

OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO PERSISTENCE: AN INTRINSIC CASE STUDY OF
STUDENT VETERANS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

by

Janet Gail Hupel

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Liberty University

2024

OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO PERSISTENCE: AN INTRINSIC CASE STUDY OF
STUDENT VETERANS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

by Janet Gail Hupel

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

2024

APPROVED BY:

David Vacchi, PhD., Committee Chair

Breck Perry, PhD, Committee Member

Abstract

The purpose of this intrinsic case study is to understand the lived experiences of student veterans as they overcome barriers to persistence at a small, faith-based institution of higher education in the South. The theory guiding this study is Pascarella's student-faculty integration model, as it explains the relationship between the student veterans' unique background characteristics and other educational experiences to the degree of integration with faculty on campus and, ultimately, their persistence in higher education. What are the experiences of student veterans as they overcome barriers to persistence in higher education? The setting for the study is a small, faith-based private university in the south. The sample will be 10-15 student veterans, either undergraduate or graduate, who currently attend the institution. Data will be collected using semi-structured interviews, observations, and document review. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed, and then coded. The codes will be combined into themes. Based on the themes that are uncovered, the researcher will take the concern to the respective university department for a response.

Keywords: persistence, barriers, student veterans, stigmatization, integration

Copyright 2024, Janet G. Hupel

Dedication

I dedicate my dissertation to my family and friends. I especially thank my husband Robert Hupel, who encouraged me to follow my dream of pursuing a doctorate and has supported me so well on this journey. I am so grateful to my parents, Bob and Sharry Provines, for instilling in me the value of hard work and education. My mother, Sharry, has been my cheerleader through it all. I wouldn't be where I am without her. My father, Bob, may he rest in peace, provided a constant example of hard work, dedication, and perseverance.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my friends and colleagues. They were my sounding board, proofreaders, and supporters every step of the way as I researched for this dissertation. I cannot express adequately my gratitude for their patient listening, guidance, and encouragement on this journey.

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank my committee members, Dr. Breck Perry and Dr. David Vacchi, for their expertise and the precious time spent guiding my dissertation journey. Special thanks to Dr. David Vacchi, my committee chair, for giving me guidance, expertise, and a listening ear throughout the dissertation. I appreciate his quick responses and his willingness to talk things out as I work to improve my writing.

I would like to express my appreciation to the student veterans at Elliot University who participated in this study. Their willingness to talk about their experiences and provide feedback made the completion of my study possible.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	3
Dedication.....	5
Acknowledgments	6
List of Tables	13
List of Figures.....	14
List of Abbreviations	15
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	16
Overview	16
Background.....	17
Historical Context.....	17
Social Context	18
Theoretical Context	19
Problem Statement.....	20
Purpose Statement	21
Significance of the Study.....	21
Research Questions	23
Central Research Question	23
Sub-Question One	23
Sub-Question Two.....	24
Sub-Question Three.....	24
Definitions	24
Summary.....	24
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	27

Overview	27
Theoretical Framework	27
Related Literature	30
Transition to College	30
Integration of Students into the College Community	32
The First Year	34
The First Year for Student Veterans	36
Transfer Students	37
Barriers to Persistence	39
Barriers for Student Veterans	40
Admission Barriers	41
Social Barriers	42
Physical and Mental Health Barriers	44
Use of Support Services	49
Tutoring	52
Veteran Services	54
Student Organizations	55
Summary	56
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS	59
Overview	59
Research Design	59
Research Questions	60
Central Research Question	61

Sub-Question One	61
Sub-Question Two.....	61
Sub-Question Three.....	61
Setting and Participants	61
Setting.....	61
Participants	62
Researcher’s Positionality	62
Interpretive Framework	63
Philosophical Assumptions	63
Ontological Assumption.....	63
Epistemological Assumption.....	63
Axiological Assumption.....	64
Researcher’s Role.....	64
Procedures	65
Data Collection Plan.....	66
Individual Interviews.....	67
Table 1. Individual Interview Questions	67
Focus Groups.....	69
Table 2. Focus Group Questions	70
Journal Prompts	70
Table 3. Journal Prompts.....	71
Data Analysis.....	71
Trustworthiness	73

	10
Credibility	73
Transferability	74
Dependability	74
Confirmability	75
Ethical Considerations.....	75
Permissions.....	76
Other Participant Protections.....	76
Summary.....	77
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS	78
Overview	78
Participants	78
Abby	78
Bailey.....	79
Barbara	79
Daisy.....	79
Donna	80
Faith.....	80
Gilbert.....	80
Jack.....	81
Kayla.....	81
Mackenna	81
Naomi	82
Table 4. Student Veteran Participants	82

Results	82
Table 5. Themes & Subthemes.....	83
Campus Support	83
Support From Faculty.....	83
Support from Staff.....	84
University Leadership Issues.....	84
Communication	85
Physical Spaces	85
Dedicated Support for Veterans	86
Belonging	87
Impact of Disability.....	87
Culture	87
Research Question Responses	88
Central Research Question	88
Sub-Question One	88
Sub-Question Two.....	89
Sub-Question Three.....	89
Summary.....	90
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION	91
Overview	91
Discussion.....	91
Summary of Thematic Findings	91
Interpretation of Findings	92

Belonging & College Experiences	92
Need for Veteran Support.....	93
Implications for Policy or Practice	93
Implications for Policy	93
Implications for Practice.....	94
Empirical and Theoretical Implications	96
Empirical Implications	96
Theoretical Implications	97
Figure 1.....	98
Limitations and Delimitations	99
Limitations.....	99
Delimitations	99
Recommendations for Future Research.....	99
Figure 2.....	100
Conclusion.....	100
References	102
Appendix A	132
Appendix B.....	133
Appendix C.....	134

List of Tables

Table 1. Individual Interview Questions	66
Table 2. Focus Group Questions	69
Table 3. Journal Prompts	70
Table 4. Student Veteran Participants	81
Table 5. Themes and Subthemes	82

List of Figures

Figure 1. Application of Pascarella's (1980) Model of Student-Faculty Integration.....	92
Figure 2. Application of the Vacchi (2011, 2013) Model of Student Veteran Support.....	95

List of Abbreviations

Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI)

Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH)

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Reserve Officer's Training Corps (ROTC)

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

Veterans On-line Application (VONAPP)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Several studies exist that focus on the transition of veterans into the higher education setting (Alschuler & Yarab, 2018; Bagby et al., 2018; Bell, 2017; Borsari et al., 2017; Vacchi et al., 2017). Aside from these, there is limited research on the factors that influence student veterans' persistence in higher education. Since the 1970s, a great deal of research has been done on student retention and persistence in higher education, most of which focused on the impact of academic and social integration on persistence (Pascarella, 1980). Tinto's (1975) student integration model and Spady's (1971) undergraduate process model led to the development of Pascarella's (1980) student-faculty integration model, which describes how the interaction of student background characteristics, institutional factors, informal contact with faculty, other college experiences, and educational outcomes influence the level of persistence of students in higher education. This case study research uses the Pascarella model to explore the experiences of student veterans as they overcome barriers to persistence in higher education.

This chapter provides background information about the study, including historical and social context as well as the theoretical context. Student veterans are a distinct population within the nontraditional student community with particular values and attitudes that carry over from their military service (Dean et al., 2020). The Post-9/11 GI Bill provides financial support for eligible student veterans to attend college (Bagby, 2015). As approximately 200,000 veterans leave the military each year (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023), the number enrolling in higher education also continues to rise. Veterans are transitioning from military to civilian life and from military to higher education at the same time (Smith et al., 2018).

Although there is substantial research on student retention and persistence in higher

education, the research on factors affecting the persistence of student veterans in higher education is quite limited (Sansone & Tucker Segura, 2020). This is an important area to study as the United States has been at war since 2001, and the number of veterans enrolling in higher education is ever-increasing (Bell, 2017; Veteran Education Success, 2019). Consideration of the needs of student veterans is critical to their success in higher education.

Background

Veterans can face unique challenges when transitioning from military life to civilian life and those who choose to attend college can experience complex issues as they transition to college life (Ward, 2019). The increase in the number of veterans entering higher education classrooms requires that higher education faculty, staff, and administration to understand and prepare to meet the needs of this growing student population (Vacchi, 2012). Student veterans have different academic and social needs than traditional students (Dean et al., 2020). The Servicemen's Readjustment Act, which became known as the GI Bill, has been modified and updated over the years (Giampaolo & Graham, 2020). Most recently, the Post-9/11 GI Bill provides educational benefits that are paid directly to the institution for tuition and fees.

Historical Context

The Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862 and the National Defense Act of 1916 established the initial relationship with the military and higher education in the United States, with the primary focus on training young men before they entered the military. The Morrill Land Grant Act required military training to be offered as part of the curriculum, and the National Defense Act established the precursor to the Reserve Officer's Training Corps (ROTC). The Servicemen's Readjustment Act changed the relationship between the military and higher education from training to re-training by providing veterans with financial benefits, including

unemployment, loans for homes and businesses, and access to college (Rumann & Hamrick, 2009). The educational benefits of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act became known as the first GI Bill in 1944 (Giampaolo & Graham, 2020). Since then, the GI Bill has gone through several adaptations and modifications, one of which was the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008, which reinvigorated the GI Bill and increased its value considerably (Martorell & Bergman, 2013). The passage of the Post-9/11 GI Bill began a system of improved educational benefits that included payments directly to schools for tuition and fees (Bagby et al., 2015). Then the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017, also known as the Forever GI Bill, was passed. The Forever GI Bill amended the Post-9/11 GI Bill by enhancing or expanding education benefits for veterans, servicemembers, families, and survivors (Department of Veterans Affairs, 2023).

Recent military operations in Iraq (Operation Iraqi Freedom, OIF; Operation New Dawn, OND; and Afghanistan (Operation Enduring Freedom, OEF) represent the most sustained ground combat operations since the war in Vietnam (Borsari et al, 2017). In 2017, 905,000 veterans attended college using VA benefits. (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, n.d.). As the number of student veterans on college campuses continues to grow, understanding the factors that influence degree attainment is of critical importance (Giampaolo & Graham, 2020).

Social Context

Due to the Global War on Terror, an increased number of veterans are returning from military service after longer and more frequent deployments (Smith et al., 2018). As many of these veterans return from service, they are also returning to higher education and dealing with barriers to degree completion. Student veterans may be at risk for reintegrating into society and entering higher education given the prevalence of traumatic injuries in this population and the

possible effects on socialization and academic success (Elnitsky et al., 2017). Veterans returning to college campuses must deal not only with their recent battlefield experiences, but also with the transition to an unfamiliar academic environment (Smith et al., 2018). Challenges veterans encounter extend beyond support services to the development of academic and social relationships with civilian students and faculty (Hunter-Johnson et al., 2021).

Student veterans experience challenges that may affect social integration such as faculty perceptions of military personnel, institutional policies, finances, and mental or physical disabilities (Osborne, 2014). One major challenge affecting student veterans' social integration is the perception that they have little in common with their civilian peers (DiRamio et al., 2008; Griffin & Gilbert, 2015). Many prefer to associate with other veterans (Vacchi et al., 2017).

Theoretical Context

There are a limited number of studies emphasizing student veterans' perception of higher education and the factors that affect their persistence in higher education (Hunter-Johnson et al., 2021; Sansone & Tucker Segura, 2020). The student-faculty integration model asserts that students' interaction with faculty outside of the classroom positively impacts their persistence in higher education (Pascarella, 1980). The components of Pascarella's (1980) model address informal contact with faculty, other college experiences, educational outcomes, existing background characteristics, and institutional factors. Pascarella's (1980) model highlights the relationship between students' background characteristics and other college experiences to student persistence in higher education. This model is essential for the study of the persistence of student veterans in higher education because it provides guidance in exploring the factors that interfere with persistence.

Astin's (1993) framework of inputs, environments, and outcomes (I-E-O) has been used

to examine the effects of peer support for student veterans in the college environment. Inputs are the factors and characteristics affecting students when they enter college, the environment is the experiences the student has in the college setting, and outcomes are characteristics the student demonstrates after exposure to the environment (DiRamio & Jarvis, 2011). While Astin's work is valuable, the Pascarella model's inclusion of background characteristics is important to consider when exploring the persistence of student veterans because of the unique experiences they bring to higher education. Studying the experiences of student veterans as they overcome barriers to persistence in higher education will help identify the challenges the veterans endure while attending college as well as assist universities in tailoring support to the disability-related needs, academic needs, and other essential support to promote success of student veterans.

Post-9/11 veterans are returning from service with different needs than previous veterans. According to RAND (2008), close to one-third of Post-9/11 veterans have post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, or both. Highlighting the difficulties that student veterans face encourages improvement to support services and university processes to ensure veterans are supported (Linski, 2019).

Problem Statement

The problem is that that 25-35% of student veterans in higher education are not succeeding (Student Veterans of America, 2017). Alschuler and Yarab (2018) reported that approximately half of the 707 veterans enrolled at a midwestern university during 2009-2014 withdrew. A survey in their study found 37% of part-time and 16% of full-time student veterans dropped out within nine months of enrolling in higher education (Walton-Radford et al., 2009). Despite the availability of the Post-9/11 GI Bill, challenges unique to this subset of non-traditional students appear to interfere with degree completion, particularly from four-year

institutions (Wagner & Long, 2022). Recent literature supports the need to identify these factors and provide support to veteran students to prevent attrition (Alschuler & Yarab, 2018; Sansone & Tucker, 2020).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this holistic single-case study is to understand the lived experiences of student veterans in higher education after military service. At this stage of the research, the lived experiences will be defined as lived experiences of student veterans as they overcome barriers to persistence. Student veterans are a unique subset of students (Dean, et al., 2020) whose needs have not been fully explored to determine what specific factors influence the degree to which they are able to persist to complete their degrees.

Significance of the Study

Every year, approximately 700,000 Post-9/11 GI Bill student veterans enroll in an institution of higher education (Veteran Education Success, 2019). To promote the success of the growing number of veterans entering higher education, educators must understand the unique needs of veteran students (Smith et al., 2018). The Post-9/11 GI Bill has increased college access and improved the affordability of higher education, but too few student veterans graduate with four-year degrees (Marcus, 2017). Understanding the issues student veterans experience will help create better experiences for them and improve the college classroom experience (Rausch & Buning, 2022). Since 2001, the US military troops have seen longer deployments and more repeat deployments, which has resulted in an increase in service-related injuries leading to service members leaving the military. This leads to more veterans enrolling in higher education. Student veterans need to be treated as a separate subgroup of students, instead of grouping them with other students with whom they have little in common. Most student veterans are 24–40-

year-old, while traditional students are 18-24 years old (Lake et al., 2022). Student veterans are also much more likely to have an off-campus job and be married than their traditional counterparts (Lake et al., 2022).

Theoretical Significance

The theory guiding this study is Pascarella's (1980) student-faculty integration model. According to Pascarella's model, the quality of informal student-faculty contact outside of class is influenced by a variety of factors, including initial student background characteristics, the faculty culture and classroom experiences, peer culture involvement, and the size of the institution (Aljohani, 2016). Although the model considered the college experience and institutional factors, it emphasized the students' individual differences, such as their personalities, abilities, educational and professional aspirations, prior educational achievement and experiences, and the characteristics of their families and home environments (Pascarella, 1980). Consideration of the students' individual differences is valuable when considering student veterans because they bring a different set of experiences with them to higher education that influences their interaction with faculty and peers at the institution.

Empirical Significance

The goal of this research study is to fill a gap in the literature that seeks to address the problem of lack of understanding the circumstances that student veterans encounter as they overcome barriers to persistence in higher education. Research exists on the topic of student persistence in higher education, but it does not address student veterans. A gap exists in the literature related specifically to student veterans' experiences. The current literature focuses on the persistence of traditional and non-traditional students in higher education but does not

examine student veterans as a separate subgroup of students, even though differences exist between them and non-traditional students.

Each year, approximately 200,000 men and women leave the U.S. military (U.S. Department of Labor, 2023). Future research on student veterans' experience in higher education is necessary due to the shortage of information on this emergent student demographic (Jones, 2013).

Practical Significance

Implementation of the Post-9/11 Educational Assistance Act has led to an influx of student veterans attending colleges and universities in the last decade (Sullivan, et al., 2021). With the number of student veterans expected to continue to rise, the need for research on the factors that affect their persistence in higher education is paramount. While in the past, student veterans have demonstrated better academic outcomes than their civilian counterparts, subsets of the current cohort of veterans returning from the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan are reporting poor social, emotional, and academic adjustment (Sullivan et al., 2021). Understanding what student veterans experience during their academic journey will help institutions of higher education improve academic support for student veterans.

Research Questions

Research questions have been developed aligned with the problem and purpose statements of this study. This study seeks to address the following research questions:

Central Research Question

What are the experiences of student veterans as they overcome barriers to persistence in higher education?

Sub-Question One

What are the experiences of student veterans using academic support services?

Sub-Question Two

What role do faculty members play in the academic integration of student veterans?

Sub-Question Three

What are the social integration experiences of student veterans in higher education?

Definitions

The following terms have been defined to understand the significance of the subject matter in this study.

1. *Persistence* – Persistence is defined as continued enrollment in postsecondary education (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).
2. *Post-9/11 GI Bill* – The Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 (Post-9/11 GI Bill) modified and updated the original GI Bill to allow for institutions to be paid directly for tuition and fees (Martorell & Bergman, 2013).
3. *Stigma* – Stigma is a belief in the military culture that seeking help is a sign of weakness (Alschuler & Yarab, 2018).
4. *Student veteran* - Any student who is a current or former member of the active-duty military, the National Guard, or Reserves regardless of deployment status, combat experience, or legal status as a veteran (Vacchi, 2012, p. 17).

Summary

There is a significant military veteran population in the United States who are transitioning into higher education (Linski, 2019). Despite existing research on student veterans' transition into higher education, there is limited research focused on the specific factors that influence student veterans' persistence in higher education (Sansone & Tucker Segura, 2020).

Over the past several decades, much research has been done focused on student retention and persistence in higher education. The focus of most of the research has been on the effect of academic and social integration on student persistence (Pascarella, 1980). Vincent Tinto's (1975) student integration model and William Spady's (1971) undergraduate process model paved the way for Ernest Pascarella's (1980) student-faculty integration model. Pascarella's (1980) model described how students' background characteristics, institutional factors, informal contact with faculty, other college experiences, and educational outcomes all interact and impact the students' persistence in higher education. This intrinsic case study research will apply the Pascarella (1980) model to understand the experiences of student veterans as they overcome barriers to persistence in higher education.

Student veterans are a distinctive group within the nontraditional student population with shared values and attitudes associated with their military service (Dean et al, 2020). They are older and have different background experiences due to their military service. The lack of literature related to student veterans, including the unique aspects of contemporary war requires that student veterans in higher education be viewed through a new lens (Hammond, 2016).

The Post-9/11 GI Bill provides funding for eligible student veterans to attend college and also allows for the tuition and fees to be paid directly to the institution (Bagby et al., 2015). The passage of the educational acts such as the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, the 1985 Montgomery GI Bill, and now the Post-9/11 GI Bill, institutions of higher education have committed themselves to educate recently discharged veterans and also to address this student population with unique needs (Vacchi et al., 2017). Given the steady increase in veteran enrollment in higher education, institutions have a responsibility to be aware of the veterans'

individual and collective needs in order to enhance their level of preparedness (Hunter-Johnson et al., 2021).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

A systematic review of the literature was conducted to explore the problem of attrition of student veterans in higher education. This chapter presents a review of the current literature related to the topic of study. First, Pascarella's (1980) model of student-faculty interactions is discussed, followed by a synthesis of recent literature about the retention and persistence of student veterans in higher education. The transition to college and integration of students into the college community will be discussed with a focus on the first year and transfer experience for both traditional students and student veterans. Next, barriers to student persistence in higher education will be addressed. The barriers to persistence for student veterans will be outlined, with emphasis on admissions barriers, social barriers, and physical and mental health barriers. An explanation of support services in higher education and how students access them will be provided. Additionally, literature will use to illustrate how veterans' persistence rates differ from that of other students in higher education. Finally, the need for the current study is addressed by identifying a gap in the literature regarding the specific factors related to the persistence of student veterans in higher education.

Theoretical Framework

The student-faculty integration model posits that students' interaction with faculty outside of the classroom positively impacts persistence in higher education (Pascarella, 1980). Ernest Pascarella's (1980) work supports the predictive validity of Tinto's (1975) student integration model and the importance of the core concepts of academic and social integration (Pascarella, Smart, & Ethington, 2004). Pascarella's (1980) model of student-faculty integration was developed following the work of William Spady (1971) and Vincent Tinto (1975). In his

undergraduate process model, Spady (1971) defined two systems in college: academic and social. Two factors within each system influence students' decision to withdraw: grades and intellectual development in the academic system and normative congruence and friendship in the social system (Spady, 1971). Tinto's (1975) institutional departure model asserts that student background characteristics interact to influence goal commitment and institutional commitment. Goal commitment reduces the likelihood of dropout, and institutional commitment leads to group interactions and social integration, reducing dropout probability (Bean, 1981). Pascarella (1980) expanded on Tinto's (1975) model by including informal contact with faculty, other college experiences, educational outcomes, and the existing student background characteristics and institutional factors. Pascarella (1980) asserted that more informal contact with faculty members would increase the students' institutional commitment and minimize the possibility of withdrawal (Aljohani, 2016).

Pascarella's model of the undergraduate dropout process is composed of five modules: student background characteristics, institutional factors, informal contact with faculty, other college experiences, and educational outcomes (Nicoletti, 2019). The model proposes that students' background characteristics form a profile of individual differences which the students bring to college (Pascarella, 1980). The institutional factors interact with the students' background characteristics and impact the process of applying and being accepted to college, educational outcomes, and influence the extent and quality of students' contact with faculty outside of the classroom. There is a reciprocal relationship between other college experiences and educational outcomes, as well as between other college experiences and informal contact with faculty (Aljohani, 2016). The model also indicates an interaction between educational outcomes and informal contact with faculty. Within each module, there are variables to consider.

Within student background characteristics, variables include family background, aptitudes, aspirations, personality orientation, goals, values, interests, high school achievement and experiences, expectations of college, and openness to change (Nicoletti, 2019). Institutional variables include faculty culture, organizational structure, administrative policies and decisions, size of the institution, and admissions and academic standards (Nicoletti, 2019; Pascarella, 1980). The response to these variables offers insight into factors affecting individual students' persistence. These main variables determine how the student interacts with the faculty and other college experiences.

The Pascarella (1980) model of student-faculty integration identifies five modules representing five critical factors that interact to influence student persistence in higher education (Nicoletti, 2019). Pascarella (1980) brings to light the relationship between students' background characteristics and other college experiences to student persistence in higher education. This is particularly relevant to studying the persistence of student veterans in higher education because the modules within the student-faculty integration model offer guidance to help identify the factors interfering with student veterans' persistence in higher education. There is evidence to suggest that the academic and out-of-class experiences that influence intellectual and personal development during college differ along the lines of race/ethnicity and first-generation versus non-first-generation status (Bray et al., 2004; Pascarella et al., 2004; Posner & Marskstein, 1994; Terenzini et al., 1996, as cited in Pascarella, 2006). Pascarella's (2006) work suggests that student groups have their own distinctive models of development and change during college. As a unique subset of non-traditional students, student veterans often face unique challenges within the college environment due to injuries from their military service (Wagner & Long, 2022). Student veterans are generally older than other non-traditional students and, as such, have

external responsibilities of employment, parenting, and supporting a family. Using Pascarella's student-faculty integration model provides a framework that can be expanded to develop additional questions to determine the barriers to student veteran persistence in higher education. To date, little is known about what factors influence a student veteran's outcomes in higher education (Sansone & Tucker Segura, 2020).

Related Literature

Despite the increase in enrollment, the research on the persistence of student veterans in higher education is limited (Sansone & Tucker Segura, 2020; Vacchi et al., 2017). A review of available literature reveals three themes: the integration of students into the college community affects persistence, that barriers to persistence in higher education exist, and the use of support services in higher education. Academic and social integration of students into the college community positively impacts the desire to persist toward completion. The second theme centers around what causes students not to stay. Barriers exist that impact student success in higher education. The final theme examines available support services in higher education and student veterans' use of those services.

Transition to College

As the number of students enrolling increases, the transition to higher education has become multidimensional with stratified experiences, entry characteristics, expectations, and abilities all affecting the trajectory of each student (Noyens et al., 2017). The transition to college coincides with a critical stage of development during which young people leave home while their brain is growing rapidly and is sensitive to stress (Chung & Hudziak, 2017). Stressors for these traditionally aged students include living with strangers and developing their independence (Brooker et al., 2017; Pennington et al., 2018). The concept of transition encourages institutions

of higher education to focus on short-term, practical strategies to promote success, which depicts transition as a linear process involving discrete stages but does not acknowledge the individual students' lived experiences, the ongoing nature of learning and development within higher education, and the ongoing nature of transition (Gravett & Winstone, 2019; Le & Wilkinson, 2018; Thompson et al., 2021). This focus on the gaps between the organizational and cultural demands of higher education compared to their previous school experience can make the students feel they need to adjust to the existing structures rather than exploring their individual prior educational and personal experiences (Money et al., 2020).

Research suggests that most students find the transition into higher education challenging, and those from non-traditional backgrounds even more so (Noyens et al., 2017). Successful transition to higher education involves accessing the right information, having the right skills, and receiving the right support (HEPI, 2017). The institution's understanding of what its students are transitioning from is crucial to their ability to support them during this transition period (Money et al., 2020).

Transition to civilian life for military service members can be a major change, and this transition often includes the desire or need to complete a college degree (Linski, 2019). Student veterans differ substantially from traditional students at two and four-year institutions, but more closely resemble nontraditional students because they are older and more likely to be married or have children (Cate & Davis, 2017; Margarit & Kennedy, 2019). Additionally, the transition from military service on the battlefield to college classroom can happen for student veterans in a matter of weeks, before they've had the opportunity to process their military experiences (Bagby et al., 2015). Even within the nontraditional student group, student veterans are a distinctive population with values and attitudes that carry over from their military experience (Dean et al.,

2020; Olsen et al., 2014). As a result of experiencing both military and academic cultures, student veterans report experiencing role confusion and identity negotiation as they adjust to the college culture (Arminio et al., 2018). Student veterans are also more likely to have an impairing disability, work full-time, and be first-generation college students (Ford & Vignare, 2015; Gonzalez & Elliot, 2016). While the transition process is already challenging for many veterans, those with invisible disabilities find it particularly challenging to transition to and integrate into higher education (Flink, 2017; Lippa et al., 2015; Sciullo, 2017).

Integration of Students into the College Community

Social, academic, and cultural integration of students into the college environment creates a sense of belonging that helps students feel they are part of the campus community (Andrade et al., 2022; Fernandez et al., 2019; Schudde, 2019). Students' sense of belonging is shaped by their daily interactions with fellow students, faculty, staff, and administration on the college campus (Tinto, 2017). Exposure to clear, organized instruction in college leads to satisfaction with the college experience because students' perceptions of their academic abilities increase when they earn higher grades (Andrade et al., 2022; Loes et al., 2019). In addition, engaging with faculty and peers outside of class serves as a way for students to receive needed support and validation during their college experience as well (Andrade et al., 2022; Schudde, 2019). Students' attitudes about their education and self-confidence significantly impact their persistence (Andrade et al., 2022; Fernandez et al., 2019).

Higher education is a unique culture in American society. In higher education, curriculum, services, and organizations are in place to promote autonomy and fulfillment of students' personal goals (Moffat, 1991; Wingate, 2007). Literature confirms that student veterans enroll with military values and dispositions that conflict with those that are normalized in higher

education, reflecting the differences in the cultures of the two institutions (Kuh & Whitt, 1988; Moffat, 1991). The conflict between the cultural norms and expectations of higher education and the military leaves student veterans feeling confused, misunderstood, and isolated (Arminio et al., 2015; Howe Jr. & Shpeer, 2019; Interiano-Shiverdecker et al., 2019; Livingston et al., 2011; McAndrew et al., 2019). Unintentionally, the cultural conflict is reinforced by faculty and staff, as the dominant culture (DiRamio et al., 2008; DiRamio & Jarvis, 2011; Interiano-Shiverdecker et al., 2019; Rumann & Hamrick, 2010).

Scholars describe the military as a culture with a unique set of values, norms, philosophies, and traditions (Reger et al., 2008; Teixeira, 2021). The socialization process begins with recruit training and often occurs between the ages of 18-20, a critical period of identity formation (Erikson, 1968). Members learn the military way and adopt a collective identity where they are committed to fellow soldiers and the mission (Demers, 2011; DiRamio & Jarvis, 2011; Hall, 2011). Military training involves memorization, drills, punishment and reward, and a lecture style where the instructor is the authority and the student is passively involved (Hunter-Johnson et al., 2020).

Studies have provided evidence that student veterans have strong leadership skills, time management, high levels of maturity, and a focus on the mission that helps them earn degrees and develop civilian careers (Lim et al., 2018; Mendez et al., 2018; Sansone & Tucker Segura, 2020). On the other hand, studies report that student veterans face major obstacles throughout their university experience, from navigating institutional policies and procedures related to admissions to assessing the requirements for degree completion (Alschuler & Yarab, 2018; Demers, 2011; McBain et al., 2012). Witkowsky et al. (2016) compared student veterans' and non-veterans' orientation experiences and found that although student veterans rated their

experience higher than non-veterans, they also reported feeling much less connected to and welcomed by the campus. Being accustomed to the structure of the military makes it difficult for many student veterans to transition to an environment where they are responsible for setting their own schedules and planning their own work with younger classmates (Arminio et al., 2018; Bagby et al., 2015; Teixeira, 2021). Because student veterans are accustomed to a structured environment in their military service, the explicit teaching model is beneficial for them (Rausch & Buning, 2022; Sullivan et al., 2021).

The First Year

In terms of college, sense of belonging refers to students' perceived social support on campus, the feeling of connectedness, and the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, respected, valued by, and important to the campus community or others on campus such as faculty, staff, and peers (Strayhorn, 2019). Students entering higher education become responsible for their own learning and achievement. Students identify academic advising, university support services, gaining confidence as a student, and peer support as critical in the first year of college (Daniels & MacNeela, 2021). This increase in responsibility along with the need to manage time across many demands can lead to increased levels of stress and anxiety (Lowe & Cook, 2003).

According to Roska et al. (2020), cultural capital, conceptualized as familiarity with the expectations, norms, and procedures of social institutions affects the adjustment of students in higher education. Students from low socioeconomic backgrounds have low cultural capital for higher education (Pennington et al., 2018; Roska et al., 2020). Studies have shown that students can acquire cultural capital through exposure to educational experiences (Bueker, 2019; Jack, 2016, 2019). The fit between a student and their chosen college indicates student satisfaction

with their choice of institution and is linked to retention (Norvilitis et al., 2022; Suhlmann et al., 2018). First-year college students who are socially integrated on campus are shown to have positive self-regulation at the end of their first year (Noyens et al., 2019; Suhlmann, 2018).

Students' sense of belonging is a combination of their feeling of involvement socially and academically, regardless of whether the academic demands are highly challenging for them (Tinto, 2016). Previous research highlighted the powerful role that faculty and staff play in helping students adjust to the higher education culture (Arminio et al., 2018; Collier & Morgan, 2008; Lim et al., 2018). Informal student-faculty relationships led to increased academic performance and intellectual development among first-year students (Schudde, 2019; Trolian et al., 2016). Socioeconomic status influences student engagement as it impacts whether the student works while attending school and affects the amount of time available for interacting with faculty and peers on campus (Schudde, 2019). For many students from low-income families, the inability to pay is an obstacle after the first year of college because of changes in financial aid or changes in GPA (Schudde, 2019).

Students' success in the first year of college heavily impacts the rest of their college career. Student retention is measured as the percentage of first-time undergraduate students who return to the same institution the following fall semester (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2022). Student engagement is an essential part of student retention, and can take many forms, such as collaborative learning and interactions with peers, faculty, and their campus (Raybourn et al, 2018). The engagement theories of Astin (1984) and Tinto (1975) set the framework for many institutions of higher education regarding how they proactively engage with students. Tinto (1975) focused on academic and social interaction between the student and the institution and the effect they have on student drop out. Students with direction, determination,

and dedication tend to have heavier course loads, which in turn leads to graduating (Caruth, 2018). On the other hand, students who are experiencing stress do not attend class, procrastinate, and have interruptions in their education which leads to not graduating (Stelnicki et al., 2015; Stephan et al., 2015). Nonacademic factors such as academic self-confidence, institutional commitment, social involvement, and social support have a positive influence on student retention (Southwell et al., 2018). Earning a college degree is tied to students' commitment to their college and the level of commitment to the college is tied to students' level of social and academic integration on campus (Caruth, 2018).

The First Year for Student Veterans

Student veterans are more likely to pursue higher education due to an injury that has removed them from deployment eligibility or a change of circumstance in employment circumstances rather than as a voluntary choice (Jenner, 2017). In addition to expected first-year challenges, student veterans also experience a significant transition process as they leave the military, navigate civilian life personally and professionally, and adjust to being a college student (Vacchi, 2012). Like many other students, student veterans experience financial challenges when attending college (Jenner, 2017; Wagner & Long, 2022). Similar to many traditional students, student veterans do not have the background experiences to be familiar with the expectations and norms of higher education (Pennington et al., 2018; Roska et al., 2020). The lack of structure in higher education may be further exacerbated for student veterans who are first-generation college and lack familiarity with the university environment (Smith et al., 2018).

According to Schaeper (2019), the individual perception of the learning environment affects the level of academic integration. Tinto (1993) noted the reciprocal relationship between formal academic learning and social learning that takes place in higher education. The difference

between student veterans and traditional students can cause student veterans to struggle to fit into the social context of higher education, making it difficult for student veterans to develop meaningful friendships with nonveteran peers (Borsari, 2017). A significant number of student veterans report that professors and classmates have little to no understanding of the challenges student veterans experience in higher education (Institute for Veteran and Military Families & Student Veterans of America, 2017; Maury & Zoli, 2018). Faculty and staff are responsible for supporting diversity on campus by serving as advocates for students with diverse cultural backgrounds, and as such, are responsible for reinforcing the underlying norms in higher education and aiding student veterans in navigating them (Carter et al., 2019). Purposeful and intentional actions by faculty can lead to improved peer interactions and therefore decrease student veteran stop out or dropout (Dean et al., 2020).

Transfer Students

In modern times, it is common for students to start at one college and transfer to another, earn college credits in high school, or be enrolled in two institutions simultaneously (Clasemann & Boon, 2020; Lee & Schneider, 2018). When transferring institutions, students must adjust academically and socially to the new institution. The evaluation of transfer credit by the receiving institution is critical because it affects the time to degree attainment and, therefore, the cost of attendance (Clasemann & Boon, 2020). Awareness of social and academic involvement offered by the institution allows students to make informed decisions about transferring (Lee & Schneider, 2018). Geography also influences students' choice of transfer institution because the distance between their home and the institution determines whether commuting is possible or not, which affects the cost of attending the institution (Clasemann & Boon, 2020). The more the

institutions differ in their structures, missions, and cultures, the more transfer students will struggle to find the fit between themselves and the institution (Lee & Schneider, 2018).

Students who experience negative discourse with faculty or perceive they are not fulfilling faculty expectations are not thriving in a space where they can have a strong identity in the university community (Roska & Whitley, 2017). Peer relations may also cultivate different academic and social expectations that influence how transfer students form their identities in their educational trajectories (Zuckerman et al., 2021). Transfer students who are involved socially and academically are more engaged, which results in a higher rate of persistence and degree attainment (Lee & Schneider, 2018; Schudde, 2019). Student perceptions of success inform their goal orientation and ultimately influence their affective, behavioral, and cognitive outcomes (Nerstad et al., 2020; Zuckerman et al., 2021). Pascarella's model (1980) proposes that informal interactions between students and faculty contribute to the student's commitment to the institution as well as the social aspects of academic life, thereby positively impacting the decision to persist (Nicoletti, 2019). Engaging with faculty outside of class has a positive impact on student achievement as well (Andrade et al., 2022; Schudde, 2019).

Transfer Student Veterans

The majority of student veterans begin their college careers at the community college and then transfer to a four-year university, making most student veterans enrolled in four-year institutions transfer students (Sansone & Tucker Segura, 2020; Sullivan et al., 2019). Many veterans earn an associate degree before they transfer to a brick-and-mortar institution to continue their education towards a bachelor's degree (Belanger et al., 2021). Veteran transfer students experience a longer elapsed time before enrollment due to deployments, transfers, long duty hours, and financial responsibilities, which can affect the transferability of credits and

persistence (Alschuler & Yarab, 2018; Jenner, 2017; Rausch & Buning, 2022; Sansone & Tucker Segura, 2020; Wagner & Long, 2022). Those who have taken classes while serving in the military may have lower GPAs because of the deployments or long duty hours that prevented them from attending classes from devoting as much time to studying as they needed (Smith et al., 2018). Student veterans face the challenge of navigating the new institution's processes and procedures, along with finding a network of peers to support them (Sansone & Tucker Segura, 2020; Smith et al., 2018). Student veterans may also feel disconnected because they have little in common with traditional students who do not have military experience (Rausch & Buning, 2022; Smith et al., 2018).

Barriers to Persistence

No single factor has been identified to explain student withdrawal from higher education prior to degree completion (Daniels & MacNeela, 2021). Action research done by Sadowski (2018) found that students faced challenges in relation to personal circumstances, lack of preparedness for higher education, timely access to support, and course difficulties. Barriers such as money, academic stress, and housing are important factors that influence the student experience (Brooker et al., 2017; MAP-Works, 2014; Simón & Puerta, 2022). Student services and curricula are typically developed for traditional students, leaving nontraditional students struggling and needing support (Glowacki-Dudka, 2019;). Because of this, nontraditional students might need greater support (Renner & Skursha, 2022). The considerations and strategies used for traditional student degree completion may not apply to because they don't address the specific needs of the nontraditional students (Margarit & Kennedy, 2019).

Barriers for Student Veterans

Many students encounter barriers that interfere with their persistence in college, such as a lack of academic preparedness, pressure to work, financial obligations, and difficulty adjusting to the lack of structure in higher education (Dean et al., 2020; Rorison et al., 2017; Schudde, 2019). Student veterans may be trying to process their military experiences while interacting with civilians in the college setting (DiRamio et al., 2008; Griffin & Gilbert, 2015).

Transitioning from military service to higher education is a significant obstacle to degree attainment for student veterans not because they are not capable, but because of adjustment to the drastically different environment (Jenner, 2017; Kelley et al., 2013; Mobbs & Bonanno, 2018). Veterans must adjust from a highly structured, rule-driven setting to a much looser structure at the college (Hunter-Johnson, 2021; Rausch & Buning, 2022; Wagner & Long, 2022).

Transfer students must navigate the application and advising process at their transfer college to determine the transfer of credits and length of time to completion (Fernandez et al., 2019). Veterans must endure a mound of governmental paperwork to access educational benefits for higher education (Hunter-Johnson et al., 2021; Pellegrino & Hoggan, 2015). Like other nontraditional students, student veterans have more work responsibilities and less flexibility than traditional students, but student veterans have different academic and social needs (Dean et al., 2020; O'Connor, 2022; Renner & Skursha, 2022). Although student veterans are considered non-traditional students, they are a unique subset of this group, and with their background experiences and identity, they are an overlooked minority among non-traditional students (Fernandez et al., 2019; Sansone & Tucker Segura, 2020; Wagner & Long, 2022). Two-thirds of student veterans are first-generation college students (US Department of Veteran Affairs, 2020).

Research suggests that student veterans are strongly affected by faculty members and peers in the classroom environments (Arminio et al., 2015; DiRamio et al., 2008; Griffin & Gilbert, 2015; Osborne, 2014). When classroom interactions are not favorable for students, they feel less membership in the institution community (Andrade et al., 2022; Fernandez et al., 2019). Student veterans connect with each other but may not feel connected with peers and faculty on campus (Rausch & Buning, 2022; Lake, et al., 2022; Sansone & Tucker Segura, 2020). In addition to being older than traditional students by a typical minimum of 10 years and having different background experiences, student veterans may be uncomfortable with the perception of the military portrayed in the classroom (Fernandez et al., 2019; Rausch & Buning, 2022).

Admission Barriers

The motives for student veterans enrolling in higher education do not differ from other students, as they share a common goal of acquiring credentials for a new career path (Renner & Skurska, 2022). Although student veterans have career goals, entering higher education as a nontraditional student can be difficult due to the competing priorities in their lives, including jobs, families, and additional commitments (Parnes et al., 2020). The decision to enroll could be the result of a positive experience, such as a job opportunity, or a negative experience, such as a career ending injury (Hardin, 2008). During the application phase, students need access to specific cultural capital, knowledge and information tailored to that transition, taking college entrance exams, completing college applications, and being aware of the financial aid process (Duetschlander, 2017). Student veterans experience a more complicated college admissions process than nonveteran students. Navigating their benefits and policies leads to financial stress and causes barriers to the social integration of student veterans (Griffin & Gilbert, 2015).

There is no consistently accepted method of awarding credit for military service or for awarding transfer credit for courses taken while veterans are serving in the military (Smith et al., 2018; Ziencik, 2020; Vacchi, 2012). Student veterans are concerned about earning credit for their military service, and the university granting partial credits has a positive impact on their transition from military service to college (Hunter-Johnson et al., 2021; Ziencik, 2020). In this time when the United States has been at war for many years, student veterans have longer delays between transfers than nonveteran students due to deployments (Kelley et al., 2013; Sansone & Segura, 2020; Smith et al., 2018). In addition to stress over the transfer and military credits, student veterans experience stress due to pressure to pay their tuition while waiting for the federal government's payment of the GI Bill (Griffin & Gilbert, 2018; Smith et al., 2018; Vacchi, 2012). Like most civilian students, student veterans expressed a desire to complete their education in a timely and cost-effective manner (Elnitsky et al., 2018). With the high prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in this population, approximately half of student veterans do not complete their degrees in the time allotted by the GI Bill (O'Connor, 2022). Additional financial assistance is needed to support their continued education.

Social Barriers

Both mental and physical conditions may inhibit student veterans from being fully integrated socially and academically (Dean et al., 2020). Like other nontraditional students, student veterans experience the challenges of fulfilling multiple roles, isolation between themselves and peers, challenges with faculty, schedules, and culture (Hittepole, 2019; Markle, 2015). Student veterans do not feel connected in college classrooms due to faculty and younger classmates' limited understanding of military culture and veteran experiences (Fernandez et al.,

2019; Sikes et al., 2020). They have difficulty connecting socially with traditional students, whom they perceive as immature and less disciplined (Borsari et al., 2017; Hammond, 2016).

The work of Maslow (1954) explains that after physiological and safety needs are met, individuals' needs for love and belonging emerge. Until the need for belonging is met, other higher order needs such as self-actualization, creativity, and innovation cannot ascend (Maslow, 1954). In addition, student veterans often deal with emotional highs and lows in their relationships with family and friends while also trying to participate as a student (Pellegrino & Hogan, 2015). Many prefer to connect with other veterans on campus but remain socially isolated from civilian classmates (Alschuler & Yarab, 2018; Fernandez et al., 2019; Rausch & Buning, 2022; Vacchi et al., 2017). Like other nontraditional students, student veterans have more external obligations, such as work and family responsibilities, that can create obstacles for them to actively engage both with their coursework and with campus activities (Raybourn et al., 2018).

Student veterans experience social challenges such as difficulty acculturating to campus life, difficulties relating to classmates and campus faculty members, problems relating to family and friends after returning from service, and loss of camaraderie (DiRamio et al., 2008; Jenner, 2019; Lake et al., 2022). As a result of their military training, student veterans are accustomed to structure, punctuality, perseverance, and meeting deadlines, which are beneficial in higher education (Alschuler & Yarab, 2018; Fernandez et al., 2019; Sikes et al., 2020). As non-traditional students who have experienced a break in their educational path, veterans can experience anxiety about completing course assignments (Jenner, 2019; Wagner & Long, 2022). Social isolation is common for veterans transitioning from military service to civilian life (Belanger et al., 2021; Blackwell-Starnes, 2018; Griffin & Gilbert, 2018; McAndrew et al.,

2019). Because they are trained in combat to be very aware of their surroundings and how to keep themselves safe, being in a crowded classroom, being forced to sit with their back to others, and being in rooms with more than one door can be stressful and distracting for student veterans (Alschuler & Yarab, 2018; Kelley et al, 2013; Vacchi, 2012). The absence of academic and social support and the faculty's lack of awareness of military culture can lead to misunderstandings and stigmatization of student veterans (Rattray et al, 2019).

Physical and Mental Health Barriers

Student veterans are twice as likely to have a documented disability than their nonveteran peers (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2010). Even so, many cases of post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and medical problems go untreated in the campus community because of concern by veterans that they will be seen as weak or dependent on others (Southwell et al., 2018; Vacchi, 2012). The most common injuries for post-2001 era veterans are the internal or hidden wounds of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI) (Shakelford, 2009; Snell & Halter, 2010; Mystakidou et al., 2007). These conditions affect mood, thoughts, and behavior, yet they often go unrecognized and unacknowledged (Linski, 2019).

The term disability is used to describe episodic or permanent physical, mental, and emotional conditions, ranging from mild to severe, often limiting daily life activities (Gonzalez et al, 2020). Disabilities fall along a continuum of visibility from those that are easily noticed by others to those disabilities that are not immediately apparent to others (Gonzales et al., 2020). Invisible disabilities can be easier in some ways than physically evident disabilities, but they can also be more difficult (Hendry et al., 2022; Solomon, 2020). They can lead to exclusion if not identified. People with hidden disabilities may experience significant physical or psychic pain

that may not be apparent to others (Solomon, 2020). Lack of understanding of invisible disabilities increases the possibility of a negative reaction (de Beer et al., 2022; Shakelford, 2009). Considering that the symptoms are invisible, much of what people with invisible disabilities experience is either stigmatized, misunderstood, or misperceived (Cook & Clement, 2019; de Beer et al., 2022; Hendry et al., 2022).

For student veterans suffering from invisible disabilities such as PTSD, anxiety, depression, and other disorders, the transition to civilian life can be challenging (Flink, 2017). Student veterans are at an increased risk of having mental health challenges including PTSD, thoughts of suicide, and feelings of displacement, all at much higher rate than their nonveteran student peers (Factsheets, 2018). Disability invisibility among veterans is positively associated with psychological safety (Gonzalez et al., 2020). The more visible the disability is the more the veteran associates themselves with a disabled identity. Thus, having an invisible disability can perpetuate the student veteran declining support services (Gonzalez et al., 2020). Student veterans, especially those with invisible disabilities, find navigating and surviving on the college campus confusing, frustrating, and demanding, Karp & Klempin, 2016).

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a condition that impacts many post-9/11 student veterans (Falkey, 2016). The American Psychological Association (APA) defines post-traumatic stress disorder as a psychiatric disorder that may occur in people who have experienced or witnessed a traumatic event, a series of events, or set of circumstances (American Psychiatric Association, 2023). PTSD is considered an invisible disability because it is not readily apparent to others interacting with the student veterans (Falkey, 2016). Although anyone can be diagnosed with PTSD, veterans are more likely to develop it than civilians (U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2022). Student veterans who are diagnosed with PTSD struggle with symptoms of

anxiety, hypervigilance, paranoia, and difficulty concentrating, which may make interpersonal relationships and concentrating difficult (Alschuler & Yarab, 2018; O'Connor, 2022; Wagner & Long, 2022). Some people living with PTSD repeatedly re-experience their trauma in the form of flashbacks, intrusive recollections of the event, and nightmares (American Council on Education, 2010).

Traumatic brain injury occurs as the result of a sudden blow or jolt to the head, and often occurs during trauma such as an accident, blast, or fall (U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2022). The Brain Injury Association of America estimated the number of wounded veterans injured by IED blasts to be over 360,000 (PBS, 2011), and that number grows every year.

Traumatic brain injury (TBI) is prevalent among combat veterans and its effect is often not fully known until the students are confronted with the academic demands of the college classroom such as writing, computer work, and lab tasks (Borsari et al., 2017; Wagner & Long, 2022).

Traumatic brain injury causes difficulty with thinking, memory, focus, and various other functions (Falkey, 2016; Wagner & Long, 2020). Individuals with TBI often suffer with pain and mood disorders. TBI can result in short- or long-term problems, although most individuals with TBI are eventually able to function independently (American Council on Education, 2010).

In addition to PTSD and TBI, many veterans experience tinnitus, ringing in the ears, which is typically caused by exposure to loud noises without adequate hearing protection, and can also cause hearing loss (Henry et al., 2019). Because one of the biggest risk factors for tinnitus is loud noises, military members are particularly susceptible due the nature of their work (Montgomery, 2022). Tinnitus is defined as the perception of ringing, hissing, or other sound in the ears or head when no external sound is present (Military.com, 2022). Tinnitus is associated with difficulty with concentration, which negatively impacts academic success (Kelley et al.,

2013; Wagner & Long, 2022). Sleep disorders, anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation are also more prevalent among those diagnosed with tinnitus (Henry et al., 2019). Over 167,000 veterans were diagnosed with tinnitus in 2021 and over 2.5 million veterans currently receive disability benefits for it (Military.com, 2022).

Research studies have documented that physical, cognitive, psychiatric, and other types of disabilities are associated with many academic, emotional, and other health problems in student veterans (Umucu et al., 2018). Veterans are at a high risk of developing chronic pain due to the extraordinary physical stress associated with military service (Higgins et al., 2014). Service-connected disabilities may have a substantial negative impact on student veterans' emotions, which may affect their overall college adjustment and well-being (Umucu et al., 2022). In addition to invisible disabilities that cannot be seen, many student veterans have visible disability conditions (Hendry et al., 2022). The most common musculoskeletal disorders among veterans are lower back, hip, and knee pain that impair mobility (Murphy et al., 2014). Over 50% of veterans who receive care at the VA are diagnosed with musculoskeletal pain (Goulet et al., 2016). Military veterans have a greater likelihood of reporting elevated rates of activity-limited back/neck, and fracture, and bone/joint problems compared to nonveterans (Hinojosa & Hinojosa, 2016; Hinojosa et al., 2017). Research supports that pain, physical health quality of life, and the ability to participate in social functions all relate to and contribute to veterans' mental health quality of life (Umucu et al., 2020). Physical disabilities can have a negative impact on self-concept and identity, as the individual must continually decide when and where to disclose their disability (Hendry et al., 2022). Physical pain also significantly impacts learning among student veterans (Bocchieri et al, 2019). TBI and spinal cord injuries can create problems student veterans in sitting, prolonged computer or laboratory work, and walking to and from

class (Borsari et al., 2017). While all physical injuries have the potential negatively influence the student-veteran degree completion, TBI and mobility issues are particularly problematic (Wagner & Long, 2020). In addition to physical pain, TBI interferes with the student veteran's ability to process and retain information (Wagner & Long, 2020).

The extended deployments of modern military campaigns have imposed physical and psychological trauma on military members, resulting in high rates of service-related health conditions among returning veterans (Tanielian et al., 2008). As compared to Pre-9/11 veterans, a higher percentage of Post-9/11 veterans had combat-related injuries that resulted in sustained physical and psychological injuries (Alschuler & Yarab, 2018; Wagner & Long, 2022). These service-related health conditions negatively impact adjustment to and success in college (Elnitsky et al., 2018; Griffin & Gilbert, 2015; Kinney et al., 2020; McAndrew et al., 2019; Mobbs & Bonanno, 2018). Serious or unpleasant events during active duty may result in student veterans having hardened personalities that do not mesh with the attitudes and values of their college peers (Vacchi et al., 2017). Student veterans may face co-occurring traumatic injuries such as polytrauma clinical triad (PCT) chronic pain, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI), and social, functional, and cognitive impairments as a result of combat experiences, which may negatively impact their ability to succeed in higher education (Elnitsky et al., 2018). Additionally, veterans who suffer from more than one condition experience difficulties with focus, cognitive processing, retention and memory (Alschuler & Yarab, 2018).

Despite the need for treatment and support, student veterans experience barriers because of stigma, perceived lack of support, and limited access to available resources (Cheney et al., 2018; Lake et al., 2018; Newins et al., 2019). A study on veterans' barriers to mental healthcare

use at the US Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) found that stigma reinforces the belief that seeking help indicates weakness or failure and is influenced by military attitudes and socialization (Cheney et al., 2018). Additionally, veterans report concern about the cost of mental health treatment as well as the confidentiality of it (Cheney et al., 2018; Newins, et al., 2019). A recent study predicts that student veterans with more military experience who have a positive TBI screen are more likely to experience academic disruptions, while student veterans with less military experience with higher depression scores are more likely to experience academic disruptions (Shakelford, et al., 2019).

Use of Support Services

Supportive services on the college campus are very important for the academic success of student veterans in their academic performance, retention, and graduation rates (Lang et al., 2013). Student services within the university such as advising, counseling, disability services, and financial aid are designed to support the students' professional and personal growth (Sikes, et al., 2020). Institutions of higher education provide academic advising for both undergraduate and graduate students (Thach, 2022).

Academic advisors play a critical role because they will likely have increased contact with the student veterans compared to other institutional staff (Long, 2022). The main function of the academic advisor is to provide holistic support to students as they navigate their journey in higher education. Advisors are not experts in every area a student veteran may face, but forging relationships with other institutional departments will positively position the advisor to support student veterans (Sherman & Cahill, 2015). Student veterans who visited the advising office and faculty members' offices more often reported a higher perception of the supportiveness from their university and expectation of degree completion (Southwell et al, 2018). Advising services

can be underutilized when students only reach out if they experience a problem or for online students who may have fewer opportunities to interact with the advisor because of the structure of their program.

The ease of navigation through the university enrollment and financial aid offices influences the students' perception of the university environment and ultimately their retention (Tinto, 1993). The financial aid office and student affairs office are sources of support for students in higher education. Financial aid assists students with scholarships, loans, and grants to pay for their education. They also help student veterans use their veteran benefits for college. Student affairs is a critical component in the higher education experience for students (NASPA, 2023). Student Affairs promotes student well-being by providing opportunities for student involvement and avenues for student support when they need assistance.

Institutions of higher education hold specific expectations and make assumptions about the knowledge and skills that students must have to navigate the academic and social systems of academia, and at the same time, they fail to provide the opportunities and resources to explicitly teach this knowledge to first-generation college students (Azpeitia et al., 2023). Students who are most confident in their academic skills are the most likely to engage in help-seeking behavior, whereas students who struggle with time management and with recalling previous academic skills are less likely to seek help (Li et al., 2023; Stevens & Mora, 2017). As previously discussed, nontraditional students in higher education do not have the same needs as traditional students. Research shows that nontraditional students use fewer university services, including disability services than their younger, non-employed counterparts (Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011). When nontraditional students are enrolled in a college or university, it is important for the institution to focus on their existence needs, which include transparency, technical support,

interaction with peers, a sense of belonging, and faculty interaction (Diep et al., 2019).

Addressing these needs is vital to their ability to function within the institutional environment (Renner & Skursha, 2022).

Each student veteran may have a differing level of needs that require attention, which makes proper communication and relationship-building between support staff and student veterans essential (Linski, 2019). Student veterans visit academic advisors and faculty less frequently than civilian students (Southwell et al., 2018). Like many other first-generation students, student veterans hesitate to reach out to faculty and staff because they lack experience with the power differential, they feel between themselves and professors (Azpeitia et al., 2023). Research has shown that student veterans may feel uncomfortable asking university staff or faculty for help because they do not want to be a burden and do not want to be the weak link on a military team (Killam & Degges-White, 2018; Rausch & Buning, 2022; Smith et al., 2018; Vacchi, 2012). Additionally, for student veterans diagnosed with invisible disabilities such as PTSD, TBI, or another hidden disability the impact of the disability interferes with their willingness to seek support (Kranke et al., 2017; Linski, 2019). Student veterans perceive support services on campus to be too spread out, with staff from one office having limited knowledge of other campus services for student veterans (Elnitsky et al., 2018).

Many student veterans cannot easily use academic resources offered by the university including tutoring and study groups because of other commitments such as work and family (Lake et al., 2022; Southwell et al., 2018). The vast differences between military and academic culture can affect the student veterans' perceptions of a situation and cause frustration (Griffin & Gilbert, 2015; McAndrew et al., 2019; Vacchi, 2012). Section 504 and Title II of The Americans with Disabilities Act require colleges and universities to provide reasonable accommodations to

ensure full access to students with disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, 2021). Although accommodations are available, students must self-register for such support in higher education. Some veterans are uncomfortable sharing their veteran status with faculty and staff (Azpietia & Emerson, 2022; Southwell et al., 2018). Student veterans may encounter difficulties accessing accommodations due to a disconnect between the required documentation and the documentation of their disability from the VA (Southwell et al., 2018). Student veterans tend to make connections with other veterans, so having a veteran organization on campus helps provide a safe, supportive place (Rausch & Buning, 2022; Wagner & Long, 2022). Student veterans' perception of the supportiveness of the university environment as well as their expectations for degree completion were enhanced by more frequent visits to their faculty members and academic advisors (Southwell et al., 2018).

Tutoring

Obtaining academic help is an essential self-regulating learning strategy in higher education, which plays a significant role in students' academic careers (Amador & Amador, 2017; Lobos et al, 2021; Lynam et al., 2022; Marbouti et al., 2021). Learning support services such as tutoring are intended to improve retention by increasing student performance in coursework (Carr & London, 2019). The aim of the personal tutor is to provide students with academic and personal support throughout their time in higher education (Yale, 2019). The tutor-student relationship promotes a sense of belonging in students (McIntosh et al., 2021; Wakelin, 2021). Research studies show that when students seek help from an institutional service, it encourages them to be satisfied and exhibit higher performance (Brown, 2020; Maine, 2017; Seeto, 2016). Students who have gaps in their education path are less confident, and therefore, intimidated by the idea of asking for help (Li et al., 2023; Stevens & Mora, 2017).

Disability Services

Because of regulations in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), students with disabilities are allowed reasonable accommodations at the college level, provided they have documentation of a qualifying condition and self-register for services (Azpeitia & Emerson, 2022; Shakelford, 2009; Southwell et al., 2018). Although the provision of reasonable accommodations is the standard for determining appropriate implementation of the ADA, there is no specific requirement for the types of the disabilities that might be encountered in education and reasonable accommodations are not standardized within higher education (Linski, 2019). At each institution, the coordinator or manager addresses the needs of students based on documentation of the disability and accommodations requested, so potentially students with similar disabilities could be provided different kinds of support that ultimately impacts their academic success (Linski, 2019; Shakelford, 2009). Obtaining the required documentation may be difficult when the veteran has accommodation needs based on ailments that have not been formally diagnosed or when the disability office at the institution is not familiar with invisible disabilities (Linski, 2019). These veterans sometimes do not seek support for their disabilities because the perceived stigma of disclosing that they have a disability will make them appear weak rather than strong as they have been trained in the military (Elnitsky et al., 2018; Southwell et al., 2018; Wagner & Long, 2022). The failure of student veterans to come self-identify is often the result of cultural norms carried over from their military service when reporting a problem or vulnerability would likely prompt a negative reaction from their supervisor and peers (Shackelford, 2009). There is also a sense of psychological safety that some veterans feel by not disclosing their invisible disability. In

addition, student veterans lack awareness of disability-related supports in higher education and the process by which they access them (Kinney et al., 2020; Linski, 2019).

The most common disabilities reported among student veterans using the Post-9/11 G.I. bill are physical disabilities associated with mobility, hearing impairments, traumatic brain injury TBI, and PTSD (Southwell et al., 2018, Wagner & Long, 2022). Potential reasonable accommodations include note-taking assistance/record lectures, assistive equipment, extended time for assignments and exams, and tutoring (Sikes et al., 2020; Wagner & Long, 2022). Busy, non-traditional students may not be able to access the disability office during regular business hours or may not have the time to travel from office to office on campus because of outside commitments (Wagner & Long, 2022). Being unsure of what is acceptable as an accommodation can instill hesitation and fear in student veteran that they will not receive the necessary supports to complete the requirements of their degree (Linski, 2019; Shakelford, 2009).

Veteran Services

Student veterans benefit from having veteran-directed support on the college campus to assist them with understanding the G.I. Bill benefits, transitioning from military member to civilian college student, accessing support on the college campus, and providing a quiet space to gather when students need a break (Alschuler & Yarab, 2018; Azpeitia & Emerson, 2022; Jenner, 2017). Many institutions now have veteran support offices designed to provide such support (Alschuler & Yarab, 2018). The veteran support office often connects student veterans to student affairs, the disability office, and other resources (Enitsky et al., 2018; Sikes et al., 2020; Southwell, 2018). Student veterans have expressed a need for increased or improved services for veterans at some level in higher education, whether a dedicated military admissions representative, someone in financial aid to help veterans navigate the changing regulations

related to the Post 9/11 GI Bill, or someone in student affairs who understands the impact of a year-long deployment on a reservist (Alschuler & Yarab, 2018; Jones, 2013). Regardless of whether a veteran services office exists on campus, creating specific points of contact for student veterans will help them navigate the institutional administrative process and assist with obstacles that might impede degree completion (The American Council of Education, n.d.). Having a dedicated veteran space on campus can help them feel like they matter (Griffin & Gilbert, 2015). As a student organization, the Student Veterans of America (SVA) promotes fellowship among student veterans and allows them a safe space to connect to other veterans.

Studies on veteran persistence are limited because of the timeline used in the research studies and because of the way in which veterans were identified for the research studies (Rausch & Buning, 2022; Sansone & Tucker Segura, 2020). Much of the research is based on graduation within four years, and many veterans do not graduate within that timeframe due to the impact of deployments and transferring institutions (Sansone & Tucker Segura, 2020). Use of GI Bill and self-disclosure are used to identify student veterans for these studies, which is limiting because there are veterans who do not use veteran benefits and who choose not to disclose their veteran status (Rausch & Buning, 2022; Sansone & Tucker Segura, 2020).

Student Organizations

Students who become more involved in university life tend to higher retention rates and satisfaction with their overall university experience (Astin, 1993). Involvement in student organizations provides students in higher education something and someone to relate to, which deepens their sense of community (Haines, 2019). Student organizations provide an opportunity for students to develop leadership skills, increase their engagement with the university, and interact with peers (Stanhope, 2022). Sometimes called the other education, participation in

extracurricular activities provides opportunities for students to apply classroom knowledge to real world experiences and develop life skills (Astin, 1993; Kuh, 1995). The work of Tinto (1993) suggests that clubs and organizations may be especially important influences on students' perception of the supportiveness of their university environment and the decision to complete their degree. These student organizations usually fall into the following categories: governing bodies, sorority and fraternity organizations, student government groups, academic clubs and professional societies, honor societies, publication and media groups, intramural sports, religious, and special interest groups (Astin, 1993; Craig & Warner, 1991).

Student organizations are important to student veterans' academic persistence and perception of the university environment (Southwell et al., 2018). Extracurricular activity involvement cultivates visible changes in a student's behavioral traits and personality characteristics (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terrenzini, 1991). Student veterans may not feel comfortable participating in student organizations geared more toward traditional-aged students. Having a student veteran organization, such as Student Veterans of America, on campus provides a way for student veterans to be involved with peers they can relate to similar to the sense of community that they experienced in the military (Bagby et al., 2015).

Summary

Although more veterans than ever are enrolling in higher education, many are not completing their degree programs within a four-year time frame (Alschuler & Yarab, 2018; Marcus, 2017). Researchers have identified factors contributing to student retention and persistence in higher education. The transition from military service to higher education presents a big challenge for veterans because it is a transition from a career and way of life that is very structured and team-oriented to one that is much more loosely bound, focused on individual

achievement (Dean et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2018). The process of integrating of student veterans into the college community is challenging because they are adjusting to the different environment and navigating the college systems as nontraditional students (Borsari et al., 2017; Carter et al., 2019). For both first year and transfer veteran students, there is a cultural adjustment and a concern for whether college credit will be awarded for military training (Roska et al., 2020). Veteran transfer students may experience deployments and job transfers that affect transferability of credit and in turn, persistence (Alschuler & Yarab, 2018; Rausch & Buning, 2022). Student veterans experience admission barriers, social barriers, and physical and mental health barriers that affect their college experience. As older, nontraditional students, student veterans may need to work, have financial pressure, and may be returning to college after being out of school for a long period of time (Schudde, 2019, Dean et al., 2020). Awareness and use of student support services in higher education can be an obstacle because of the perceived stigma attached to asking for help and the mindset of military perseverance. Student veterans may not be confident in their academic skills, and therefore will be less likely to seek help (Li et al., 2023; Stevens & Mora, 2017). Membership in student organizations on the campus offers students a place to belong and interact with others while also building leadership skills (Haines, 2019; Stanhope, 2022). Joining an organization might be difficult for student veterans because of their outside obligations (Raybourn et al, 2018).

Pascarella's (1980) model of student-faculty interactions identified modules that interact to impact student persistence in higher education. A gap exists in the literature related to identifying factors affecting the persistence of veterans in higher education. Recent literature supports the need to identify these factors and provide support to veteran students to prevent attrition (Alschuler & Yarab, 2018; Sansone & Tucker, 2020; Shackelford et al., 2019). By

examining the variables within the student background characteristics module and other college experience modules of student veterans, institutions can better understand the needs of student veterans and design supports for them in higher education (Rausch & Buning, 2022; Schroeder & Perez, 2022; Shackelford et al., 2019).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this holistic single-case study (Yin, 2018) was to understand the lived experiences of student veterans as they overcome barriers to persistence in higher education. My research study explored the experiences of student veterans as they overcome barriers to persistence of at a small, faith-based university in the South. This chapter presents a thorough review of the research methodology applied to this study. Details about the setting and participants of the study are also provided. In addition, this chapter includes the researcher's positionality, focusing on the interpretive framework, philosophical assumptions, and the role of the researcher in this single-instrument case study. The methods and plan for data collection will also be addressed, along with details about how data will be collected and analyzed from individual interviews, observations, and focus groups. Finally, the data synthesis plan offers a rationale for the research's reliability and ethical considerations. A summary will conclude this chapter.

Research Design

My study was qualitative because it was holistic, empirical, interpretive, and empathetic (Stake, 1995). I conducted interviews, focus groups, and journal prompts to gather data. The uniqueness of the university and the context of student veterans were important to understanding (Stakes, 1995). My research was a holistic design of naturalistic inquiry and case analysis (Patton, 2023). This study was a holistic single-case study (Yin, 2018), similar to Stake's (1995) intrinsic case study. The purpose of the study was to learn about the case, the university, and the factors that affect the persistence of student veterans (Stake, 1995). A holistic single-case study was the best approach for this study because I aim to explore the lived experiences of student

veterans as they overcome barriers to persistence in higher education. I collected data from student veterans by conducting in-depth interviews (Patton, 2023; Yin, 2018). Between 10 and 15 student veterans were selected as participants in the study. I conducted intensive interviews, resembling guided conversations, to allow open-ended comments and questions (Yin, 2018). Through these in-depth qualitative interviews, this holistic single-case study addressed the core questions: (a) what is the essence of the experience of student veterans as far as overcoming barriers to persistence; (b) in what context did these factors occur; and (c) what recommendations do student veterans have for improvement of negative factors? After the interviews were completed, I reviewed the transcriptions and highlight significant statements, sentences, or quotes that contributed to understanding how the student veterans experienced the factors affecting their persistence in higher education, which is called horizontalization.

Case study research was the type of study best suited for understanding the way in which the subject under investigation by the researcher was defined or established within the meanings of social actors, by the description of the object as the study develops (Patton, 2023).

Historically, case study research has been used across disciplines. The need for case study research comes from a longing to understand a complex social phenomenon (Yin, 2018). In the case of this holistic single-case study, the goal was to understand the experiences of student veterans as they overcome barriers to persistence in higher education. The current study was considered unusual or extreme because it deviated from theoretical norms and its findings were projected to reveal insights into the university's processes.

Research Questions

The following were the research questions for this holistic single-case study.

Central Research Question

What are the experiences of student veterans as they overcome barriers to persistence in higher education?

Sub-Question One

What are the experiences of student veterans using academic support services?

Sub-Question Two

What role do faculty members play in the academic integration of student veterans?

Sub-Question Three

What are the social integration experiences of student veterans in higher education?

Setting and Participants

This section describes the single-instrument case study and provides information about the study participants and how they will be chosen. I am currently employed at a private, faith-based institution in the south, where I serve as the director of Accessibility Services. I chose this faith-based, Hispanic-serving university for my study. The institution is a Yellow-Ribbon campus and is considered veteran friendly. The known veteran population was 100 students in undergraduate and graduate programs combined. The known veteran population was based on the voluntary disclosure by student veterans.

Setting

This study was conducted at a small, faith-based, four-year university in the south. I selected this faith-based, four-year university because it is a small, private, four-year institution. The university is small, with an enrollment of 2,300 students and 211 faculty members (IPEDS, 2022). The university is considered a veteran-friendly campus and is designated a Yellow Ribbon campus. Of the 2,300 students, 40% are first-generation, and the retention rate among

first-time freshmen was 57% in 2022 (IPEDS, 2022). The university leadership is a shared governance model, where the president makes final decisions on institutional and university strategies, tactics, and initiatives, and the provost has absolute decision-making power on academic programs, support, and services.

Participants

Participants in this study were student veterans attending Elliot University, a four-year, faith-based university in the South. The student veterans were undergraduate students, in their junior or senior year, actively attending the university for at least one year prior to the study. There were no age restrictions for participants, however, given the participants are veterans, the minimum age is at least 22. Both male and female student veterans were recruited, and all ethnic groups were included. Yin (2018) recommends four or five participants, and the School of Education at Liberty University requires at least 10 participants. The recruited sample size was between 10 and 15 students to allow for attrition. Student veterans self-identified by responding to the posted flyer. Some research participants also referred other student veterans for involvement. Participation was voluntary.

Researcher's Positionality

I was particularly interested in conducting this research study to understand the experiences of student veterans as they overcome barriers to persistence in higher education because of my passion for student success. Through my involvement in Student Affairs at the college level, I have done a great deal of reading about student retention and persistence. Although our Student Affairs team and my readings discuss the persistence and retention of various student groups in higher education, I noticed that student veterans are often grouped with non-traditional students, even though student veterans are very distinct and worthy of exploration

and research. My goal was to understand the lived experiences of student veterans as they overcome barriers to persistence and work toward their degrees in higher education.

Interpretive Framework

My research followed the social constructivism qualitative framework. In social constructivism, the individuals seek an understanding of the world in which they live and work, and that aligns with my research topic because I was trying to understand the factors that affect student veterans' persistence in higher education (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I was sensitive to participants and context in my research procedures. I respected the participants and the research site as I focused on multiple perspective stories of the student veterans (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Philosophical Assumptions

The philosophical assumptions of my research study were based on my use of a holistic single-case study and the social constructivism approach. I used an inductive method of emergent ideas through interviewing, observing, and reviewing documents (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Ontological Assumption

God's word proves there is one reality, but even so, individuals have their perceptions shaped by their lived experiences. The ontological assumption concerns the nature of being, existence, and reality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). People bring basic perspectives, interpretations, cognitive schemas, or social and cultural frames of reference with them to an interpretive situation such as an interview (Höijer, 2008). People must then interact with the social world and construct meaning based on their culture, beliefs, and experiences (Hinojosa, & Kaufman, 2022).

Epistemological Assumption

The epistemological assumption focuses on what can be known, the knowledge, and the relationship between the researched and the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Crotty, 2003). My single-instrument case study qualitative research aimed to create an unbiased research study. The knowledge was derived from the subjective experiences of the student veteran participants through interviews, focus group participation, and the journaling of the student veteran participants.

Axiological Assumption

The axiological assumption describes what is valuable in the research process (Park et al., 2020). My research study will honor the human values of everyone involved (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). My research topic is focused on understanding the factors that affect student veteran persistence in higher education. I am not a veteran or military member, but I work in the Accessibility Services Office at a university and frequently assist student veterans with accommodations. While this qualitative study conveyed my values concerning the context and setting of the research, I was also mindful of those values and biases to best seek the truth in the information I was gathering (Creswell & Poth, 2018). People who read this dissertation must understand these nuances.

Researcher's Role

When conducting qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As the researcher in my holistic single-case study, I used my eyes and ears to collect, analyze, and interpret data (Stake, 1995). I collected data by conducting interviews with student veterans, conducting a focus group, and using journal prompts. Being the human instrument in my holistic single-case study had implications from four different angles (Wa-Mbaleka, 2020). First, I used interview protocols and focus group protocols

that I developed for this study, taking care to capture data from lived experiences of the participants. Second, because I was researching an issue that was important to me and I could relate to well, it could put me in an emotional state (Haynes, 2012). Third, emotions can bring out the vulnerability of participants when the qualitative researcher and participant engage in a constructive dialogue (Wa-Mbaleka, 2020). Lastly, as a researcher, I brought my own bias to the study. I am not a veteran, nor have I ever served in the military. I am, however, the director of the Accessibility Services Office at a university and I assist student veterans with accommodations. During my research study, I remained aware of my prior knowledge and assumptions about military service and being a student veteran so that I could conduct the research and analysis with an open mind.

Procedures

This section will outline the steps that will be used to conduct my research study. I will explain how I gained permission to conduct the study, how I solicited student veterans to participate, my data collection and analysis plan, and an explanation of the data analysis.

I requested permission from the university's institutional review board (IRB) to conduct my holistic single-case study. The IRB provides oversight when human subjects are involved as the main participants for research purposes. I also requested permission to communicate with the associate director/VA coordinator of financial aid and the military and VA financial aid counselor, the Accessibility Services Office, the vice president of Student Affairs, and the sponsor of the student veterans organization at the campus. I also requested permission to post flyers with information about the research study and a QR code so that student veterans could learn more about the study and agree to participate.

Because this is an embedded, holistic single-case study, purposeful sampling was used to select individuals who purposefully informed an understanding of the research problem (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The student veteran population was calculated based on voluntary disclosure and use of GI Bill. At the time of the study, 100 student veterans were enrolled in the university as either undergraduates or graduates. Once the institutional review board at Liberty University approved this study, I submitted a requested for approval from the participating university through their IRB process. Once approved, I communicated with the associate director and military and VA counselor in Financial Aid, staff in the Accessibility Services Office, the vice president of Student Affairs, and the sponsor of the student veteran organization on campus. Flyers detailing the research study were posted in those offices and flyers with a QR code will also be left for interested student veterans to take in those four locations. Participants were required to be undergraduate student veterans who were juniors or seniors. Student veterans could scan the QR code to learn more about the research. Interested participants were required to email me an electronic copy of their signed informed consent. I accepted participants in the study who joined from the QR code on the flyer as well as those whom existing participants referred. I was looking for undergraduate students who were juniors or seniors to participate, and my goal was to have 10-15 in total to allow for attrition. The flyer and QR code indicated that I was seeking participants who are student veterans attending this private, faith-based university.

Data Collection Plan

My research topic focused on factors affecting student veterans' persistence in higher education. The study was a holistic single-case study that was be used to obtain descriptions and interpretations of its participants (Stakes, 1995). Because it was a case study, I took pride in discovering and portraying the multiple views of the case (Stakes, 1995). I also used

observations and a focus group to collect data for the study. I planned to recruit between 10 and 15 student veterans who are undergraduate students in their junior or senior year and have been attending the university for a year.

Individual Interviews

I utilized a semi-structured interview approach to interview each student veteran (Yin, 2018). During the interview, I established rapport with the participants and collected data regarding the participants' experiences. During the interviews, I was following my line of inquiry for the case and articulating the questions in an unbiased manner that meets the needs of the inquiry (Yin, 2018). The interviews were scheduled and conducted online via Microsoft Teams. Allowing participants to be interviewed in a web-based format allowed them to participate without meeting in person, as meeting in-person could be challenging for student veterans with physical or mental health conditions. Web-based interviews also enabled online students to participate in the study and allowed them more time to consider and respond to questions and requests for information. Qualitative data collection in a web-based platform also saved time and money (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Table 1. Individual Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your educational background and career through the current time.
2. How did faculty your faculty affect your academic performance? SQ1, SQ2
3. How connected to the campus community do you feel? SQ3
4. What support systems have been helpful in making you feel connected to the campus community? SQ3
5. How similar to a traditional student do you feel you are as a student veteran? SQ3
6. How have faculty members or courses contributed to your learning and development? SQ2

7. What support services have you found most beneficial in supporting your success at this university? SQ1
8. What aspects of your higher education experience have contributed most to your satisfaction as a student veteran? CRQ
9. What are some areas where you believe the institution could improve in supporting student veterans? CRQ
10. What would you say the experiences of a satisfied student veteran are? CRQ
11. Can you share your experience with using the academic support services at this university? SQ1
12. In your opinion, what challenges do student veterans face in accessing and using academic support resources? SQ1
13. In your opinion, how do the challenges student veterans face impact them academically and socially? SQ1, SQ3
14. Can you share your experiences involving any challenges you've faced as a student veteran in higher education? SQ1, SQ3
15. How important do you think it is for faculty members to be aware of the military background and experiences of student veterans? SQ2
16. Can you provide examples of a conversation between you and a faculty member that led to a positive academic experience? SQ2, SQ3
17. How could a faculty member show they understand and support you as a student veteran? SQ2, SQ3
18. How has your military background affected you connecting with other students, faculty, and staff at the university? SQ3

19. How would you describe the overall support for student veterans? CRQ

20. Is there anything else you would like to add to your responses?

Before beginning each interview, I introduced myself to the participant and explained the purpose of the interview was to gather information from them about their personal experience attending college as a student veteran and for them to share the factors that affected their persistence in higher education. I also shared the purpose of my research. I asked each participant for their consent to be interviewed and recorded during the interview. Interviews were recorded using a digital recorder and on my cell phone using otter.ai software. Two recording methods were used to ensure that all the interviews are captured, even if there was a problem with the recording device.

Focus Groups

Using a focus group provided an opportunity for me to moderate a discussion with multiple student veteran participants (Yin, 2018) at the same time while encouraging dialogue among participants about the area being researched. Focus groups allowed the researcher to expand on themes and patterns that emerged during interviews and observations. I analyzed the interview transcriptions and observations thoroughly to develop focus group questions based on the emergent themes and patterns. Conducting the analysis before the questions also ensured that the focus group provided a unique opportunity for data collection and not repeating questions already addressed in the individual interviews.

I developed the focus group questions following the analysis of the individual interviews and observations. Questions will be based on emergent themes and patterns. The following are the focus group questions that were asked, after the analysis.

Table 2. Focus Group Questions

1. What motivated you to go to college after your military service? CRQ
2. What features did you like about your enrollment/ onboarding process at the university?
CRQ, SQ1
3. At the start of any given semester, what is the biggest hassle? SQ1
4. What support service does the university not have that you think is needed for student veterans? SQ3
5. Think back to your initial advising session at the university. How did you feel about your educational goals after that meeting? SQ2
6. Have you experienced mentoring or guidance from faculty that had an effect on you?
SQ2
7. What recommendations do you have for faculty members to support inclusion of student veterans at this university? SQ2
8. If you could offer advice to incoming student veterans, based on your experiences, what would it be? CRQ
9. Of all the things discussed today, what to you is most important? SQ1, SQ2, SQ3
10. Have we missed anything that you feel needs to be addressed to improve student veteran persistence at the university? SQ1

Journal Prompts

Journal prompts allowed participants time and space to reflect on a specific topic, rather than the immediate question-and-answer format of interviews and focus groups, journal prompts allow for a deeper, nuanced understanding of everyday subjectivities, emotions, and activities (Eidse & Turner, 2014). Journal entries were initially developed to facilitate entry into

ethnographic settings that the researcher would have trouble accessing otherwise without changing the dynamics of what they want to observe (Rudrum et al., 2022). I assigned three journal prompts for participants to complete at two-week intervals during my study, given that each prompt took an estimated 10-15 minutes of response time and student veteran participants had college course work and other responsibilities. Journal prompts allowed me to be contemporaneous to the events and emotions, capturing the participant experiences (Taylor et al., 2019).

Table 3. Journal Prompts

1. How have challenges you've faced affected your well-being, both academically and personally? SQ3
2. Reflect on your achievements at the university. What has helped you accomplish your goals? How did you stay motivated during difficult times? CRQ
3. What would you like faculty, staff, and non-veteran students to know about being a student veteran at this university to help them understand your perspective? CRQ

Data Analysis

When conducting research involving human subjects, such as in this single-instrument case study, ethical considerations arise (Yin, 2018). I developed a plan before conducting any interviews to be certain that the identity of the participants remains confidential (Stake, 1995). I used pseudonyms for participants as well as for the research site. After the interviews were complete, I listened to the recordings of them repeatedly until they were completely transcribed. While listening to and reading the interview transcripts, I remained open to whatever meanings emerged (Hycner, 1985). Once the interviews were transcribed, I emailed each participant a copy of their interview for their approval as a member-checking exercise (Stakes, 1995). Participants

reviewed and approved or amended their interview before I moved to coding so that I was certain I had captured their perspective accurately (Tong et al., 2007). I read and reviewed each interview transcript and made notes of meaningful words and phrases (Chang & Wang, 2021), engaging in the initial coding process (Saldana, 2021). Once I had reviewed all the transcripts and noted these, I checked them again, looking for common themes. I then consolidated the common themes into new chunks of meaning (Saldana, 2021). Pattern matching was used related to why student veterans were experiencing these factors that affect persistence and how they perceived the situation could be improved (Yin, 2018).

Prior to the group sessions, I developed a focus group protocol so that the questions and responses could be recorded easily. I recorded the focus group meetings with the permission of the participants. As with student veteran interviews, I used the pseudonyms previously developed to maintain the privacy and confidentiality of participant responses. I wrote keywords and phrases, coding for patterns (Saldana, 2021). Categories representing words or phrases emerged to describe an explicit aspect of the data, and a phrase or sentence described more subtle processes (Saldana, 2021).

I engaged in initial coding, comparing data, thematic clustering, and writing textural descriptions to synthesize the data from individual interviews, focus groups, and journal prompts. This was appropriate because holistic single-case study research involves an ongoing process of continual engagement with the data and writing reflections until the researcher can describe the essence of the lived experience (Neubauer et al., 2019). I reread the interview transcripts and the notes from the focus groups. I then categorized them and placed them into themes. Next I used topic coding to code issues that became apparent during the interviews and observations (Baskarada, 2013). The coding, themes, and categories from the interview

transcripts, focus groups, and journal entries were analyzed into common themes. I was sure to attend to all of the data collected during the study, consider all interpretations, and I addressed the most significant aspects of the study (Yin, 2018).

Trustworthiness

For research to be relevant, it must be trustworthy (Adler, 2022). Validating qualitative research is essential because it informs the work of both researchers and readers. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued for assessing qualitative research using trustworthiness rather than using scientific measures. The trustworthiness of a research study can be established by discussing the study's credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and ethical considerations (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Credibility

The credibility of the study is the most important criterion (Connelly, 2016). Credibility is focused on how congruent the findings are with reality (Shenton, 2004). Lincoln and Guba assert that ensuring credibility is one of the most important aspects of establishing the trustworthiness of a study. I achieved credibility for my study in these ways: triangulation, peer debriefing, and development of early familiarity with the culture of the participants (Shenton, 2004).

Triangulation is used to test validity through the convergence of information from different sources (Carter et al., 2014). In this study, I undertook triangulation through data collection methods and sources to explore the factors affecting the persistence of student veterans in higher education (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Data collection triangulation was achieved using individual interviews, focus groups, and journal prompts.

I used peer debriefing frequently in this research study to allow me to discuss emergent findings with colleagues to ensure my analyses are grounded in the data. Peers in the academic program and colleagues in my university employment setting kept me honest, asked difficult questions about my methods, meanings, and interpretations, and provided listening ears to hear my feelings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I am fortunate to work in a university where I have colleagues who are knowledgeable about research as well as student affairs. I also have a few colleagues who have a deep understanding of the veteran population in higher education.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend prolonged engagement between the researcher and the participants in the study for the researcher to gain an understanding of the group and establish trust between the researcher and the participants. To gain an understanding of the student veteran participant group and to establish trust with student veterans, I conducted two to three interviews with each participant so that I can include questions to break the ice. Additionally, I reminded participants that pseudonyms would be used instead of their real names to ensure that their identifying information was not shared in the study.

Transferability

I used peer debriefing frequently in this research study to allow me to discuss emergent findings with colleagues to ensure my analyses are grounded in the data. Peers in the academic program and colleagues in my university employment setting will keep me honest, ask difficult questions about my methods, meanings, and interpretations, and provide listening ears to hear my feelings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I was fortunate to work in a university where I have colleagues who are knowledgeable about research as well as student affairs. I also had a few colleagues who have a deep understanding of the veteran population in higher education.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the degree to which if the work were repeated, in the same context, with the same methods, and with the same participants, the results would be similar (Shenton, 2004). I achieved dependability by reporting the process within the study in detail so that future researchers would be able to repeat the work. In-depth reporting of the research also allows the reader to determine the extent to which proper research methods have been followed. My research report included sections dedicated to the research design and its implementation, the details about data gathering, and the evaluation of the effectiveness of the research process.

Confirmability

Confirmability means that the research study is as objective as possible (Stahl & King, 2020). Steps must be taken to ensure that the research findings are the experiences and ideas of the participants and not the preferences or characteristics of the researcher (Shenton, 2004). I used three techniques to ensure confirmability in my research. I included a detailed, step-by-step description of the research process so that any readers can trace the course of the research by reviewing the decisions made and procedures described (Shenton, 2004). I also implemented triangulation as described above. Additionally, I was reflexive in my construction of knowledge to be mindful of the effect of the researcher at each step of the process (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006).

Ethical Considerations

Before conducting the research, I obtained approval from Liberty University's Institutional Review Board as well as the Institutional Review Board of the small, faith-based university where the study was conducted. I obtained site and participant access. For participants, I obtained informed consent; informed student veterans of the voluntary nature of the study and their right to withdraw from the study at any time; the confidentiality of the site and participants;

and discussed how physical and electronic data will be stored. Participants will be informed that pseudonyms will be used to maintain their confidentiality. They were also informed that all physical data for the study will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. All electronic data has been stored in a password-protected file on the researcher's computer and external hard drive. If my research does not lead to publication, I will delete the files in five years. I will inform participants in writing of the intent to delete files. The purpose of the research was shared with the participants, along with any possible risks and mitigating factors. Participants were made aware that answering interview questions and sharing information about factors related to their persistence in higher education might lead to an emotional or stress-related reaction.

Permissions

I requested approval from Liberty University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Appendix A) to conduct my single-case study. Once approved, I requested permission from Elliot University's IRB to conduct my study there (See Appendix B). I also requested approval to communicate with the associate director/VA coordinator of financial aid and the military and VA financial aid counselor, the Accessibility Services Office, the vice president of Student Affairs, and the sponsor of the student veterans organization at the campus. Additionally, I requested permission to post flyers with information about the research study and a QR code so that student veterans were able to learn more about the study and agree to participate.

Other Participant Protections

For participants, I obtained informed consent (See Appendix C), informed student veterans of the voluntary nature of the study and their right to withdraw from the study at any time, the confidentiality of the site and participants, and discussed how physical and electronic data will be stored. Participants were informed that pseudonyms will be used to maintain their

confidentiality. They were also informed that all physical data for the study will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. All electronic data will be stored in a password-protected file on the researcher's computer and external hard drive. If my research does not lead to publication, I will delete the files in five years. I informed participants in writing of the intent to delete files. The purpose of the research was shared with the participants, along with any possible risks and mitigating factors. Participants were made aware that answering interview questions and sharing information about factors related to their persistence in higher education might lead to an emotional or stress-related reaction.

Summary

This chapter presented an overview of the methods that will be used in my holistic single-case study. I have explained the research design and research questions to be used in this study as well as provided information about the proposed setting and participants for my study. The interpretive framework and philosophical assumptions have been discussed. Additionally, I have included the procedures that will be followed, the methods for data collection and analysis, and how the study will be validated.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this holistic single-case study is to understand the lived experiences of student veterans in higher education after military service. This chapter begins with a description of the participants along with a table. The data will be presented in narrative descriptions presented by theme and research question responses. A table of themes and subthemes is also provided.

Participants

The goal for this study was to enlist 10-15 student veteran participants who are juniors or seniors at Elliot University and have been attending the university for at least one year. Even with a pool of 150 student veterans, finding at least 10 who met the criteria and were willing to participate proved a little challenging. Sixteen students completed the participant survey. Of those, one was not a student veteran, one did not respond to any of the follow-up emails, and three did not meet the research criteria. Eleven student veterans agreed to participate in this study. Of the 11, two were men and nine women.

Abby

Abby is a senior at Elliot University. She is an Army veteran studying social work. Abby did not complete high school but earned her GED while in basic training. She continued her education while active duty, completing a degree in business. Abby planned to work in human resources after her military service, but then realized it was not really what she wanted. She decided to study social work because she likes helping people. Right after Abby started at Elliot the COVID-19 pandemic began, and classes went online. She compared the university moving to

online instruction to the military taking care of soldiers during a transition, saying the university supported students.

Bailey

Bailey is in her junior year majoring in social work. She served in the Marine Corps and is married with young children. While stationed overseas, Bailey completed her associate degree. Bailey grew up in a group home in the foster care system. Once she completes her degree in social work, Bailey would like to work with children in similar situations. She has also been thinking about doing an internship with at the VA so that she can work with veterans or with a program they have for child advocacy. Bailey acted as an advocate for her fellow Marines, so what she wants to do now feels connected to is her military experience. She feels fortunate that she is able to use her VA benefits to pay for school and it helps with her living expenses.

Barbara

Barbara's story is somewhat unique. She finished high school, planning to attend college the following year but instead fell in love and married a man who was in the military. Years later, her marriage ended, and Barbara decided to enlist in the Army to take care of her children. After 10 years of service, Barbara was no longer able to serve and left the Army. She entered college at the urging of her VA counselor. Barbara has three grown daughters and has custody of two of her grandchildren. She is a senior in social work and plans to continue with a master's degree.

Daisy

Daisy served in the Army for a very short time, during which she was injured and unable to continue. She was diagnosed with breast cancer as she was separating from the Army, and after treatment and surgery, she was left with very limited use of her left arm. Daisy is quiet and

reserved and does not enjoy socializing at school. She completed her associate's degree at a local community college before transferring to Elliot University. Daisy is focused on getting the work done and does not interact much with others.

Donna

Donna served in the Army reserves and on active duty. As such she was able to use the GI bill and the reserve GI bill to help with her education. After she left the military, Donna worked as a travel agent for SATO travel, which handles travel for the Navy and other military. After 911, she lost her job and went back to school. Donna earned her associate degree in network administration. She worked in that field until debilitating back spasms made some parts of the job (lifting) impossible. She continued her education, but sometimes had to drop to part time or take time off when her pain level was incapacitating. In addition to her studies in computer information systems, Donna enjoys playing in the university band.

Faith

Faith served 20 years in the Army in the field of logistics. She began her studies at Elliot University after her military service and almost 30 years after her last time in school. Faith served as president of the Student Veterans of America organization on campus in the past. When Faith returned to college, there was a lot to learn because things had really changed since she was last in school. Faith is a senior majoring in social work. She is currently doing an internship and said she is learning a lot.

Gilbert

Gilbert served in the Army and reports that he does not like school. During his service in the Army, Gilbert started as a medic, and then retrained to two other career fields. He has a

daughter and saw that she was going to college and that only one of his siblings has her own business so he thought it would be a good idea for him to go to school.

Jack

Jack is a senior in mass communications, focused on radio, tv, and film. He dropped out of high school and later got his GED while he was in the Army. After getting his GED, Jack decided to continue on to college. Jack works part-time as a security guard while he is finishing his education. He explained this allows him to do an internship in public relations at a local school district and have time to take his children to their medical appointments. One of Jack's children has autism and goes to therapy weekly. Jack's wife is a teacher.

Kayla

Kayla is a veteran of the Marines, where she served four years. She is a junior in social work and plans to pursue her masters and doctorate degrees in social work as well. One of the reasons she has such high educational goals is because of her career goals. Kayla was an admin in the Marines and works in a similar role with Compass Connections now while attending Elliot University. Her goal is to work as a social worker with the VA when she completes her education. Ashley is married and has two young children.

Mackenna

Mackenna served in the Navy and is a junior in the communication science and disorders program. Her goal is to be a speech-language pathologist. Mackenna began her education when she was on active duty and has continued since leaving the military. She earned her associate degree and planned to continue towards becoming a teacher. When Mackenna was working at a school, she changed her mind about being a teacher. She began working at an applied behavioral analysis (ABA) clinic with children with autism and realized she wanted to be a speech therapist.

Mackenna's background in the Navy was in human resources. She worked with payroll and separations.

Naomi

Naomi served in the Army and is a senior majoring in social work. Naomi plans to continue her education with her master's degree in social work. Naomi has had some minor setbacks due to illness that caused her to repeat a few classes. In addition to her coursework, Naomi is very involved with her daughters' extracurricular activities.

Table 4. Student Veteran Participants

Student Veteran	Branch of Military	Classification in College	Major
Abby	Army	Senior	Social Work
Bailey	Marine Corps	Junior	Social Work
Barbara	Army	Senior	Social Work
Daisy	Army	Junior	Psychology
Donna	Army	Senior	Computer Info Systems
Faith	Army	Senior	Psychology & Social Work
Gilbert	Army	Senior	Computer Info Systems
Jack	Army	Senior	Mass Communication
Kayla	Marine Corps	Junior	Social Work
Mackenna	Navy	Junior	Comm Sciences & Disorders
Naomi	Army	Senior	Social Work

Results

During the transcribing and coding processes, three main themes emerged that affect student veterans at Elliot University. These themes are *campus support*, *university leadership issues*, and *belonging*. The following paragraphs explain these themes and sub-themes.

Table 5. Themes & Subthemes

Theme	Subtheme	Subtheme	Subtheme
Campus Support	Support From Faculty	Support From Staff	
University Leadership Issues	Communication	Physical Spaces	Dedicated Veteran Support
Belonging	Impact of Disability	Culture	

Campus Support

During the analysis of data from individual interviews, focus groups, and journal prompt responses, support from faculty and staff was a prominent theme. Nine of 11 participants mentioned faculty or staff as helping them feel more connected to the campus community.

The theme campus support emerged after the descriptive codes were categorized into sub-themes: support from faculty and support from staff. The codes professor, mentor, and adviser were clustered to form the sub-theme support from faculty. In total, these codes appeared 74 times in participant interview transcripts, focus groups, and journal responses. The codes disability office, accommodations, tutoring, writing center, and SVA were clustered to form the sub-theme support from staff.

Support From Faculty

Student veteran participants shared that faculty have provided valuable support during their higher education experience. Bailey shared, “Last semester, I almost left the school, but my professor connected me to the director of the Social Work program and got my problem taken care of.” Seven out of 11 participants reported that faculty have made a significant impact on their academic achievement. Professors have meet student veterans while the students are

enrolled in their courses and continued the relationship beyond that. Gilbert shared, “Dr. Cox and I bonded in my first course with him. He became a mentor to me.” Jack explained, “Professor Winstead gives us more information than what needs to be taught, and then anytime we have questions, she’s always there.” Six out of 11 participants indicated they have had conversations with a professor about their own future career goals. Faith reported, “One of my first professors talked to me about my career goals and helped me decide to double major in psychology and social work.”

Support from Staff

University staff provide a support system to student veterans at Elliot University. Eight out of 11 participants named staff from a university office as an important support system that helped them feel connected at the university. Five participants named staff from the Accessibility Services Office, two named the Student Veterans of America sponsor, and one named the tutoring center. Donna said, “Accessibility Services makes me feel normal and accepted.” Faith recalled, “The Accessibility Services director did a lot to help us get our books quicker.” Gilbert and Donna reported feeling very supported by the vice president of Student Affairs. Mackenna found the Writing Center helpful and reported, “The tutor gave me resources where I could look for extra information like the database in the library.”

University Leadership Issues

University leadership oversees all the divisions at Elliot University. While four of the 11 participants reported positive support for student veterans at the university, there were also several areas where participants felt the university could improve its support. The codes *too many texts*, *too many emails*, *award letter*, and *university website* were clustered to form the sub-theme communication. The codes *parking*, *veteran lounge*, and *elevator* were clustered to form

the sub-theme physical surroundings. The codes *veteran coordinator*, *textbooks*, *veteran benefits*, and *orientation* were clustered to form the sub-theme designated support for veterans. These codes appeared 77 times in interview responses, focus groups, and journal responses.

Communication

Participants agreed that communication from the university to students is excessive and disjointed. The sheer volume of emails and text messages sent to the students by the university can be overwhelming to student veterans, causing them to overlook important emails. Daisy expressed that if there was a way to opt out of those, it would be helpful to her. Gilbert suggested that the emails could be filtered so that the emails students receive are more relevant to them. Three of the participants mentioned receiving their acceptance letter from Elliot University and being excited and proud to have been awarded a merit scholarship, however, when they met with financial aid, they were told they would not receive the scholarships because they have veteran benefits. Bailey asked, “Why send the award letter if you don’t plan to award the scholarship?”. Gilbert recalled being excited when he received his award letter, and disappointed when the scholarship was not awarded.

Physical Spaces

The physical surroundings on a college campus contribute to social and academic well-being of students. Elliot University has a Veterans Lounge with space for student veterans to work on assignments, have coffee or a snack, or relax. While three participants reported spending time in the veterans lounge on campus, six participants expressed that the lounge is not accessible to all student veterans. It is in the social work building across the street and about ¼ mile down from the main campus buildings. Daisy reported, “I’ve never been there because why am I going to go across campus and walk for 10 minutes with my books and bags that I can

hardly get to class with to and have my own space?” Donna said she wished there was a veteran space in the main building. She said, “We feel separate, so maybe if the veterans center were closer, we would feel included and therefore, respected.”

Parking was another area where participants had a concern. Four out of 11 participants said parking is an area where the institution could improve in supporting student veterans. Elliot University is over 125 years old, and it was not designed with space for parking by each building. Although the university complies with the total number of handicapped parking spaces available, handicapped parking is very limited near the main building, the science building, and the professional studies building. Donna explained, “Walking a distance carrying a heavy backpack is difficult with my physical limitations.”

Accessibility within the campus buildings is also difficult to navigate. Between December 2023 and April 2024, the elevator in the professional studies building broke three times and was not operational for several days each time. The education and psychology classes are on the third and fourth floors, respectively, and without the elevator, students with physical disabilities could not attend class in person. Daisy said, “Sometimes the effort it takes to get help is a barrier.”

Dedicated Support for Veterans

Support for student veterans was clearly important to the participants in this study. Ten out of the 11 participants expressed concern about situations in which a veteran support person is needed, such as assisting with understanding veteran education benefits, using veteran benefits for textbook purchases, and acting as a resource for student veterans. While Elliot University has a veteran financial aid counselor, there was not a dedicated veteran coordinator or office on

campus. Bailey said, “They boast they are Yellow Ribbon, but there isn’t any special support for student veterans.”

Belonging

The final theme to emerge was belonging. The codes *PTSD*, *memory*, *mental health*, *physical health*, and *illness* were clustered to form the sub-theme impact of disability. The codes *transition*, *culture shock*, *separate*, *adjust*, and *order* were clustered to form the sub-theme culture.

Impact of Disability

Military members often sustain physical and mental health conditions during their service. Nine participants mentioned having a physical or mental health disability that impacts them academically or socially. Gilbert said, “For veterans with PTSD and anxiety, being in a crowd is difficult. Just reaching out for help is a challenge.” Similarly, Faith said, “When veterans have PTSD or have experienced trauma, it is hard for them to be around others.” Donna, Daisy, and Barbara have physical conditions that affect their mobility. Donna and Naomi experience illnesses that have negatively impacted their ability to attend class and complete assignments.

Culture

The military culture is structured, disciplined, and orderly, quite different from the culture in higher education. Bailey reported, “As a Marine, it’s different because it’s instilled in us to be disciplined, to have time management, and to do everything with a purpose.” At the same time as many veterans are transitioning to civilian life, they are also transitioning to college. The lack of structure in college can be a culture shock. Barbara shared, “We are not the

same people we were when we got out of the military.” Jack said, “We see things differently, and what we have experienced makes it harder to connect with people.”

Research Question Responses

This section provides answers to the research questions. The central research question and the three sub-questions are listed along with responses based on data from the study. Quotes from participants are also included.

Central Research Question

What are the experiences of student veterans as they overcome barriers to persistence in higher education? Interview transcripts indicate that participants believe a satisfied student veteran feels included and recognized, experiences academic success, participates in veteran activities and receives veteran support, gets financial aid and textbooks easily, enjoys good communication with administration and professors, and carries their satisfaction home, making their home life less stressful. Student veterans at Elliot University report experiencing both challenges and successes during their academic journey. Bailey and Gilbert both almost left the university because of negative experiences in their first few weeks of their first semester. Thankfully, a faculty member intervened for each of them and their situations both improved. Jack, Donna, Barbara, Daisy, and Kayla mentioned a positive relationship with a faculty or staff member that enhanced their educational experience at Elliot University. This reinforces Pascarella’s (1980) student-faculty integration model where informal contact with faculty and staff increases the likelihood of persistence to degree completion.

Sub-Question One

What are the experiences of student veterans using academic support services? Nine of

the 11 participants reported using an academic support service. The two who have not used academic support services had different reasons for not taking advantage of the support. Kayla remarked, “I did not know about Accessibility Services until now.” Abby shared, “I started at Elliot during COVID, and I am rarely on campus to go to any of the support offices.” The most common academic support services among student veterans are the Writing Center and Accessibility Services Office. Student veterans who utilize the Writing Center reported initially doing so because of their professors’ recommendations. They have since continued with that support. Five of the 11 participants reported having a disability condition and being reluctant to seek assistance from Accessibility Services. Jack said, “Our personal stuff (anxiety) makes it hard, and we are too proud to ask for help from others, especially when it’s something we should know.” Participants’ military training reinforces the need to push through on their own.

Sub-Question Two

What role do faculty members play in the academic integration of student veterans? According to interview responses, focus groups, and journal entries, faculty have primarily a positive effect on the academic integration of student veterans by being a mentor, an encourager, a motivator, a listener, and an adviser. Two participants said there was a negative impact when faculty did not accommodate their disabilities. Faculty who are straightforward are especially helpful to student veterans. Kayla said, “The professor that sticks out in my head is Dr. Flores. She checks in with me and says if I need anything to let her know even when I am not taking her class. I really want to get through this so that way I can start working and be kind of like her.”

Sub-Question Three

What are the social integration experiences of student veterans? Nine of the participants said they do not feel connected to the Elliot University campus. Eight out of 11 participants said

that they find it difficult to be around others. Daisy said, “I try to get my work done and leave.” Gilbert said, “I did not socialize at all and that’s you know, you’ll find that’s what most veterans do, find a place where they’re comfortable and hide out.”

Summary

The research was conducted to understand the lived experiences of student veterans as they overcome barriers to success in higher education. Through participant interviews, focus groups, and journal prompt responses, three themes emerged: campus support, university leadership issues, and belonging. Responses to the research questions were also included.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this research study was to understand the experiences of student veterans as they overcome barriers to persistence in higher education. After a discussion of the thematic findings of the research study, the interpretation of the findings is presented. The interpretation of findings leads to the implications for policy and practice at Elliot University followed by a discussion of how the study authenticates the prior research on experiences of student veterans in higher education. This chapter also explores findings that reinforce Pascarella's (1980) student-faculty integration model and explains the limitations and delimitations of this study. The chapter ends with recommendations for future research involving the experiences of student veterans as they overcome barriers to persistence in higher education.

Discussion

The answer to the research question, "What are the experiences of student veterans as they overcome barriers to persistence in higher education?" was outlined in three main themes: Campus support, university leadership issues, and belonging. The first theme fits within the informal contact with faculty area of Pascarella's (1980) student-faculty integration Model. University leadership issues fall under institutional factors of the model and belonging intersects with other college experiences on the student-faculty integration model.

Summary of Thematic Findings

The data from individual interviews, focus groups, and journal prompts conducted in this study yielded three main themes: campus support, university leadership issues, and belonging. *Campus support* had two subthemes, one for support from faculty and one for support from staff. The theme *university leadership issues* was formed by combining the subthemes communication,

physical spaces, and dedicated veteran support. The final theme *belonging* contains the subthemes impact of disability and culture.

Interpretation of Findings

The findings of this study confirm and expand upon the literature discussed in Chapter Two. The individual interview and focus group transcripts as well as the journal responses demonstrate that the Pascarella (1980) model of student-faculty integration offers guidance to help identify the factors interfering with student veterans' persistence in higher education. Pascarella's (2006) later work proposes that student groups have their own distinctive models of development and change during college, which then encourages examining the unique challenges that student veterans face in higher education. The findings show that student veterans face their own set of challenges in higher education.

Belonging & College Experiences

When aligning the student-faculty integration model with the research findings, it becomes clear that the third theme, *belonging*, affects the student veterans' other college experiences due to the impact of disabilities and culture. During the individual interviews, several participants shared that having PTSD makes it challenging for them to be around others. They tend to go to class and then go home, and if they interact with others at school, the interaction is likely with another veteran. Gilbert, Faith, Abby, Donna, Barbara, and Jack all disclosed that they don't feel close to their classmates partly because they are older than their classmates but also because they don't have the same experiences and values. Student veterans are adjusting to a very different culture in higher education than what they experienced in the military.

Need for Veteran Support

Throughout the study, the participants expressed the desire and perceived need for targeted student veteran support. Daisy, Faith, Kayla, and Jack shared challenges they had experienced getting books and supplies through their VA counselors that caused the books and supplies to be delayed. Kayla, Bailey, Gilbert, and Donna experienced some confusion and frustration with the Financial Aid office regarding whether students using VA benefits could also receive scholarships at Elliot University. Participants shared that various departments, faculty, and staff assisted them with aspects of their academic journey, such as advising and mentoring. Despite this, there is not a position at Elliot University devoted solely to supporting student veterans. Having targeted support for student veterans to act as a liaison between the student veteran and the bookstore, financial aid, registrar, and the VA itself would make the experience less stressful and more supportive to student veterans. Elliot University boasts of being a Yellow Ribbon campus and adding dedicated support for student veterans will validate that claim.

Implications for Policy or Practice

The results of this study have implications for higher education policy and practice. Administrative leadership, faculty members, and staff in various support services all have a role in contributing to the success of student veterans at Elliot University. Student veterans must self-register for support services and be aware of what the university offers. Some implications require individual effort to implement, while others require setting policies and making changes that require collaboration between leadership and multiple departments.

Implications for Policy

Participant data indicates a need for Elliot University to establish a clear policy for awarding financial aid to student veterans. Since students using the GI Bill and other VA benefits

may also be eligible for federal financial aid, the policy should precisely articulate the process for students to follow and explain the impact of the financial aid on the GI Bill or VA benefit payment. Then, the student veteran will be able to make an informed decision about financing their education. Additionally, this information must be articulated to the admissions office so that acceptance letters contain correct information regarding scholarships and other financial aid.

Veterans complete the Veterans On-Line Application (VONAPP) to access education benefits administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs. VONAPP is not associated with the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which veterans can also complete to determine their eligibility for federal student aid. According to veteran.com (2022), veteran education benefits are available in addition to what is offered through the GI Bill. The GI Bill benefits including basic allowance for housing (BAH), tuition payments, book stipends, etc. are not counted against the veteran on the FAFSA because they are considered entitlements. Through FAFSA, veterans may be eligible for need-based grants or loans, the most common of which is the Pell Grant for undergraduate students who do not have a degree. Some scholarships reduce the amount of tuition money the GI Bill sends. If the scholarship can only be used toward tuition (Military.com, 2009), the GI Bill cannot pay that tuition bill a second time (University of Minnesota Crookston, 2024).

Implications for Practice

This study yields some important implications for practice at Elliot University. The participants expressed strong feelings about the university's need for dedicated veteran support, veteran-specific student orientation, and reduction/filtering of the emails sent to student veterans from university departments. One way to reduce the volume of emails without compromising content is to have general messages consolidated and posted in Elliot University's existing

weekly electronic newsletter. Additionally, encourage departments on campus to send key information in fewer emails, once or twice per week. Collaboration between the admissions and financial aid offices is also recommended so that information regarding scholarship awards for student veterans is communicated accurately. Adding a veteran services coordinator will provide targeted support for student veterans. The coordinator can act as a liaison between the student veteran and other university departments, will be available to assist student veterans navigating the VA system, assist with textbook and supply needs, and partner with the Accessibility Services office and ACE tutoring center to support student veterans. Hosting an orientation specifically for student veterans will increase the likelihood of student veterans attending by involving the veteran services coordinator, the Accessibility Services office, transfer advisors, ACE tutoring center, the bookstore, and the library.

There is no common practice for awarding credit for military service or for awarding transfer credit for courses taken while veterans are serving in the military (Smith et al., 2018; Ziencik, 2020; Vacchi, 2012), so it varies by institution. Participants interviewed reported losing credits when they transferred to Elliot University. Bailey said she lost the equivalent of a semester of credits that will delay her graduation by at least one semester, depending on when the remaining courses are offered. Given the longer and more frequent deployment of military members during the Global War on Terror that can impact the length of time between college enrollments and number of institutions attended, Elliot University would be wise to adopt a more flexible method of course credit review. Allowing coursework to be accepted for a longer period of time is also advised. These practices will affirm Elliot's veteran-friendly status.

Empirical and Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study corroborated and expanded upon some of the empirical and theoretical literature reviewed in Chapter Two. A summary is provided here, followed by findings related to empirical implications and theoretical implications.

Empirical Implications

The transition from military service to the classroom can happen for student veterans quickly, often before they can cognitively process their military experiences (Bagby et al., 2015). This study corroborated this finding as participants reported separating from the military one day and starting college the next. Participants felt isolated and experienced culture shock due to the difference between the military and college cultures. Jack shared, “We see things differently, and what we’ve experienced makes it harder to connect with people.” Student veterans often do not feel the sense of belonging that helps them feel part of the campus community. Gilbert recalled that classmates often mistook him for a professor because he was older than they were, and he did not feel connected with them. Like other student veterans, he had difficulty connecting socially with traditional students (Borsari et al., 2017; Hammond, 2016). Daisy does not feel connected to the campus community. She said, “I just try to get my work done and leave.”

Student veterans are a distinctive group with values and attitudes that carry over from their military service (Dean et al., 2020; Olsen et al., 2014). They enroll with military values and dispositions that conflict with those in higher education, depicting the disparate cultures of the military and higher education (Kuh & Whitt, 1988; Moffat, 1991). Military members learn the military way and are committed to their fellow soldiers and the mission (Demers, 2011; Di Ramio & Jarvis, 2011; Hall, 2011) while college students are on individual journeys. Participants explained how their military service trained them to pay attention during long PowerPoint

presentations, to push through during difficult times, and to be organized. These are not traits of most traditional college students.

Theoretical Implications

Pascarella's (1980) model of student-faculty interaction expanded on Tinto's (1975) institutional departure model, which asserted that student background characteristics interact to influence goal commitment and institutional commitment. Pascarella (1980) expanded that and included informal contact with faculty, other college experiences, educational outcomes, and the existing student background characteristics and institutional factors. Pascarella (1980) asserted that more informal contact with faculty members would increase the students' institutional commitment and reduce the likelihood of withdrawal (Aljohani, 2016). This study validates Pascarella's (1980) model of student-faculty interaction from a veteran's lens. Gilbert, Kayla, Baily, and Daisy were seriously considering dropping out of Elliot University until a faculty or staff member stepped in. For Gilbert, Kayla, and Bailey, a faculty member from their program of study showed extra interest in them and developed a positive relationship that provided a connection on campus. The director of Accessibility Services became an advocate and mentor for Daisy, and in Daisy's words, "I wouldn't be here if it weren't for Accessibility Services." Even though these four are examples of initially having a negative experience or experiencing an obstacle, having the support and advocacy of the faculty or staff member improved the situation and increased motivation for each of the students. Donna, Jack, Barbara, and Faith expressed that having a positive relationship with a faculty or staff member impacted their connection at Elliot University.

Figure 1

Application of Pascarella's (1980) model of Student-Faculty Integration

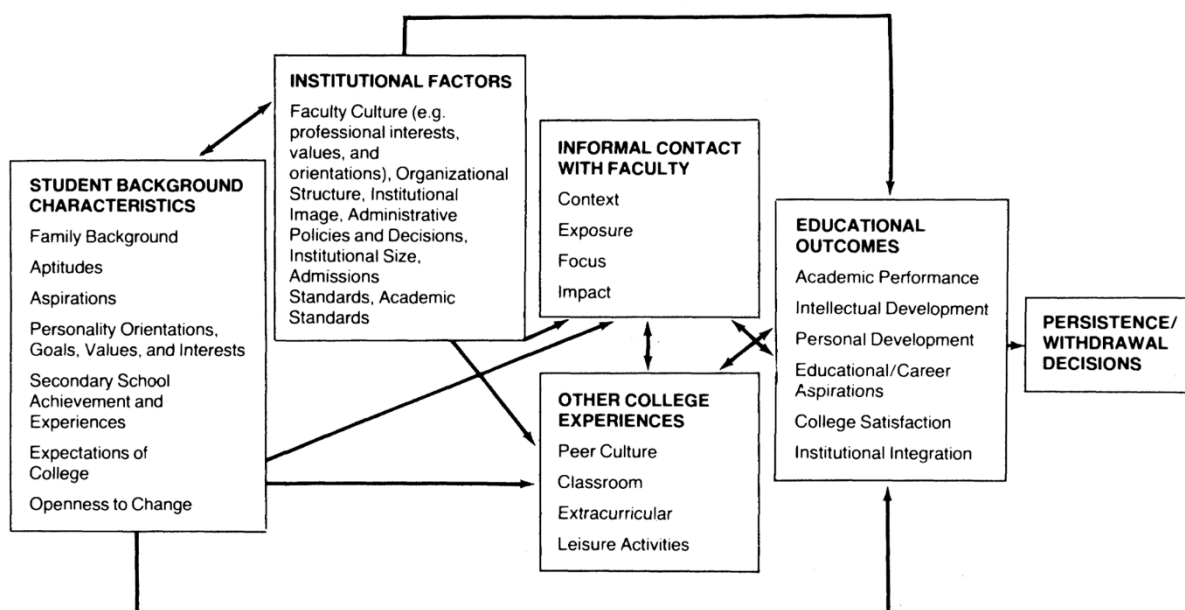


FIGURE 1. Conceptual model for research on student-faculty informal contact.

The subthemes *impact of disability* and *communication* may have affected the students' experience but did not interfere with their success in higher education. The subtheme *impact of disability* likely impacts Pascarella's (1980) model of student-faculty integration in the module "other college experiences" because the existence of a disability influences the student veterans' behavior and experiences in peer culture, classrooms, extracurricular and leisure activities. Research participants reported that it is difficult to be around others, especially in a crowd, due to PTSD. Participants stated they primarily attend class and leave campus afterwards. They do not spend free time on campus. The subtheme *communication* fits into the institutional factors module of the student-faculty integration model (Pascarella, 1980) because the communication is based on administrative policies and decisions, admissions standards, and academic standards. Additionally, in this case, communication sometimes negatively impacts the institutional image.

Communication revealed a need for alignment of admissions standards and administrative policies and decisions. This misalignment caused conflicting information to be shared with student veterans regarding financial aid and scholarships.

Limitations and Delimitations

The following paragraphs will explain limitations and delimitations of this qualitative research study. The study had just one soft limitation that did not seem to impact the overall results. Delimitations related to the intentionality of the research site and participant qualifications also existed and will be explained.

Limitations

There was one minor limitation in my study. Although 90% of veterans in the United States are men (Gilligan, 2022), only two of the 11 participants in the study are men. Flyers were posted and information was provided to all known veterans attending Elliot University, and women predominantly responded. The responses from the male student veterans were consistent with the female veterans. Results do not appear to be skewed.

Delimitations

This study is intentionally focused on a single site. Elliot University is a small, faith-based institution, ideal for the phenomenon that I researched. Study participants were student veterans in their junior and senior years of college at the selected university.

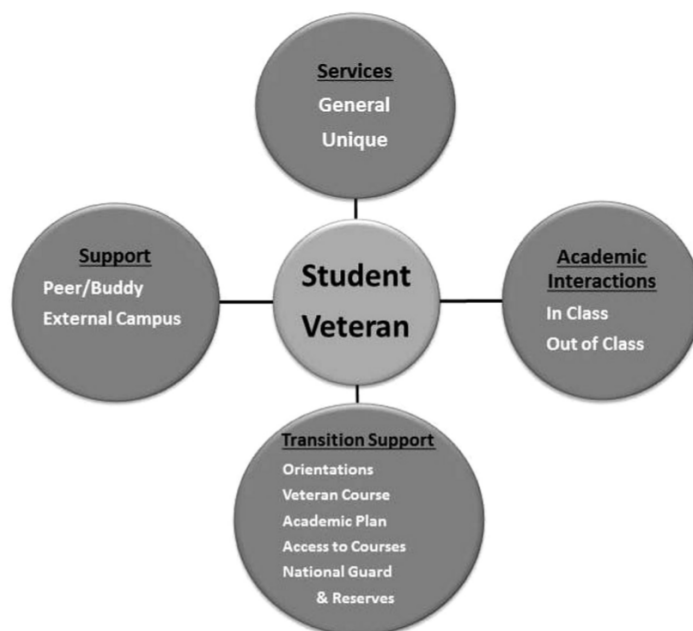
Recommendations for Future Research

The individual interviews, focus groups, and journal responses reveal that student veterans are a unique subset of nontraditional students, and as such, their experiences in higher education are also unique. While the data fits into Pascarella's (1980) model of student-faculty integration, the findings from this study also validate the use of the Vacchi (2011, 2013) model

of student veteran support. Vacchi's (2011, 2013) model focuses on the individual student veteran rather than a linear institutional pattern. Vacchi expanded on the theories from Bean & Metzner (1985) and Wiedman (1989) to take a broader look at student veterans' experiences in higher education rather than focusing on one or two semesters of transition. Future research studies should consider using the Vacchi (2011, 2014) model of student veteran support as a theoretical model to look at holistic support for student veterans.

Figure 2

Application of the Vacchi (2011, 2013) model of student veteran support



Conclusion

The purpose of this holistic single-case study is to understand the lived experiences of student veterans in higher education after military service. The study gathered input from undergraduate student veterans in their junior or senior year who had attended Elliot University for at least one year. Through individual interviews, focus groups, and journal prompts, student

veterans shed light on factors that contributed to their success as well as revealing obstacles they encountered. The obstacles came in the form of processes and practices at the university that were often not clear or consistent.

Some important implications for practice at Elliot University are the addition of a dedicated veteran support coordinator, designing and hosting veteran-specific student orientation sessions, and improving communication practices at the university. The veteran support coordinator will be a valuable liaison between the student veteran and resources within and outside of the university. Providing a student orientation geared especially for the needs of student veterans allows the university the opportunity to connect the student veterans with key resources on campus and affords them a chance to meet other student veterans as well. Reducing and filtering the emails and text messages sent to student veterans will improve communication because students are more likely to read a message when they are not receiving an overwhelmingly large number of messages, many of which are not relevant to them. This case study provided relevant information with actionable items that are designed to improve strategies and processes in higher education for this unique population of nontraditional students.

References

- Adler, R. H. (2022). Trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Journal of Human Lactation*, 38(4), 598-602. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08903344221116620>
- Alhazami, A. A. & Kaufman, A. (2022). Phenomenological qualitative methods applied to the analysis of cross-cultural experience in novel educational social contexts. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/psyg.2022.785134>
- Aljohani, O. (2016). A comprehensive review of the major studies and theoretical models of student retention in higher education. *Higher Education Studies*, 6(2): 1-18. <https://dx.doi.org/10.5539/hes.v6n2p1>
- Alschuler, M. & Yarab, J. (2018). Preventing student veteran attrition: What more can we do? *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 20(1), 47-66. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1025116646382>
- Amador, P. V. & Amador, j. M. (2017). Academic help seeking: A framework for conceptualizing Facebook use for higher education support. *TechTrends*, 61, 195-202. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11528-016-0135-3>
- American Council on Education. (2017). *Accommodating student veterans with traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder: Tips for campus faculty and staff*. <https://www.acenet.edu/Documents/Accommodating-Student-Veterans-with-Traumatic-Brain-Injury-and-Post-Traumatic-Stress-Disorder.pdf>
- American Psychiatric Association. (2023). *What is posttraumatic stress disorder?* <https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/ptsd/what-is-ptsd>
- Andrade, M. S., Miller, R. M., McArthur, D. & Ogden, M. (2022). The impact of learning on student persistence in higher education. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research,*

- Theory, & Practice*, 24(2), 316-336. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1521025120915576>
- Arminio, J., Yamanaka, A., Hubbard, C., Athanasiou, J., Ford, M., & Bradshaw, R. (2018). Educators acculturating to serve student veterans and service members. *Journal of Student Affairs Research & Practice*, 55(3), 243-254. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19496591.2018.1399895>
- Astin, A. W. (1993) What matters in college? *Liberal Education*, 79(4), 4-16.
- Azpeitia, E., Emerson, S. (2022). Assessing veteran services and success in higher education: Cal Poly Pomona's veterans resource center case study. *Journal of Veterans Studies*, 8(1), 29-40. <https://doi.org/10.21061/jvs.v8/1.238>
- Bagby, J. H., Barnard-Brak, L., Thompson, L. W. & Sulak, T. N. (2015). Is anyone listening? An ecological perspective on veterans transitioning from military to academia. *Military Behavioral Health*, 3(4), 219-229. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21635781.2915.1057306>
- Baskarada, S. (2013). *Qualitative case study guidelines*. Australian Government Department of Defense. <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA594462.pdf>
- Bean, J. P. (1981). The synthesis of a theoretical model of student attrition. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED202444.pdf>
- Bell, B. (2017). In and out: veterans in transition and higher education. *Strategic Enrollment Management Quarterly*, 5(3), 128-134. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sem3.20111>
- Belanger, B., Steele, A., & Philhower, K. (2021). Tailoring higher education options for smaller institutions to meet veterans' needs: Enhancing inclusion in higher education: Practical solutions by veterans for veterans. *Journal of Veterans Studies*, 7(1), 138-147. <https://doi.org/10.21061/jvs.v7i1.229>
- Blackwell-Starnes, K. (2018). At ease: Developing veterans' sense of belonging in the college

- Classroom. *Journal of Veterans Studies*, 3(1), 18-36. <https://doi.org/10.2106/jvs.v3i1.2>
- Bocchieri, B. J., Gadzik, K. W., Kerns, L., Williams, P. L., & Landgraff, N. C. (2019). Severe pain in veteran students. *Journal of Allied Health*, 48(3), 172-180. <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/severe-pain-veteran-students/docview/2292893407/se-2>
- Borsari, B., Yurasek, A., Miller, M. B., Murphy, J. G., McDevitt-Murphy, M. E., Martens, M.P., Darcy, M. G., & Carey, K. B. (2017). Student service members/veterans on campus: Challenges for reintegration. *Am J Orthopsychiatry*, 87(2), 166-175. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ort0000199>
- Brooker, A., Brooker, S., & Lawrence, j. (2017). First year students' perceptions of their difficulties. *Student Success*, 8(1), 49-62. <https://doi.org/10.5204/ssj.v8i1.352>
- Brown, S. (2020). *Overwhelmed: The real campus mental health crisis and new models for well-being*. Chronicle of Higher Education.
- Bueker, C. S. (2019). You're in the basement of this grand house: Habitus reformation and elite cultural capital acquisition among women of color. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 25(3). <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2019.1599345>
- Carr, B. B., & London, R. A. (2019). The role of learning support services in university students' educational outcomes.
- Carter, N., Bryant-Lukosius, D., DiCenso, A., Blythe, J., & Neville, A. J. (2014). The use of triangulation in qualitative research. *Oncology Nursing Forum*, 41(5), 545-547. <https://doi.org/10.1188/14.ONF.545-547>
- Caruth, G. D. (2018). Student engagement, retention, and motivation: Assessing academic success in today's college students. *Participatory Educational Research*, 5(1), 17-30.

<https://doi.org/10.17275/per.18.4.5.1>

Cate, C. A., & Davis, T. A. (2017). *The 2016 SVA census survey: Student veteran general demographics breakdowns*. Student Veterans of America.

<https://studentveterans.org/images/pdf/2016-SVA-Census-Survey-Student-Veteran-General-Breakdowns-120716.pdf>

Chang, C. & Wang, Y. (2021). Using phenomenological methodology with thematic analysis to examine and reflect on commonalities of instructors' experiences in MOOCs. *Education Sciences, 11*(5), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educi11050203>

Cheney, A. Am., Koenig, C. J., Miller, C. J., Zamora, K., Wright, P., Stanley, R., Fortney, J., Burgess, J. F., & Pyne, J. M. (2018). Veteran-centered barriers to VA mental healthcare services use. *BMC Health Services Research, 18*(1), 1-14.

<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-018-3346-9>

Chung, W. W., & Hudziak, J. J. (2018). The transitional age brain: The best of times and the worst of times. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics of North America, 26*(2), 157-175. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chc.2016.12.017>

Clasemann, C. & Boon, R. D. (2020). Seeking patterns in swirl and drift: Retention, persistence, and transfer. *New Directions for Institutional Research, 184*, 21-32.

<https://doi.org/10.1002.ir.20319>

Cohen, D. & Crabtree, B. (2006). *Qualitative research guidelines project*.

https://sswm.info/sites/default/files/reference_attachments/COHEN%202006%20Semistructured%20Interview.pdf

Collier, P. J., & Morgan, D. L. (2008). Is that paper really due today? Differences in first-Generation and traditional college students' understandings of faculty expectations.

- The International Journal of Higher Education and Educational Planning*, 55(4), 425-446. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-007-9065-5>
- Connelly, L. M. (2016). Trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Medsurg Nursing*, 25(6), 435-436. <https://go.openathens.net/redirector/liberty.edu?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/trustworthiness-qualitative-research/docview/1849700459/se-2>
- Cook, S., & Clement, K. (2019). Navigating the hidden void: The unique challenges of accommodating library employees with invisible disabilities. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 45(5), 102007. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2019.02.010>.
- Craig, D. H. & Warner, T. R. (1991). Working together: The “forgotten” majority of student organizations and campus activities. *Campus Activities Programming*, 23(9), 42-46.
- Creswell, J. W. & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches*, (4th ed). Sage Publications.
- Crotty, M. (2003). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. SAGE.
- Dahlberg, K. (2006). The essence of essences: The search for meaning structures in phenomenological analysis of lifeworld phenomena. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being*, 1(1), 11-19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17482620500478405>
- Daniels, N., & MacNeela, P. (2021). Students’ views of promoters and barriers to first-year college persistence in Ireland: A partnership study. *Student Success Journal*, 12(1), 56-71. <https://doi.org/10.5204/ssj.1211>
- Dean, T., Sorgen, C. H. & Zinskie, C. D. (2020). Social integration of student veterans: The influence of interactions with faculty and peer-group interactions. *Journal of Veteran*

Studies, 6(2), 20-29. <https://doi.org/10.21061.jvs.v6i2.188>

de Beer, C., Isaacs, S., Lawrence, C., Cebukhulu, G., Morkel, J. M., Nell, J., Mispane, N., van Tonder, W. P., Mayman, Y. R., Thobejane, L. Z., & Pedro, A., (2022). The subjective experiences of students with invisible disabilities at a historically disadvantaged university. *African Journal of Disability*, 11(0), 932.

<https://doi.org/10.4102/ajod.v11i0.932>

Demers, A. (2011). When veterans return: The role of community in reintegration. *Journal of Loss and Trauma*, 16(2), 160-179. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1532024.2010.519281>

Deutschlander, D. (2017). Academic undermatch: How general and specific cultural capital structure inequality. *Sociological Forum*, 32(1), 162-185.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/socf.12322>

DiRamio, D., Ackerman, R. L., & Mitchell, R. L. (2008). From combat to campus: Voices of student veterans. *NASPA Journal* 45, 102-173. <https://doi.org/10.2202/1949-6605.1908>

DiRamio, D. & Jarvis, K. (2011). Veterans in higher education: When Johnny and Jane came marching to campus. *ASHE Higher Education Report*, 37(3), 1-144.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/aehe.3703>

Eidse, N. & Turner, S. (2014). Doing resistance their own way: Counter-narratives of street vending in Hanoi, Vietnam through social journaling. *Area*, 46(3), 242-248.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/area.12107>

Elnitsky, C. A., Blevins, C., Findlow, J. W., Alverio, T. & Wiese, D. (2018). Student veterans reintegrating from the military to the university with traumatic injuries: How does service use relate to health issues? *Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation*, 99(2 Suppl 1), 558-564. <https://doi.org/10.1016/h.apmr.2017.10.008>

- Erikson, E. (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis*. W. W. Horton and Company.
- Falkey, M. (2016). An emerging population: Student veterans in higher education in the 21st century. *Journal of Academic Adjustments in Higher Education*, 12(1), 27-38.
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1139143>
- Fernandez, F., Merson, D., Ro, H. K., & Rankin, S. (2019). Do classroom interactions relate to considerations of institutional departure among student veterans and service members? *Innovative Higher Education*, 44, 233-245. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-019-9460-8>
- Ferrão, M. E., & Almeida, L. S. (2021). Persistence and academic expectations in higher Education students. *Psicothema*, 33(4), 587-594.
<https://doi.org/10.7334/psicothema2020.68>
- Flink, P. J. (2017). Invisible disabilities, stigma, and student veterans: Contextualizing the transition to higher education. *Journal of Veterans Studies*, 2(2), 110-120.
<https://doi.org/10.21061.jvs.v2i2.20>
- Ford, K. & Vignare, K. (2015). The evolving military learner population: A review of the literature. *Online Learning*, 19(1), 7-30. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1061492>
- Giampaolo, L. A. & Graham, F. D. (2020). Student veterans: Does how we welcome them matter? *The Journal of College Orientation, Transition, and Retention*, 27(2), 1-21.
<https://doi.org/10.24926/jcotr.v27i2.3030>
- Gilligan, C. (2022, November 11). Who are American veterans? Veteran demographics are shifting, but the population remains overwhelmingly male and white. *U.S. News and World Report*. <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/articles/2022-11-11/who-are-americas-veterans>
- Gilardi, S. & Guglielmetti, C. (2011). University life of non-traditional students: Engagement

styles and impact on attrition. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 82(1), 33-53.

<https://doi.org/10.1353/jhe.2011.0005>

Glowacki-Dudka, M. (2019). How to engage nontraditional adult learners through popular education in higher education. *Adult Learning*, 30(2), 84-86.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1045159519833998>

Gonzalez, C. A., & Elliot, M. (2016). Faculty attitudes and behaviors towards student veterans. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability*, 29(1), 35-46.

<https://eric.ed.gov/?ed=EJ1107471>

Goulet, KJ. L., Kerns, R. D., Bair, M., Becker, W. C., Brennan, P., Burgess, D. J., Carroll, C., Dobscha, S., Driscoll, M. A., Fenton, B. T., Fraenkel, Haskell, S. G., Heapy, A. A., Higgins, D. M., Hoff, R. A., Hwang, U., Justice, A. C., Piette, J. D., Sinnott, P. Wandner, L., Womack, J. A., & Brandt, C. A. (2016). The musculoskeletal diagnosis cohort: Examining pain and pain care among veterans. *Pain*, 157(8), 1696-1703.

<https://doi.org/10.1097/j.pain.0000000000000567>

Gravett, K., & Winstone, N. E. (2019). Storying students' becomings into and through higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2019.1695112>

Griffin, K. A., Gilbert, C. K. (2015). Better transitions for troops: An application of Schlossberg's transition framework to analyses of barriers and institutional support structures for student veterans. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 86(1), 71-97.

<https://doi.org/10.1353/jhe.2015.0004>

Haines, K. (2019, August 1). Student perspectives on joining student organizations. Advancing Campus Community. <https://www.acui.org/resources/bulletin/bulletin-detail/2019/07/02/student-perspectives-on-joining-student-organizations>

- Hall, L. (2011). The importance of understanding military culture. *Social Work in Health Care*, 50(1), 4-18. <https://doi.org/10.1080.00981389.2010.513914>
- Hammond, S. P. (2016). Complex perceptions of identity: The experiences of student combat veterans in community college. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 40(2), 146-159. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2015.1017891>
- Hardin, C. J. (2008). Adult students in higher education: A portrait of transitions. *New Directions for Higher Education*. Wiley. <https://doi.org/10.1002/he.325>
- Haynes, K. (2012). Reflexivity in qualitative research. In G. Symon & C. Cassell (Eds.), *Qualitative organizational research: Core methods and current challenges*, pp. 72-89 Sage Publications.
- Hendry, G., Wilson, C., Orr, M. & Scullion, R. (2022). I just stay in the house so I don't need to explain: A qualitative investigation of persons with invisible disabilities. *Disabilities* 2022, 2, 145-163. <https://doi.org/10.3390/disabilities2010012>
- Henry, J. A., Griest, S. E., Blankenship, C., Thielman, E. J., Theodoroff, S. M., Hammill, T. & Carlson, K. F. (2019). Impact of tinnitus on military service members. *Military Medicine*, 184(3/4), 604-614. https://academic.oup.com/article-abstract/184/Supplement_1/604/5418685
- HEPI. (2017, October 16). *HEPI response to 'Everyone in: Insights from a diverse student population'* <https://www.hepi.ac.uk/2017/10/16/hepi-response-everyone-insights-diverse-student-population/>
- Higgins, D. M., Kerns, R. D., Brandt, C. A., Haskell, S. G., Bathulapalli, H., Gilliam, W., Goulet, J. L. (2014). Persistent pain and comorbidity among Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation New Dawn Veterans. *Pain Medicine*, 15(5),

782-790. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pme.12388>

Hinojosa, R. & Hinojosa, M. S. (2016). Activity-limiting musculoskeletal conditions in U.S. veterans compared to non-veterans: Results from the 2013 national health interview survey. *PLOS One*, *11*(12). <https://doi.org.10.1371/journal.pone.0167143>

Hinojosa, R., Hinojosa, M. S., & Nguyen, J. (2017). Military service and physical capital: Framing musculoskeletal disorders among American military veterans using Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital. *Armed Forces & Society*, *45*(2), 268-290. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X17741888>

Hittepole, C. (2019). *Nontraditional students: Supporting changing student populations*. NASPA, Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education. https://www.naspa.org/images/uploads/main/hittepole_NASPA_Memo.pdf

Höjjer, B. (2008). Ontological assumptions and generalizations in qualitative (audience) research. *European Journal of Communication*, *23*(3), 275-294. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02673231908092536>

Howe, W. T., Jr. & Shpeer, M. (2019). From military member to student: An examination of the communicative challenges of veterans to perform communication accommodation in the university. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, *48*(3). <https://doi.org/10.1080/17475759.1592770>

Hunter-Johnson, Y., Liu, T., Murray, K., Niu, Y., & Surprise, M. (2020). Higher education as a Tool for veterans in transition: Battling the challenges, *The Journal of Continuing Higher Education*, *69*(1), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07377363.2020.1743621>

Hycner, R. H. (1985). Some guidelines for the phenomenological analysis of interview data. *Human Studies*, *8*(3), 279-303. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20008948>

- Interiano-Shiverdecker, C. G., Lim, J. H., Tkacik, P. T., & Dahlberg, J. L. (2020). From the barracks: A multi-dimensional model of student veteran's cultural transition. *Journal of Military and Government Counseling*, 7(3), 62-79.
- IPEDS. (2022). *Look up an institution*. Integrated postsecondary Education Data System. National Center for Education Statistics.
<https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/InstitutionByName.aspx?goToReportId=6&sid=a717e24b-154d-438e-9f2e-ae4a66337ad9&rtid=6>
- Jack, A. (2016). (No) Harm in asking: Class, acquired cultural capital, and academic engagement at an elite university. *Sociology of Education*, 89(1), 1-19.
- Jack, A. (2019). *The privileged poor: How elite colleges are failing disadvantaged students*. Harvard University Press.
- Jenner, B. M. (2017). Student veterans and the transition to higher education: Integrating existing literatures. *Journal of Veteran Studies*, 2(2), 26-44.
<https://doi.org/10.21061/jvs.v2i2.14>
- Jenner, B. M. (2019). Veteran success in higher education: Augmenting traditional definitions. *Journal of Ethnographic & Qualitative Research*, 14, 25-41.
- Jones, K. (2013). Understanding student veterans in transition. *The Qualitative Report*, 18, 1-14.
<http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR18/jones74.pdf>
- Karp, M. M. & Klempin, S. (2016). *Improving student services for military veterans*. Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University.
<https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/improving-student-services-for-military-veterans.pdf>
- Kelley, B. C., Fox, E. L., & Smith, J. M. (2013). *Preparing your campus for veterans' success:*

An integrated approach to facilitating the transition and persistence of our military students. Stylus Publications.

Killam, W. K. & Degges-White, S. (2018). Understanding the education related needs of contemporary male veterans. *Adultspan Journal*, 17(2), 81-96.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/adsp.12062>

Kinney, A. R., Graham, J. E. & Eakman, A. M. (2020). Supported education among student veterans: Impact on self-advocacy skills and academic performance. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability*, 33(4), 353-363.

Kivunja, C. & Kuyini, A. B. (2017). Understanding and applying research paradigms in educational contexts. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 6(5), 26-41.

<https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v6n5p26>

Klinke, M. E., Fernandez, A.V. (2022). Taking phenomenology beyond the first-person perspective: Conceptual grounding in the collection and analysis of observational evidence. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences* 22, 171-191.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11097-021-09796-1>

Kranke, D., Weiss, E. L., & Conostantine Brown, J. L. (2017). Student veterans with invisible disabilities: Accommodations-seeking in higher education. *Journal of Veteran Studies*,

2(2), 45-57. <https://doi.org/10.21061/jvs.v2i2.15>

Kuh, G. D. (1995). The other curriculum: Out-of-class experiences associated with student learning and personal development. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 66(2), 123-155.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/0221546.1995.117774770>

Kuh, G. D. & Whitt, E. J. (1988). The invisible tapestry culture in American colleges and universities. Association for the Study of Higher Education-ERIC Higher Education

Report No. 1. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED2999934.pdf>

Lake, K. N., Ferber, L., Kilby, D. J., Mourtada, H., Pushpanadh, S., & Verdeli, H. (2022).

Qualitative study examining perceived stigma and barriers to mental health care among student veterans. *Journal of Veterans Studies*, 8(3), 239-252.

<https://doi.org/10.21061/jvs.v8i3.379>

Lang, W. A., Harriett, B. D., & Cadet, M. (2013). *Completing the mission II: A study of veteran students' progress toward degree attainment in the post 9/11 era*. Pat Tillman Foundation.

https://www.cc.mountainwest.org/sites/default/files/completing_mission_ii.pdf

Le, D. T. & Wilkinson, R. B. (2017). *Students' mental health during university transition across*

cultures: An attachment perspective. [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Duy-Le-](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Duy-Le-20/publication/327237205_Students'_mental_health_during_university_transition_across_the_cultures_An_attachment_perspective/links/5b837e1fa6fdcc5f8b6a40ae/Students-mental-health-during-university-transition-across-the-cultures-An-attachment-perspective.pdf)

[20/publication/327237205_Students'_mental_health_during_university_transition](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Duy-Le-20/publication/327237205_Students'_mental_health_during_university_transition_across_the_cultures_An_attachment_perspective/links/5b837e1fa6fdcc5f8b6a40ae/Students-mental-health-during-university-transition-across-the-cultures-An-attachment-perspective.pdf)

[across_the_cultures_An_attachment_perspective/links/5b837e1fa6fdcc5f8b6a40ae/](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Duy-Le-20/publication/327237205_Students'_mental_health_during_university_transition_across_the_cultures_An_attachment_perspective/links/5b837e1fa6fdcc5f8b6a40ae/Students-mental-health-during-university-transition-across-the-cultures-An-attachment-perspective.pdf)

[Students-mental-health-during-university-transition-across-the-cultures-An-attachment-](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Duy-Le-20/publication/327237205_Students'_mental_health_during_university_transition_across_the_cultures_An_attachment_perspective/links/5b837e1fa6fdcc5f8b6a40ae/Students-mental-health-during-university-transition-across-the-cultures-An-attachment-perspective.pdf)

[perspective.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Duy-Le-20/publication/327237205_Students'_mental_health_during_university_transition_across_the_cultures_An_attachment_perspective/links/5b837e1fa6fdcc5f8b6a40ae/Students-mental-health-during-university-transition-across-the-cultures-An-attachment-perspective.pdf)

Lee, H. & Schneider, T. (2018). Does posttransfer involvement matter for the persistence of

community college transfer students? *Community College Journal of Research and*

Practice, 42(2), 77-94. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2016.125351>

Li, R., Hassan, N. C., & Saharuddin, N. (2023), College students' academic help-seeking

behavior: A systemic literature review. *Behavioral Sciences*, 13, 637.

<https://doi.org/10.3390/bs13080637>

- Lim, J. H., Interiano, C. G., Nowell, C. E., Tkacik, P. T., & Dahlberg, J. L. (2018). Invisible cultural barriers: Contrasting perspectives on student veterans' transition. *Journal of College Student Development, 59*(3), 291-308.
- Lincoln, Y. & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Sage.
- Linski, C. (2019). Assisting student veterans with hidden wounds: Evaluating student support in US higher education. *Perspectives on diverse Student Identities in Higher Education: International Perspectives on Equity and Inclusion. Innovations in Higher Education Teaching and Learning, 14*, 29-45. <https://doi.org/10.1108/S2055-364120180000014004>
- Lippa, S. M., Fonda, J. R., Fortier, C. B., Amick, M. A., Kenna, A., Milberg, W. P. & McGlinchy, R. E. (2015). Deployment-related psychiatric and behavioral conditions and their association with functioning disability in OEF/OIF/OND veterans. *Journal of Traumatic Stress, 28*(1), 25-33. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jts.21979>
- Livingston, W. G., Havice, P. A., Cawthon, T. W., & Fleming, D. S. (2011). Coming home: Student veterans' articulation of college re-enrollment. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice, 48*(3), 315-331. <https://doi.org/10.2202/1949-6605.6292>
- Lobos, C., Gallardo, G., & Valenzuela, J. (2021). Why not ask for help when I need it? Obstacles to the search for institutional academic support (IAS) in Chilean universities. *Educational Policy Anal Arch, 2021, 29*, 157.
- Loes, C. N., An, B. P., & Pascarella, E. T. (2019). Does effective classroom instruction enhance bachelor's degree completion? Some initial evidence. *The Review of Higher Education, 42*(3), 903-931. <https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2019.0024>
- Long, M. S. (2022, September). Advising student veterans: The role of advisors in fostering

- success. *Academic Advising Today*, 45(3). <https://nacada.ksu.edu/Academic-Advising-today/View-Articles/Advising-Student-Veterans-The-Role-of-Advisors-in-Fostering-Success.aspx>
- Lowe, H. & Cook, A. (2003). Mind the gap: Are students prepared for higher education? *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 27, 53-76.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03098770305629>
- Lynam, S., Cachia, M., Stock, R. (2022). An evaluation of the factors that influence academic success as defined by engaged students. *Educational Review*, 2022, 1-19.
- Maine. (2017). *Interview with Dr. Melik Khoury* [Video]. Unity: Education, Search and Rescue #287. <https://www.themainemag.com/radio/radio-guests/dr-melik-peter-khoury/>
- MAP-Works. (2014). The foundation of MAP-Works research and theoretical underpinnings of MAP-Works. EBI MAP-Works 2014.
<https://www.asc.dso.iastate.edu/sites/default/files/mapworks/MW%20Foundations%20-%202014.pdf>
- Marbouti, F., Ulas, J., Wang, C. H. Academic and demographic cluster analysis of engineering student success. *IEEE Trans. Educ.*, 64, 261-266
- Marcus, J. (2017). At some colleges that recruit veterans their GI Bill money, none graduate. *The Hechinger Report*. <https://hechingerreport.org/colleges-recruit-veterans-gi-bill-money-none-graduate/>
- Margarit, V. & Kennedy, J. (2019). Students' variables predicting timely graduation at a community college. *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice*, 19(6), 97-117.
<https://doi.org/10.33423/jhtep.v19i6.2308>
- Markle, G. (2015). Factors influencing persistence among nontraditional university students.

- Adult Education Quarterly*, 65(3), 267-285. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0741713615583085>
- Martorell, P. & Bergman, P. (2013). *Understanding the cost and quality of military-related education benefit programs*. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/j.ctt5vjwnk>
- Maslow, A. H. (1954). *Motivation and personality*. Harper and Row.
- Matua, G. A. & Van Der Wal, D. M. (2014). Differentiating between descriptive and interpretive phenomenological research approaches. *Nurse Researcher* 22(6), 22-27.
- Maury, R., & Zoli, C. (2018, September 27). Student veterans: A valuable asset to higher education. [Conference Session]. *NYACME Annual Conference*, Syracuse University, NY. https://securitypolicylaw.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads/uploads/2018/09/IVMF_student-Vet_Value_Sept-2018.pdf
- McAndrew, L. M., Phillips, L. A., Crede, M., Slotkin, S., Kimber, J., Maestro, K., Martin, J. L. & Eklund, A. (2019). Cultural incongruity predicts adjustment to college for student veterans. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 66(6), 678-689. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1037/cou0000363>
- McConnell-Henry, T., Chapman, Y., & Francis, K. (2009). Husserl and Heidegger: Exploring the disparity. *Journal of Nursing Practice*, 15, 7-15. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1440-172X.2008.0172.x>
- McBain, L., Kim, Y., Cook, B., & Snead, K. (2012). *From soldier to student II: Assessing campus programs for veterans and service members*. <http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/From-Soldier-to-Student-II.aspx>
- McIntosh, E. A., Thomas, L., Troxel, W. G., van den Wijngaard, O., & Grey, D. (2021, January 28). Editorial: Academic advising and tutoring for student success in higher education: International approaches. *Secondary Leadership in Education*, 6.

<https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2021.631265>

Mendez, S. L., Witkowsky, P., Morris, P., Brosseau, J., & Nicholson, H. (2018). Student veteran experiences in a transition seminar course: Exploring the thriving transition cycle. *Journal of Veterans Studies*, 3(2), 1-17. <https://typeset.io/pdf/student-veteran-experiences-in-a-transition-seminar-course-zsbavh6gqg.pdf>

Merriam, S. B. & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. Wiley.

Military.com. (2009, February 3). Scholarships and the GI Bill.

<https://www.military.com/paycheck-chronicles/2009/02/03/more-scholarships>

Military.com. (2022, July 15). Tinnitus is number one disability for veterans.

<https://military.com/benefits/veterans-health-care/tinnitus-is-number-one-disability-for-veterans.html>

Mobbs, M. C., Bonanno, G. A. (2018). Beyond war and PTSD: The crucial role of transition stress in the lives of military veterans. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 59, 137-144.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2017.11.007>

Moffatt, M. (1991). College life: Undergraduate culture and higher education. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 62(1), 44-61. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1982100>

Molina, D., & Morse, A. (2017). Differences between military-connected undergraduates: Implications for institutional research. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 2016 (171), 59-73. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ir.20194>

Money, N. M., Schroeder, A. R., Quinonez, R. A., Ho, T., Marin, J. R., Morgan, D. J., Dhruva, S. S., & Coon, E. R. (2020). Update on pediatric medical overuse: A systematic

overview. *JAMA Pediatrics*, 174(4), 375-382.

<https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapediatrics.2019.5849>

Montgomery, N. (2022, August 8). New study on tinnitus adds heft to findings on scourge of US Vets. *Stars and Stripes* <https://stripes.com/veterans/2022-08-08/tinnitus-troops-veterans-6916514.html>

Motl, T. C., George, K. A., Gibson, B. J., Mollenhauer, M. A., & Birke, L. (2022). Stereotyping of student veterans on a university campus in the U.S. *Military Psychology*, 34(5), 604-615. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08995605.2021.2025012>

Murphy, L. B., Helmick, C. G., Allen, K. D., Theis, K. A., Baker, N. A. Murray, G. R., Qin, J., Hootman, J., Brady, T., & Barbour, K. E. (2014). Arthritis among veterans-United States, 2011-2013. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report MMWR*, 63(44), 999-1003. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25375071/>

Mystakidou, K., Parpa, E., Tsilika, E., Galanos, A., & Vlahos, L. (2007). Traumatic distress and Positive changes in advanced cancer patients. *American Journal of Hospice and Palliative Care*, 24(4). <https://doi.org/10.1177/104999091072299917>

National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. (2022). *Persistence and retention*. <https://nscresearchcenter.org/persistence-retention>.

National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). (2010). *Major differences: Examining engagement by field of study: Annual results 2010*. <https://scholarworks.iu.edu/iuwrrest/api/core/bitstreams/0c14abae-e4e7-4b57-a0fe-9d799782c22a/content>

NASPA. (2023). Student Success. <https://naspa.org/focus-areas/student-success>

Newins, A. R., Wilson, S. M., Hopkins, T. A., Straits-Troster, K., Kudler, H. & Calhoun, P. S.

- (2019). Barriers to the use of veterans affairs health care services among female veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan. *Psychological Services, 16*(3), 484-490.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/ser0000230>
- Nerstad, C. G. L., Searle, R., Cerne, M., Dysvik, A., Sherlavaj, M. & Scherer, R. (2017). Perceived mastery climate, Felt trust, and knowledge sharing. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 39*(4), 429-447. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2241>
- Neubauer, B. E., Witkop, C. T., & Varpio, L. (2019). How phenomenology can help us learn from the experiences of others. *Perspectives on Medical Education, 8*(2), 90-97.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s40037-019-0509-2>
- Nicoletti, M. (2019). Revising the Tinto's theoretical dropout model. *Higher Education Studies, 9*(3), 52-64. <https://doi.org/10.5539/hes.v9n3p52>
- Norvilitis, J. M., Reid, H. M., & O'Quin, K. (2022) Amotivation: A key predictor of college GPA, college match, and first-year retention. *International Journal of Educational Psychology, 11*(3), 314-338. <https://doi.org/10.1017583/ijep.2022.7309>
- Noyens, D., Donche, V., Coertjens, L., Daal, T., & Van Petegem, P. (2019). The directional links Between students' academic motivation and social integration during the first year of higher education. *European Journal of Psychology of Education, 34*, 67-86.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10212-017-0365-6>
- O'Connor, M. & Elkit, A. (2022). Treating PTSD symptoms in older adults. In E. Schnyder & M. Cloitre (Eds.), *Evidence based treatments for trauma-related psychological disorders: A practical guide for clinicians* (2nd ed., pp. 443-459). Springer Nature Switzerland AG.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-97802-0_21
- Olsen, A., Brunner, J. F., Evensen, K. A. I., Finnanger, T. G., Vik, A., Skandsen, T., Landrø, N.

- I., & Håberg, A. K. (2014). Altered cognitive control activations after moderate-to-severe traumatic brain injury and their relationship to injury severity and everyday-life function. *Cerebral Cortex*, 25(8), 2170-2180. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cercor/bhu023>
- Osborn, N. J. (2014). Student veteran discussion panels: Deconstructing the traumatized veteran stigma on campus. *About Campus*, 19(2), 24-29. <https://doi.org/10.1002/abc/21153>
- Park, Y. S., Kong, L., & Artino, A. R. (2020). The post-positivism paradigm of research. *Academic Medicine: Journal of the Association of American Medical Colleges*, 95(5), 690-694. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1097/ACM.0000000000003093>
- Parnes, M. F., Boals, A., Brown, A. D., & Eubank, J. (2020). Heterogeneity in temporal self-appraisals following exposure to potentially traumatic life events: A latent profile analysis. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 277, 515-523. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ad.2020.08.050>
- Pascarella, E. T. & Terenzini, P. T. (1979). Student-faculty informal contact and college persistence: A further investigation. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 72(4), 214-218. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220671.1979.10885157>
- Pascarella, E. T. (1980). Student-faculty informal contact and college outcomes. *Review of Educational Research*, 50(4), 545-595. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1170295>
- Pascarella, E. T., Smart, J. C., & Ethington, C. A. (2004). Long-term persistence of two-year college students. *Research in Higher Education*, 24(1), 47-71. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00973742>
- Pascarella, E. T. (2006). How college affects students: Ten directions for future research. *Journal of College student Development*, 47(5), 508-520.
- Pascarella, E. T. & Terenzini, P. T. (1979). Student-faculty informal contact and college

- persistence: A further investigation. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 72(4), 214-218. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220671.1979.10885157>
- Pascarella, E. T. (2019). Assessing the impact of college on student: a four-decade quest to get it approximately right. In M. B. Paulson & L. W. Pern (Eds.), *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research*, Vol. 34, pp. 1-38. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-03457-3_1
- Patton, M. Q. (2023). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*, (4th ed.). Sage Publications. <https://bookshelf.vitalsource.com/books/978148337605>
- PBS. (2011). *POV: Bodi discusses TBI* [Video]. Season 24. Episode 14. <https://www.pbs.org/video/pov-bodi-discusses-tbi/>
- Pellegrino, L. & Hoggan, C. (2015). A tale of two transitions: Female military veterans during their first year at community college. *Adult Learning*, 26(3), 124-131. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1045159515583257>
- Pennington, C. R., & Pennington, C. Bates, E. A., Kaye, L. K., & Bolam, L. T. (2018). Transitioning in higher education: An exploration of psychological and contextual factors affecting student satisfaction. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 42(5), 596-607. <https://doi.org/1080/0309877x.2017.1302563>
- Rattray, N. A., True, G., Natividad, D. M., Salyers, M. P., Frankel, R. M., & Kukla, M. (2019). The long and winding road to postsecondary education for U.S. veterans with invisible injuries. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, 42(3), 284-295. <https://doi.org/10.1037/prj0000375>.
- Rausch, M. A. & Buning, M. M. (2022, August 5). Student veterans 'perspectives on higher education contexts: Beyond the non-traditional student. *College Teaching*.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/87567555.2022.2106469>

- Raybourn, K., BrckaLorenz, A., & Shoup, R. (2018). Reimagining student engagement: How nontraditional adult learners engage in traditional postsecondary environments. *Journal of Continuing Higher Education, 66*(1), 22-33.
- Reger, M. A., Etherage, J. R., Reger, G. M., & Gahm, G. A. (2008). Civilian psychologists in an Army culture: The ethical challenge of culture competence. *Military Psychology, 20*(1), 21-35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08995600701531444>
- Renner, B. J. & Skursha, E. (2022, June 14). Support for adult students to overcome barriers and improve persistence. *The Journal of Continuing Higher Education*.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/07377363.2022.2065435>
- Rorison, J., Voight, M., & Poutre, A. (2017). Exploring the role of affordability in first-year student access and persistence. In R. S. Feldman (Ed.), *The first year of college* (pp. 3-31). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/978136811764>
- Roska, J., Silver, B. R., Deutschlander, & Whitley, S. E. (2020). Navigating the first year of college: Siblings, parents, and first-generation experiences. *Sociological Forum, 35*(3).
<https://doi.org/10.1111/socf.12617>
- Rudrum, S., Casey, R., Frank, L., Brickner, R. K., MacKenzie, S., Carlson, J., & Rondinelli, E. (2022). Qualitative research studies online: Using prompted weekly journal entries during the COVID-19 pandemic. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 21*, 164069221093138. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069221093138>
- Rumann, C. B. & Hamrick, F. A. (2009). Supporting student veterans in transition. In R. Ackerman & D. DiRamio (Eds.), *Creating a veteran-friendly campus: Strategies for transition success. New Directions for Student Services, 126*, 25-34.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.313>

Sadowski, C., Stewart, M., & Pedititis, M. (2018). Pathway to success: Using students' insights and perspectives to improve retention and success for university students from low socioeconomic (LSE) backgrounds. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 22(2), 158-175. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2017.1362048>

Saldana, J. (2021), *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (4th ed.). Sage Publications

Sansone, V. A. & Tucker Segura, J. S. (2020). Exploring factors contributing to college success among student veteran transfers at a four-year university. *The Review of Higher Education*, 43(3), 887-91. <https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2020.0011>

Schaeper, H. (2019). The first year in higher education” The role of individual factors and the learning environment for academic integration. *Higher Education*, 79, 95-110.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-019-00398-0>

Schroeder, M. & Perez, R. (2022). Exploring the salience of veteran identity for US college students. *Journal of Veteran Studies*, 8(1), 54-66. <https://doi.org/10.21061/jvs.v8i1.289>

Schudde, L. (2019). Short- and long-term impact of engagement experiences with faculty and peers at community colleges. *The Review of Higher Education*, 42(2), 385-426.

<https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2019.0001>

Sciullo, N. J. (2017). Making debate more inclusive for the student veteran debater. *Argumentation & Advocacy*. 53(2), 138-148.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00028533.2017.1305008>

Seeto, E. M. (2016). Professional mentoring in student affairs: Evaluation of a global program. *Journal of Student Affairs in Africa*, 4(2), 47-51.

<https://www.ajol.info/index.php/jssa/article/view/151006>

- Shackelford, A. (2009). Documenting the needs of student veterans with disabilities: Intersection roadblocks, solutions, and legal realities. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability*, 22(1), 36-42. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ844249>
- Shackelford, J. L., Smith, L. S., Farrell, C. T., & Neils-Strunjas, J. (2019). Interrelationships among resilience, posttraumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, depression, and academic outcomes in student military veterans. *Journal of Psychosocial Nursing & Mental Health Services*, 57(2), 35-43. <https://doi.org/10.3928/02793695-20180924-02>
- Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, 22(2), 63-75. <https://doi.org/10.3233/EFI-2004-22201>
- Sherman, A., & Cahill, C. (2015). *Academic advising for student veterans*.
- Sikes, D. L., Duran, M. G., & Armstrong, M. L. (2020). Shared lessons from serving military-connected students. *College Student Affairs Journal*, 38 (2), 186-197.
- Simón, L., & Puerta, G. (2022). Prediction of early dropout in higher education using the SCPQ. *Educational Psychology*, 9, 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311908.2022.2123588>
- Smith, S. J., Farra, S L., Ulrich, D. L., Franco, S., Keister, K. J., & Chatterjee, A. (2018). The Veteran-student experience: Lessons for higher education. *Journal of Military Learning* <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Journal-of-Military-Learning/Journal-of-Military-Learning-Archives/April-2018-Edition/The-Veteran-Student-Experience-Lessons-for-Higher-Education/>
- Snell, F. I. & Halter, M. J. (2010). A signature wound of war: Mild traumatic brain injury. *Journal of Psychosocial Nursing and Mental Health Services*, 48,22-28. <https://doi.org/10.3928/02793695-20100108-02>
- Solomon, A. (2020, July 26). What happens when you're disabled, and nobody can tell? *New*

York Times.

- Southwell, K. H., Whiteman, S. D., MacDermid Wadsworth, S. M., & Barry, A. E. (2018). The Use of university services and student retention: Differential links for student service members or veterans and civilian students. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory, & Practice*, 19(4), 394-412.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1521025116636133>
- Spady, W. G. (1971). Dropouts from higher education: Toward an empirical model. *Interchange* 2, 38-62. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02282469>
- Speziale H. S. & Carpenter D. R. (2011). *Qualitative research in nursing: advancing the humanistic imperative* (5th ed.). Wolters Kluwer Health/Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.
- Stahl, N. A. & King, J. R. (2020). Expanding approaches for research: Understanding and using trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 44(1), 26-28. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45381095>
- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Sage Publications
- Stanhope, C. C. (2022). *Why student associations are essential to the university experience*. Keystone Higher Education. <https://www.keg.com/news/the-role-of-student-associations-university>
- Stelnicki, A. M., Nordstokke, D. W., & Saklofske, D. H. (2015). Who is the successful university student? An analysis of personal resources. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 45(2), 214-228.
- Stephan, J. L., Davis, E., Lindsay, J., Miller, S., American Institutes for Research, National Center for Educational Evaluation and Regional Assistance, & Regional Educational Laboratory Midwest. (2015). Who will succeed and who will struggle? Predicting early

college success with Indiana's student information system. Regional Educational Laboratory Midwest.

Stevens, M. & Mora, P. (2017). *Factors influencing academic help seeking by college students. Learning from the learners: Successful college students share their effective learning habits*. Rowan & Littlefield.

Strayhorn, T. (2019). *College students' sense of belonging: A key to educational success for all students*, 2nd (ed.). Routledge.

Student Veterans of America. (2017). *National veteran education success tracker: A report on the academic success of student veterans using the Post-9/11 GI Bill*.

<https://www.luminafoundation.org/files/resources/veteran-success-tracker.pdf>

Suhlmann, M., Sassenberg, K., Nagengast, B., & Trautwein, U. (2018). Belonging mediates effects of student-university fit on well-being, motivation, and dropout intention. *Social Psychology*, 49(1), 16-28. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1864-9335/a000325>

Sullivan, N., Freer, B. D., Ulrich, S. (2021). Student veterans and adjustment to college: Making meaning of military experiences. *Journal of American College Health*, 69(5), 503-512. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07444848.2019.1683017>

Tanielian, T., Vaiana, M. E., Jaycox, L. H., Schell, T. L., Marshall, G. N., Burman, M. A., Eibner, C., Karney, B. R., Meredith, L. S., & Ringel, J. S. (2008). *Invisible wounds of war: Summary and recommendations for addressing psychological and cognitive injuries*. RAND Corporation.

Taylor, B. J., Killick, C., & McGlade, A. (2019). *Understanding & using research in social work*. Sage Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473922365>

Teixeira, S. M. (2021). Breaking barriers to success: Aligning program offerings to better serve

- student veterans. *Journal of Student Affairs, New York University*, 17,49-63.
<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1336752>
- Thompson, M., Pawson, C., & Evans, B. (2021). Navigating entry into higher education: The transition to independent learning and living. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 45(10), 1398-1410. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877x.2021.1933400>
- Thach, K. (2022, August 10). The importance of academic advising in higher education. *Homeroom, the Official Blog of the U.S. Department of Education*.
<https://blog.ed.gov/2022/08/the-importance-of-academic-advising-in-higher-education/>
- Tinto, V. (1975). Dropout from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research. *Review of Educational Research*, 45(1), 89-125. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1170024>
- Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition* (2nd ed.). University of Chicago Press. <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226922461.001.0001>
- Tinto, V. (2017). Through the eyes of students. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, 19(3), 254-269. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1521025115621917>
- Tisdell, C. C., & Skekhawat, G. S. (2019). An applied mentoring model for academic development, reflection, and growth. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 13(2), 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.20429/ijstl.2019.130206>
- Tong, A., Sainsbury, P., & Craig, P. (2007). Consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research (COREQ): A 32-item checklist for interviews and focus groups. *International Journal for Quality in Healthcare*, 19(6), 349-357.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/intqhc/mzm042>
- Trolian, T. L., Jach, E. A., Hanson, J. M., & Pascarella, E. T. (2016). Influencing academic motivation: The effects of student-faculty interaction. *Journal of College Student*

Development, 57(7), 810-826. <https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2016.0080>

Umucu, E., Castruita Rios, Y., Lo, C., Wang, A., Grenawalt, T., Yasuoka, M., & Brooks, J.

(2022). Service-connected disability and happiness in student veterans: A parallel mediation study of PERMA. *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin*.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/00343552221139880>

Umucu, E., Villegas, D., Viramontes, R., Jung, H., & Lee, B. (2020). Measuring grit in veterans

with mental illnesses: Examining the model structure of grit. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation*

Journal. <https://doi.org/10.1037/prj0000420>

University of Minnesota Crookston. (2024). *Post -9/11 Gi Bill and scholarships or*

assistantships.

<https://onestop.crk.umn.edu/finances/veteran-education-benefits/financial-aid-and-educationbenefits#:~:text=GI%20Bill%C2%AE%20not%20affected,undergraduate%20students%20file%20a%20FAFSA>

U.S. Department of Education. (2021). *Auxiliary aids and services for postsecondary students*

with disabilities. Office for Civil Rights.

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/auxaids.html>

U.S. Department of Labor. (2023). *Transition assistance programs*.

<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/vets/programs/tap>

U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs. (2022). *Traumatic Brain Injury and PTSD*.

https://www.ptsd.va.gov/understand/related/tbi_ptsd.asp

U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs. (2023). *Forever GI Bill-Harry W. Colmery Veterans*

Educational Assistance Act. <https://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/forevergibill.asp>

Vacchi, D., Hammond, S., & Diamond, A. (2017). Conceptual models of student veteran college

experiences, *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 171, 23-41.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/ir.20192>

Vacchi, D. (2012). Considering student veterans on the twenty-first-century college campus. *About Campus*, 17(2), 15-21.

Vacchi, D. & Berger, J. (2014). Student veterans in higher education: a direction for research and theory. In M. Paulsen (Ed.), *Higher education handbook of theory and research*, vol. XXIX. Springer Science+ Business Media.

Veteran.com. (2022, February 4). *FAFSA veteran education benefits*.

<https://veteran.com/fafsa-veteran-education-benefits/>

Veteran Education Success (2019). *Should colleges spend the GI Bill on veterans' education or late-night TV ads? And which colleges offer the best instructional bang for the GI Bill buck?* <https://vetsedsuccess.org/should-colleges-spend-the-gi-bill-on-veterans-education-or-late-night-tv-ads-and-which-colleges-offer-the-best-instructional-bang-for-the-gi-bill-buck/>

Wagner, B. A. & Long, R. N. (2022). From start to finish: What factors inhibit student veterans completion? *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory, & Practice*, 24(3), 631-649. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1521025120935118>

Wakelin, E. (2021). Personal tutoring in higher education: An action research project on how improve personal tutoring for both staff and students. *Educational Action Research*, 31(1), 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09650792.2021.2013912>

Walton-Radford, A., Wun, J., & Weko, T. (2009). *Issue tables: A profile of military service members and veterans in higher education*. National Center for Educational Statistics.

Wa-Mbaleka, S. (2020). The researcher as an instrument. Computer-supported *qualitative*

- research*, 2020, Volume 1068.
- Wang, R., Han, J., Liu, C., u, H. (2021). How do university students' perceptions of the instructor's role influence their learning outcomes and satisfaction in cloud-based virtual classrooms during the COVID-19 pandemic? *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 627433.
<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.627433>
- Wingate, U. (2007). A framework for transition: Supporting 'learning to learn' in higher education. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 61(3), 391-405.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2273.00361.X>
- Witkowsky, P., Kumm, c., Mendez, S., Nicholson, H., Dimandja, O. O., & Morris, P. (2016). Comparing military-connected and non-military-connected students' orientation experiences. *The Journal of College Orientation and Transition*, 24(1), 78-83.
- Yale, A. T. (2017). The personal tutor-student relationship: Student expectations and Experiences of personal tutoring in higher education. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 43(4), 533-544. <https://doi.org/1080/0309877X.2017.1377164>
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Ziencik, C. (2020). Transitioning from the military to higher education: A case study of the transition assistance program. *Journal of Veteran Studies*, 6(2), 30-45.
<https://doi.org/10.21061/jvs.v6i2.178>
- Zuckerman, A. L., & Lo, S. M. (2021). Transfer student experiences and identity navigation in STEM: Overlapping figured worlds of success. *CBE-Life Sciences Education*, 20(3), 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.1187/cbe.20-06-0121>

Appendix A

IRB Approval



January 11, 2024

Janet Hupel
David Vacchi

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY23-24-1155 Overcoming Barriers to Persistence: A Single-Case Study of Student Veterans in Higher Education

Dear Janet Hupel, David Vacchi,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) 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 to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(ii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation; or

For a PDF of your exemption letter, click on your study number in the My Studies card on your Cayuse dashboard. Next, click the Submissions bar beside the Study Details bar on the Study details page. Finally, click Initial under Submission Type and choose the Letters tab toward the bottom of the Submission Details page. Your information sheet and final versions of your study documents can also be found on the same page under the Attachments tab.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, PhD, CIP
Administrative Chair
Research Ethics Office

Appendix B

Site Approval



INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Our Lady of the Lake University

www.ollusa.edu

411 SW 24th Street, San Antonio, TX 78207

P: 210-434-6711

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Reliance Authorization Agreement

This form is used for institutions with a Federalwide Assurance (FWA) to rely on the IRB of another institution.

A. Name of Institution Providing IRB Review:

❖ Name of Reviewing Institution – IORG# Liberty University - IORG0006023

IRB Registration #:

Federalwide Assurance (FWA) #:

IRB00007258

FWA00016439

B. Name of Institution Relying on the Designated IRB:

❖ Our Lady of the Lake University – IORG0005113

IRB Registration #: IRB00006134

Federalwide Assurance (FWA) #:

FWA00029533

The officials signing below agree that Our Lady of the Lake University may rely on [Name of Institution Providing IRB Review] as the designated IRB for review and continuing oversight of the human subject research limited to the following specific project(s) described below:

❖ Name of Research Project: Overcoming Barriers to Persistence: A Single-Case Study of Student Veterans in Higher Education

Name of Principal Investigator: Janet Hupel

Sponsor or Funding Agency:

Award number, if any:

The review performed by the designated IRB will meet the human subject protection requirements of Institution B’s OHRP-approved FWA. Institution B remains responsible for ensuring compliance with the IRB’s determinations and with the Terms of its ORHP-approved FWA. The IRB at Institution A will follow written procedures for reporting its findings and actions to appropriate officials at Institution B. Relevant minutes of IRB meetings will be made available to Institution B upon request.

Terrence Conner

Digitally signed by Terrence Conner
Date: 2024.01.22 16:23:29 -05'00'

Name _____ Date _____

Title _____
Authorized Institutional Official,
Reviewing Institution

Teresita Munguia

Digitally signed by Teresita Munguia
Date: 2024.01.23 13:33:02 -06'00'

Teresita Munguia, Ph.D. _____ Date _____

Associate Vice President for Academic
Affairs, Our Lady of the Lake University
Authorized Institutional Official,
Relying Institution

Appendix C

Participant Consent

Consent for Participation

OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO PERSISTENCE: A SINGLE-CASE STUDY OF STUDENT VETERANS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Title of the Project: Overcoming Barriers to Persistence: A Single-Case Study of Student Veterans in Higher Education

Principal Investigator: Janet G. Hupel, Doctoral Candidate, School of Education, Liberty University

Invitation to be part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be an undergraduate student veteran enrolled at Our Lady of the Lake University for at least one year and must be a junior or senior. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to understand the experiences of student veterans as they overcome barriers to persistence in higher education.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

1. The first procedure is to participate in a virtual or in-person interview that will be audio/video-recorded. The interview will take no more than 1 hour. [
2. The second procedure is to participate in a virtual, audio/video-recorded focus group that will take no more than 1 hour.
3. The third procedure is to participate in a journal prompt exercise once a week for three weeks. These exercises will take no more than 1 hour each week.

The total time estimated to complete the study will be no more than 5 hours.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

The direct benefits participants should expect to receive from taking part in this study include the opportunity to share their experiences as student veterans in higher education to help improve the

experiences of other student veterans in higher education. Participants will have access to access to the final study results as well.

Benefits to society include awareness of barriers that exist in higher education and how student veterans overcome the barriers as they persist toward their degree completion.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life. The risks involved in this study include the possibility of psychological stress from being asked to recall and discuss challenges you have experienced as a student veteran. To reduce risk, I will monitor participants and discontinue the interview if needed. I will also provide referral information for counseling services.

I am a mandatory reporter. During this study, if I receive information about child abuse, child neglect, elder abuse, or intent to harm self or others, I will be required to report it to the appropriate authorities.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.
- Interviews will be conducted in a virtual location where others will not easily overhear the conversation and with only the participant and researcher present.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.
- Data will be stored as follows: Electronic data will be stored in a password-protected file on the researcher's computer and external hard drive. Physical data for the study will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. If the research does not lead to publication, all files will be deleted after five years.
- Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for five years/until participants have reviewed and confirmed the accuracy of the transcripts and then deleted. The researcher and members of her doctoral committee will have access to these recordings.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or Our Lady of the Lake University. [If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Janet G. Hupel. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [REDACTED] or by email at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, David Vacchi, at [REDACTED].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; our phone number is 434-592-5530, and our email address is irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

The researcher has my permission to audio-record/video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date