional life challenges that student-veterans face would affect their participation in extraneous actions such as lengthy surveys.

These findings expand upon the body of knowledge of literature on veterans' transitional experiences to academia and how satisfaction theory applies not only to work related scenarios, but also to the academic realm. In his earlier works, Tinto (1975) researched student attrition from higher education and had stated a students' lack of interactions with other individuals at the college or their inability to adopt the values of that segment of society are two of the reasons an individual would choose to dropout. As the data would support, the more the student-veteran was satisfied with the social aspects of their university, the more satisfied they were with overall experiences at the university. Also, academically, there was a positive correlation with student-veterans satisfaction with the university's assistance programs and military affairs to help them succeed. Although Tinto (1997) states that a mix of both academic and social integration is required to fully integrate a student into college life, what the challenges are for student veterans is areas of importance or interests that population finds important. For instance, from questions from the SSI survey; student veterans placed a high value on Question 40 where faculty are usually available to students outside of class with a 6.22 mean, with 7 being the most satisfied. Where the same student-veteran population put the least value on Question 10 where my

academic advisor helps me set goals to work towards. This question had a mean score of 4.91 which was the lowest satisfaction rate of all SSI questions for the student-veteran population. This can be explained as veterans have training on developing goals which contrasts with many of the other cultural populations which have very little experience in developing goals. This area does provide a research opportunity to compare various populations to student-veterans to understand how campus programs can further meet the needs of veterans.

RQ1: Student-Veteran Academic Satisfaction

Is there a relationship between student-veterans' academic satisfaction as measured by the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory and overall educational experience at their educational institution of enrollment as measured by the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory?

Using correlation analyses, the researcher found a statistically significant, moderately strong, positive correlation between veteran's academic satisfaction and educational experience. As the sample of veterans' academic satisfaction rating increases, their educational experience rating increases. According to Bücker, Nuraydin, Simonsmeier, Schneider, and Luhmann (2017), student academic achievement is not automatically correlated to their feelings of well-being. That is well-being defined by the researchers as "…the state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy" (Bücker et al., 2017). A student's academic achievement is not tied to a single behavior, there can be influences for the student's achievement. A study of personality traits of military training, researchers Jackson et al. (2012) discovered that military training was associated with changes in personality. Student-veterans are influenced by the long-lasting individual characteristics developed from training within the military. Often service members have very little options when training for a specific specialty, therefore can be detached from

their academic satisfaction and the overall experience at their school of enrollment. Also, as pointed out by Bücker et al. (2017), there were observations of student underachievement, however they had felt self-fulfillment and a positive well-being.

RQ2: Student-Veteran Social Satisfaction

Is there a relationship between student-veterans' social satisfaction as measured by the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory and overall educational experience at their educational institution of enrollment as measured by the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory?

Using correlational analyses, the researcher found a statistically significant, strong, positive correlation between veteran's social satisfaction and educational experience. As the sample of veterans' social satisfaction rating increases, their educational experience rating increases. This is an area that has made significant strides in improving the universities relationship with the veteran population. Social integration continues to be an important concept in college integration studies, especially with student-veterans (Carroll, 2015; Kurshid & Archad, 2013; Love et al., 2015; Tinto, 1997). A recent study looked at various aspects of campus preparedness for various student populations. Kim and Cole (2013) found that there was a significant gap between percentage of student-veterans and nonveteran/civilian students who mentioned that their campus provides the support they needed to succeed socially (33% of student veterans versus 46% of nonveteran/civilian students). Student-veterans whom may have had traumatic experiences dealing with their service in the military may experience that their college are not prepared to interact with student-veterans whom have serious and sensitive issues that can be awkward or uneasy to discuss (Raybeck, 2010). Veterans of today have different military experiences to include enduring vastly different wartime experiences than from veterans

of the past. School have begun to adapt to the new population of student-veterans who are products of nearly a two-decade long war on terrorism, and there has been significant strides of schools over the last decade to help facilitate a new environment on campus with programs and services to better meet the needs of student-veterans (Anderson, 2016; Heineman, 2016; Vacchi, 2016).

Implications

In a competitive higher education market, nearly all colleges today are looking for way to connect with potential students and increase enrollment (Ruffalo Noel-Levitz, 2019). Many are utilizing tools such as the Noel-Levitz SSI to determine the best way to provide a satisfying college experience for all student populations. An overall experience will vary throughout a diverse student population and it is challenging for higher educational institutions to determine path for developing its faculty members, create new state-of-the-art teaching facilities, developing school and student led clubs and organizations to meet the needs of the entire student population. Student-veterans prove to be a unique and diverse student population with specialized needs that may not be readily available in some colleges. Due to the increased number of veterans utilizing educational benefits, universities need to understand this unique non-traditional population of veteran-students and continue to find ways to make their schools more welcoming. This unique and diverse population of student-veterans do provide a revenue of guaranteed federal funding (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2017; Vacchi, 2016). Several sources agree that veterans transitioning into the classroom benefit from having a veteran-only orientation to help with the anxiety that comes with transitioning into unknown territory, especially to help navigate the VA paperwork (Heineman, 2016; Jones, 2017; Moore, 2015; Tinoco, 2014; Vacchi, 2016). These student-veteran orientations would help with

addressing concerns and providing a full-spectrum of information which includes veteran clubs and organizations all the way to finding counseling to deal with combat related injuries and stressors.

This study can be utilized to help to convince higher educational institutions to continue in the pursuit to develop themselves as a military-friendly institution. One can expect some variations of results as the university used in this study has a well-established department of military affairs, therefore he university has a high success rate of graduating veterans. However, as research has shown the correlation of academic and social satisfaction with their school of enrollment is important to student-veterans. Therefore to reach higher levels of satisfaction with this population of students, universities needs to continue to strive and set goals towards becoming a VA rated military friendly status. This would ensure student-veteran social needs are met and support them academically.

Another implication is the moral obligations to support our troops who serve in the military. Since 2001, there are new challenges that student-veterans face due to new stressors and military experiences that had not existed before. With the possibility of deploying to a warzone at any time, veterans of today carry unknown burdens that peacetime servicemembers may not have. Our elected officials has passed many supporting bills in the efforts to help veterans reintegrate into society. Since 9/11, there have been significant strides by the U.S. Government to improve services for veterans. Over the past two decades, significant strides have been made in VA funding for medical, employment, financial, and educational support. Since 2001, veterans have opportunities to attend college through several programs and tuition assistance programs through the Post-9/11 GI Bill, Montgomery GI Bill, and various state programs through the National Guard. Also, some colleges are also providing additional

financial support through various scholarships and tuition discounts which include the Yellow

Ribbon Program, veteran-only scholarships and reduced or waived tuition fees. Therefore, being

good stewards of the educational opportunities, schools today need to develop the most effective

means to ensure student-veteran success. Looking at areas of improving student-veteran

satisfaction as provided in this research by placing an emphasis on a well-established and pro-

active military affairs department in today's colleges will lead to a higher level of success for

veterans.

Finally, again as research has shown that student-veteran satisfaction correlates with this

overall educational experience. A positive college experience does yield higher graduation rates

(Barry, 2015; Cotton et al., 2002). Compared to the start of the war on terror, today there are a

multitude of educational resources available, especially from the U.S. Department of Veterans

Affairs. Schools have quick and easy access online to the VA's school resource page to help

guide educational institutions towards becoming a military-friendly school or enhancing ways to

meet the needs of today's veterans. Resources located at benefits.va.gov provides schools with

links to informational letters and training videos on various topics from becoming a VA benefit

certifying official, understanding military housing allowance payment systems, and a multitude

resources for accessing veteran benefits. If schools are truly looking to support veterans, there

are many organizations prepared to assist.

Limitations

The current study is not without limitations and there were some challenges to internal

validity. First is the limitation of the study as it relates to the use of existing data. The Noel-

Levitz SSI is a reliable and valid measure of student satisfaction, but it does not provide

information on many of the other variables that retention models include as predictors of student

persistence. Therefore, the model that was created from the existing data provided by the SSI is not a comprehensive model of student persistence. The model that was tested was able to indicate the role that student satisfaction plays in college students' subsequent enrollment patterns as well as in their perceptions of their college experiences being worth repeating, but it is not sufficiently complex to capture all the influences on student persistence, especially for a more specialized student-veteran population. Variables that may be important control variables, such as students' socioeconomic status or ability to pay, were not part of the instrument and thus could not be included in the model. A custom survey would mitigate this problem by development of questions specifically focused towards student-veterans and not at the population at whole. Additionally, utilizing this type of data has a potential of introducing confounding variables by the numerous questions dealing with satisfaction questions across a spectrum of topics without regards to the weight or value of each against the other questions. The researcher minimized the potential adverse effect of confounding variables and maintaining a high level of confidence of the data by reducing the number of satisfaction questions to seven for each of the predictor variables dealing with academic and social satisfaction. The selection of a specific 14 questions that pertain most to veterans out of 63 available questions from the SSI reduces the extra variations that were not expected and improves the ability to replicate this study, therefore giving this research a medium to high internal validity.

Another challenge to internal validity is the sample size. Although the sample size in this study is more than adequate, the sample represents a specific stratum within higher education: four-year institutions that chose to administer the Student Satisfaction Inventory online and agreed to provide subsequent enrollment data. These sampling characteristics necessarily limit the generalizability of the findings to other types of institutions. Two-year institutions utilize a

different form of the Student Satisfaction Inventory and would likely have slightly different results. Institutions that choose to assess student satisfaction may be different in substantive ways from those who elect not to assess this facet of institutional effectiveness. And, those students who respond to online surveys may not be representative of the total college student population; previous researchers have found such students to be disproportionately female and Caucasian (Pike, 2008). Another limitation dealing with sample size is the disparity of the population of the total enrollment which exceeds to 100,000 students and 30,000 military students as reported on the universities quick facts (Liberty, 2019). Therefore, it would be expected that participation by veterans would be higher. Inquiry with the school's department controlling the SSI administration informed the researcher that they did not know how many veterans were asked to participate. At the national level, the National Center of Education Statistics report that the military population attending college is 4% (U.S. Department of Education, 2015), therefore the 2% participation could be within limits. However, when comparing to the school's report of military veterans currently attending, there is a significant disparity between what NCES and what the school of this study reports.

Whereas internal validity shows how strong the research methods were, there we also limitations on external validity. An external limitation is the assumption that social satisfaction is linked to success in higher education. The researcher put equal weight upon both research questions that attempted to determine student-veteran success. Although the research showed a stronger correlation with academic satisfaction versus social satisfaction, a review of how other population revealed interesting results. In a Texas A&M University study that researched cultural transition of international students into the U.S. sociocultural setting, it found that student services were not widely utilized by international student, but despite the challenges of

socially adapting, they were able to adapt academically to be a successful student (Hsiao-Ping, Garza, & Guzman, 2015). Therefore, there is less need for veterans to have college peer acceptance; however more satisfaction with the colleges' academic content is an indicator for success. Research has shown that there is a correlation between satisfaction and success in higher education, however as seen with the international student population, the use of the SSI could yield contrasting results therefore bringing into question the amount of external validity outside of the student-veteran population.

The final external limitation is the scope of higher educational institutions that was studied. Due to restrictions on access to the SSI of various colleges, a single institution was chosen for this study. However, as the researcher was looking for trends that may help student-veterans nationally, the data utilized was from a single educational institution that has a strong military affairs program. Through further research, it was determined that the school utilized in this study was considered veteran-friendly and ranked amongst the top military-friendly schools by onlinecolleges.com, bestcolleges.com, guidetoonlineschools.com, and many others. Therefore, there can be expectation of increased satisfaction at schools that have utilized VA guidelines to become a veteran-friendly institution. A considerable amount of universities across the nation has made considerable strides with its support towards veterans, this study may not have generalized the population to all national schools and puts a minimal threat to external validity.

Finally, limitations are placed upon the researcher's biases for having ties to the U.S. military. As a prior student-veteran, there were some expectations of findings that strongly supported the initial premise of this research topic. However, the researcher mitigated any potential of researcher influence and made efforts to ensure his own biases did not affect the

conclusion of this manuscript. This was alleviated through thorough review of the research

methodology by non-military partners and reviewers. There were no attempts to manipulate the

data or to eliminate SSI questions that did not produce a significant deviation of from the non-

military traditional student in comparison to the student-veterans'.

Recommendations for Future Research

Because this manuscript was a first step, future research can further expand on this

research by looking at the sub-culture of the student-veteran population. These demographic

variables as identified in Appendix D are readily available within the SSI for detailed statistical

analysis to compare against this research study. The SSI allows data to be separated by gender,

age, ethnicity, and even up to GPA. Other potential studies can look towards the demographics

to find vulnerable areas within the student-veteran population. Looking at demographic trends

can lead to specialized veteran programs to support these vulnerable populations. Also

demographics can go beyond the scope of this study and find populations who are under-

represented in the classroom and determine at why some veterans do not utilize the benefits

provided to them.

Secondly, this study was limited by the type of statistical data available. Gaps of

information could be addressed through the conduct of a qualitative research with interviews,

focus groups, etc. Future research can expand on student-veteran satisfaction and include

veteran concerns with their transition from active service. A carefully tailored questionnaire

determining what specifically meets the needs or satisfies student-veterans as they transition into

college could help colleges tailor their military affairs departments to meet these demands.

Especially questions that directly look at student-veterans satisfaction with their school's military

affairs departmental programs. This includes the review of policies and procedures that has been

successful in improving the satisfaction of student-veterans. Future studies could also focus on comparing schools that invest into a comprehensive student-veterans department with permanently staffed personnel who are actively involved with keeping current with student-veteran support services. Much can be learned from the examination of the school's military department operating procedures to support veteran success and the tools to measure the veteran's success with completing their educational endeavors. An additional step could look at a school's veteran department that includes assistance to online students. As Jim Sweitzer, Vice President of Military Education for American Military University states, "the percentage of active-force students taking online or distance courses…is 65%" (Global Student Network, 2017). Due to the higher operational tempo of today's military and the emphasis of today's military career advancement hedged upon education, there is a weighty number of service-members taking online credits. Future research can examine the satisfaction of student-veterans who are pursuing online education in comparison to student-veterans who are taking classes on a campus, therefore the students on campus will have more access to military resources through an established military affairs department.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

March 8, 2018

William Hammac
IRB Application 3149: The Influence of Satisfaction among Post-9/11 Veterans in Higher
Education

Dear William Hammac,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance
with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration
(FDA) regulations and finds your study does not classify as human subjects research. This means
you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your IRB
application.

Your study does not classify as human subjects research because it will not involve the collection
of identifiable, private information.

Please note that this decision only applies to your current research application, and any changes
to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued non-human
subjects research status. You may report these changes by submitting a new application to the
IRB and referencing the above IRB Application number.

If you have any questions about this determination or need assistance in identifying whether
possible changes to your protocol would change your application's status, please email us at
irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School

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APPENDIX B: Copy of Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory

The SSI can be administered in different versions that institutions can utilize to best suit their needs. There is a 70-question (Form A) or a 66-question (Form B). Also there is a Canadian version with item specifics to Canadian institutions. The SSI can be administered either online or in paper form. Attached is the four-year university Form B SSI used at the University and is the form that provided the data set used in this research.

*** Document removed due to copyright ***

APPENDIX C: Approval to Use SSI Data

In the email message below dated 9 May, 2016. Shannon Cook, a Ruffalo Noel-Levitz representative reports that the data I am requesting is available from the university which is being used in this study. The SSI conducted made provisions to determine military demographics. The point of contact for the SSI data is Elicia Charlesworth, Associate Director for Data Analysis, Institutional Effectiveness Admin, Liberty University, echarlesworth@liberty.edu, (434)592-3011.
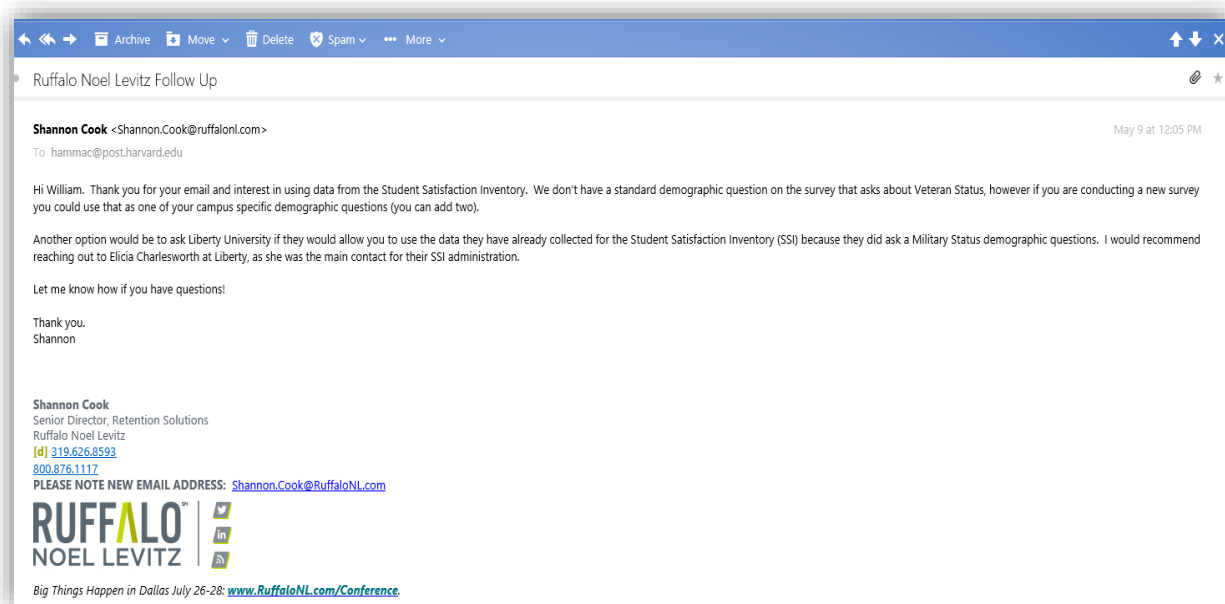
APPENDIX D: Demographics of Participants

Summary of Student-Veteran SSI Demographics (N = 86)

Demographic Category	*n*	*Percent*
Gender		
Female	18	23.7
Male	58	76.3
Age		
18 and under	4	4.9
19 to 24	18	22.2
25 to 34	36	44.4
35 to 44	9	11.1
45 and over	14	17.3
Ethnicity / Race		
Alaskan Native	0	0.0
American Indian	1	1.2
Asian	3	3.6
Black/African-American	4	4.8
Hispanic or Latino (and Puerto Rican)	5	6.0
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0	0.0
White / Caucasian	62	74.7
Multi-racial	3	3.6
Other race	5	6.0
Current Enrollment Status		
Day	76	95.0
Evening	4	5.0
Weekend	0	0.0
Current Class Load		
Full-time	70	88.6
Part-time	9	11.4
Class Level		
Freshman	9	11.4
Sophomore	7	8.9
Junior	6	7.6
Senior	28	35.4
Special Student	0	0.0
Graduate / Professional	29	36.7

Current GPA

No credits earned	12	14.5
1.99 or below	3	3.6
2.0 – 2.49	4	4.8
2.5 – 2.99	8	9.6
3.0 – 3.49	17	20.5
3.5 or above	39	47.0

Educational Goal

Associate degree	0	0.0
Bachelor's degree	47	57.3
Master's degree	29	35.4
Doctorate or professional degree	6	7.3

Employment

Full-time off campus	7	8.4
Part-time off campus	21	25.3
Full-time on campus	7	8.4
Part-time on campus	9	10.8
Not employed	39	47.0

When I entered this institution, it was my:

1st choice	70	83.3
2nd choice	11	13.1
3rd choice	3	3.6

Did Transfer Here

Yes transferred here	39	48.1
No did not transfer here	42	51.9

Plan to Transfer

Yes, I plan to transfer	7	8.9
No, I do not plan to transfer	72	91.1

Organizational memberships

No organizational membership	48	57.1
One or two organizational memberships	35	41.7
Three or four organizational memberships	0	0.0
Five or more organizational memberships	1	1.2

Primary Tuition Source

Scholarships	7	8.3
Financial aid	35	41.7
Family contributions	2	2.4
Self-support	8	9.5
Other tuition source	32	38.1