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Navigating the Transition Between Military and College Life: Exploring College Veteran Help-Seeking Attitudes Toward Academic and Psychological Services

Abstract

Student veteran enrollment in college is increasing at a significant rate and colleges are struggling to serve this population. Although research has indicated that college veteran academic performance is on par with nonveteran peers, college veterans are more likely to experience challenges related to mental and physical health. The purpose of this study was to understand better the help-seeking attitudes of veterans toward academic and psychological services so that colleges might enhance student veteran services. The research utilized a quantitative methodology to obtain help-seeking attitude data from college veteran participants. A survey was administered electronically to college veterans attending two State University of New York colleges. The results of the survey indicated that college veterans hold generally positive help-seeking attitudes toward academic and psychological services. Furthermore, the results indicated no significant difference between the help-seeking attitudes of veterans who experienced combat and veterans who had not experienced combat. The implications of these results are that college veterans find value in academic and psychological services and help-seeking attitudes may not impact veteran help-seeking behavior. Moreover, combat experience may not have an impact on help-seeking attitudes and further research on other possible contributing factors may be of value.

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Navigating the Transition Between Military and College Life: Exploring College Veteran
Help-Seeking Attitudes Toward Academic and Psychological Services

By

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Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Ed.D. in Executive Leadership

Supervised by

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St. John Fisher College

August 2016

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Dedication

This educational trek would not have been possible if not for the support, leadership, and trust of my family, friends, classmates, and professors. First and foremost, I must proclaim that I have been blessed with an amazing family. They have been the center of my motivation and they nurtured me through the toughest of times. For countless weekends, I left my family to attend courses for this program. Although it was difficult to leave them each weekend, it was their positive energy that kept me moving forward. Thank you, Jackie, Jack, and Isabelle, for being my lighthouse in this journey. I love you all very much and am grateful to have you in my life.

Dr. VanDerLinden, faculty member at St. John Fisher College, my dissertation chair, and most of all my guiding light through this difficult process. I cannot thank her enough for her leadership and mentorship through the academic rigor, but also through my personal challenges as well. I was thrown a few curve balls during this journey, and her patience and understanding really made things more manageable. Dr. Winter, my committee member, has been a great resource to me during this process, thank you.

I am incredibly thankful for the access to outstanding faculty and students in the St. John Fisher College DEXL program. Each instructor contributed to my growth as an individual and had a significant impact on the development of research and writing skills. Regarding my fellow students, friends, and cohort members, I feel blessed to have you as shipmates during this experience and am a better person for having met you.

Biographical Sketch

Matthew Michael LaLonde is currently the Director of Judicial and Veteran Affairs at the State University of New York (SUNY) at Cobleskill and the Coordinator of Veteran Affairs at SUNY Delhi. Mr. LaLonde is a graduate of SUNY Mohawk Valley Community College, receiving an A.S. in Liberal Arts. Mr. LaLonde is a graduate of SUNY Plattsburgh, receiving a B.S. in Elementary Education. Mr. LaLonde attended SUNY Oneonta, receiving an M.S. in Literacy. Mr. LaLonde enrolled in the Education Doctorate of Executive Leadership program at St. John Fisher College in the spring of 2014. Mr. LaLonde studied the help-seeking attitudes of college veterans toward academic and psychological services under the supervision of Dr. Kimberly VanDerLinden and mentorship of Dr. Tara Winter. Mr. LaLonde received the Ed.D. degree in 2016.

Abstract

Student veteran enrollment in college is increasing at a significant rate and colleges are struggling to serve this population. Although research has indicated that college veteran academic performance is on par with nonveteran peers, college veterans are more likely to experience challenges related to mental and physical health. The purpose of this study was to understand better the help-seeking attitudes of veterans toward academic and psychological services so that colleges might enhance student veteran services. The research utilized a quantitative methodology to obtain help-seeking attitude data from college veteran participants. A survey was administered electronically to college veterans attending two State University of New York colleges. The results of the survey indicated that college veterans hold generally positive help-seeking attitudes toward academic and psychological services. Furthermore, the results indicated no significant difference between the help-seeking attitudes of veterans who experienced combat and veterans who had not experienced combat. The implications of these results are that college veterans find value in academic and psychological services and help-seeking attitudes may not impact veteran help-seeking behavior. Moreover, combat experience may not have an impact on help-seeking attitudes and further research on other possible contributing factors may be of value.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Student veteran enrollment in college is increasing, and although colleges are investing resources to enhance veterans' services, very little empirical research is available to direct strategic resource allocation (DiRamio, Jarvis, Iverson, Seher, & Anderson, 2015). In 2012, the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) reported that almost one million veterans utilized financial assistance through VA educational entitlement programs. This amount is approximately 75% higher than the amount reported in 2008. Much of this enrollment growth is attributed to recent changes in VA educational entitlements that have increased financial access for veterans to college.

The transition from military to college life may be one of the most challenging events a student can experience (Home Alone?, 2011). In the military, veterans experience intensive training and meet challenges through teamwork and leadership (What Matters to Veterans, 2011). Members of the military develop strong bonds with one another as they journey through difficult rites of passage in training, and experience long terms of exposure to stress in combat situations (Elliot, Gonzalez, & Larsen, 2011). Military protocols are taught early on in the military induction process, resources are provided in advance to complete the processes, and the expectation is that tasks are completed consistently and with near perfection (Vacchi, 2012).

In contrast to the college environment, college veterans might not be orientated to the new experience because a process does not exist or because the veteran does not understand or value the process. The veteran might experience an unfamiliar culture

which, in contrast to the military experience, may not provide resources in advance and requires the veteran to discover the process. Furthermore, DiRamio, Ackerman, and Mitchell (2008) explained that transition success is connected with a veteran's ability to acclimate to the collegiate system and feel comfortable with clear, consistent rules. Although colleges typically have campus-wide policies in place, classroom instructors often have autonomy in the development and implementation of academic requirements which can lead to inconsistency between teaching faculty.

While colleges have recognized that veteran enrollment is booming and research has indicated that veterans have transition needs, it appears that only a minority of colleges offer veteran services. Queen, Lewis, and the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) (2014) reported that although 96% of U.S. colleges reported enrolling veterans, only 25% of the colleges had customized support services for veterans; 19% of those colleges had a dedicated space for veterans, and 36% had specific military/veteran organizations. In a study of 723 higher education intuitions, Cook and Young (2009) found that only 22% of the colleges provided college veterans with some format of transition assistance.

A prevalent myth in non-empirical literature and media is that college student veteran academic achievement and persistence are problematic; however, the Million Records Project (Student Veterans of America, 2014) revealed that student veterans generally persisted and academically outperformed peers. It may appear positive that many veterans achieve their college goals amidst their challenges (Student Veterans of America, 2014), yet contrastingly numerous veterans are not completing academic goals successfully. Research indicates that these veterans who are not meeting goals are not as

likely to utilize student services as nonveteran student peers (DiRamio et al., 2015). This study attempted to better understand college veteran relationships with college academic services more deeply.

Along with academic achievement, numerous other myths exist in the college culture that are based on speculation rather than empirical research. Some examples of those myths are that veterans with post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other mental health-related injuries do not persist in college, veterans who have service-connected disabilities are unstable, veterans are more likely to have substance abuse issues than nonveteran students, and veterans are all the same. Although it is possible there may be accuracy in certain stereotypes, the overall issue is that there is only limited empirical research to substantiate any generalizations about these issues, and some research refutes these concepts. Bryan, Bryan, Hinkson, Bichrest, & Ahern (2014) found in a study that PTSD and grade point average (GPA) are not related. Widome, Laska, Gulden, Slevin, and Lust (2011) examined the possible effects of substance use on college students and found that veterans were not at higher risk for substance related issues than nonveteran college students.

Contemporary media and research have elaborated on the myths regarding the veteran population, but have place little emphasis on a clear significant problem: veterans are at high risk for suicide. Kang et al. (2015) reported that general suicide rates among veterans were approximately 50% higher than among nonveteran civilians. Furthermore, college student veterans were statistically more likely to commit suicide than nonveteran students. Rudd, Goulding, and Bryan (2011) reported that nearly 46% of college student veterans reported having suicidal thoughts or ideation, 20% reported having a suicidal

plan, and 8% attempted suicide. In comparison, the American College Health Association (ACHA, 2010) reported that 6% of nonveteran college students have suicidal thoughts and 1% reported suicide attempts. Suicide rates are the highest during the first 3 years out of the military, which is when most veterans elect to utilize their VA educational entitlements.

College student veterans have a much higher risk of mental health-related disabilities than nonveteran students. Approximately 75% of combat veterans have service-connected injuries, the most common of which are mental health-related (Bryan et al., 2014). The ACHA (2010) reported that approximately 10% of college students, including college veterans, indicated having a mental health diagnosis. Queen, Lewis, and the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) reported that only 22% of college campuses provide mental health counseling for college veterans, and only 49% of colleges reported having access to off-site veteran medical services.

DiRamio et al. (2015) noted that veterans do not utilize college veteran services. Additionally, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO, 2014) reported that approximately 8.4 million veterans are enrolled in VA healthcare programs, and of the 13 million veterans remaining, approximately 8 million qualify for healthcare but do not utilize the benefits. Considering that many veterans are returning to civilian life with injuries, it is difficult to understand why veterans do not access these services. However, very little research is available on advisable best practices that colleges may employ to enhance the help-seeking frequency of college veterans (Francis & Kraus, 2015; Hamrick & Rumann, 2010).

In their analysis of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), Daly and Fox Garrity (2013) found that veterans were less likely to utilize institutional support than nonveteran students. However, not much empirical research is currently available on the college student veteran population, and even less research is available on college students' needs in transitioning from military to college life (Francis & Kraus, 2015). Lee, Smith, Stevenson, and Wilson (2013) found that soldiers tended not to be socially integrated with their college campuses and had little interest in traditional activities such as club involvement and social programs. Considering the research indicating that veterans are more likely than nonveterans to cope with mental stressors such as suicidal ideation, it is concerning that veterans do not appear to be utilizing available services at the same rate as nonveterans (DiRamio et al., 2015). To this point, Rickwood, Deane, Wilson, and Ciarrochi (2005) stated that *help-seeking* is the "behavior of actively seeking help from other people" (p. 4). They defined *formal help-seeking* behavior as the degree to which a person pursues professional services when experiencing distress. Although research is available on general help-seeking attitudes, scarcely any studies have provided insight into college veteran help-seeking.

Problem Statement

With the onset of the Post 9/11 GI Bill in 2008, college veteran enrollment has markedly increased and the VA has forecasted further growth (VA, 2012a). With over \$20 billion in education benefits distributed by the VA, colleges are fiscally benefitting from this enrollment growth (VA, 2014b). Although colleges are investing resources in veteran recruitment efforts, it appears that colleges are not investing in college veteran services. Daly and Fox Garrity (2013) reported that only 11% of college campuses have

dedicated veteran affairs offices, and 18% of campuses reporting having a dedicated veteran services provider. Queen, Lewis, and the NCES (2014) reported that less than 20% of college's structure dedicated veteran programs. The slow growth of veteran services and programs in colleges is problematic given that research indicates many veterans are entering college with transition difficulties (Home Alone?, 2011).

Although college veterans academically persist at a similar rate as nonveteran peers (Lang and Powers, 2011), many veterans do not complete their academic goals as planned (Student Veterans of America, 2014). Those veterans who are not academically successful are not as likely as nonveteran students to utilize academic services (Daly & Fox Garrity, 2013; Lee, Smith, Stevenson, & Wilson, 2013). DiRamio et al. (2015) explained that veterans do not engage in help-seeking behavior at a similar rate as nonveteran students. Most college veterans are considered to be non-traditional students, who have had a substantial experience gap between high school and college (Young & James, 2013). For those college veterans who are not academically successful they may not have the skills to adapt, and because they are not likely to utilize services may end of failing.

College student veterans are at a higher risk for mental health-related challenges than nonveteran students, including physical and mental health injury (Bryan et al., 2014). Approximately 75% of veterans who experience combat are entering colleges with injuries, and as a whole, 20% of all college veterans struggle with injury (Eckstein, 2009). According to the VA's (2012) suicide data report, approximately 22 veterans commit suicide every day in the United States. By way of comparison with nonveteran peers, college veterans are approximately 7 times more likely to experience suicidal

ideation, and 8 times more likely to attempt suicide (Rudd, Goulding, & Bryan, 2011; ACHA, 2010).

Lee, Smith, Stevenson, and Wilson (2013) found that veterans are not likely to engage in traditional college services, activities, or programs. Livingston et al. (2011) explained that veterans choose to isolate themselves from others and do not tend to engage in traditional college socialization, referring to the phenomenon as being *invisible*. Rickwood et al. (2005) defined help-seeking as the degree in which a person pursues formal or informal assistance when experiencing distress. DiRamio et al. (2015) explained that veterans have a low-degree of help-seeking which may be contributed to the veteran's level of *burdensomeness*. Brenner et al. (2008) defined *burdensomeness* as the perception of burden a college veteran may have toward social supports. Veteran's military experience influences college veteran coping techniques in managing stressors through self-reliance in order to avoid the perception of weakness and prioritizing the needs of others before themselves.

Considering that college veteran enrollment is continuing to grow, college veterans are entering college with serious transition difficulties, and those veterans are not likely to seek help when experiencing a crisis; it is important that scholars examine help-seeking. A stronger understanding of college student veteran help-seeking attitudes may inform college administrators about techniques that might enhance college veterans' usage of services and ultimately prevent loss of life.

Theoretical Rationale

Transition events significantly contribute to personal development and can have an impact on an individual's ability to be successful (Schlossberg, 1981). Schlossberg

hypothesized that regardless of the complexity of the transition, a transitional process exists which, if understood, might be enhanced. Although colleges have increased investment into student veterans' resources over the past few years, research has indicated that veterans are not utilizing services (DiRamio et al., 2015). The complicated process of transition is unique to each individual and requires analysis by the impacted student as well as the intervening college professional. In order to provide a better understanding of why veterans seek help at a lower rate than nonveterans, the present researcher considered Schlossberg's transition theory and selected it as the primary theoretical framework because it offers a model that may be practically applied to the transition process.

Schlossberg (1981) characterized transition as an event or nonevent that impacts an individual's personal development. She described personal development as an ongoing process that does not end and noted that a person's adaptation to life events has a direct impact on an understanding of one's self. Schlossberg theorized that individuals may enhance adaptation to transitional events through assessing each individual's resources and deficits, and then evaluating the balance between resources and the environment. Schlossberg also argued that individuals vary in their ability to adapt to transition and thus the transitional experience is unique to each person's circumstances. College veterans are a diverse group of people representing almost every known demographic area. Furthermore, college veterans may vary in military experience according to a branch of service, job position, rank, responsibilities, combat experience, duty station, and time served. College is also a variable with inherent contributing factors that complicate the transition process. Considering that the military and collegiate

experience for the college veteran is complex, Schlossberg's theory provides an opportunity to understand the veterans' circumstances more deeply so that colleges might assist them in navigating the transition successfully.

Schlossberg (1981) further explained that people possess a level of control regarding adaptation to transition, and identified three factors that contribute to the event: (a) individual perception of the transition, (b) characteristics of the environment, and (c) characteristics of the individual. The individual's perceptions of the transition include role change, positive and negative effect, internal and external sources, timing and duration of the transition, and degree of stress on the individual. College veterans experience a cultural change when moving from military to collegiate life. Captain Allison Lighthall (2012) described the military to college transition as follows:

The loss of friendship, purpose, identity, structure, and income is enough to push most people to their limits. Throw in an unfamiliar social system . . . no clear chain of command . . . and students and faculty who can't even imagine the student veterans' experience, and you have a *deeply alienating environment* for many of them. (p. 82)

Schlossberg explained that environmental characteristics include interpersonal support systems, institutional supports, and the physical setting in which the transition occurs. College veterans' military support systems differ from college. Generally speaking, military support systems are designed to provide resources directly to the service members in an autonomous fashion. In college, students often must engage in the process, conduct research, and enact protocol on their own accord. The characteristics of the individual factors include psychosocial competence, gender, maturity, individual

health conditions, socioeconomic status, value orientation, and previous experience. As described in Chapter 2 of this dissertation, college veterans vary greatly in their individual factors.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to understand better the help-seeking attitudes of veterans toward academic and psychological services so that colleges might enhance the connection between student veteran services and students in crisis. The theoretical framework for this study was Nancy Schlossberg's (1981) transitional theory, which provided a lens with which to view the student veterans' transition experience.

Schlossberg hypothesized that regardless of the complexity of the transition, a transitional process exists which, if understood, might be enhanced.

Research Questions

1. What are the help-seeking attitudes of college student veterans toward academic services?
2. What are the help-seeking attitudes of college student veterans toward psychological services?
3. What differences in help-seeking attitudes toward academic services exist, if any, between college student veterans who experienced military deployment(s) and college veterans who did not experience deployment?
4. What differences in help-seeking attitudes toward psychological services exist, if any, between college student veterans who experienced military deployment(s) and college veterans who did not experience deployment?

Potential Significance of the Study

This dissertation examined college veteran help-seeking attitudes to understand better how veterans might self-select academic and psychological services during distress in order to inform college administrators about potentially influencing transition success. Veterans are a student population who is at high risk for suicide, and it is imperative that colleges better understand how student services might increase student service usage. Veterans tend to not self-identify their veteran status (Livingston, Havice, Cawthon, & Fleming, 2011) and are less likely to seek help if they are experiencing an academic or mental health crisis (DiRamio et al., 2015).

In large part, because an enhanced GI Bill has made college more accessible for veterans, college veteran enrollment is increasing. Colleges are yielding large financial gains from this increase, but only a small percentage of colleges have dedicated veteran services. This study focused on better understanding college veteran help-seeking attitudes in order to inform colleges about the potential importance of veteran service outreach and provide insight into how veteran services may better meet the needs of veterans. The Department of Defense and the VA have begun passing legislation that places some requirements on colleges but does not require colleges to provide dedicated services. Thus, this study sought to inform governing organizations on the potential importance of developing policy surrounding veteran services for veterans.

Definitions of Terms

Burdensomeness - A perception of a burden on social supports (Brenner et al., 2008).

College Student Veteran - “Any student who is current or former member of the active duty military, the National Guard, or Reserves regardless of deployment status, combat experience, legal veteran status, or GI Bill use” (Vacchi, 2012, p. 17).

Combat Student Veteran - A student in higher education who served as an active duty service member in a U.S. military-designated combat zone for a minimum of at least one tour.

Habituation - “A process of learning whereby repeated presentations of a stimulus result in decreased response to that stimulus” (Brenner et al., 2008, p. 216).

Help-Seeking Attitude - The value veterans attribute to veteran services (DiRamio et al., 2015).

Help-Seeking Behavior - The behavior of actively seeking help from veteran services (DiRamio et al., 2015).

Formal Help-Seeking - The degree to which a person pursues professional services when experiencing distress, such as suicidal ideation (Rickwood et al., 2005).

Informal Help Seeking - General attempts to seek help from another person (Rickwood et al., 2005).

Invisible - A term introduced by Livingston et al. (2011) to describe a student veteran who chooses isolation versus socialization at college.

Chapter Summary

College veterans are a unique student subpopulation in colleges who are understudied in contemporary research literature. Colleges are observing increasing veteran enrollment but, because of the lack of available empirical research, are not able to make strongly informed decisions related to student services. Although college veterans

are academically performing on-par with nonveteran students, many college veterans are not meeting academic goals. Of greatest concern is the well-being of college veterans: research has indicated that college veterans are more likely than nonveteran students to consider or attempt suicide. Furthermore, research has indicated that veterans are less likely than nonveteran students to seek help from formal services, or informal social supports. This dissertation was focused on understanding college veteran help-seeking behavior more deeply so that college services might better serve veterans and potentially assist those who might be in crisis.

Chapter 2 presents a thorough review of relevant empirical literature related to the research problems previously discussed in this dissertation. The review includes information related to college veteran enrollment, transition, engagement and social integration, academic and psychological challenges, and help-seeking attitudes toward services. Chapter 3 provides a detailed review of the research methodology utilized in this study including the research context, participants, data collection instrument, and procedures for data collection and analysis. Chapter 4 provides the findings for the study with a focus on the established research questions. Chapter 5 presents an interpretation and discussion surrounding the findings of the study.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction and Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to present the review of literature associated with empirical information related to: (a) student veterans are re-emerging in higher education, (b) college student veteran characteristics, (c) multiple identities of college student veterans, (d) college veteran support services, (e) academic outcomes, (f) engagement and social integration of veterans, (g) specific challenges for college veterans, (h) overcoming challenges, and (i) help-seeking attitudes and behavior. This review provides empirical evidence of research problems that exist in the contemporary literature.

Review of the Literature

College veterans are re-emerging in higher education. The Department of Veteran Affairs (VA, 2012a) Annual Benefits Report indicated that the rate of student veteran education benefit usage may continue to grow. The VA (2012) further reported that almost one million veterans utilized financial assistance through VA educational entitlement programs. This amount was approximately 75% higher than the amount reported in 2008. Although numerous VA educational programs are accessible to veterans and active duty service members, this increase was due in large part to the usage of the Post 9/11 GI Bill entitlement. The Post 9/11 GI Bill typically provides complete financial coverage for college costs and provides a monthly cost of living stipend for student veterans.

With the passage of the Veterans' Access to Care through Choice, Accountability, and Transparency Act (2014), colleges are required to charge the in-state tuition to veterans regardless of the veterans' academic residency. The rationale for this benefit is that active duty service members are often required to reside outside of their home states for duty, and this benefit is intended to provide them with options. According to the VA, this change will encourage greater college participation by veterans.

History of college veteran education benefits. According to Bound and Turner (2002), approximately 16,000,000 veterans have utilized the GI Bill since World War II. The Department of Veteran Affairs (2014b) reported that the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 is considered one of the most important pieces of legislation in America's history. With the conclusion of World War II, many servicemen were no longer service-bound and unemployed, and the job market was not able to sustain the surge of returning veterans. The U.S. government passed the Servicemen's Readjustment Act, granting veterans \$20 per week toward college. By 1947, veterans accounted for approximately 50% of college admissions across the country. Furthermore, the VA reported that when the first GI Bill ended in 1956, nearly \$8 million of the 16 million World War II veterans had utilized the GI Bill.

The Department of Veteran Affairs (2014b) reported that in 1966, Congress passed the Veterans Readjustment Benefits Act that, contrary to its GI Bill predecessor, extended education benefits to veterans who served in times of peace and war. The educational entitlement payment format was changed significantly through this legislation: colleges no longer received payments directly from the VA. According to the VA, veterans were sent payments directly on a monthly basis. The payments started at

\$100 and slowly increased over a span of 11 years, eventually to reach payments of \$311 per month during the student veterans' enrollment period. The VA also reported that approximately 25% of Vietnam veterans utilized the GI Bill. According to Bound and Turner (2002), the percentage of college costs covered by the GI Bill were much less than during World War II.

In 1984, Congress passed the Montgomery GI Bill which replaced the previous law (Department of Veteran Affairs, 2014b). With the passage of this bill, educational benefits were no longer automatic. Active duty service members could elect to deduct \$100 from their paychecks for 12 months at the onset of their military career. This amount would yield an option to collect GI Bill benefits in college for up to 36 enrolled months. The monthly payments of the GI Bill were more significant than the preceding entitlement. According to the Department of Defense (2013), enlisted persons who started their military career in 1984 earned \$573.60 per month. In order for the lowest-ranking enlisted members (E-1) to receive the GI Bill after their service, they must voluntarily waive approximately 20% of their salary.

According to the Department of Veteran Affairs (2014b), Congress passed the Post 9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act. Also known as the Post 9/11 GI Bill, the new legislation significantly changed VA educational entitlements for service persons. The new GI Bill does not require any financial investment from the active duty service person. Active duty service personnel who departed from the military after September 11, 2001, can apply for the benefit. The entitlement pays for 100% of public school tuition as well as provides a monthly housing allowance and \$1,000 per year for textbooks and other supplies. The percentage of college costs covered by the Post 9/11

benefit is reflective of the World War II GI Bill. The Department of Veteran Affairs (2014b) has paid over \$20 billion in education benefits to veterans since 2008. This amount is greater than the total sum of all educational entitlement payments made between the years of 1944 and 2007.

College student veteran characteristics. Traditional college students differ demographically from college veterans. Young and James (2013) observed that 78.9% of student veteran participants were 25 years of age or older, compared to 13.5% civilian students. The researchers reported that 26.7% of student veterans were female, while civilian female student composition was 65.9%. It was further reported that 61.8% of veterans indicated first-generation college student status, compared with 42.8% of civilian students. The Million Records Project (Student Veterans of America, 2014) cross-referenced data from the Department of Veteran Affairs and National Clearing House to examine 898,895 veterans who attended college from 2002 to 2010. The results indicated that: (a) 51.7% of veterans in the sample earned a postsecondary degree or certificate, (b) 71.7% of veterans graduated from public colleges, (c) 15.5% graduated from nonprofit private colleges, and (d) 12.9% graduated from proprietary schools. The average time of degree completion for an associate degree was 5.1 years; however, the mode for the sample was 2 years. The average degree completion time for a bachelor's level degree was 6.3 years, with a mode of 5 years. According to the sample, 6.3% of participants achieved a certificate as their highest degree, 29.2% an associate's degree, 47.3% a bachelor's degree, 15.7% a master's degree, and 1.6 % a doctoral-level degree. The researchers found most veterans enrolled in programs relating to degrees in business, engineering, health, public service, and science.

College veterans vary in their demographic background. Radford (2012) analyzed data from the U.S. Department of Education's NCES, drawing from two primary datasets: the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS) conducted in the 2007-08 academic year, and the Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS) covering students who were interviewed in 2003, 2006, and 2009. The researcher found that 3.1% of students in higher education were veterans, .7% were active duty, .4% were reservists, and 95.8% were civilian students. Moreover, 15% of veterans were 19-23 years of age, 31.4% were 24-29 years, 28.2% were 30-39 years, and 24.9% were over the age of 40. Radford further reported 26.9% of student veterans were female, 73.1% were male, 60.1% were White, 18.3% were African American, 12.8% were Hispanic, 3.2% were Asian American, and 5.7% listed as other. According to Radford, 48% of student veterans were married, 33% of whom also had children; 14% of student veterans were single parents, 35% were unmarried without dependents, and 3% were dependents.

College veterans indicated that location, academic program, and cost were important factors in choosing a college. Radford (2012) reported student veterans' preference regarding college enrollment: 75% of student veterans indicated that location was most important, while 52% indicated academic program and 42% indicated cost. Approximately 30% of student veterans indicated personal, family, and reputation as reasons for choosing a college. Approximately 88% of student veterans elected to attend a public or private not-for-profit institution. Furthermore, 42% of student veterans enrolled in four-year degree programs and 47% in two-year programs, while 6% were undeclared and 5% participated in certificate programs. Radford indicated 23% of

veterans were enrolled full-time for one full year, 16% enrolled full-time for one semester, 23% enrolled part-time for one year, and 37% enrolled part-time for part of the academic year. Radford found that 34% of veterans at public two-year colleges, 47% at four-year public, 37% at private nonprofit, and 32% at private colleges received veterans' educational financial assistance. Overall, veteran students received more financial aid than civilian peers.

Compared to nonveteran students, Radford (2012) found that student veterans were similar in some aspects to nontraditional students, but were much less likely to be female. Although student veterans received slightly more financial aid than civilian students, they were also likely to have increased burdens such as cost of living due to family costs and the need to balance college and employment. Furthermore, the additional burden of dealing with combat-related or service-related injuries can create obstacles for student veterans. Radford portrayed that most student veterans enrolled in public colleges and many did not enroll full-time, while a majority did not complete a full year at full-time status.

Currently, the only practical way to track student veteran enrollment in college is through the Department of Veteran Affairs report of educational entitlement use (Bryan et al., 2014). The Department of Veteran Affairs (2014c) *VA Campus Toolkit* reported that 96% of all postsecondary institutions enrolled student veterans. The VA further reported that 79.6% of student veterans were enrolled in public institutions of higher education and the most popular degrees are: (a) business, (b) public service, (c) health, (d) health-related fields, (e) science-related degrees, (f) and engineering.

The multiple identities of college student veterans. According to the Department of Veteran Affairs (2014c) *VA Campus Toolkit*, student veterans are defined as veterans of U.S. armed forces, active duty service members, reservists, and members of the National Guard. According to Vacchi (2012), the veteran population includes individuals from numerous and varied backgrounds, demographics, types of military experience, legal status, and educational benefit qualification. According to the Institute for Veterans and Military Families (Syracuse University, 2015), there are 22.5 million veterans in the United States, and more than 2.5 million active people have served as duty service members since 2001.

College veterans are difficult to identify at college campuses. The Department of Defense (2015) Memorandum of Understanding prohibits colleges from requiring veterans to identify veteran status. The NCES (2014) reported 89% of colleges identified student veterans through receipt of military education benefits, 74% of colleges utilized admissions data for identification, and 59% have a system to allow self-identification of student veteran status. Regardless of the method utilized by colleges, student veterans must self-identify their status, and as a result, many veterans may decide to remain anonymous. According to the Department of Veteran Affairs (2014), veterans can apply to seven different education entitlementments. Each benefit, also known as Chapters, have varied requirements for qualifications and, as described by DiRamio and Jarvis (2011), can be difficult for both administrators and students to navigate. As a result, many organizations define the student veteran population by the type of benefits they qualify for, instead of what their military service entails.

Defining a veteran by educational entitlement creates student veteran definitions that are broad, and may potentially misidentify a veteran's experience. For example, veterans who qualify for the Post 9-11 GI Bill may pass their benefit to their spouse or child. Once the benefit is passed, the dependent receives a certificate of eligibility that is identical to any veteran. Unless the dependent specifies his or her civilian status to an administrator, it can be difficult for colleges to ascertain a person's veteran status. Vacchi (2012) defined student veteran as "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, legal veteran status, or GI Bill use" (p. 17).

According to Bryan et al. (2014), veterans differ from traditional college students in that they are more likely to be: (a) male, (b) married, (c) have children, (d) be older in age, (e) have had a gap between high school and college, or (f) were activated to military duty during college. Furthermore, the researchers explained that veterans' military experience such as training, combat deployments, reassignments, and responsibilities positively impact veteran academic potential versus nonveteran students. According to the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance (2012), a nontraditional student is someone who is typically 25 years of age or older and faces challenges that a typical traditional student would not face. College veterans meet the scope of the definition and can be considered nontraditional students.

According to the Department of Defense (2013), 56.1% of the active duty enlisted military are married and 43.5% have children. According to the Department of Veteran Affairs (2012), all active duty military and veterans are considered to be financially independent. According to the U.S. Census (2000), on average, military service is 4 years

or more in length. According to Bryan et al. (2014), approximately 75% of student veterans have service-connected disabilities, and most injuries are mental health-related. The researchers noted that empirical data have outlined the general adverse connection between emotional distress and academic performance in all college students, but little research is available on the effects of combat-related injuries.

The Million Records Project (Student Veterans of America, 2014) cross-referenced data from the Department of Veteran Affairs and National Clearing House to examine 898,895 veterans who attended college from 2002 to 2010. According to the data in the sample, 21.1% of the veterans were female. According to the Department of Defense (2013), 14.6% of current active duty service persons were female. The age of the participants included: (a) 20.4% under the age of 20, (b) 32.6% between 20-24, (c) 23.7% between 25-29, (d) 17.4% between 30-39, and (e) 5% over the age of 40. With approximately 80% of the participants over the age of 20 who had a disruption in high school and college, the pool seemed indicative of a nontraditional definition of a college student.

The Million Records Project (Student Veterans of America, 2014) highlighted the branch experience of participants: (a) 18.1% served in the Air Force, (b) 39.7% in the Army, (c) 1.5% in the Coast Guard, (d) 17.1% in the Marines, and (e) 23.5% in the Navy. Very little empirical research has examined the differences in experience between veterans of different branches of the U.S. military. According to the researchers, this report was the first empirical product that captured branch representation of students in college. The researchers also indicated that 79.2% of veterans attended a public college, while 10.7% attended private nonprofit colleges and 10.1% attended for-profit colleges.

College veteran support services. Research has indicated that colleges are investing increased resources in support services for college veterans, but college veterans may not be utilizing services (DiRamio et al., 2015). Queen et al. (2014) submitted a report on services and support programs provided by postsecondary colleges between the years of 2012 and 2013. The researchers in this study were interested in learning what services colleges provide and what trends exist across the nation. One of the researchers, the NCES, conducted a questionnaire known as *First Look* during the summer of 2013. The survey assessed institutional support services for veterans at colleges, including veteran affairs, career services, health services, and student affairs services. Questionnaires were mailed to 1,650 colleges across the country with instructions to have the most knowledgeable personnel complete the included questions as appropriate.

The NCES survey indicated that 96% of colleges reported the enrollment of student veterans; however, 14% of institutions reported having a specific student veteran mentoring program, 12% sustained a veteran peer-to-peer support program, and 11% of colleges reported specific mental or physical health services for veterans. Furthermore, 19% of colleges reported the existence of a dedicated social space for student veterans, and 36% reported having a specific veteran or military organization on campus. The survey also revealed that 8% of campuses reported offering specific courses related to military or veteran student needs, and 21% had specific orientation programs for the student veteran population. The survey found that 99% of institutions enrolled veterans, active duty service members or dependents during the 2012-13 academic years, for a total of approximately 844,500 students. The data shared in this report indicated that among

all colleges, only a small percentage of institutions have developed specific programs for the student veteran population.

Although research has indicated that colleges are investing resources into student veteran services, minimal research has pointed out that such services are effective. Cook and Young (2009) conducted a study to understand the readiness of the California State universities to meet the needs of the contemporary veteran population. The researchers sent invitations to 2,647 campus presidents via email requesting them to forward the survey to appropriate institutional research personnel on campus. The researchers received and assessed only 723 useable responses. Cook and Young indicated 57% of the participating institutions reported having specific services for student veterans, and 60% reported veteran services as a part of their strategic plan. Furthermore, 74% of four-year public universities reported having specific veteran service programs. Campuses reported having long-term goals associated with veteran-friendly changes, including the top two noted areas: professional development for faculty and staff, and exploring funding sources to enhance student veteran services. Results indicated that less than 50% of the colleges provided any training or professional development for campus faculty or staff.

Cook and Young (2009) reported that campuses significantly varied in the types of support services offered to student veterans. Results indicated that 57% of campuses offered student veteran-specific financial aid counseling, 49% offered employment assistance, and 48% provided academic advisement. Although the researchers reported that 70% of public institutions reported the capability of treating specific veteran-related counseling needs, only 49% of colleges surveyed indicated they had a dedicated veteran

affairs office. Approximately 33% of public colleges reported having the capability of treating physically related health issues for combat veterans. The researchers stated that 75% of participating colleges reported offering credit for military experience. The findings also indicated that colleges are focusing on specific student veteran program enhancements, counseling services, development of action committees, and increased marketing of veteran services. Cook and Young (2009) also conducted student veteran focus groups in their study, which revealed that students perceived specific campus student veteran organizations and peer counseling as high priorities. However, the findings from the quantitative survey indicated that approximately 32% of the institutions offered these resources. In addition, although the survey indicated that the colleges were developing higher priorities for veteran services, many colleges have not yet developed dedicated college veteran services.

Although available designations have identified colleges as military- or veteran-friendly, colleges who are identified as such do not necessarily provide adequate veteran services. Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC, 2015) is a program designed by the military to match service members with colleges that provide the best programmatic support. Daly and Fox Garrity (2013) analyzed the NSSE and found that veterans were less likely to receive institutional support through dedicated student support services than nonveteran students. Moreover, they found that current studies on this topic generally had small sample sizes and wanted to know what larger quantitative data pools might reveal. As a result, the researchers wanted to know if there were differences between student veteran services offered by military-friendly institutions as identified by SOC versus other colleges.

Daly and Fox Garrity (2013) downloaded publicly accessible data from the SOC database that included details relating to each campus's student veteran certifying official (VCO). Every college must identify a specific VCO for its campus, but the duties of the VCO range from data entry to active student veteran support for student veterans. The researchers analyzed each VCO position at every college to assess the campus organizational structure related to student veteran services through the VCO. They found that campuses varied greatly in student veteran support structure. Moreover, they found 24% of campuses housed their VCO in the financial aid office, 20% in the registrar's office, and 6% in admissions; only 11% had a specific veteran affairs office. Furthermore, 62,8% of campuses categorized the VCO as a mid-level administrator, and 24.5% categorized the position as a low-level administrator. Daly and Fox Garrity also revealed that 18.1% of colleges reported the VCO was a standalone position or office, whereas 70.9% indicated that VCO responsibilities were a collateral function of a different position. Over 70% of institutions who self-identified as being military-friendly did not have dedicated VCO positions at their campuses. This report revealed that military-friendly colleges varied greatly in structure, raising questions about student veteran efficiency and the military-friendly self-identification process.

Academic outcomes. Current research has not offered much empirical data associated with college persistence and, more specifically, graduation rates of student veterans. Lang and Powers (2011) wanted to understand better the likelihood that student veterans who enroll in college will persist and graduate, especially considering that national veteran unemployment rates have increased. They identified seven participatory colleges who qualified in identifying student veterans and were considered as "military-

friendly,” utilizing the Operation College Promise (OCP) framework for Veteran Student Success. They randomly selected a sample of 160 student veterans and evaluated academic performance and graduation rates during the 2010-11 academic year. All participants were either active duty service members or veterans who were currently receiving VA educational entitlements.

Lang and Powers (2011) found that student veterans had higher grade point averages (GPAs) than traditional students and progressed toward degree completion more quickly. Findings indicated that student veterans averaged 24 credits per academic year and were on a par with traditional students for four-year degree completion. The researchers also found that 71% of student veterans in the sample successfully earned every credit pursued. Moreover, 92% of student veterans persisted or were retained between the fall and spring semester, whereas the national average was 65.7%. The researchers indicated that the findings of this study revealed that student veterans at the military-friendly colleges were academically successful.

In 2014, the Student Veterans of America partnered with the Department of Veteran Affairs and the National Student Clearing House to conduct the study known as the Millions Records Project, which examined 1,000,000 U.S. service members or veterans who utilized the Montgomery GI Bill or the Post 9/11 GI Bill in college between 2002 and 2010. The total survey proxy population of veterans who claimed VA educational benefits between 2002 and 2010 was 4,067,476. According to the researchers, the sample in the study represented 22.1% of the entire population. They also indicated that current research on college veteran academic information is speculative and inconsistent, especially regarding student veteran persistence and

academic performance in college. The researchers established the following research questions: (a) What are the postsecondary completion rates of student veterans in college? (b) How long does it take student veterans to complete a college degree? (c) What level of education are student veterans achieving? and (d) What fields are student veterans earning their degrees in?

The results of the Million Records Project (Student Veterans of America, 2014) indicated that 51.7% of veterans in the sample earned a postsecondary degree. The average time of degree completion for an associate degree was 5.1 years; however, the mode for the sample was 2 years. The average degree completion time for a bachelor's level degree was 6.3 years, with a mode of 5 years. According to the NCES (2015), 54.9% of traditional students and 31% of nontraditional students earned a degree within 5 years. The data revealed in this study indicated that veterans persisted in college and completed their degrees at approximately the same rate as the traditional student population and exceeded that of civilian nontraditional students (NCES, 2015).

Engagement and social integration of veterans. Currently, little research is available on contemporary college veteran social integration, and even less research is available on student veterans' perspectives of re-enrollment to college after military deployment. Livingston et al. (2011) wanted to understand better how student veterans perceived the college enrollment process as well as academic and social transition after re-enrollment. The researchers utilized Schlossberg's S-4 model to understand more deeply how student responses may be categorized to provide insight into the transition experience. They conducted a qualitative study of 15 student veterans at a large undisclosed four-year public college located in the southeast United States.

Livingston et al. (2011) found that student veterans felt they had increased academic focus, motivation, and grade point achievement after re-enrolling to college after military service. Furthermore, student veterans felt their military experience enhanced maturity and preparedness for college, and felt a significant gap existed between their maturity and that of traditional cohort members. Student veterans felt that the military instilled leadership, self-sufficiency, confidence, resiliency, and pride. Moreover, Livingston et al. found that student veterans preferred to be *invisible*, a term the researchers coined to describe a student veteran who chose isolation over socialization at college. Student veterans did not disclose their military status and felt their military experience should not be given special consideration. This phenomenon creates difficulties for college administrators who are trying to identify veterans and then match them to resources.

Livingston et al. (2011) viewed the data utilizing Schlossberg's (1981) work on transitional theory. Student veterans verbalized that they were not likely to seek support by college services or to participate in social activities. Student veteran support systems were limited to the few military members they discovered on campus, faculty with whom they had developed a rapport, or their personal social circles. Student veterans verbalized enhanced leadership and self-reliance, but also noted difficulty with having to display mature autonomy in college processes. They also explained that the military gives specific direction for military processes, whereas the college requires self-motivation and autonomy. As noted earlier, Schlossberg's (1981) S-4 theory outlined several different types of transition, including anticipated, unanticipated, and nonevent transitions. Student veterans verbalized in this study that they *anticipated* the transition obstacles and

generally found the issues easy to navigate. The researchers also found that participants relied on themselves for coping with enrollment challenges; this connected with previous findings on student veteran pride, self-reliance, and leadership.

Lee et al. (2013) identified that veterans are experiencing high attrition rates in online college courses, and wanted to understand perceptions of active duty military personnel as related to military expectations of college participation, and college and military program impact on college veteran integration. The researchers examined an undisclosed Army installation that accommodated approximately 30,000 personnel. The base campus center housed representatives from a community college, two state colleges, and one for-profit college. Soldiers had access to two-year, four-year, and graduate-level academic programs. In interviews with 13 students and five education counselors and military administrators, the researchers found that soldiers were not socially integrated with their college campuses and had little interest in traditional activities. Moreover, military students prioritized military commitments over college, and pursued college mainly to advance military goals. The findings indicated that soldier success in college may be enhanced if higher education institutions weave military structure and values into college settings. These findings are significant in that other studies reviewed in this report emphasized a focus on creating opportunities for veterans to develop relationships with peers, and veteran students in college are experiencing *loss* related to the absence of military culture in college.

Colleges have invested in resources bolstering student veteran support services, but very little research is available that indicates if services are helpful, utilized, or successful. Recognizing the lack of research on student veteran engagement in academic

or social programs, Young and James (2013) utilized data from the NSSE to assess student veteran perceptions relating to academic and social integration on college campuses. The 2010 NSSE survey included new demographic information on veteran status; this information permitted the researchers to compare veteran responses to nonveterans. Although the NSSE data included 288,000 participants enrolled in 584 higher education institutions, the researchers examined 2,505 veterans and 88,000 nonveteran civilians.

In a review of NSSE items related to student services, student veterans indicated less perceived support from student services than civilians in all categories. According to Young and James (2013), 32.9% of student veterans responded that colleges socially supported them, compared with 45.6% for civilian students. Furthermore, 49.4% veterans responded that they attended campus events, whereas 64.7% of civilians reported the same. These figures indicated a distinct difference in student veterans' perception of support services and suggested that veterans are less likely to engage in college programs. The researchers also reported that 43.1% of student veterans provided care for dependents off campus, as compared with 12.1% of civilian peers. Results also indicated that 43.1% of veterans are employed off campus, whereas only 29.6% of civilians reported the same. With the exception of working with classmates on academic projects, student veterans and civilian responses to academic participation were relatively similar.

Young and James (2013) also found that student veterans are more likely to be male, first-generation students, and students of color than civilian students in college. Student veterans are more likely to be engaged in non-collegiate activities such as

childcare and off-campus employment. These items might be contributing factors to student veterans reporting less involvement in social activities on campus. Other findings indicated that although veterans were engaged outside of college, academic engagement indicated they were as invested in academic success as civilian students.

Specific challenges for college veterans. Approximately 20% of veterans returning to college have injuries that might have a significant impact on student veteran transition (Eckstein, 2009). The Department of Veteran Affairs (2012a) reported that 3,536,802 veterans received compensation benefits in 2012. Furthermore, 1,344,652 veterans receiving compensation benefits for service-connected disabilities in 2012 served during the Gulf War Era. The Gulf War Era includes all veterans who served from August 2, 1990, through today. The Department of Veteran Affairs (2014b) reported that 646,302 veterans benefited from the Post 9/11 GI Bill in 2012. All Post 9/11 student veterans served during the Gulf War Era, suggesting that a significant percentage of current student veterans may be experiencing transitional challenges related to service-connected injury (Department of Veteran Affairs, 2014).

The American College Health Association-National College Health Assessment II (ACHA-NCHA II, 2010) is a national survey administered by the ACHA. The survey gathered data on college student habits, behaviors, and perceptions surrounding major health topics. In 2010, the survey was administered to 146 colleges, and 99,710 surveys were fully completed. For the questions pertaining to suicide, approximately 6% of students reported considering suicide and 1% reported an attempt. Of the students surveyed, approximately 8% reported being diagnosed with a medical condition. Rudd et al. (2011) surveyed 628 college veterans regarding suicide risk, symptom severity, and

psychological symptoms. The results indicated that 35% of the participants experienced severe anxiety, 24% experienced severe depression, and 45% experienced symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Regarding suicide, the researchers found that 46% of veterans thought about suicide, 20% had a suicide plan, and approximately 8% had previously attempted suicide.

According to the Department of Veteran Affairs' (2012b) suicide data report, approximately 22 veterans commit suicide every day in the United States. The VA has tracked these data through a catalog of suicide statistics for death certificates with a veteran indicator. This rate was the highest it had been in the past 20 years. Specifically, 97% of the veterans tracked by VA were male, and 69% of the veterans were over the age of 50. Veterans who died from suicide were more likely to be married, widowed, or divorced, and 93% of veterans who died from suicide were White, 5% African American, and 1% all other races. Moreover, 45% of the veterans who died from suicide held a high school diploma or less, and 14% held a four-year degree or higher.

Kang et al. (2015) reported that before the onset of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, suicide rates for former military personnel were approximately 25% lower than the general U.S. population. The U.S. Army reported that suicide rates between the years of 2005 and 2009 had doubled. The researchers examined military suicide rates through an evaluation of Defense Manpower Data Center records, cross-referenced the Contingency Tracking System to identify veteran status, and determined causes of death through the National Death Index Plus. They found 317,581 deployed veterans and 964,493 nondeployed veterans through 2009. Overall, military members had an approximate 25% lower death risk from all causes compared to the general U.S. population but had a

41% to 61% higher risk of suicide. Deployed veterans had a lower risk of suicide, compared to non-deployed veterans.

Ellison et al. (2012) identified a significant appearance of prospective college student veterans who exhibited signs of potential PTSD. The Department of Veteran Affairs (2014) described PTSD as a mental disorder that occurs as a result of one or more traumatic events in a person's life. Ellison et al. conducted a qualitative needs assessment of prospective student veterans to identify their perceived needs in support of postsecondary education goals. They studied 31 veterans from the Housing and Mental Health Services Department at the Massachusetts VA Hospital and the Boston VA Upward Bounds program. Participants needed to meet qualifications, including: (a) served in active duty combat in the middle east region, (b) self-reported PTSD symptoms through structured interviews, and (c) established educational goals to enter college or another postsecondary formal training. The researchers also found that veterans had low confidence in college success and were concerned about reintegration into civilian life. Participants as well indicated concern about the impact of PTSD on educational attainment and access to mental health care while in college. The researchers recommended the need for further research to develop programs that assist student veterans with education planning, GI Bill consultation, assistance for PTSD symptoms, community outreach, assimilation support, and general VA assistance.

Bryan et al. (2014) conducted a study to determine the potential relationship between PTSD, depression, and the GPAs of college student veterans. They wanted to understand the effects of combat-related injuries on academic performance and hypothesized that students' self-reported PTSD symptoms and depression would be

inversely associated with GPA. The researchers sent a web survey to college student veteran services administrators via a national distribution list that was not named in the study. A total of 561 people accessed the website and 422 student veterans completed the survey. Student depression was assessed utilizing the Patient Health Questionnaire, a 9-point self-measure evaluating symptoms of depression experienced over a two-week timeframe. PTSD was assessed through a PTSD checklist-short form known as the PCL-SF.

Bryan et al. (2014) found that student veterans self-reported strong GPAs, with female students reporting an average of 3.56 versus male students reporting an average of 3.41. Overall, the researchers rejected the null hypothesis and found a relationship between severe depression, PTSD, and student GPA. Depression symptoms, male gender, and younger age were associated with lower GPA, but PTSD symptoms themselves were not found to be inversely related. Severe depression was found to be inversely associated with academic difficulties; students who self-reported significant depression symptoms were more likely to hand in assignments late, skip class, or fail academic measures. The researchers found 31.7% of respondents screened positively for depression, and 45.6% screened positively for PTSD.

Little research has been conducted on the lived experiences of servicemen and servicewomen in the military, and how their experience relates to college transition. Jones (2013) conducted a phenomenological study of three undergraduate veteran students to understand more fully how student veterans perceived identity, specifically in terms of how identity may have changed between military and collegiate life. Jones found three major themes emerge from the study, including: (a) adaptation to the college

environment and civilian identity, (b) college role in the military to the college life transition process, and (c) need for student veteran services. In addition, participants verbalized challenges related to adapting to the changes of the hierarchical environment in the military to the perceived unstructured college environment. Specifically, students verbalized that college required a greater degree of self-regulation than the military, and colleges might benefit from including this in their student veteran orientation. The student veterans in this study did not see value in the traditional orientation process provided for the general college population. Each participant verbalized a strong need for student veteran services, and particularly veteran services and financial aid.

Few empirical studies have examined the health and readjustment issues of veterans in college, and current research suggests that student veterans may have difficulty connecting with civilian students and are at risk for social isolation. Whiteman, Barry, Mroczek, and Wadsworth (2013) conducted a study that examined the impact of peer emotional support for student veterans and civilian college students. They wanted to understand: (a) the influence of structural and psychosocial factors on student veteran adaptation and success in college, (b) the peer emotional support that student veterans and civilians receive in college, and (c) perceived support change over time.

Whiteman et al. (2013) distributed a web-based survey to 380 students from 20 colleges. Of the 380 students, 45 were female and 154 were male student veterans; of the civilian population, 100 were female, and 81 were male. The researchers administered the survey via email three times over the course of three semesters. During the first survey, student veterans reported significantly less peer social support than civilians. The researchers found that peer social support for veterans increased at a much lower rate

than for nonveteran civilians, and there appeared to be little impact on psychological distress. Overall, individuals who reported more social support had less emotional distress. The negative relationship between poor social support and emotional distress was much greater for civilians than for student veterans. Individuals who reported high social support also reported higher levels of self-efficacy; however, military status did not appear to be a factor.

Widome, Laska, Gulden, Slevin, and Lust (2011) explained how little is known about student veteran health behaviors, especially related to substance use, as compared with nonveteran counterparts. The researchers wanted to study student veteran health-related behaviors and compare self-reported high-risk behaviors between veteran and nonveteran students. They utilized the Boynton College Student Health Survey (CSHS) to gather data, and random samples of students at 14 different Minnesota state colleges were invited to participate. A total of 26,400 students were invited to participate; 8,651 completed the survey and 1,901 identified themselves as veterans.

The survey questions Widome et al. (2011) used addressed tobacco, alcohol, drug use, safety, and obesity. The survey responses were compared for veterans who experienced combat, noncombat veterans, and nonveterans. The participant demographics indicated that veterans were much more likely to be male, students of color, and older than nonveterans. The data indicated that a greater percentage of veterans smoked tobacco than nonveterans, and combat veterans were much more likely to utilize smokeless tobacco than noncombat veterans. Combat veterans reported the highest rates of alcohol use, with a higher percentage of reported travel with drivers under the influence of alcohol. Nonveteran students reported higher rates of marijuana

use than veterans. Results pertaining to high alcohol use in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) or Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) combat veterans may indicate a significant challenge that colleges need to consider.

Schonfield et al. (2014) hypothesized that student veterans who experienced significant readjustment difficulty in college were more likely struggling with PTSD or other mental health concerns. The researchers administered a survey to 173 (143 men, 28 women) students at a large undisclosed southeastern university. A total of 85% of the participants representing every branch of service reported combat experience. The survey required self-reported fields pertaining to college transition and behavioral health screening. The behavioral health section of the survey inquired about substance use, PTSD, a patient's health questionnaire, and a veteran's health survey. The patient's questionnaire included nine items that assessed depression, suicidal, and self-harm. The veteran's survey included questions on physical and mental health issues relating to combat and VA medical history.

Schonfield et al. (2014) found that 60.9% of participants reported drinking weekly or daily, 27.8% reported frequent tobacco use, and 19.1% utilized illegal substances. In addition, 28.3% of the participants reported experiencing difficulty with the transition to college from the military. Some of the reasons veterans mentioned for transition difficulty were: (a) attitudes regarding traditional-age student peers, (b) academic difficulties such as studying and concentrating, (c) frustration with VA benefits and college processes, (d) social adjustment, and (e) emotional challenges.

Schonfield et al. (2014) found that in evaluating participant depression scores, 53.8% rated none/minimal, 24.9% mild, 11.6% moderate, and 10.5% moderate to severe.

Moreover, 9% of the participants commented they might be better off dead or hurting themselves; 37.2% of the participants screened positive for PTSD which, according to the researchers, was similar to the national veteran population rate. When comparing the quantitative data, the researchers found that students who reported high rates of college adjustment issues also reported significant rates of behavioral and health issues, higher levels of PTSD, depression, and other mental health disorders. They also found there was no significant difference or relationship with substance use.

Brenner et al. (2008) recognized that veteran suicide rates have significantly increased, stating that 2006 had the highest rate of suicide since 1990. Furthermore, although a significant amount of research is available on suicide risk, not much research was available on contemporary veteran suicide indicators. The researchers wanted to understand more deeply: (a) the degree to which veterans experience habituation to pain, burdensomeness, and failed belongingness; (b) whether student veterans would volunteer information about suicide when asked questions related to habituation to pain, burdensomeness, and failed belongingness; and (c) how veterans habituated to pain in the combat setting and in post-deployment?

Brenner et al. (2008) conducted a qualitative study with 16 veterans who had experienced combat during OEF or OIF. They interviewed participants with 36 semi-structured questions focusing on three social constructs that research has indicated are connected to suicide risk: (a) habituation to pain and fear, (b) burdensomeness, and (c) belongingness. The researchers hypothesized that people who experienced high levels of these three constructs may be at higher risk for suicidal ideation or attempts.

In addition, Brenner et al. (2008) found that veterans did habituate to pain and fear. They defined habituation as “a process of learning whereby repeated presentations of a stimulus result in decreased response to that stimulus” (p. 216). The researchers asked veterans questions about pain and fear and learned that combat was the context that emerged for pain tolerance. Participants explained that pain tolerance and fear management improved over time. Furthermore, comments suggested that each veteran’s previous life experiences contributed to pain tolerance ability and that each soldier had different ability levels. Participants commented that in order to deal with fear, they purposefully disconnected emotionally, the rationale being that an emotionless person is less afraid. Emotional disconnection occurred during post-deployment life and had an impact on social interactions with family and friends at home.

Brenner et al. (2008) explained that data from the study indicated that veterans did perceive burdensomeness—a perception of a burden on social supports. Veterans verbalized that they valued family, friends, and other social supports, but also commented on feeling inept in providing for loved ones. Veterans articulated a feeling of loss of self, most specifically regarding self-value. However, they felt pride and fulfillment regarding their positions in the military, working in jobs that required state-of-the-art training, significant responsibility, and important missions. Moreover, veterans viewed their transition from military to civilian lives as a loss and experienced confusion about how to proceed. Brenner et al. explained that veterans did experience levels of failed belongingness, meaning they disconnected from society and social circles. Veterans frequently commented in the study about the relationships they had developed with other service members. The unique common experiences offered by combat veterans and their

shared values were perceived as irreplaceable and lost in civilian life. Participants did not feel confident that they would replicate those relationships in the civilian world and, as a result, became isolated from society and avoided social interactions with others.

Brenner et al. (2008) did find that a number of veterans mentioned suicide when indirectly asked questions utilizing the three social constructs. Although the researchers did not ask any questions containing the word *suicide*, veterans did volunteer that word when asked about how they would deal with certain situations, such as ending the severe pain. Furthermore, some veterans offered past suicidal behavior during the interviews. The researchers commented that their research results should be utilized to conduct more focused research on habituation to pain. More specifically, the researchers believed that by better understanding the process related to habituation, health care professionals may become more effective in identifying concerns and applying resources. Furthermore, the researchers stated that healthcare practitioners may be able to lower suicide risk by focusing on one or more of the three constructs discussed in this study.

Overcoming challenges. Although some research exists on military personal stress during combat activation from civilian life, few studies have examined the impact on college students who are activated to combat while enrolled in college and then return to college. Bauman (2013) wanted to understand the perceptions of soldiers during the three transitional phases relating to student veteran combat deployment, and the similarities and differences of soldier experience in the military versus the college setting. The researcher examined the experiences of 24 soldiers attending an undisclosed Pennsylvania college. Bauman found that student veterans' perceptions of college were significantly different before and after combat deployment. Furthermore, findings

indicated that student veterans who returned to college from combat experienced significant obstacles to college transition. Specifically, student veterans experienced difficulty creating a civilian identity and deescalating military reflexes, while some veterans experienced suicidal ideation. The findings indicated that combat veterans may experience different transitional issues than veterans who did not serve in a combat zone.

Numerous studies have examined federal assistance programs for veterans, but only minimal research has addressed individual student veterans' transition issues. Hamrick and Rumann (2010) wanted to understand transitional issues college student veterans face when re-enrolling to college post combat deployment. Furthermore, the researchers utilized Schlossberg's theory to help analyze findings regarding student veterans' transitional issues in order to enhance student veteran programs.

Hamrick and Rumann (2010) reported that respondents generally described college re-enrollment experiences as positive, and experienced self-enhancements to maturity and goal commitment. Respondents verbalized that combat experiences contributed to overall motivation in college, and student veterans preferred not to separate civilian and military experiences. Student veterans' transition issues were categorized as military and academic difficulties, lingering stress, anxiety related to post combat and college re-enrollment, and student role confusion between combat and college life.

Current literature does not provide reasonable insights into student veterans' lived experience. However, Tomar and Stoffel (2014) wanted to identify factors and resources that influence academic motivation in student veterans and identify obstacles that hinder degree attainment for student veterans. They found three major themes emerging from

the study: (a) reminiscence of past military experiences and life, (b) military to college life transition, and (c) entrance to a new life stage. Moreover, they found that participants appeared to have strong ties to military reminiscence throughout their college career, which had great value to them.

Tomar and Stoffel's (2014) findings further indicated that participants perceived the following as helpful factors to college degree attainment: (a) opportunities for social interactions with veteran peers, (b) student support during early college transition, (c) awareness of campus resources, (d) family care services, and (e) career services. The participants also verbalized a significant value in the military and veteran services offices in their transition experience. The researchers found that participants observed the following obstacles in degree attainment: (a) negative attitudes and behavior of nonveteran staff and students, (b) lack of resources and university outreach, and (c) lack of socialization with veteran peers.

Given the gap in empirical research regarding student veteran perspectives on transition to college from combat, Ackerman, DiRamio, and Mitchell (2009) established two research questions for their study: (a) What are the needs of student veterans who experience combat in the military and then enroll into college? and (b) What challenges do student veterans face in college, and what types of services should colleges provide to meet those needs? The researchers selected six women and 19 men from three different four-year colleges in the north, west, and southern regions of the United States. The participants were all veterans who served in military combat between the years of 2003 and 2007.

Ackerman et al. (2009) discovered that the categories emerging in the research were best viewed through the lens of Schlossberg's *moving in, moving out, moving on* transition model. This model was applied to process data relating to joining the military, military combat experience, military exit, and enrollment to college. Student veterans articulated that they joined the military as a result of the attacks of September 11, 2001, as well as family tradition, education benefits, and financial reasons. Student veterans described combat as violent, unexpected, and difficult. The participants shared various candid stories relating to horrific events experienced in the military and spoke about how those experiences changed them. Participants also commented on how observations of other cultures positively enhanced their perspective about human life, yet observations of mistreatment, murder, and other atrocities of foreigners demoralized them.

Ackerman et al. (2009) explained that participants had varying perspectives about exiting the military because each branch varied programmatically. The participants exhibited a mix of praise and frustration over leaving the military and feeling prepared for civilian life. The researchers found that veterans struggled with re-integration into civilian life, especially at home. Participants verbalized the difficulty they felt in communicating with loved ones about their hardships because they thought people would not understand or would view them differently. A number of participants had strained or terminated relationships that they perceived stemmed from their combat experience. They also noted they did not feel academically prepared for college and had concerns about having enough financial aid for college.

Ackerman et al. (2009) reviewed student veterans' perspectives related to college enrollment. Findings indicated that student veterans perceived a significant maturity gap

with other college students, and veterans often felt frustrated with peer behavior. Participants communicated that they craved camaraderie and sought social interaction with other student veterans. Furthermore, veterans tended to isolate themselves and blend in with the crowd in order to avoid interactions with students and faculty. Student veterans felt many students and faculty did not understand them, and had experiences in which they were ostracized or treated negatively because of their veteran status. Participants verbalized a desire for faculty to understand them better and for colleges to recognize veteran service. Student veterans also commented that the colleges did not meet their health needs; there are limited disability services and few to no services for combat-related injuries on campus.

Nancy Schlossberg's transition model. Goodman, Schlossberg, and Anderson (2006) theorized that the focus for transition should be on the individual and that transition is very personal and specific to a person's circumstance. Each person brings a set of unique skills, strengths, and challenges to each situation that influences transition, and each situational context where the transition occurs contributes to adaptation. The researchers hypothesized that every person experiences transition and those events can be organized into three categories: (a) anticipated, (b) unanticipated, and (c) nonevent. Anticipated transitions are significant life events people experience that are expected to occur. For example, a person who joins the military for the purpose of receiving an educational benefit is likely anticipating a transitional event to occur when entering college. An unanticipated transition includes significant events that are disruptive or occur unexpectedly, such as the death of a fellow service member, unexpected advancement, or sudden change from military status. A nonevent transition is an event

an individual expects to occur that does not occur or presents the opposite of what was anticipated. An example of this event might be a veteran who expects to find a level of service in higher education reflecting his or her military culture, only to find no designated position on campus to assist with veteran benefits, thus slowing or delaying payments. This experience may impact a veteran's attitude toward the institution and potentially impact help-seeking attitudes.

Goodman et al. (2006) indicated transitions occur over a nonspecific amount of time and have a non-prescribed impact on personal development. Each transition experience varies and has the potential to impact an individual's perspective role, relationships with others, routines, and assumptions significantly. Given a person's ability level to manage transitions, that individual might adapt quickly and positively, whereas individuals who are less able may struggle through long transition periods. The researchers developed a model known as the Situation, Self, Support, and Strategy (S-4) system for coping with transition. Utilization of the S-4 model provides an assessment of resources that an individual possesses to cope with transitional challenges so that professionals might develop supports for individual resource deficits. This model provides an opportunity to understand the veterans' transition deficits better so that college services might provide appropriate resources. Furthermore, understanding transition deficits may impact a college administrator's ability to influence help-seeking attitudes positively.

Situation. This category refers to the state of the person's situation at the time of transition (Schlossberg, 2011). Goodman et al. (2006) explained that each person's situation is impacted by several factors: (a) initiation of the event, (b) timing of the event

in relation to the individual's internal clock, (c) the individual's ability to control parts of the event, (d) the individual's role change, (e) the duration of the event—temporary versus permanent, (f) the individual's experience in dealing with transition, (g) the existence of stress during event, and (h) the individual's positive and negative perspectives of the event. Situation explains that every transition event is dependent upon the context surrounding the individual, and it is important to give meaning to that situation. College veterans enter college with great variety in their personal situation; for example, veterans can: (a) be single, married, or divorced; (b) greatly range in age; (c) have varying military status; (d) significantly vary in geographic and ethnographic backgrounds; and (e) have various physical and mental health challenges.

Self. This category refers to the individual's resource assets and deficits in relation to the transition event (Schlossberg, 2011). Schlossberg (1981) stated that each person brings a unique set of skills, strengths, and competencies to the transition. Goodman et al. (2006) explained that self is broad, complex, and difficult to define, but narrowed-down characteristics that seem most relevant to transition events are: (a) personal and demographic characteristics, (b) socioeconomic status, (c) gender, (d) age and life stage (maturity), (e) health condition, (f) culture and ethnicity, (g) psychological resources, (h) ego stage, (i) self-efficacy and optimistic outlook, (j) commitment and values, and (k) resiliency and spirituality. Self provides context to the college administrator surrounding an individual's competency relating to the transition. Understanding *self* is imperative for the college veteran population, as veterans significantly vary in this regard.

Support. This category refers to external reinforcements on the individual that impact adaptation during the transition event (Schlossberg, 2011). Support resources are classified based upon the individual's circumstances and can vary greatly from person to person. Goodman et al. (2006) explained that supports might be considered as: (a) significant other, (b) family, (c) friends and acquaintances, (d) place of employment, (e) student services, and (f) community organizations such as student clubs. The main functions of support are identified as affect, affirmation, and aid. Kraus (2012) explained that support is social in nature and includes elements of compassion, affirmation, honesty, and positive reinforcement, shaping individual adaptation to transition events. Goodman et al. (2006) stated that assessing support includes the measurement of individually defined resources, and also includes an assessment of support concurrency, most especially the existence of the support during the time of transition. This concept is particularly resonant with the student veteran population, given the variety of external supports that might change between military and college life.

Strategies. Schlossberg (2011) married the term *strategy* to the concept of coping. She explained that there is no universal coping strategy for transition success; rather, an individual utilizes multiple coping strategies to thrive in transition events. Goodman et al. (2006) utilized the work of Pearlin and Schooler to identify the responses that individuals may use in stressful situations. The responses were categorized into three coping areas: (a) techniques that modify the situation or the source of the event, (b) techniques that restructure perspective and change the meaning of the event, and (c) techniques that reduce stress after the event has occurred. These researchers explained that individuals initiate one of four different modes when dealing with coping

response: (a) direct intervention, (b) inhibition of action, (c) information seeking, and (d) intrapsychic. Understanding a college veteran's tendency to cope during transition events provides insight into possible interventions. Thus, the present study gave consideration to strategy in order to understand better which coping modes veterans experience related to their help-seeking attitude.

Help-seeking attitudes and behavior. Fisher and Turner (1970) realized little research was available on why people did not solicit formal assistance for psychological discomfort. Despite much speculative information on the varying attitudes people held toward seeking help, the researchers wanted to understand the phenomenon better through empirical study. They developed a 31-item scale to assess participants' attitudes toward seeking professional mental health assistance. The researchers utilized the scale with 492 female and 468 male high school, trade, and college students.

Fisher and Turner (1970) found significant differences between responses by gender. Generally speaking, females scored significantly higher in their attitudes toward help-seeking than males. Furthermore, results indicated that participants who had previously experienced psychological services had a more favorable attitude toward help-seeking. Students who were in professional studies, such as healthcare, were more likely to have favorable help-seeking attitudes. The researchers utilized the results of the study to develop a 29-item scale that mental health care providers might utilize in assessing a patient's attitude toward help-seeking.

Fisher and Farina (1995) recognized the lack of a practical contemporary tool to assess a person's attitudes toward seeking help through psychological services. The researchers were familiar with the 29-item help-seeking measurement scale developed by

Fisher and Turner (1970), and they wanted to create a scale that was brief and practical but had a similar level of reliability to the original tool. The first phase of the study administered a modified 14-item help-seeking scale to 389 college students enrolled in an introductory psychology course. The college students rated each item based upon a Likert scale. The researchers found that gender was the strongest demographic difference in the scores: females were much more likely to have higher degrees of help-seeking attitudes toward psychological services. Furthermore, the researchers found that the new 14-item scale variations were as reliable and valid as the 29-item version.

Although very little contemporary research is available on college veteran help-seeking attitudes, DiRamio et al. (2015) found that colleges are investing new resources into student veteran services, but veterans may not be utilizing them. Furthermore, the researchers found little research in general on female veterans and even less on female veterans enrolled in college. The researchers sought to understand: (a) college veteran help-seeking attitudes, (b) female veterans' experiences related to military to college transition, (c) student veterans' usage of veteran services, and (d) female veterans' perspective variance compared to male veterans.

DiRamio et al. (2015) utilized the *attitude toward seeking professional psychological help scale* survey, initially developed by Fischer and Farina (1970). In their study, 26% of the participants were female and 73% male, and approximately two-thirds of the sample experienced combat in the military. The second phase of the study was qualitative and included semi-structured interviews with female student veterans. The interview questions were driven by results found in phase one and focused on female

students' perspectives. Eight women from undisclosed southeastern states and five from northeastern states participated.

DiRamio et al. (2015) found attitudes regarding help-seeking behavior toward psychological and academic services statistically similar between men and women. The researchers strongly verbalized this as a significant finding, referring to contemporary research that has outlined how civilian females typically score higher than males in attitudes towards assistance. The researchers found that military experience significantly contributed to female veterans' attitude toward assistance in college, and utilized phase two of the study to explore the findings further.

DiRamio et al. (2015) explained that phase two revealed three emergent themes in the data: responsibility, worth, and pride. Furthermore, they found that three ethos emerged which connected those themes together: (a) ethos of accountability, (b) ethos of male dominance, and (c) ethos of gender expectations. Participants verbalized feeling a significant level of responsibility to their military units, regardless of feelings of differential, compared to male counterparts. Help-seeking behaviors were determined to be negative characteristics for all military members in the study. Female participants explained they felt it necessary to conform and behave like males, eventually embracing and embodying those values.

DiRamio et al. (2015) explained that participants' responses related to worth connected the ethos of gender expectations and male dominance. Female participants verbalized that self-worth was connected to the type of military experience, specifically type of combat experience. Participants who did not experience combat felt lower self-worth, which appeared to translate into an attitude of not deserving student veteran

services in college. Female participants commented that the military is competitive, especially between women, and felt as if they must prove themselves. This pride was emulated through the behavior of conformation to stereotypically male behavior, especially in terms of not being perceived as weak. Weakness appeared to carry over to college, with female participants perceiving help-seeking as a weakness.

Rickwood et al. (2005) examined possible aspects that contribute to the help-seeking attitudes of adolescents in Australia. The researchers defined help-seeking in two categories: formal and informal. Formal help-seeking is the degree to which a person pursues professional services when experiencing distress, such as suicidal ideation. Informal help-seeking includes general attempts to seek help from another person. The researchers had discovered through previous research that people in this age group tended to have a low rate of formal help-seeking behavior. In addition, these young adults tended to seek informal help at much higher rates than formal assistance and females sought help at a higher rate than males. The researchers were interested in better understanding why male students sought help at a lower rate than females.

Rickwood et al. (2005) utilized a help-seeking questionnaire with 2,721 young adults ranging in age from 14 to 24 years of age. The survey measured the participants' experience with seeking assistance in the past, as well as attitudes toward seeking help in the future. Findings were similar to previous research: young people were much more likely to seek informal help rather than formal help, and females had a higher rate of help-seeking than males. The survey revealed that students' informal and formal help-seeking attitudes were relatively lower regarding help-seeking for suicidal thoughts, but as suicidal thoughts increased, help-seeking intentions decreased. The young people

indicated they might be more comfortable seeking the help of anonymous resources, such as help lines, rather than familiar resources. The researchers found that a person's degree of hopelessness indicated in the survey had a positive correlation with help-seeking attitudes. These results suggested that identifying hopelessness might aid professionals in recognizing high-risk suicidal conditions.

Rickwood et al. (2005) also indicated that a person's preconceived notions of health services, such as low help-seeking attitudes toward services, had a significant correlation to actual help-seeking behavior. The researchers found that if individuals do not value a service, they are less likely to utilize it. This attitude toward psychological services often stemmed from the participants' previous experiences. The results are helpful in better understanding a college veteran's attitude towards services, as veterans may generalize negative experiences in the military to all government, healthcare, and college services. Due to their negative experiences, people might elect to self-medicate psychological trauma with substances or informal help-seeking, or utilize self-coping strategies that could potentially be problematic. The researchers also found that positive experiences with services had a positive influence on help-seeking attitudes and behavior.

Hoge et al. (2005) realized that members of the military who served in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars were returning from combat with injuries. The researchers were interested in better understanding what injuries soldiers were experiencing in order to better advise healthcare services on practices. The researchers surveyed a total 2,530 participants before entering a combat deployment, and 3,671 participants three to four months after returning from the deployment. Hoge et al. implemented a combined assessment that included the use of preexisting instruments for depression, anxiety, and

PTSD, as well as additional questions relating to stress, substance use, family problems, and the rate at which they utilized mental health services. The researchers analyzed the data utilizing a Chi-square for linear trend.

Hoge et al. (2005) found that veterans who were deployed to Iraq were much more likely to have experienced combat situations than veterans who were deployed in Afghanistan. The survey results indicated that 31% of soldiers deployed to Afghanistan reported combat-like experiences, whereas 86% of soldiers deployed to Iraq reported combat experience. Furthermore, soldiers deployed in Afghanistan who did experience combat reported a median of two firefights, whereas veterans deployed to Iraq reported a median of five occurrences. The researchers found a strong correlation between level of combat experience for veterans and prevalence of mental health issues. Moreover, soldiers who had served in Iraq were significantly more likely to report mental health concerns and utilize mental health services than soldiers who were surveyed prior to deployment or serving in Afghanistan. These results indicated that combat experience may have an influence on help-seeking attitudes or behavior.

Chapter Summary

Cook and Young (2009) observed that student veterans are currently entering college at a rate that has not been since World War II. The researchers further observed the lack of research on the contemporary student veteran population and no research at the national level on the programs and services offered by college campuses. This review of literature considered empirical information related to: (a) college veteran enrollment, (b) college student veteran characteristics, (c) college veteran support services, (d) academic outcomes, (e) college veteran engagement and social integration,

(f) challenges of veterans in college, and (g) overcoming challenges. This review clearly highlighted a number of significant problems that exist in the literature. College veterans may be academically persisting, but they are a population with a higher risk of suicide than nonveteran civilians. Furthermore, college veterans tend to have a lower rate of help-seeking than nonveterans, and veterans do not tend to utilize veteran services that colleges invest in among their numerous resources.

Chapter 3 provides a detailed review of the research methodology utilized in this study including the research context, participants, data collection instrument, and procedures for data collection and analysis.

Chapter 3: Research Design Methodology

Introduction

Research has indicated that college veteran enrollment is increasing and colleges are not properly equipped to deal with the special needs of this population (DiRamio & Jarvis, 2011). Although college veterans perform well academically in comparison to nonveteran peers, many veterans are not persisting in college. Research also indicates that college student veterans are at high risk for mental health-related challenges, including suicide (Kang et al., 2015). Many college student veterans do not utilize college veteran services or participate in social programs (DiRamio et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2013). A stronger understanding of college student veteran help-seeking attitudes may inform veteran administrators on techniques that might enhance college veteran usage and possibly recognize mental health concerns.

The following research questions were established for this study:

1. What are the help-seeking attitudes of college student veterans toward academic services?
2. What are the help-seeking attitudes of college student veterans toward psychological services?
3. What differences in help-seeking attitudes toward academic services exist, if any, between college student veterans who experienced military deployment(s) and college veterans who did not experience deployment?

4. What differences in help-seeking attitudes toward psychological services exist, if any, between college student veterans who experienced military deployment(s) and college veterans who did not experience deployment?

Research Context

The researcher conducted this study at two colleges that are part of the State University of New York (SUNY) system. The researcher is the Director of Veteran Affairs at SUNY Cobleskill and SUNY Delhi, which enrolls approximately 80 total veterans; both colleges participated in the study.

SUNY Cobleskill is a public residential college offering bachelor, associate, and professional educational programs through its Schools of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Business, and Liberal Arts and Sciences. According to Queen et al. (2014), SUNY Cobleskill enrolled 2,453 students in 2013. SUNY Cobleskill veteran services include a 20% full-time equivalent (FTE) veteran services director and a 10% FTE veteran services certification officer. The college has a dedicated veterans' center that is led by VA work study students and provides a social venue as well as an academic center for veteran use. SUNY Cobleskill has a student club known as the Student Veterans Association and is a chapter member of the national organization Student Veterans of America.

SUNY Delhi is a public residential college offering master-, bachelor-, and associate-level degrees, and certificate programs through its Schools of Applied Sciences and Building Technologies, Business and Hospitality, Liberal Arts and Sciences, Nursing, and Veterinary Science Technology. According to NCES (2014), SUNY Delhi enrolled 3,308 students in 2013. SUNY Cobleskill veteran services include a 20% full-

time equivalent (FTE) veteran services director and a 10% FTE veteran services certification officer. SUNY Delhi also has a student club known as the Student Veterans' Association and is a chapter member of the national organization Student Veterans of America.

Research Participants

The target population for this study was college student veterans. According to the Department of Veteran Affairs (2014c) *VA Campus Toolkit*, student veterans are defined as “veterans of U.S. armed forces, active duty service members, reservists, and members of the National Guard” (p. 2). Vacchi (2012) explained that the student veteran population includes individuals from a broad array of backgrounds, demographics, types of military experience, legal status, socioeconomic status, and educational benefit qualifications. According to Bryan et al. (2014), veterans differed from traditional students in that they were more likely to be: (a) male, (b) married, (c) have children, (d) be older in age, (e) have had a gap between high school and college, or (f) were activated to military duty during college.

The sampling plan for this study was purposeful. Johnson and Christensen (2014) explained that purposeful sampling is appropriate in research for specific target populations who share close characteristics. College student veterans share a unique common characteristic of military training and experience. All individuals who met the criteria of the student veteran definition were invited to participate in the study. Respondent information was kept completely confidential and anonymous. Survey question detail did not include options for names or other personally identifiable information and demographic information was not utilized to discern participant identity.

The researcher designed this study to make internal estimations about the data that may be generalized to larger college veteran populations. According to Johnson and Christensen (2014), researchers should strive to maximize confidence intervals and margin of error in order to limit possible data analysis errors. Although a 95% or 99% confidence interval is optimal, the small population involved in this study required the researcher to establish a 90% confidence level. To determine the appropriate minimum sample size, the researcher utilized a sample size calculator designed by the National Statistical Service (NSS, 2016). Based on the number of possible participants in the pool, the researcher established that a 90% confidence level with a 10% margin of error would be required to establish an appropriate sample.

Once the participating college's Institutional Research Board (IRB) granted approval, the researcher administered electronic surveys directly to SUNY Cobleskill and SUNY Delhi college veterans via email distribution lists. Each college received a unique college survey in order to track participant rate and send reminder notifications. Because the researcher serves as the SUNY Cobleskill and SUNY Delhi veteran administrator, he further assured survey confidentiality by providing contact information for the dissertation committee chair. SUNY Cobleskill and SUNY Delhi students were encouraged to contact the dissertation chair with any concerns or questions.

Instruments Used in Data Collection

The survey selected for this research was adopted from a previous study conducted by DiRamio et al. (2015). The researchers conducted a mixed-methods study; the first phase utilized a quantitative approach through a survey administered to 1,800 participants, with 167 completing the instrument. The *Attitudes Toward Seeking*

Professional Psychological Help Scale (ATSPPHS) survey included demographic questions and assessed student veteran attitudes regarding help-seeking attitudes exhibited toward psychological and college academic services. The researchers utilized the ATSPPHS survey developed by Fischer and Farina (1995) and gathered the survey responses through the use of a 5-point Likert scale.

DiRamio et al. (2015) conducted an assessment of the reliability of the ATSPPHS and determined that all 20 questions yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient score of .89. Johnson and Christensen (2014) explained that an effect measurement for the internal consistent reliability of instrument items is coefficient alpha, also known as Cronbach's alpha. Cronbach's alpha indicates the degree to which the survey questions are interrelated. According to DeVellis (1991), a Cronbach score that falls between 0.9 and 0.8 is considered to be good.

The Qualtrics online program was utilized to administer the survey for this study. Additional questions pertaining to student demographics were added, including: (a) family structure, (b) previous mental health counseling experience, (c) military service, (d) grade point average, (e) college status (years in college), (f) branch of service, and (d) deployments served. Questions relating to help-seeking attitudes were not modified.

Data Analysis

The researcher analyzed the data from this survey by using descriptive statistics and analysis of variance (ANOVA). Descriptive statistics and ANOVA were conducted via the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Descriptive statistics were utilized to observe and describe the data related to research questions 1 and 2. The researcher conducted a frequency analysis for each survey question to portray the help-

seeking attitudes of college veterans toward academic and psychological services. The frequency analysis provided numerical data related to the mode and mean for responses. Furthermore, the researcher conducted an aggregate analysis for both the academic and psychological survey questions in order to identify the most frequently occurring responses and observe possible trends in the data.

ANOVA was utilized to examine research questions 3 and 4 to analyze the possible relationship between help-seeking attitudes and military deployments. Military deployments were defined as any official combat operation such as Global War on Terrorism, Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), and Operation New Dawn (OND). Johnson and Christensen (2014) explained that ANOVA is an effective technique for analyzing the variation between designated groups of data. This process provides a statistical test to compare the means of several groups and observe any potential statistical significance between the means. The researcher established a p -value $\leq .05$ as the threshold to identify potential significance between the variables combat and help-seeking attitudes.

Several items in the ATSPPHS survey utilize a negatively keyed questioning method to impact the validity of the survey. In order to ensure a consistent measure of the responses through data analysis, the researcher conducted reverse-coding on the negatively keyed Likert scale responses for questions 3, 6, 8, and 10 in the academic services section, and questions 1, 4, 8, 9, and 10 in the psychological section. Upon closing the survey, the researcher transcribed nominal string data into numerical ordinal values so that the data might be best interpreted.

DiRamio et al. (2015) conducted an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to determine the validity of the survey construct. Johnson and Christensen (2014) explained that factor analysis is utilized to analyze the degree to which an instrument is unidimensional. The EFA resulted in the elimination of 13 survey items to improve on survey construct validity. As a result of this analysis, the researcher focused data analysis on survey questions 1, 2, 3, and 6 in the academic's section, and questions 2, 3 and 8 in the psychological section. These questions were determined to be the most unidimensional in answering the research questions.

The IRB application was submitted and approved by St. John Fisher College. IRB applications for SUNY Cobleskill and SUNY Delhi were sent to each research site and were approved (Appendices C, D, and E). An electronic Qualtrics survey and disclosure (Appendix A) was sent to each college's student veteran populations via email distribution lists. All participant information was kept completely confidential and anonymous. Participants were informed they may leave the survey at any time, and all responses for incomplete surveys were not recorded. SUNY Cobleskill yielded a 51% response rate and SUNY Delhi yielded 47%. All survey information was removed from the Qualtrics website, and all data were kept on the researcher's computer and secured via password. Only the researcher has access to the data. All data will be deleted three years after approval of the dissertation.

Summary

This study *Navigating the Transition between Military and College Life: Exploring College Veteran Help-Seeking Attitudes Toward Academic and Psychological Services* was conducted to understand more deeply college veteran help-seeking attitudes

toward academic and psychological services so that college administrators might become more effective in assisting veteran students. Furthermore, the research was also purposed to learn more about any variation that might exist in help-seeking attitudes related to combat experience. The researcher utilized a quantitative methodology to obtain help-seeking attitude data from college veteran participants. The instrument was a survey titled the Student Veteran Help-Seeking Attitudes Survey, which was adapted from a previous study and administered electronically to all SUNY Delhi and SUNY Cobleskill veterans through the survey program Qualtrics. Chapter 4 provides the findings for the study with a focus on the established research questions.

Chapter 4: Results

Research Questions

The objective of this study was to understand more deeply college veteran help-seeking attitudes toward academic and psychological services so that college administrators might better serve the college veteran population. The researcher used a nonexperimental quantitative approach through the distribution of a survey instrument.

The following research questions were established for this study:

1. What are the help-seeking attitudes of college student veterans toward academic services?
2. What are the help-seeking attitudes of college student veterans toward psychological services?
3. What differences in help-seeking attitudes toward academic services exist, if any, between college student veterans who experienced military deployment(s) and college veterans who did not experience deployment?
4. What differences in help-seeking attitudes toward psychological services exist, if any, between college student veterans who experienced military deployment(s) and college veterans who did not experience deployment?

Data Analysis and Findings

The researcher conducted a statistical analysis of the data to understand better the demographics of the sample population and to assess the help-seeking attitudes of college veterans toward academic and psychological services. A total population of 79 students

at SUNY Cobleskill and SUNY Delhi qualified as *college veterans* as defined by this study. All 79 college veterans were invited to participate in the study, with 48 responses recorded. Eight responses were incomplete and deleted from consideration. The response rate for the population was 50.6% and met the sample size requirement. For a population size of 79 students, 37 or more participants are required for internal estimation of data utilizing a 90% confidence level and 10% margin of error (NSS, 2016).

Study sample and demographic analysis. The following section utilizes descriptive statistics to present a clearer understanding of the composition of the sample who participated in this study (Appendix C). Of the 40 participants who completed the survey, 30 were male, nine female, and one did not indicate gender. Study participants identified their ethnicity or race. They were instructed to select all of the options that applied. Thirty-four respondents indicated Caucasian or White, three indicated African American, two indicated Caucasian or White and African American, and one indicated Caucasian or White and American Indian or Alaskan Native. The age range indicated by study participants included: 32.5% of respondents fell between the years of 18-25, 32.5% indicated an age between 26-35, 27.5% indicated an age between 35-54, and 7.5% indicated an age between 55-64 years. Moreover, 60% of the population fell between the ages of 26-34 years, which is aligned with the national average of 33 years (Department of Veteran Affairs, 2014b).

Participants were asked to indicate the amount of college experience in years. Fifteen percent of the respondents indicated possible freshman status having less than one year of college experience; 60% of respondents indicated sophomore to junior status having 1 to 3 years of collegiate experience; 12.5 % of the respondents indicated possible

senior status with 3 to 4 years of college experience; and 10% of the survey population indicated having beyond 4 years of college experience. Participants were asked to indicate their grade point average (GPA). Of those surveyed, 2.5% indicated a score between 1.6 - 2.0, 15% indicated 2.1 - 2.5, 15% indicated 2.6 – 3.0, 27.5% indicated 3.1 – 3.5, and 40% indicated 3.6 – 4.0. Survey respondents were asked to indicate their family structure. Among all the participants, 42.5% indicated being single without children; and 40% indicated having children, with 2.5% indicating having a life partner, 30% being married, and 7.5% being single. Finally, 15% of the respondents indicated being married or with a life partner and not having children.

Survey respondents were asked to share information related to their military experience. Of the 40 respondents, 22.5% indicated serving in the Air Force, 35% Army, 5% Coast Guard, 25% Marines, and 12.5% Navy. The Marines and Army accounted for 60% of the total survey population. Of the survey participants, 30% of the respondents indicated they were still currently serving in the military. Participants were asked to describe their combat experience. Participants were advised to only indicate combat deployments defined as any official combat operation such as Global War on Terrorism, Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), and Operation New Dawn (OND). Thirty percent of the respondents in the study did not serve in any combat deployments; 27.5% of the respondents served one combat deployment, 22.5% served two, 10% served three, 2.5% served 4, and 7.5% indicated serving in five combat deployments.

Participants were asked to indicate their experiences with therapists. In this category, 45% of respondents indicated never having experience with a therapist; 22.5%

indicated seeing a therapist in the past six months, 2.5% in the past year, 2.5% in the past 2 years, 5% in the past 4 years, 17.5% over 4 years ago, and 5.0% indicated seeing a therapist in general. According to the data, 55% of the veterans in this study population indicated having an experience with a therapist.

Help-seeking attitudes of college veterans toward academic services.

Research question 1 was analyzed through the use of SPSS software descriptive statistics. Table 4.1 depicts a summary of 10 question responses related to academic help-seeking attitudes by college veterans. Response options were part of a 5-point Likert scale range that included in rank order: (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neither agree or disagree, (4) agree, and (5) strongly agree. The nominal string data were transcribed into numerical ordinal values in order to provide a macro view of how respondents responded. Questions 3, 6, 8, and 10 (Appendix B) were recoded because the questions were inversely written. In a review of the mean scores for each question, the average responses ranged from 3.05 to 3.975. The mean range indicated that respondents more often than not selected answers other than Disagree or Strongly Disagree.

To better understand the responses indicated by participants, the researcher conducted a frequency analysis with a focus on the mode. Questions 1, 2, 3, and 6 were reviewed in this manner. These questions were selected because of the results of the EFA conducted by DiRamio et al. (2015) that indicated these questions to be most unidimensional. Table 4.2 depicts responses to question number 1: “If I believed that I was struggling significantly in my college coursework, my first strategy would be to seek out academic assistance from support staff on campus” (Appendix B). The most frequent

response is *agree* with 60%, and 72.5% of respondents indicating a positive response of *agree* or *strongly agree*.

Table 4.1

Research Question 1 Descriptive Statistics Summary

Question	Mean	SD
1. If I believed that I was struggling significantly in my college coursework, my first strategy would be to seek out academic assistance from support staff on campus	3.5250	1.17642
2. If I were having a serious academic crisis in college, I would be confident that I could find help in academic counseling.	3.6500	1.00128
3. The idea of talking about academic problems with a campus academic counselor seems to me to be an unproductive way to deal with schoolwork issues.	3.6500	.94868
4. It is commendable when a student is willing to deal with his or her college coursework and tests without resorting to seeking academic assistance from the school.	3.0500	.84580
5. I would want to get academic counseling if I were experiencing difficulties with any of my classes over a long period of the semester.	3.9750	.69752
6. Considering the extra effort involved in getting academic assistance from campus staff. it is unlikely to be valuable for a student like me.	3.5750	.90263
7. I might want to get academic counseling in the future.	3.1250	.88252
8. Troubles with college classes, like many things, tend to work out by themselves.	3.4750	.81610
9. A student with a learning disability is not likely to overcome it alone; he or she is likely to solve it with professional assistance.	3.6500	.76962
10. A person should work out his or her own difficulties with college coursework and tests; getting academic counseling would be a last resort.	3.4000	.92819

Table 4.2

If I Believed That I Was Struggling Significantly in My College Coursework, My First Strategy Would Be to Seek Out Academic Assistance From Support Staff On Campus.

Likert Response	Frequency	Percent
<i>Strongly Disagree</i> (1.00)	4	10.0
<i>Disagree</i> (2.00)	5	12.5
<i>Neutral</i> (3.00)	2	5.0
<i>Agree</i> (4.00)	24	60.0
<i>Strongly Agree</i> (5.00)	5	12.5
Total	40	100.0

Table 4.3 shows the frequency of responses for question number 2: “If I were having a serious academic crisis in college, I would be confident that I could find help in academic counseling” (Appendix B). The most frequent response is *agree* with 52.5%, and 67.5% of respondents indicating a positive response of *agree* or *strongly agree*.

Table 4.3

If I Were having A Serious Academic Crisis in College, I Would Be Confident That I Could Find Help in Academic Counseling.

Likert Response	Frequency	Percent
<i>Strongly Disagree</i> (1.00)	2	5.0
<i>Disagree</i> (2.00)	3	7.5
<i>Neutral</i> (3.00)	8	20.0
<i>Agree</i> (4.00)	21	52.5
<i>Strongly Agree</i> (5.00)	6	15.0
Total	40	100.0

Table 4.4 shows responses related to question 3: “The idea of talking about academic problems with a campus counselor seems to me to be an unproductive way to deal with schoolwork issues” (Appendix B). This question was reverse coded in order to interpret response data. The most frequent response is *agree* with 45%, and 62.5% of respondents indicating a positive response of *agree* or *strongly agree*.

Table 4.5 indicates the frequency of responses to question 6: “Considering the extra effort involved in getting academic assistance from campus staff, it is unlikely to be valuable for a student like me” (Appendix B). The most frequent response is *agree* with 47.5%, and 60.0% of respondents indicating a positive response of *agree* or *strongly agree*.

Table 4.4

The Idea of Talking About Academic Problems with a Campus Academic Counselor Seems To Me To Be An Unproductive Way To Deal With Schoolwork Issues.

Likert Response	Frequency	Percent
<i>Strongly Disagree</i> (1.00)	0.0	0.0
<i>Disagree</i> (2.00)	6	15.0
<i>Neutral</i> (3.00)	9	22.5
<i>Agree</i> (4.00)	18	45.0
<i>Strongly Agree</i> (5.00)	7	17.5
Total	40	100.0

The aggregate percentage of responses by study participants relating to help-seeking attitudes toward academic services indicated *agree* or *strongly agree* with a 54% response rate, and when furthering considering *neutral* responses, 84.75% college veterans responded. The data indicates that college veterans have a positive attitude regarding help-seeking attitudes toward academic services.

Help-seeking attitudes of college veterans toward psychological services. The researcher utilized descriptive statistics through SPSS software to analyze research question 2. Table 4.15 shows a summary of 10 question responses related to help-seeking attitudes toward psychological services by college veterans. Questions 1, 4, 8, 9, and 10 (Appendix B) were recoded because the questions were inversely written. In a review of the mean scores for each question, the responses ranged from 3.025 to 3.65. The range

indicated that respondents more frequently selected responses other than *disagree* or *strongly disagree*.

Table 4.5

Considering the Extra Effort Involved In Getting Academic Assistance From Campus Staff. It Is Unlikely To Be Valuable For A Student Like Me.

Likert Response	Frequency	Percent
<i>Strongly Disagree</i> (1.00)	0.0	0.0
<i>Disagree</i> (2.00)	6	15.0
<i>Neutral</i> (3.00)	10	25.0
<i>Agree</i> (4.00)	19	47.5
<i>Strongly Agree</i> (5.00)	5	12.5
Total	40	100.0

The researcher conducted a frequency analysis of questions 2, 3, and 8 with a focus on the mode of responses. These questions were selected because of the results of the EFA conducted by DiRamio et al. (2015) that indicated these questions to be most unidimensional. Table 4.7 shows responses to question 2, “If I believe that I was having extreme difficulty in my transition to college, my first inclination would be to get professional attention” (Appendix B). In an analysis of the frequency of responses, 50% of respondents indicated *agree*, and 62.5% of respondents indicating a positive response of *agree* or *strongly agree*.

Table 4.8 depicts responses to question 3: “If I were experiencing a serious emotional crisis at this point of my life, I would be confident that I could find relief in psychological counseling” (Appendix B). The highest frequency of responses for the question was *agree* with a 45% response rate, and 60.0% of the respondents indicated *agree* or *strongly agree*.

Table 4.9 indicates responses for question 8: “Considering the time and expense involved in getting counseling, it would have doubtful value for a person like me” (Appendix B). This question was reverse-coded in order to analyze the data. The highest frequency of response was 37.5% of respondents indicating *agree*, and 42.5% indicated *agree* or *disagree*. In comparison to questions 2 and 3, a larger percentage of participants indicated *disagree* with 27.5%, and 30% neutrally responded.

The aggregate percentage of responses by study participants regarding help-seeking attitudes toward psychological services indicated *agree* or *strongly agree* with a 55% response rate, and when furthering considering *neutral* responses, 77.5% college veterans responded. The data indicates that college veterans have a positive attitude regarding help-seeking attitudes toward psychological services.

Table 4.6

Research Question 2 Descriptive Statistics Summary

Question	Mean	SD
1. The idea of talking about problems with a transition counselor (a trained professional who assists veterans) strikes me as a poor way to get rid of emotional conflicts.	3.6500	1.00128
2. If I believed that I was having extreme difficulty in my transition to college, my first inclination would be to get professional attention.	3.4500	1.10824
3. If I were experiencing a serious emotional crisis at this point of my life, I would be confident that I could find relief in psychological counseling.	3.6000	.92819
4. There is something admirable in the attitude of a person who is willing to cope with his or her conflicts and fears without resorting to professional help.	3.0750	.94428
5. I would want to get transition counseling if I were worried or upset for a long period of time.	3.6000	.90014
6. I might want to have transition counseling in the future.	3.0250	1.07387
7. A person with an emotional problem is not likely to solve it alone; he or she is likely to solve it with professional help.	3.0750	.85896
8. Considering the time and expense involved in getting counseling it would have doubtful value for a person like me.	3.2000	.91147
9. A person should work out his or her own problems; getting psychological counseling would be a last resort.	3.4750	1.19802
10. Personal and emotional troubles, like many things, tend to work out by themselves.	3.2250	1.02501

Table 4.7

If I Believed That I Was Having Extreme Difficulty In My Transition To College, My First Inclination Would Be To Get Professional Attention.

Likert Response	Frequency	Percent
<i>Strongly Disagree</i> (1.00)	2	5.0
<i>Disagree</i> (2.00)	8	20.0
<i>Neutral</i> (3.00)	5	12.5
<i>Agree</i> (4.00)	20	50.0
<i>Strongly Agree</i> (5.00)	5	12.5
Total	40	100.0

Considering combat experience as it relates to possible differences in help-seeking attitudes toward academic services. The researcher utilized ANOVA to analyze research question 3. Questions 1, 2, 3, and 6 were reviewed in this manner. These questions were selected because of the results of the EFA conducted by DiRamio et al. (2015) indicating these questions to be most unidimensional. Table 4.10 shows the results of an ANOVA analysis of mean responses between college veterans who indicated serving in at least one combat deployment and college veterans who did not serve in a deployment. In an analysis of the comparison of the means, the range for significance for each question spanned from .268 to .770. These data indicated no significance related to effects of combat experience on college veteran help-seeking attitudes toward academic services. Table 4.11 shows the ANOVA comparison of the

means for the six different categories respondents could indicate pertaining to combat deployment. In an analysis of the comparison of the means, the range for significance for each question spanned from .327 to .889, indicating no significance between the means.

Table 4.8

If I Were Experiencing A Serious Emotional Crisis At This Point Of My Life, I Would Be Confident That I Could Find Relief In Psychological Counseling.

Likert Response	Frequency	Percent
<i>Strongly Disagree</i> (1.00)	0	0
<i>Disagree</i> (2.00)	6	15.0
<i>Neutral</i> (3.00)	10	25.0
<i>Agree</i> (4.00)	18	45.0
<i>Strongly Agree</i> (5.00)	6	15.0
Total	40	100.0

Considering combat experience as it relates to possible differences in help-seeking attitudes toward psychological services. The researcher employed ANOVA to analyze research question 4. The researcher focused analysis on questions 2, 3, and 8. These questions were selected because of the results of the EFA conducted by DiRamio et al. (2015). Table 4.12 shows the results of an ANOVA analysis of mean responses between college veterans who indicated serving in at least one combat deployment and college veterans who did not serve in a deployment. In an analysis of the comparison of the means, the range for significance between each question spanned from .479 to .685.

These data indicated no significance related to effects of combat experience on college veteran help-seeking attitudes toward psychological services. Table 4.13 shows an ANOVA comparison of the means for the six different categories respondents could indicate pertaining to combat deployment. The range of significance for each question ranged from .523 to .941.

Table 4.9

Considering The Time And Expense Involved In Getting Counseling It Would Have Doubtful Value For A Person Like Me.

Likert Response	Frequency	Percent
<i>Strongly Disagree</i> (1.00)	0	0
<i>Disagree</i> (2.00)	11	27.5
<i>Neutral</i> (3.00)	12	30.0
<i>Agree</i> (4.00)	15	37.5
<i>Strongly Agree</i> (5.00)	2	5.0
Total	40	100.0

Table 4.10

ANOVA Combat Deployment Attitudes Academic Services

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Question 1	Between Groups	.933	1	.933	.929	.341
	Within Groups	38.167	38	1.004		
	Total	39.100	39			
Question 2	Between Groups	1.543	1	1.543	1.265	.268
	Within Groups	46.357	38	1.220		
	Total	47.900	39			
Question 3	Between Groups	.076	1	.076	.086	.770
	Within Groups	33.524	38	.882		
	Total	33.600	39			
Question 6	Between Groups	.868	1	.868	.748	.393
	Within Groups	44.107	38	1.161		
	Total	44.975	39			

Table 4.11

ANOVA Multiple Combat Deployments Academic Services

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Question 1	Between Groups	.705	4	.176	.279	.889
	Within Groups	14.545	23	.632		
	Total	15.250	27			
Question 2	Between Groups	4.953	4	1.238	.977	.439
	Within Groups	29.154	23	1.268		
	Total	34.107	27			
Question 3	Between Groups	3.463	4	.866	1.145	.361
	Within Groups	17.394	23	.756		
	Total	20.857	27			
Question 6	Between Groups	5.948	4	1.487	1.225	.327
	Within Groups	27.909	23	1.213		
	Total	33.857	27			

Note: Combat Deployment range is from 0 to 5 or more.

Table 4.12

ANOVA Combat Deployment Psychological Services

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Question 2	Between Groups	.171	1	.171	.167	.685
	Within Groups	38.929	38	1.024		
	Total	39.100	39			
Question 3	Between Groups	.171	1	.171	.187	.668
	Within Groups	34.929	38	.919		
	Total	35.100	39			
Question 8	Between Groups	.344	1	.344	.510	.479
	Within Groups	25.631	38	.674		
	Total	25.975	39			

Table 4.13

ANOVA Multiple Combat Deployments Psychological Services

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Question 2	Between Groups	.979	4	.245	.190	.941
	Within Groups	29.699	23	1.291		
	Total	30.679	27			
Question 3	Between Groups	3.285	4	.821	.807	.533
	Within Groups	23.394	23	1.017		
	Total	26.679	27			
Question 8	Between Groups	2.113	4	.528	.818	.527
	Within Groups	14.851	23	.646		
	Total	16.964	27			

Note: Combat Deployment range is from 0 to 5 or more.

Summary of Results

The purpose of Chapter 4 was to analyze the study data to determine if there were any findings that might inform the four research questions asked in this study. The total

college veteran population invited to participate in the study was 79, with 40 complete responses submitted for review. The response rate was 50.6% and met the minimum criteria for a 90% confidence level at a 10% margin of error. Respondent gender indicated that 22.5% were female and 75% male, with one respondent undeclared. Regarding respondent ethnicity or race, 85% indicated Caucasian or White, 7.5% African American, 5% Caucasian and African American, and 2.5% Caucasian and American Indian or Alaskan Native. Regarding age, there was a fairly even distribution of 92.5% veterans in the 18-25, 26-34, and 35-54 age groups.

Research questions 1 and 2 focused on understanding the help-seeking attitudes of college veterans toward academic and psychological services. Descriptive statistics were utilized to analyze the data. In a review of the individual and aggregate frequency of responses to each question, the mode was resoundingly in the *agree* column. Overall, there was a slightly higher degree of negative and neutral responses for the questions in the psychological services section than in the academic services area.

Research questions 3 and 4 focused on assessing potential differences in degree of help-seeking attitudes between veterans who have experienced combat and those who did not. An ANOVA was conducted utilizing SPSS software, and it appears that combat experience did not have a significant impact on the degree of college veteran help-seeking attitudes toward academic and psychological services. Chapter 5 presents an interpretation and discussion surrounding the findings of the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of this dissertation was to develop a stronger understanding of college veteran help-seeking attitudes toward academic and psychological services in order to inform colleges on how they might better serve the veteran population.

Furthermore, the study sought to understand more deeply any differences that might exist in help-seeking attitudes between veterans who have experienced combat and those who did not experience combat.

Research has indicated that veterans were not utilizing veteran services or participating in structured programs (CBO, 2014; DiRamio et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2013). The low frequency of help-seeking behavior of college veterans is concerning because research has indicated that college veterans are at a higher risk for mental and physical health concerns than nonveteran college students (Kang et al., 2015). Although college veterans perform on par academically with their nonveteran college peers, many veterans do not achieve their academic goals as planned (Student Veterans of America, 2014). Furthermore, the Department of Veteran Affairs' (2012) suicide data report indicated approximately 22 veterans commit suicide every day in the United States, with veterans having a 41%-61% higher risk of suicide than nonveterans (Kang et al., 2015). This study will contribute information to the literature pertaining to connecting college veterans to veteran services.

Schlossberg (1981) theorized that every transition event can be assessed and potentially influenced. Because individuals possess a level of control regarding adaptation to transition, Schlossberg identified three factors that contribute to the event: (a) individual perception of the transition, (b) characteristics of the environment, and (c) characteristics of the individual. In many cases, self-intervention does not successfully lead to transition success and formal or informal support may be beneficial. Veteran services may provide a conduit for consultation that helps identify deficits in college veterans and establish appropriate resources. Queen et al. (2014) reported that although 96% of U.S. colleges reported enrolling veterans, only 25% of colleges had customized support services for veterans. Veteran enrollment is continuing to increase in college, and although schools are investing resources in veteran services, many appear to be ill-equipped to assess and assist this population.

Although student veteran enrollment in colleges is increasing, very little empirical research is available to inform colleges on best practices to support the veteran population. Furthermore, several prevalent myths in the nonempirical literature have become misleading cultural norms. This type of speculation could be considered potential misinformation and may possibly damage the success of administering services. For example, one relatively prevalent myth is that college veterans are not persisting in college. Contrary to this myth, recent empirical data has outlined that college veterans perform as well and generally persist at the same rate as nonveteran peers (Student Veterans of America, 2014).

Another area that has not been thoroughly explored is college veteran help-seeking attitudes. Although research discussed in these chapters has indicated that

veterans are not utilizing services through their behavior, it is not known if students see the value in these services. Furthermore, with exception to gender, this researcher was not able to find any research that examined variance in help-seeking attitudes or behavior between veterans of different demographic backgrounds or types of military experience. This researcher wanted to understand better how veterans perceived the services they are allegedly not using.

For this quantitative study, a survey was utilized to understand student veteran help-seeking attitudes toward academic and psychological services more deeply. The study examined the responses of the participants through the use of descriptive statistics and utilized ANOVA to compare combat and non-combat veterans' perspectives. The four research questions of focus for this study were:

1. What are the help-seeking attitudes of college student veterans toward academic services?
2. What are the help-seeking attitudes of college student veterans toward psychological services?
3. What differences in help-seeking attitudes toward academic services exist, if any, between college student veterans who experienced military deployment(s) and college veterans who did not experience deployment?
4. What differences in help-seeking attitudes toward psychological services exist, if any, between college student veterans who experienced military deployment(s) and college veterans who did not experience deployment?

Answers to these research questions were obtained through the quantitative analysis of a survey that was administered to college veterans who attended two SUNY

colleges. This chapter reviews the results discovered, analyzed, and presented in Chapter 4 through the synthesis of Schlossberg's transition theory and the relevant empirical literature.

Implications of Findings

The study utilized a nonexperimental quantitative approach to analyze the data retrieved via survey to college veterans. Results from the survey were analyzed through the use of SPSS software, with a specific focus on a review of data that answered the research questions outlined in this study. Descriptive statistics were utilized to answer research questions 1 and 2, and ANOVA was used to answer research questions 3 and 4. Because of the absence of contemporary empirical literature available on college veteran help-seeking, the results of this study provide a starting point for researchers to consider college veterans' attitudes toward academic and psychological services.

Research question 1 inquired into college veteran help-seeking attitudes toward academic services. In a review of the mean scores pertaining to academic services, responses ranged from 3.05 to 3.95. A frequency analysis of the questions was conducted to understand the patterns in college veterans' responses best. A close examination of the aggregate frequency of responses revealed that 83.75% of respondents neither responded *disagree* or *strongly disagree*. A majority of the respondents indicated positively, with an average of 54% indicating *agree* or *strongly agree*.

The results for research question 1 are somewhat contradictory to what is discussed in empirical literature. Although the lack of empirical research available on veteran help-seeking attitudes prevents the benefit of a baseline comparison, the available research indicated that veterans have a potentially low degree of help-seeking attitudes

toward services (DiRamio et al., 2015). With over 83% of respondents indicating a positive or neutral response, it appears that veterans have a favorable attitude toward academic services. Given that research indicated that veterans do not utilize academic services, it is reasonable to expect that veterans may not value academic services. This study indicates that the participants do value academic services.

The participants in this study had relatively high GPA scores, with 67.5% indicating a 3.1 GPA or higher, and only one participant indicating a GPA below 2.0. It is possible that the academic success indicated by the participants may have contributed to their help-seeking attitudes toward academic services. Although this survey was administered to all college veterans, it is possible that the survey did not include many academically struggling students. Furthermore, 85% of the participants in this study were upper classmen having more than one year of college experience. The study was implemented during the late part of the spring semester, which for most students constitutes an academic year of experience. Many of the participants in the study may have successfully adapted to the college culture in such a manner that their perspective toward academic services was impacted.

Research question 2 targeted college veteran help-seeking attitudes toward psychological services. In a review of the frequency of responses pertaining to psychological services, mean scores ranged from 3.025 to 3.65. This range was markedly similar to the response range of research questions pertaining to academic services. An examination of the aggregate frequency of responses to the questions revealed that 77.5% of respondents neither responded *disagree* or *strongly disagree*. A majority of the respondents indicated positively, with an average of 55% indicating *agree* or *strongly*

agree. In a comparison of academic and psychological attitudes, slightly more participants responded with *disagree* or *strongly disagree* regarding attitudes toward psychological services, with 22.5% compared to 16.25% toward academic services.

The neutral and positive responses for academic services and psychological services were nearly identical and unexpected. Research has depicted an association of negative stigma by veterans toward healthcare, especially mental healthcare. This stems from various contributing factors such as a prevalent history of controversy surrounding the VA, and the perception of veterans that if they engage in mental health services, they may be considered weak (DiRamio et al., 2015). Furthermore, although laws are in place to protect veterans from being subject to discrimination regarding veteran or disabled status, a number of veterans do believe there is a risk of career loss, judgment, or discrimination once they are diagnosed with a mental health injury. Academic services do not seem to carry the same stigma in research, and it was unexpected to see that positive responses regarding help-seeking attitudes were relatively consistent toward both service areas. It is possible that the stigma associated with psychological services may have contributed to the slight difference in negative responses.

Schlossberg (2011) explained that each transition experience varies and has the potential to impact an individual's perspective role, relationships with others, routines, and assumptions significantly. Given people's ability level to manage transitions, they might adapt quickly and positively, where more incompetent individuals may struggle through long transition periods. One of the explanations pertaining to the participants' positive help-seeking attitudes in this study may pertain to their experience. College veterans are typically nontraditional students who have lived years of life experience

between completing high school and starting college. Demographics for the study included 67.5% of the participants indicated being 26 years of age or older. During the time between high school and college, veterans who have military experience receive professional training that has an impact on personal and professional development. Each training regimen is tailored to the service member's military occupational specialty (MOS) and is often extensive, expensive, and exhaustive. Military members often find themselves in leadership situations early on in their military career and are given grand responsibilities, such as the issuance of firearms, supervisory roles, technical expertise, and decision making in rules of engagement. These experiences may have contributed to the transition competence of the veteran, and may have had an impact on the results displayed in this study.

Although various sources have depicted veterans as having academic difficulties in college, recent research (Student Veterans of America, 2014) has indicated that college veterans generally perform at a higher level than their nonveteran peers. Schlossberg (1981) theorized that an individual who is not experiencing a transitional deficit may not perceive a need for transitional support. College veterans who perceive sound academic achievement may elect to not utilize services because they do not self-assess any deficits. Furthermore, Schlossberg explained that the characteristics of the transitional environment are a major factor contributing to the transition event. It is possible that academic services, including teaching faculty, may not be conducting outreach to student veterans because their academic achievement is perceived as satisfactory. At many colleges, academic outreach is typically conducted with students who are struggling academically. Schlossberg noted there are three different means by which to categorize a

transition: anticipated, unanticipated, and nonevent. College veterans may have anticipated the academic rigor of college and placed a higher priority on studying and other efforts needed for academic success.

Help-seeking attitudes are different than help-seeking behaviors. A veteran might have a positive perspective of the value of academic services such as tutoring, but that does not automatically correlate with a high degree of help-seeking behavior. A way to picture this more clearly might be through the analogy of automotive services. Although it may be common knowledge that preventative maintenance to a car helps prevent catastrophic engine failure, many people do not invest in scheduled tune-ups. Does that mean that a person does not care about his or her vehicle or does not value the mechanic's skill? In most cases, the reality is that the person has other things to consider such as the prioritization of tasks and expenditures. Or perhaps that person was taken advantage of by an unethical mechanic and has decided not to trust other mechanics? Furthermore, perhaps the person has experience working on cars and feels able to handle any possible scenario on their own, even without formal training. The reality is many scenarios can contribute to that person's decision to utilize the automotive services, and these must be assessed at an individual level.

Another explanation regarding help-seeking attitudes is that a person's behavior might change over time and through experience. In looking at the automotive example, if the car breaks down on the side of the road, the person might have no other choice than to ask for assistance. Another possibility might be if the person had a bad experience with a previous mechanic, perhaps a positive experience with a new mechanic might impact that person's overall perspective. Perhaps a trusted person in that person's life, such as a

family member, recommended the new mechanic. In considering college veteran' help-seeking attitudes and behaviors, it may not matter as much how a veteran perceives the service as long as they can be convinced to utilize it. The participants in this study had strikingly positive attitudes toward services, and it is possible that variable may not be connected to their help-seeking behavior.

Data was analyzed through a consideration of Schlossberg's transition theory. Goodman et al.'s (2006) Situation, Self, Support, and Strategy (S-4) system for coping with transition was also utilized as a lens to synthesize the results of the study. The results of this study indicate that veterans have a positive help-seeking attitude toward academic and psychological services, yet contemporary literature indicates that veterans are not utilizing services. In order to better understand the generally positive responses by participants, the study utilized an adapted version of Nancy Schlossberg's 4-S model. Figure 5.1 provides a conceptual model of factors that may have contributed to the participant's attitudes toward academic and psychological services.

4S MODEL CONNECTING VETERANS TO SERVICES



Figure 5.1. A Conceptual Adaptation of Nancy Schlosberg's Transition Model.

Self. This category refers to the individual's resource assets and deficits in relation to the transition event (Schlossberg, 2011). Put simply, this category refers to the person's ability to cope with and navigate transition. Goodman et al. (2006) explained that self is broad, complex, and difficult to define, but narrowed-down characteristics that seem most relevant to transition events include: (a) personal and demographic characteristics, (b) socioeconomic status, (c) gender, (d) age and life stage (maturity), (e) health condition, (f) culture and ethnicity, (g) psychological resources, (h) ego stage, (i) self-efficacy and optimistic outlook, (j) commitment and values, and (k) resiliency and spirituality. College veterans are nontraditional students who have generally experienced more outside life experience than traditional-aged students. Veterans may be more likely to enter college in the later stages of role acquisition, and have a greater confidence and resiliency in making decisions without support. This concept could explain why veterans in the study have fairly strong help-seeking attitude toward services. If veterans are operating at a level of mature autonomy, they might not perceive a legitimate reason to seek help, even if they believe the service is effective. This information is very insightful because it showcases the need for veteran services to conduct outreach. If veterans are not going to seek assistance, the assistance must seek the veterans.

Brenner et al. (2008) explained *burdensomeness* as a perception of being a burden on social supports. As part of the military training experience, service members are instructed on primary responsibilities, but are also taught how to accomplish tasks when a team member is not available. This training technique impacts military culture to the point that service members develop pride in being able to adapt to unexpected situations and successfully accomplish the mission at hand. Service members learn how to

prioritize tasks and are often impacted by the values that are instilled by the military. Each branch of military service has a process in which service members learn core military values and are required to memorize and recite these values. The combination of value development, adaptability pride, and prioritization can impact the veterans' level of burdensomeness. Veterans may prioritize the needs of others, the needs of the mission, and the desire to be independent above any personal concerns they may have. This phenomenon might insinuate that help-seeking attitudes would be low for veterans, but the results of this study depicted otherwise. The colleges involved in this study conduct outreach with the veteran population, with a mission of developing relationships with college veterans. It is possible that the study sites veteran service programs may have had an impact on the participant's level of burdensomeness, and in-turn impacted help-seeking attitudes indicated by participants in this study.

Livingston et al. (2011) described a student veteran who chooses isolation versus socialization at college as *invisible*. One of the greatest challenges to veteran services programs is student outreach. Students who are not already connected with the program might only contact the veteran services office for self-perceived needs such as veteran educational benefit processing. Veteran services should consider student outreach, relationship development, and community development as high priorities. These efforts impact a student veteran's sense of belonging and trust, and inevitably impacts the rate in which the student interacts with veteran services. The participants in this study had access to specific veteran social resources such as a veteran resource center, professional veteran services, student veteran organizations, and peer to peer support programs. The positive help-seeking attitudes displayed by veterans in this study may in part be

impacted by a strong sense of connectedness to the college. That connection may impact the overall perceptions veteran participants in this study had on college services.

Situation. Goodman et al. (2006) recognized that a person's *situation* at the time of the transition has a direct impact on the ability of the person to navigate the event successfully or learn effectively from the event outcome. These researchers explained that each person's situation is impacted by several factors: (a) initiation of the event; (b) timing of the event in relation to the individual's internal clock; (c) individual's ability to control parts of the event; (d) individual role change; (e) the duration of the event, temporary versus permanent; (f) individual's experience in dealing with transition; (g) existence of stress during event; and (h) individual positive and negative perspectives of the event. It is important to note that this study was conducted during the last quarter of the academic year. All students, including those in their first year, have had enough college experience to have potentially adapted to the cultural norms that exist in college and may have been able to establish a structured academic routine. If this study had been implemented in the early stages of the academic year, it is possible there may have been different outcomes because of the lack of the participants' college experience.

In the military, service members tend to prioritize needs based upon the mission in front of them. Although student veterans might believe in the value of academic or psychological services, they might categorize such services as a low priority. This categorization may be the result of the veterans not perceiving a need to utilize resources because they are succeeding, or it could include the prioritization of other issues such as family, income, and health. As previously discussed, college veterans may have had experience dealing with transition and learned to cope with transition stressors on an

individual level. Considering that the veteran services office at the study sites conduct active programming with veterans, it is possible that veterans who actively utilized the Student Veteran Resource Center (SVRC) may have become more experienced at dealing with transition, or developed a more favorable attitude toward help-seeking and formal help-seeking behavior. Furthermore, as students advance in college experience, they learn from their transition experiences. Students who successfully identified resources during transition events will be able to repeat future success and, in theory, improve it.

Institutional commitment related to the students' integration into formal and informal institutional experiences and activities can lead to increased participation and influence successful transition. College veterans are familiar with goal setting and task completion as a result of their military training and experience. It is reasonable to believe that college veterans may transfer goal completion practices from military to civilian culture. The military culture strives for service members to excel at their practice because, in many cases, the lives of others depend on success. Veterans may enter college with clear goals and have the intention of completing those goals. Additionally, veterans at SUNY Cobleskill and SUNY Delhi who participate in the SVRC may be experiencing a strong institutional commitment and, in return, have a more favorable attitude toward services.

Strategies. Goodman et al. (2006) provided the S-4 model for examining the transitional deficits and resources a person might have so that a transition might be addressed successfully. *Strategies* indicate three categories for coping responses: modifying the situation, controlling the meaning of the transition problem, and managing stress during the post transition phase. The person may cope with stress through direct

intervention, inhibition of action, information seeking, and intrapsychic behavior. With regard to academic services, college veterans might be employing independent techniques to modify academic success during the transition event, such as studying or speaking with a professor. For example, veterans who are performing well academically might see the value of tutoring services, but decide not take action to modify the event. Furthermore, the participants in this study were asked to indicate their experiences with therapist with 55% of the participants indicated experience meeting with therapists. Considering that research indicates veterans tend to not utilize psychological services, the participant pool appears to have a relatively high amount of experience utilizing formal psychological services. This experience may have had an impact on the positive attitudes indicated by participants toward psychological services in this study.

Veterans might view the college experience as a temporary transition event that has an anticipated end date. As long as veterans are managing stress to the point that it is not impacting important responsibilities, they might believe they can endure high stress because they will eventually graduate and transition to the next life event. Veterans who cope through *inhibition of action* might be effective at coping but may not utilize services, nor have a positive attitude toward services. Additionally, college veterans may develop a sense of tolerance for absence of socialization and interconnectedness, perceived discomfort with people who do not understand them, or frustration with processes and culture. Brenner et al. (2008) described *Habituation* as “A process of learning whereby repeated presentations of a stimulus result in decreased response to that stimulus” (p. 216). Research indicates that veterans do not utilize services and a strong contributing factor might be that many veterans cope with transition stressors on their

own. The participants in this study indicated a positive attitude toward services, and given that the colleges in this study have dedicated veteran services it is possible that the study participants utilize different coping mechanisms. For example, if the participants had experienced previous transition success through the aid of the veteran's office, that veteran may develop an appreciation for the service and engage in *information seeking*. Furthermore, veterans who become exceptional proficient at seeking assistance may also develop stronger *intrapsychic* coping skills. Although the participants in this study were not asked about their perceived coping methods, coping mechanisms may serve as a possible explanation for the positive attitudes exhibited in the study.

Support. Schlossberg (2011) explained that *support* resources can have a significant impact on a person's ability to transition successfully. Supports might be considered as: (a) significant other, (b) family, (c) friends and acquaintances, (d) place of employment, (e) student services, and (f) community organizations such as student clubs. The main functions of support are identified as affect, affirmation, and aid. Over 50% of the respondents in this sample indicated having a nuclear family member such as a spouse, life partner, or child. The participants' family composition may have had an influence on the resources that were accessible to the veterans during the time of the study. For example, veterans in this study had access to the SVRC, student veteran club, dependent support programs and outside VA agencies. These resources may have had an impact on their transition experience and overall attitudes toward services.

Van Maanen and Schein (1977) explained that formal processes, informal processes, and personal reflection influence how individuals learn a new role and how they fit into a new setting. The researchers theorized that increased socialization

positively affects transition adaptation and success. They speculated that each organization has a unique history, reputation, chain of command, language, and process of recognition. Moreover, organizational socialization provides a context for how an individual *learns the ropes*, and that process to a successful transition is not clear, simple, or linear. At SUNY Cobleskill and Delhi, the SVRC provides outreach and support for veterans, and establishes socialization opportunities for veterans to meet peers and interact with veteran services. Over time, veterans may begin to trust veteran services, increase socialization behavior, and increase perceived value in the institution. It may be reasonable to infer that veterans who have developed a positive connection with their college might also develop a positive attitude of services.

SUNY Cobleskill and SUNY Delhi have a dedicated veteran services provider who conducts systematic outreach to college veterans. This strategic initiative is designed to establish one-on-one relationships with veterans. As veterans develop a rapport with the provider, they may have also developed a connectedness to the college and a trust of veteran services. As veterans interact with the provider over time, they gain potentially positive experiences that contribute to their attitude and their ability to seek resources. Additionally, the veteran services provider utilizes the information learned from each individual veteran's experiences to assess deficits and provide resources.

Based upon current empirical research, the responses from participants regarding attitudes toward psychological services were striking. A prevalent stereotype is that veterans have a low favorability of mental health care services because of the existence of perceived negative cultural stigma and potential negative experiences with VA services. Furthermore, research has indicated that military experience has a significant impact on

the self-identity that veterans have formed, including a perspective that veterans avoid seeking assistance because they do not wish to be *the weakest link in the chain* (DiRamio et al., 2015). This concept was drawn from the premise that each member of the military has the training, fortitude, and persistence to tackle any situation, and it is perceived to be unfavorable to ask for assistance. Given the positive attitudes displayed in this study, it is possible that the participants may have successfully navigated away from the weakest link pedagogy.

According to the survey responses, 55% of the respondents indicated they had seen a therapist within the past 4 years, with 25% indicating seeing a therapist within the past six months. This statistic indicated that a majority of the sample surveyed did previously engage in help-seeking behavior in psychological services. It was unexpected to see the volume of respondents who had indicated experience with formal assistance relating to psychological services. According to the VA (2015), less than 50% of eligible veterans apply for VA healthcare benefits, less than 30% have utilized general VA healthcare, and much less have utilized specific mental healthcare services. Given the indicated experiences of the participants in this study related to mental health services, that may have had an impact on the positive attitudes noted in the study findings.

At SUNY Cobleskill and SUNY Delhi, college veterans have access to the Student Veterans Association (SVA), which is a college-recognized and financed student club that is open to all students but primarily populated by veterans. The club provides an outlet for veterans to congregate with other veterans, engage in social activities, and provide peer-to-peer support. Veterans meet other veterans who have similar experiences and feel more comfortable discussing personal matters. Newer college veterans have

access to more seasoned students and, in some cases, a mentorship bond is formed. This resource may have been a contributing factor to the help-seeking attitudes of the participants in this study.

Research question 3 considered combat experience as it related to possible differences in help-seeking attitudes toward academic services. An ANOVA analysis was conducted through SPSS software to compare the mean responses of college veterans who served in combat and veterans who did not serve in combat. The analysis of the comparison of the means for each question resulted in a value of .217 to .824. Considering that none of the values met the requirement of $p \leq .05$, it is clear there was no significant difference between the variables.

Research question 4 considered combat experience as it related to possible differences in help-seeking attitudes toward psychological services. An ANOVA analysis was conducted through SPSS software to compare the mean responses of college veterans who served in combat and veterans who did not serve in combat. The analysis of the comparison of the means for each question resulted in a value of .174 to .970. Considering that none of the values met the requirement of $p \leq .05$, it is clear there was no significant difference between the variables.

The results of this study relating to combat experience were surprising. Combat deployments can have a tremendous impact on a person's development and overall health. For those veterans who experience war, their lives are changed forever, and that change often brings challenges. Approximately 75% of combat veterans have service-connected injuries, the most common of which are related to mental health (Bryan et al., 2014). During combat service, members are exposed to almost inhospitable

environments, severe weather, constant threats to health and safety, exposure to death, loss of friends, and homesickness. Service members are often deployed for long periods of time and are exposed to prolonged periods of stress, especially during high-intensity combat situations. In a combat environment, service members must maintain focus and be attentive to threats at all times, resulting in a prolonged fight-or-flight syndrome which can have a negative impact on the veterans' health.

Research has indicated that veterans who have experienced combat may have developed different help-seeking perspectives compared with veterans who have not experienced combat. As discussed in Chapter 2, Hoge et al. (2005) conducted a study on the possible connection between combat experience, existence of injury, and use of mental healthcare services of 2,530 participants surveyed before entering a combat deployment, and 3,671 participants three to four months after returning from the deployment. The researchers found soldiers who had served in Iraq were significantly more likely to report mental health concerns and to utilize mental health services than soldiers who were surveyed prior to deployment or serving in Afghanistan.

A possible explanation for why combat does not appear to be significant is that *military experience* may be the strongest contributing factor in help-seeking attitudes. Each branch of service is markedly different in types of career pathways, types of service deployments, and culture. A common experience that exists for service members regardless of their branch of service is that everyone experiences a military culture and training. Most members of the military serve their first year of active duty in training at some level. One element of training that all members of the military experience is *boot camp*. Boot camp is an experience in which all military members are required to

participate and it is seen as a rite of passage. Boot camp is a training program that, depending on the branch of service, lasts only six to 13 weeks but has a long-lasting experience. The goal of boot camp is the fundamental transformation of the service member from a civilian to a military member. Drill instructors are trained to create a stressful environment that challenges recruits to function effectively in difficult situations. Recruits are expected to endure severe negative criticism and to not retaliate, make excuses, or question authority. In order to be successful in boot camp, service members learn to acculturate, are expected to do as they are told when they are told to do it, and cannot be inventive. Although the intensity of the military experience does change after boot camp, service members are still bound to practices and rules that are more restrictive than civilian life. It is possible that military training, such as boot camp, may have a long lasting impact on veteran perspectives and behavior. Given the results of this study that combat experience is not a variable that impacts variance in help-seeking attitudes, the idea that general military experience impacts help-seeking attitudes seems a more reasonable supposition.

Limitations

It is important to consider the contextual environment at the colleges the participants attend, as it may have had an impact on the results of this study. SUNY Cobleskill and SUNY Delhi both have a Veteran Affairs program that includes a dedicated professional and support staff for veteran services. Both colleges have independent dedicated space for college veterans known as the SVRC. Each SVRC has a full kitchen, student lounge, and academic center with computer lab, professional staff, and a peer-to-peer support program. The Veteran Affairs Office has several outreach

programs aimed at yielding student use of the SVRC, with an overarching mission of relationship development with college veterans. The premise regarding this mission pertains to the development of trust so that veterans might be more likely to communicate concerns to the office. The response rate for the survey implemented in this study was over 50%. By way of comparison to a number of studies reviewed in this dissertation, other studies experienced response rates as low as 10%. Although there is no known empirical data available to explain low veteran response rates, this phenomenon may be reflective of the low help-seeking behavior that was discussed in Chapter 2. The high response rate in this survey may be attributed to the success of the Veteran Affairs Office outreach programs, which may have also had an impact on student veteran attitudes toward college services.

A second limitation in this study concerned the survey sample. Although there was a high response rate from the total population surveyed, the study was limited to 40 participants, which is relatively small. As a result, this study did not have the statistical power of a study with a larger sample size. Furthermore, the small sample size did not include the diversity of demographics as desired. The sampling technique for this study was purposeful and all eligible veterans were invited to participate. Ideally, this study would be conducted with institutions that have large veteran populations so that other sampling techniques might be considered.

Another limitation for this study was the scarcity of empirical research available on veteran help-seeking attitudes. A frequency analysis was utilized to understand the frequency of responses related to help-seeking attitudes questions, but did not have a body of literature for comparison purposes. The findings depicted in this dissertation made

generalizations based both on a connection with empirical literature and these results. It is important to keep in mind that the veteran population is diverse and vast, and every individual veteran is a unique human being with unique circumstances. Schlossberg (2011) explained that every transition is unique to the individual experiencing the event, and each person experiences transition differently based upon their personal circumstances.

Recommendations

Future research. The results of this study indicated that college veterans had a positive help-seeking attitude toward academic and psychological services. Although the data provided a good start to understanding veterans' perspectives toward existing services, it did not inform on the rate in which veterans will decide to utilize these services. Further research that reviews the relationship between help-seeking attitudes and behaviors may give insight into whether attitudes influence behavior. It is possible that the veterans' attitude toward help-seeking may have no impact on behavior.

As researchers further explore help-seeking attitudes, it might be of value to conduct qualitative studies on detailed aspects of the military experience as it relates to veterans' perspectives toward help-seeking. Furthermore, this study focused on two colleges that had dedicated resources for college veterans, including veteran resource centers. Future research is recommended to include a larger and more diverse sample of colleges, including schools that do not have dedicated veteran services.

Policy. The Veterans Access to Care through Choice, Accountability, and Transparency Act (2014) is a U.S. public law instituted on August 7, 2014. On April 30, 2014, the Cable News Network (CNN) published an article that alleged at least 40 U.S.

veterans had died while waiting for healthcare appointments with the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA). The article revealed that the VA may have been involved in a practice of misreporting healthcare wait times to the government in order to cover up noncompliance with VA regulations. On June 9, 2014, an internal investigation by the VA revealed that more than 120,000 veterans were prevented access to healthcare and that several major VA hospitals were engaged in various unethical and illegal behaviors. The Veterans' Access to Care through Choice, Accountability, and Transparency Act was passed in order to address the healthcare gaps quickly and create protections, enhance benefits for veterans, and strengthen oversight of the VA.

The Veterans' Access to Care through Choice, Accountability, and Transparency Act is considered one of the most comprehensive reforms in VA history. If funding and support continue, the law has the potential to change a strong bureaucracy fundamentally. As a result of significant political and public pressure that stemmed from the CNN article, politicians reported a need for immediate relief to veterans through greater access to healthcare. The reality is that for many years, many people were aware that the VA healthcare system was broken. It has been well documented how veterans who served in Vietnam were practically ignored and, as a result, many veterans suffered from serious mental and physical injuries and continue to suffer today. Unfortunately, awareness of a problem does not always lead to action and the education system has similar challenges.

The Veterans Choice Act (2014) significantly expanded veteran and dependent access to education benefits. This law requires all public colleges to provide in-state tuition to veterans and their immediate family members. Furthermore, the Act provided a consequence that any college not in compliance with this policy will become ineligible to

receive any VA education payments. Furthermore, the Act expanded the Sgt. Fry scholarship program that provides full education benefits to widows of a service member who died in the line of duty. Effective September 6, 2014, the Department of Defense (2015) required all educational institutions to adhere to the DOD Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The MOU requires colleges to commit to a set of standards and tasks pertaining to college veterans; colleges that do not sign or comply with the MOU risk the chance of losing VA funding. The MOU is one of the first official agreements colleges have been required to follow in the entire 70-year history of the GI Bill, but similar to The Veterans' Access to Care through Choice, Accountability, and Transparency Act, it only scratches the surface of the problem.

The Department of Veteran Affairs (2012b) has reported that approximately 22 veterans are dying each day from suicide. The VA has reported that an extensive number of veterans who have served in combat are experiencing combat-related injuries. Furthermore, colleges are seeing enrollment growth, but are not required to report college veteran retention, persistence, or graduation rates. Many veterans are utilizing their GI Bill to attend colleges, yet colleges are not required to provide specialized services for veterans. Queen et al. (2014) noted that although 96% of U.S. colleges reported enrolling veterans, only 25% of colleges had customized support services for veterans; 19% of those colleges had a dedicated space for veterans; and 36% had specific military/veteran organizations. The United States cannot afford to wait for colleges to create services on their own. Serious consideration should be given to expanding the DOD MOU or create new legislation that includes requirements for colleges to establish dedicated veteran services.

On August 12, 2013, President Barack Obama sent a letter to college presidents across the country referred to *8 keys to success* (Student Veterans of America, 2016). The letter reviewed that college veteran enrollment is increasing and combat veterans are returning home with injuries and need everyone's support. The letter outlined eight recommendations colleges should take to support veterans better. Although the content of the letter was positive and made great recommendations, all of the items were voluntary and optional. Currently, no legislation or system-wide effort is in place to assist veterans beyond advice. Legislation should be considered that would require colleges to develop dedicated services for veterans.

Practice. This section addresses practices that colleges might consider to bolster veteran services and potentially increase the rate at which veterans seek assistance. Colleges should consider enacting or bolstering veteran service programs to ensure the presence of dedicated staff who are focused on developing relationships between the office and college veterans. Research has made colleges aware that veterans are coming to colleges with serious challenges, and they are not likely to reach out for assistance on their own. Furthermore, veterans are not likely to communicate problems unless they trust the available resource, which is developed over time. Having a veteran services program with a trained dedicated veteran services provider is an important investment. It is also important to create as many one-to-one opportunities as possible between service providers and students that offer streamlined *one-stop-shop* services. Veterans are accustomed to having resources provided in advance during military experiences and would benefit from having to go to just one office at college to make arrangements for college. It would be an advantage for the college if the veteran service providers are

veterans themselves. Being a veteran tacitly communicates the same rite of passage as the students they serve, and they are likely to earn an immediate level of clout and respect. The position should also be an expert on college entry-level issues so that veterans can be advised properly by one person rather than having to go to multiple sources. The red tape of veteran benefits can seem confusing and overwhelming for some veterans, and having a resource that can lead the way can make a significant difference for these students. Perhaps most importantly, the veteran services provider should be well trained in transition counseling. Techniques should include consideration of transition evaluation models such as Schlossberg's S-4 model.

Many colleges tout that they are veteran- or military-friendly, but it is important that colleges establish support at every level of the institution and strive to develop a true comfortable environment for veterans. If the college administration is not supportive of veteran services, it might have a significant impact on the college's ability to serve this population. College veterans have strong financial stability as full-time equivalent students through their VA educational entitlements, and college campuses are benefitting from the increased enrollment. Considering the money that colleges make from enrolling veterans, it is logical that colleges invest money in veteran services, training, and staffing. Colleges should consider the development of ongoing professional education for faculty and staff. One of the most frequent transition issues veterans have communicated to this researcher related to their frustrations with teaching faculty. Oftentimes, veterans feel that faculty and staff do not understand their needs or might have an awareness that is based on stereotypes or misinformation. A good strategy is to hold periodic professional development sessions with faculty as well as identify faculty who might be interested in

becoming a designated point of contact for veterans. Developing trained allies in the faculty ranks increases the number of representatives on the college campus who can communicate and potentially influence peers.

Based on what was revealed in this dissertation, it is possible to understand that many veterans are experiencing serious challenges. It is important that colleges establish a means to recognize issues as early as possible. Veterans are not likely to seek assistance on their own or recognize when they are in crisis. As Schlossberg (2011) theorized, every person experiences transition differently, and by assessing that transition and identifying the deficits, it will be possible to impact the transition positively. Thus, it is imperative that veteran outreach be conducted to develop relationships and communicate services so that veteran issues might be flagged.

College veteran outreach is very beneficial and can happen in a number of different formats. Conversations are most effective in an in-person setting, but if not available or feasible, electronic means are also effective. As well, it is important for colleges to capture and track veteran enrollment data. As reviewed in this study, little research is available on the college veteran population, and having empirical data to inform decision making is imperative. This information will not only inform colleges about the potential gaps that might exist, but will also contribute to the slowly growing body of literature pertaining to college veterans.

A strong resource that a college can establish on campus for veterans is a dedicated space or resource center. Having a dedicated space provides a venue for veterans to congregate and develop relationships. One of the transition difficulties veterans tackle is the feeling of *alienation* (Elliot et al., 2011). The space can provide

opportunities for veterans to develop a community, as discussed through the lens of social integration theory; in this way, veterans become more connected to the institution. That connectedness may have an impact on the veterans' perspective of college services and, and in turn, impact help-seeking behavior. Having such a space in place also communicates to the veterans that the college has made a very tangible investment and has taken them seriously.

Colleges should develop student-led organizations for veterans and their families on campus. Such student groups provide opportunities for veterans to meet and establish a network of connectedness through a peer support model. Previous research has implied that connecting veterans with other veterans can positively impact veteran transition (DiRamio et al., 2008). For example, having a spousal support group on campus serves several purposes. Families of veterans have a level of contact that colleges cannot begin to match, and creating a unit in which they can interact with the college is very strategic. That connection not only provides an outlet and training for the families, but also creates another conduit for communication and potential transition evaluation. If the family members have developed rapport and trust with the college, they may be more likely to encourage their veteran to seek assistance or perhaps raise the alarm themselves.

It is beneficial for colleges to develop a strong network with outside agencies. Although most campuses have healthcare of some sort on site, most do not have staff who are trained in serving the veteran population. In that case, it is imperative that the campus develop strong relationships with local VA hospitals and other providers. Ideally, it would be positive if the college could bring specialists on campus, which would be convenient for the veterans and possibly promote trust between provider and

students. General veteran benefits are complex and often difficult for the veterans to access. Most benefits and resources are not well marketed and veterans are not aware of their existence or how to apply. Connecting to local resources is important because each subject matter expert can be a resource for the veteran service office, and especially the veterans themselves. Furthermore, connecting with local veteran support agencies provides additional options for veterans who are experiencing a crisis. For example, this researcher often works with a nonprofit organization that assists veterans who are homeless or on the verge of homelessness. When veterans are experiencing serious financial difficulty, that organization will provide immediate funding so the veterans can function.

Colleges are spending more money on resources, but are also making decisions without accessing empirical data that pertains to best practices. The DOD MOU was a good start to holding colleges accountable for offering quality education options to students, but it did not include clear mandates for veteran services. Colleges that have dedicated veterans services with trained staff, student veteran centers, strong connections with outside agencies, and strong programming and outreach are positioned to have greater success in meeting the needs of college veterans.

Social justice. Members of the U.S. military volunteer to sacrifice many of their own personal liberties so that citizens may enjoy freedom. Service members are not politicians, nor do they make decisions for war, but they are the ones who put their lives at risk for others. Many men and women of the military serve their country with great honor, committing everything they have to protect and serve those who cannot protect themselves. Oftentimes, these sisters and brothers sacrifice their health and return home

with injuries they will endure for the rest of their lives. It is no mystery that many veterans who have returned home are not doing well. Veteran unemployment is still very high, the VA is riddled with scandals, and 22 veterans die every day by suicide (Department of Veteran Affairs, 2012).

Veterans need their country to take the initiative and serve them with the same decency they bestowed upon their fellow citizens. Higher education is a great example of this problem. Almost every college enrolls veterans, yet only 25% of colleges have customized support services for veterans (Queen et al., 2014). This study was interested in learning more about help-seeking attitudes toward services, and although the data are important, the reality is that no one needs to be inspired by studies to do the right thing. It is time for this nation and its colleges to become more proactive and establish dedicated services for veterans at every college. College veterans are not fragile, needy, dangerous, or any other of the many negative stereotypes that have been used to describe them, but they do need assistance. Veterans will seldom ask for this assistance or complain about their difficulties, and so if change is not made through leadership, there is every chance that this country will fail many of these veterans.

Our veterans have never given up on us. Let us not give up on them.

Conclusion

College veteran enrollment is a rising trend in higher education, and veterans are coming to college with unique challenges. Although recent research has revealed that veterans are performing well academically compared with nonveteran students, veterans are at much greater risk for mental health challenges, including suicide. Due to an absence of contemporary empirical data on how to serve this population effectively,

colleges are struggling with which practices will best serve veterans. The main purpose of this study was to understand better student veterans' attitudes toward academic and psychological services to inform the reader and contribute to more effective college veteran services.

Chapter 1 reviewed current problems and challenges facing veterans in higher education. Contemporary empirical literature was examined to discover what gaps might exist in the research and establish current problems that deserve further study. This review revealed that college veterans are at a higher risk for mental health-related challenges than nonveteran students, including suicide (Kang et al., 2015). According to the Department of Veteran Affairs' (2012b) suicide data report, approximately 22 veterans commit suicide every day in the United States. Furthermore, although many college veterans perform academically well, many veterans are not meeting academic goals. Research has indicated that colleges are not prepared or equipped to deal with the special needs of this population. Many college student veterans do not utilize college veteran services or participate in social programs. Furthermore, the research reviewed the existence of generalizations about veterans that were not informed through research, resulting in speculation and misinformation.

The review of the research problems led to the development of four research questions. The goal of this study was to obtain a better understanding of the help-seeking attitudes of college veterans toward academic and psychological services. Furthermore, the study sought deeper insights into the potential differences in help-seeking attitudes that might exist between veterans who experienced combat and veterans who did not

experience combat. To give a context to the study of the problem, Schlossberg's transition theory was utilized as a lens to view the research and results of this study.

Chapter 2 reviewed contemporary literature surrounding topics related to the identified research problems in this study. This review examined why college veteran enrollment is booming and what are the characteristics of college veterans. This discussion of the literature revealed that the veteran population is vast and diverse, leading to consideration of different themes or identities that make up the college veteran population. Given that enrollment is increasing, the study examined what colleges were doing to serve the veteran population and learned that only a small percentage of colleges had dedicated veteran services. Chapter 1 revealed that reports surrounding college veteran academic achievement were based mostly on non-empirical data, and the review of the literature in Chapter 2 found that veterans were performing well academically. A study conducted by Student Veterans of America (2014) which included one million college veterans found that veterans performed competitively academically, compared to nonveteran peers.

Because this present study was focused on learning more about veteran behavior in college, the dissertation reviewed empirical data related to college veteran engagement and social integration. The review found that veterans did socially engage in a different manner than traditional students, and preferred to participate in social activities with peers or in military-like organizations such as veteran clubs. Empirical research was also examined related to the challenges veterans face in higher education. This review revealed that many veterans are experiencing mental and physical health issues. Furthermore, veterans are more likely to experience suicide than nonveteran students.

Empirical work on college best practices and techniques for working with veteran challenges was also considered. The review of this research highlighted a significant problem surrounding veteran help-seeking behavior in that veterans were not utilizing services. The review of literature revealed that very little research is available on veteran help-seeking attitudes and very little is known about how veterans feel about services.

Chapter 3 discussed the overall research methodology, including the research context, participants, and procedures. This quantitative study was conducted at two SUNY colleges in upstate New York through the administration of a survey to all qualified veterans; of the 79 surveyed, 51% responded. The survey was adapted from a previous study conducted by DiRamio et al. (2015). The study utilized descriptive statistics to answer research questions 1 and 2, ANOVA to analyze research questions 3 and 4. All data were analyzed through use of SPSS software.

Chapter 4 presented the results of the study. Research questions 1 and 2 focused on understanding the help-seeking attitudes of college veterans toward academic and psychological services. Descriptive statistics were utilized to analyze the data. In a review of the aggregate frequency responses to each question, the mode to every question was resoundingly in the *agree* column. Research questions 3 and 4 focused on assessing potential differences in degree of help-seeking attitudes between veterans who have experienced combat and those who have not. An ANOVA was conducted utilizing SPSS software, and the data revealed that combat experience did not have a significant impact on the degree of college veteran help-seeking attitudes toward academic and psychological services.

This final chapter reviewed the results and discussed them using a theoretical lens, and presented the implications and implications of the study as well as recommendations for future research.

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Appendix A

Letter of Introduction to Participants (SUNY Delhi)

Good Afternoon Student Veterans,

I hope that you are all experiencing a wonderful semester thus far!

Although you all know me as your Coordinator for Veteran Affairs at SUNY Delhi, like you I am also a college student. I am currently enrolled in the Ed.D. program in Executive Leadership program at St. John Fisher College. As part of the degree requirements for that program, I am required to complete a study for my dissertation. I am emailing you this invitation to participate in that study.

Purpose of this study:

The purpose of this study is to examine student veterans attitudes toward help-seeking behavior at college. Research indicates that colleges are investing increased resources in college veteran services, but are not seeing increases in student veteran utilization of services. While many veterans seek services when needed, others who could benefit from these services choose not to do so. This study examines college veteran help-seeking attitudes, in order to better understand how veteran administrators might be able to serve college veterans. As a veteran myself, I am very interested in learning from fellow veterans so that we can potentially make the collegiate experience more positive.

Why were you selected to participate in this study?

All college veterans over the age of 18 that are currently enrolled at SUNY Delhi are being invited to participate in this survey. This includes all veterans of U.S. armed forces, active duty service members, reservists, and members of the National Guard who are attending SUNY Delhi during the Spring semester.

What are the risks or inconveniences in this study?

While in does not anticipate any risks greater than that you would experience in everyday life, reflecting on academic and psychological services may be distressing for some people. If this study does bring out negative feelings, please contact the numbers below for additional resources and/or support:

- SUNY Delhi Health Services: Phone Number: 607-746-4692
- The Veterans Crisis Line: Phone Number: 1-800-273-8255 and press 1, OR you can chat online at <http://www.veteranscrisisline.net>

If you are interested in participating in this survey, please click on the link below or copy and paste the link into your web browser.

Survey Link: XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

In participating in the study, you will be asked to review a disclosure statement, provide consent, and fill out a short anonymous survey. Please note that your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may decide to leave the study at any time. Your responses will be stored in a database that is password protected on a secure computer. Please note that although you will not be asked for your name or any personally identifying information in the survey, absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed due to the limited protections of Internet access.

Research at SUNY Delhi involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). This research has been reviewed and approved by the SUNY Delhi IRB. If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research participant that have not been answered by the investigator or if you wish to report any concerns about the study, please contact the SUNY Delhi IRB chair, Katherine Quartuccio, at quartuke@delhi.edu or (607)746-4812.

Contact Information:

If you have concerns or questions about this study, please contact:
Primary Researcher: Matthew LaLonde at mml04241@sjfc.edu or
Dissertation Chair: Dr. Kim VanDerLinden at kvanderlinden@sjfc.edu.

Thank you in advance for considering participating in this study. Please let me know if you any questions or if I can assist in any fashion.

Appendix B

Copy of Data Collection Tool (survey)

Attitudes Toward Seeking Professional Psychological

Student Veteran Help-Seeking Behavior Survey Disclosure and Consent

Purpose of this study: This is a survey conducted by Matthew LaLonde, Coordinator of Veteran Affairs at SUNY Delhi. The purpose of this study is to examine student veterans attitudes toward help seeking behavior at college, in order to better understand how veteran administrators might be able to serve college veterans. As a veteran myself, I am very interested in learning from fellow vets so that we can make the collegiate experience more positive. This study is being implemented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the St. John Fisher College Ed.D. Program in Executive Leadership. This study has been approved by the St. John Fisher Institutional Research Board, please see attached documentation.

Contact Information: If you have concerns or questions about this study, please contact: Primary Researcher: Matthew LaLonde at mml04241@sjfc.edu or Dissertation Chair: Dr. Kim VanDerLinden at kvanderlinden@sjfc.edu. If you have questions concerning your rights as a research participant that have not been answered by the investigator or if you wish to report any concerns about the study, please contact the SUNY Delhi IRB chair, Katherine Quartuccio, at quartuke@delhi.edu or (607)746-4812.

What will be done: You will complete a survey, which will take about 20 minutes to complete. The survey includes questions regarding some of your demographic information (age, education level, etc.), and your perspectives related to utilization of psychological and academic services. Benefits of this study: You will be contributing important information to the scholarly community regarding college veteran help-seeking attitudes, so that colleges might enhance student services for veterans. Please note that participants will not benefit immediately from this research, but participation might improve future college veteran experiences.

Risks or discomforts: The survey presents a low level of risk for participants because confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained by the researcher, and the questions included in this study are intended to better understand enhancement of college

veteran services. If you feel uncomfortable, you can withdraw from the study all together at any time.

Confidentiality: Your responses will be kept completely confidential. You will not be asked for your name during the survey and demographic information will not be utilized to discern identity, and will only be utilized in gathering aggregate data. Only the researcher will see your individual survey responses. The information will be stored electronically and secured via password. Findings of the survey will be shared with the St. John Fisher Dissertation Committee. Please note when participating via online survey that absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed due to the limited protections of internet access.

Decision to quit at any time: Your participation is voluntary; you are free to withdraw your participation from this study at any time. If you do not want to continue, you can simply leave the survey. If you do not click on the "submit" button at the end of the survey, your answers and participation will not be recorded.

By clicking the "agree" button below, you acknowledge:

- You have read the above information
- You have had the opportunity to clarify any questions regarding your participation in the study
- You are at least 18 years of age
- You voluntarily agree to participate

Please check the circle corresponding to your agreement with the statement from 1. "Strongly Disagree" to 5. "Strongly Agree". Range example: 1. Strongly Disagree (strong "No") 2. Disagree ("No") 3. Neither Agree or Disagree ("Neutral") 4. Agree ("Yes") 5. Strongly Agree ("Strong Yes")

Section B: Attitudes regarding psychological services in college

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
1. The idea of talking about problems with a transition counselor (a trained professional who assists veterans) strikes me as a poor way to get rid of emotional conflicts. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. If I believed that I was having extreme difficulty in my transition to college, my first inclination would be to get professional attention. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. If I were experiencing a serious emotional crisis at this point in my life, I would be confident that I could find relief in psychological counseling. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. There is something admirable in the attitude of a person who is willing to cope with his or her conflicts and fears without resorting to professional help. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. I would want to get transition counseling if I were worried or upset for a long period of time. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. I might want to have transition counseling in the future. (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. A person with an emotional problem is not likely to solve it alone; he or she is likely to solve it with professional help. (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Considering the time and expense involved in getting counseling it would have doubtful value for a person like me. (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. A person should work out his or her own problems; getting psychological counseling would be a last resort. (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Personal and emotional troubles, like many things, tend to work out by themselves. (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Section A: Attitudes regarding academic services in college:

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
1. If I believed that I was struggling significantly in my college coursework, my first strategy would be to seek out academic assistance from support staff on campus. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. If I were having a serious academic crisis in college, I would be confident that I could find help in academic counseling. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. The idea of talking about academic problems with a campus academic counselor seems to me to be an unproductive way to deal with schoolwork issues. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. It is commendable when a student is willing to deal with his or her difficulties with college coursework and tests without resorting to seeking academic assistance from the school. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. I would want to get academic counseling if I were experiencing difficulties with any of my classes over a long period of the semester. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Considering the extra effort involved in getting academic assistance from campus staff, it is unlikely to be valuable for a student like me. (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. I might want to get academic counseling in the future. (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Troubles with college classes, like many things, tend to work out by themselves. (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. A student with a learning disability is not likely to overcome it alone; he or she is likely to solve it with professional assistance. (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. A person should work out his or her own difficulties with college coursework and tests; getting academic counseling would be a last resort. (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Section C: Demographic Information

Q3 How many years of college have you completed?

- less than 1 year (1)
- 1 - 2 years (2)
- 2 - 3 years (3)
- 3 - 4 years (4)
- 4 - 5 years (5)
- 5 - 6 years (6)
- 6 or more years (7)
- Not Sure (8)

Q4 Please indicate your current GPA (Grade Point Average):

- 3.6 - 4.0 (1)
- 3.1 - 3.5 (2)
- 2.6 - 3.0 (3)
- 2.1 - 2.5 (4)
- 1.6 - 2.0 (5)
- 1.1 - 1.5 (6)
- .6 - 1.0 (7)
- 0 - .5 (8)

Q5 What is your gender?

- Male (1)
- Female (2)

Q6 Are you currently serving in the United States Military?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q7 In which branch (or branches) of the United States military have you served (please check all that apply)?

- Marines (1)
- Army (2)
- Air Force (3)
- Navy (4)
- Coast Guard (5)

Q8 Please indicate the capacity in which you served, or are serving (please select all that apply):

- Active Duty (1)
- Reserves (2)
- National Guard (3)

Q9 Please indicate your Ethnicity or Race (Please check all that apply):

- African American or Black (1)
- American Indian or Alaska Native (2)
- Asian (3)
- Hispanic or Latino (4)
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (5)
- Caucasian or White (6)
- Other (7)

Q10 Please indicate how many times you were deployed during your military service? (This includes any official combat operations such as Global War on Terrorism, Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), Operation New Dawn (OND).

- 0 deployments (1)
- 1 deployment (2)
- 2 deployments (3)
- 3 deployments (4)
- 4 deployments (5)
- 5 or more deployments (6)

Q11 What is your age?

- Under 13 (1)
- 13-17 (2)
- 18-25 (3)
- 26-34 (4)
- 35-54 (5)
- 55-64 (6)
- 65 or over (7) _____

Q12 Please indicate your current family structure.

- Single without children (1)
- Single with children (2)
- Married without children (3)
- Married with children (4)
- Life partner without children (5)
- Life partner with children (6)

Q13 Have you ever seen a therapist or counselor (mental health counselor, psychologist, social worker, etc.) in the past?

- Yes, I have never seen a therapist (1)
- Yes, I have seen a therapist within the past 6 months (2)
- Yes, I have seen a therapist within the past year (3)
- Yes, I have seen a therapist within the past 2 years (4)
- Yes, I have seen a therapist within the past 4 years (5)
- Yes, I have seen a therapist more than 4 years ago (6)
- No (7)

Q17 Thank you for taking time out of your personal life to take this survey. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at any time: mml04241@sjfc.edu.

Appendix C

Demographic Data Summary

Gender Participant Summary

	Frequency	Percent
Female	9	22.5
Male	30	75
No Entry	1	2.5
Total	40	100

Branch of Service Participant Summary

	Frequency	Percent
Air Force	9	22.5
Army	14	35.0
Coast Guard	2	5.0
Marines	10	25.0
Navy	5	12.5
Total	40	100.0

Ethnicity or Race

	Frequency	Percent
African American	3	7.5
Caucasian or White	34	85.0
Caucasian or White and African American	2	5.0
Caucasian or White and American Indian or Alaskan Native	1	2.5
Total	40	100.0

Currently Serving in the Military

	Frequency	Percent
No	28	70.0
Yes	12	30.0
Total	40	100.0

Years of College Participant Summary

	Frequency	Percent
1-2 years	14	35.0
2-3 years	10	25.0
3-4 years	5	12.5
4-5 years	2	5.0
5-6 years	2	5.0
6 or more years	1	2.5
Less than one year	6	15.0
Total	40	100.0

Family Structure Participant Summary

	Frequency	Percent
Not Mentioned	1	2.5
Life partner with children	1	2.5
Life partner without children	1	2.5
Married with children	12	30.0
Married without children	5	12.5
Single with children	3	7.5
Single without children	17	42.5
Total	40	100.0

Combat Deployment Summary

	Frequency	Percent
0 Deployments	12	30.0
1 Deployment	11	27.5
2 Deployments	9	22.5
3 Deployments	4	10.0
4 Deployments	1	2.5
5 Deployments	3	7.5
Total	40	100.0

Grade Point Average

	Frequency	Percent
1.6 – 2.0	1	2.5
2.1 – 2.5	6	15.0
2.6 – 3.0	6	15.0
3.1 – 3.5	11	27.5
3.6 – 4.0	16	40.0
Total	40	100.0

Therapist Experience Participant Summary

	Frequency	Percent
No	18	45.0
Yes, I have seen a therapist	2	5.0
Yes, I have seen a therapist more than 4 years ago	7	17.5
Yes, I have seen a therapist within the past 2 years	1	2.5
Yes, I have seen a therapist within the past 4 years	2	5.0
Yes, I have seen a therapist within the past 6 months	9	22.5
Yes, I have seen a therapist within the past year	1	2.5
Total	40	100.0