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Kovach, Daniel R. *Faculty Attitudes and Beliefs Toward Current Era Student Veterans at Mid-Western Institutions of Higher Education*

Abstract

The current military era is the longest period of sustained conflict in the nation's history. Moreover, it is being fought by a contracting volunteer force of less than one half of one percent of the population. As veterans utilize their military benefits in their transition to civilian life, colleges are trying to create a veteran friendly environment and identify the barriers student veterans face. Research has shown that student veterans cited a barrier to inclusion and college success as feeling misunderstood by college faculty. This qualitative phenomenological study examines the perceptions of faculty at mid-western technical colleges and universities. The key objectives of the study were to determine what influences faculty perceptions of student veterans and what were the teaching faculty attitudes toward accommodations for student veterans.

Qualitative interviews were conducted with ten faculty from two college systems across three campuses. Subjects were asked a series of questions that explored their background, military heritage, political perceptions and that of their professional peers, significant personal experiences with veterans, knowledge of veteran issues, and other factors that influence their perceptions of student veterans. The findings used interpretational analysis to identify patterns of perception and themes that help understand the objectives of the study.

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Chapter I: Introduction

The attacks on September 11, 2001 and the subsequent Global War on Terror triggered the longest sustained period of conflict in our nation's history. This same era of military service, also referred to as the Gulf War era II, has been marked by a number of unique and troubling characteristics, such as the lowest military participation rate. Less than 0.5 % of the population was on active duty status (Defense Manpower Data Center, 2016). Additionally, among this group of military service participants and veterans, reported the highest rates of suicide, 21% higher among veterans when compared to U.S. civilian adults in 2014 (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs [DoVA], 2016).

As of September 2016, a full fifteen years after the attacks that started the protracted Global War on Terror, the Gulf War era II has produced about 4.4 million living veterans (U.S. DoVA, 2016), with more than a million beneficiaries using military education benefits. More than 790,000 of them were using the Post 911 GI Bill to reintegrate to civilian life through post-secondary education (U.S. DoVA, 2015). Research suggests that transitioning from a very structured military life to a loosely structured student life can be stressful and laden with obstacles intrinsic to institutions of higher learning (Steele, Salcedo, & Coley, 2010).

Other studies have revealed that first-year veterans tend to be less engaged in reflective learning compared to nonveterans (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2010). Even without combat stress, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI) or other factors, many veterans struggle to adjust to college culture from military culture (Gourley & Alexander, 2013). Among veterans who served during Gulf War era II, about 1 in 3, or 1.2 million, reported having a service-connected disability (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). As a result, veterans are experiencing unprecedented levels of unemployment, low GI Bill utilization

rates and, most discouraging, a growing reliance on entitlement benefits in lieu of self-sufficiency (DeGroat & Crowley, 2013).

The statistics compiled from the 2009-2013 American Community Survey showed 21.3 million veterans living in the United States and Puerto Rico, comprising 9 percent of the civilian population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015), a number hardly represented on college campuses, not just in student population, but faculty and staff. While it can be difficult for colleges to obtain data on their student veteran population, it is critical since the data will ensure programs and services that are being implemented are truly supporting veterans and helping to achieve their postsecondary goals (American Council on Education, 2011).

Despite the availability of county veteran service officers (CVSOs) and on-campus personnel such as veteran benefit coordinators, it is teachers who have the most contact with student veterans, teachers who tend to have walked a very divergent path in life. In one 2013 study of two and four year college teachers found that although virtually all of the instructors were aware of veterans in their classrooms, nearly half were less likely to believe that they should take steps to support student veterans in the classroom (Gonzalez & Elliot, 2013).

Although the retention and graduation rates that are often identified with college success largely rest on an aggregate of attitudes, influences and experiences, for student veterans, a significant barrier remains in the effort in which they seek to understand the academic and social landscape that encompasses their new environment and the willingness in which they engage it (Kovach, 2014). The attitudes and beliefs of teachers shape that landscape. This phenomenological study seeks to identify teaching faculty's attitudes and beliefs toward current era student veterans at mid-western technical colleges and universities.

Statement of the Problem

Numerous studies have identified that an invisible barrier to student veteran success in higher education settings is their perception that non-veteran college faculty and student peers do not understand them or their experiences. Research suggests that classroom behaviors that lend to feeling “understood” impact student veteran perceptions of their college more than the accommodations and amenities developed to support their inclusion and the academic success.

Research has also shown that student veterans tend to exhibit a selflessness and concern for other veterans that is a product of military culture and training. Being oriented to the mission and others over self affects their willingness to seek critical support and use appropriate services in the college setting. This selflessness, known as the “Carpenter Effect,” has been observed in research where student veterans were adamant about services and amenities for their veteran peers, but demonstrated a reluctance to utilize these same services and amenities toward their own support and success.

Due to the degree of contact and influence teaching faculties have with students, their level of understanding toward student veterans has a significant impact on the student veterans’ perception of their college experience. Therefore, in an effort to support student veterans in their educational journey, institutions of higher learning should include examining the perceptions of teaching faculty toward the classroom environment and campus culture that student veterans experience.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine teaching faculty’s attitudes and beliefs toward current era student veterans at mid-western technical colleges and universities. Understanding faculty perceptions is critical for colleges to help identify potential barriers in the classroom and

determining the appropriateness of staff development training. The results of this study may be used to inform veteran specific training for faculty.

Research Objectives

This study attempted to understand the following objectives:

1. Understand the influence of teaching faculty perceptions of student veterans.
2. Understand teaching faculty attitudes toward accommodations for student veterans.

Significance of the Study

Broadly, the importance of this study is to inform a college and classroom environment that promotes enrollment, retention and graduation rates of current era veterans. More generally, this study will contribute to identifying cultural competency issues helpful in removing potential stigmas and stereotypes held by student veterans, their non-veteran peers and college faculty.

Specifically, this study is geared toward understanding teaching faculty's attitudes and beliefs toward current era student veterans at mid-western technical colleges and universities.

Understanding their perceptions and examining what shapes them will help college leaders to be more intentional in determining the level of need and appropriateness of veteran specific training for teaching faculty.

Assumptions of the Study

Based on the personal and professional experiences of the researcher and other works, this study makes the following assumptions:

1. The researcher assumes that not all student veterans encounter barriers to college success, nor do they experience the stigmas or pronounced cultural conflict documented by other studies and student veterans.

2. The researcher assumes that not all barriers to college success can be attributed to military service, service related injuries, or a lack of college support.
3. The researcher assumes that college faculty and veterans alike self-identify along a diverse spectrum of political ideals and values.
4. The researcher assumes that colleges are good-willed institutions that seek to promote a supportive learning environment, yet can hold individual values and appear exclusive to particular schools of thought.

Limitations of the Study

Despite the efforts and intentions of the research, the study includes some notable limitations. Although qualitative phenomenological studies can produce valuable and relevant information, the research produced is not empirical. Contributing to the confusion regarding student veteran postsecondary academic outcomes is the fact that national-level data on student veterans have been difficult to find, analyze, and interpret due to poor collection methods, narrow inclusion criteria, and mistakes in identifying student veterans.

Most traditional national postsecondary databases exclude a portion of the student veteran population while including other military populations, which makes accurately analyzing student veteran postsecondary academic outcomes difficult at best. The value of qualitative research is heavily dependent on the individual skills of the researcher and more easily influenced by the researcher's personal biases and idiosyncrasies. The researcher's presence during data gathering, which is often unavoidable in qualitative research, can affect the subjects' responses. Issues of anonymity and confidentiality can taint the testimony of subjects and be the basis of problems when presenting findings. Lastly, qualitative research is sometimes not as well

understood and accepted as quantitative or mixed methods research within the scientific community.

Definition of Terms

Carpenter effect. The Carpenter Effect describes the profound sense of duty and instinctive selflessness veterans tend to exhibit, especially toward one another. This phenomenon is named in honor and recognition of Lance Cpl. William Kyle Carpenter, who deliberately threw himself onto a grenade in Afghanistan in 2010 to save his friend and fellow Marine, Lance Cpl. Nicholas Eufrazio.

Cultural competency. For the purpose of this study, cultural competency is defined as the ability to understand an organization's culture, what is valued, how traditions influence operations, and how symbolism is used to reinforce actions (Rhoads & Tierney, 1992).

Current era veteran. For the purpose of this research, Current Era Veterans are members or former members of the United States military serving or having served after September 11, 2001. This era includes the campaigns; Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan, Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). This era is also referred to as the POST 9/11 era, Gulf War II era, and the Global War on Terror (GWOT). This era represents the longest period of sustained combat in American history.

Don't ask don't tell (DADT). DADT refers to the former official U.S. policy (1993–2011) regarding the service of homosexuals in the military. The term was coined after President Bill Clinton in 1993 signed a law (consisting of statute, regulations, and policy memoranda) directing that military personnel “don't ask, don't tell, don't pursue, and don't harass” (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2016).

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). According to Merriam Webster Online Dictionary (2012), PTSD is a psychological reaction occurring after experiencing a highly stressing event (as wartime combat, physical violence, or a natural disaster) that is usually characterized by depression, anxiety, flashbacks, recurrent nightmares, and avoidance of reminders of them.

Recruit officer training corps (ROTC). Seeded by the Morrill Act of 1862, ROTC began with President Wilson signing the National Defense Act of 1916. The Army ROTC is the largest officer-producing organization with the American military, having commissioned more than half a million second lieutenants since its inception (U.S. Army Cadet Command, 2016).

Student veteran. For the purpose of this study, student-veteran is defined 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” (Vaccaro, 2015, p. 347).

Traumatic brain injury (TBI). Also called “severe concussions,” “close head wounds,” and “mild brain injuries,” TBIs occur when a person receives a severe blow to the head, either by a physical object or a concussion blast like that produced by a detonated improvised explosive device (Klocek, 2008). The symptoms of a TBI parallel those of a concussion. However, concussion symptoms typically dissipate after a day, while TBI symptoms can last for years or a person’s entire life (Cate, 2014).

Veterans. For the purpose of this study, the term “veteran” is used synonymously with members of the military, servicemen and women, vets, and may also imply sailors, soldiers, Marines, and all members of other U.S. Military branches. The research often alludes to cadets or students enrolled in Recruit Office Training Corps (ROTC) programs as viewed in a similar

light as veterans due to their association and commitment to military service. Segments of the Chapter Two imply an association between college campus ROTC programs and the U.S. Government, as such programs have been the most visible example of government on campuses.

Warrior identity problem (WIP). Warrior identity problem was proposed as a new diagnostic category and subcategory of identity problem by Max Sugar (2004). WIP posits that identity problem occurs in late adolescence due to interference in identity development and an absence of character synthesis.

Chapter II: Literature Review

With the longest sustained period of military conflict in our nation's history, the substantial benefits of the POST 911 GI BILL and the shifting economic needs that precipitate most careers requiring post-secondary credentials, colleges have seen an increase in student veterans on their campuses. The growth of student veterans on campus and the emergence of invisible barriers to retention and graduation rates have forced institutions of higher learning to re-examine several things such as the unique challenges of current era student veterans. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey PUMS (2014), a higher percentage of Post-9/11 Veterans had a service-connected disability, used VA health care only, used food stamps, had no health insurance coverage and no income compared to veterans of other eras (National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, 2016). The challenges of the services and amenities needed by this group will lend to the social inclusion and academic success of current era veterans.

Studies have revealed that despite efforts to aid student veterans in their transition to college and civilian life invisible barriers remain. Reintegration and inclusion have been more of a cultural competency issue than the lacking of a particular service or amenity colleges have offered. Many of these barriers are rooted in the perceptions and stereotypes of student veterans, their non-veteran peers and college faculty. This literature review parsed through some of the aggregate factors that impact student veteran success and examined three remarkable periods that helped to shed light on and define the relationship between college and military cultures.

This study examines teaching faculty's attitudes and beliefs toward current era student veterans at mid-western technical colleges and universities, toward a goal of helping college

administrators improve cultural competency and campus climate for student veterans. The review of literature will provide support to the study and its research methodology.

Growth of the Student Veteran

Historians and economists have documented the positive, beneficial outcomes that the original GI Bill produced for World War II veterans and the United States economy (Bound & Turner, 2002; Greenberg, 1997; Stanley, 2003). Cook and Kim (2009) evaluated this increasing trend and surmised that postsecondary institutions are currently experiencing the highest influx of student veterans since World War II. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2014) the Post-9/11 Veteran population is expected to increase 46 percent between 2014 and 2019 (National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, 2016). Numerous needs assessments and studies have identified invisible barriers to college success for current era veterans that translate to high drop-out rates and negative social indicators that range from rates of veteran unemployment to veterans suicides of epidemic proportion. In the largest study ever done on veteran suicide conducted by the Department of Veterans Administration (2016), after controlling for factors like age and gender, veterans faced a 21 percent greater risk for suicide than those who had not served in the armed forces.

Since the protracted wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that have produced millions of veterans and the passing of the POST 9/11 GI BILL (2008), college campuses have seen an increase in college enrollment by members and former members of the military and members of their families (Cook & Kim, 2009). Many institutions of higher learning have strived to better serve this growing population, improve their enrollment and increase campus diversity with student veterans by developing task forces and committees that examine the needs of student veterans.

The University of Wisconsin-Stout (UW-Stout) established a veteran's subcommittee in 2010 to develop a five-year Veterans Recruitment and Retention plan to increase enrollment, retention, and graduation rates for student veterans. This plan explicitly sought to increase the retention rates of veterans to 73% by 2015 and reach six-year graduation rates of 87% or higher (UW-Stout Office of Planning, Assessment, Research, and Quality (PARQ) [UW-Stout PARQ], 2010b). Following the trend of UW-Stout (2010) and other colleges such as Auburn (2010) and the University of Hawaii (2011), the University of Arkansas (UARK) formed an interdepartmental veteran task force in 2014 to assess the needs of their student veterans and create a more "veteran-friendly" campus. Of the nearly twenty recommendations, they included the need to increase military cultural competency among faculty and training of all staff members in veterans' issues (University of Arkansas Task Force to Study Needs of Student Veterans, 2008). Similar studies have identified a need to develop training programs for faculty and staff "to broaden their understanding of working with student veterans" (Hayden, 2014). One of the most significant barriers to student-veterans becoming a part of the campus community was the attitudes of other students and faculty (Burnett & Segoria, 2009). In Kovach (2014) student veterans stated that they felt, "their academic experience had in some ways, been complicated by their military service. Citing reasons such as changes in perception and maturity, feeling stigmatized for being a veteran, peers and teachers unwilling or unable to relate to their perspective or not wanting to share their veteran status or talk about their experiences" (p. 53).

For young men and women who lack the financial means or the skills to attend college, however, the choice to serve in the military is more than a "call to duty." It is a means of escaping environments that have little potential for socioeconomic advancement and limited vocational options by which to learn discipline, and potential trades (Teachman, 2007). A desire

to enlist in the military after high school implies an individual is not desperately seeking college for the “college experience,” and may use their benefits more strategically where life circumstances permit. Due to the college credits many veterans complete while in the military, they are generally classified as transfer students by the American Council on Education credit recommendations (O’Herrin, 2011).

Horn (1996) uses seven characteristics to classify postsecondary students as “nontraditional.” These characteristics include delayed enrollment, part-time enrollment, financial independence, full-time employment while enrolled, having dependents, single parent, and did not receive standard high school diploma. Additionally, Horn established a scale of nontraditional status based on the number of characteristics met by the student. A student having one nontraditional characteristic ranked as “minimally nontraditional;” those with two or three nontraditional characteristics are classified as “moderately nontraditional;” and having four or more nontraditional characteristics means one is “highly nontraditional.” In contemporary times, student veterans resemble student veterans of other eras and were classified as nontraditional students using Horn’s characteristics. They are frequently older than their traditional counterparts due to a multiyear break between high school and college; high percentages of this population were married and had families of their own (Cate, 2014).

Complicating the adjustment to college and broadening the divide created by entering the college from a divergent military pathway, student veterans were more likely to be first-generation students than their non-veteran peers (National Survey of Student Engagement [NSSE], 2010). The term “first generation students” has several definitions, but for the purpose of this research the term is defined as students whose parents have no college or post-secondary experiences (Engle, 2007; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004; Saenz, Hurtado,

Barrera, Wolf, & Yeung, 2007). There was considerable “cultural capital” that continuing-generation students, those whose parents attended college, had by virtue of their parents’ experiences, in the form of financial, informational, and social resources (Stephens, Fryberg, Markus, Johnson, & Covarrubias, 2012).

Lighthall (2012) stated,

Because the vast majority of Americans choose not to join one of the branches of the military, our student veterans are surrounded by people who have no experience, or context, for understanding their experiences; to many of them, the student veteran’s behavior may be confusing, inexplicable, or even frightening. (p. 88)

As the military continued to compress into a smaller force, the exposure educators have to the military has diminished. According to the 2010 US Census, less than 0.5% of the population was on active duty status. Only 33% of Americans under the age of 30 were directly related to a service member, which contributed to 77% of veterans feel misunderstood by civilians (Pew, 2011).

Chickering and Reisser (1993) and Kegan (1994) are cited by DiRamio and Jarvis (2011) that identity is based on a belief structure about personal values and self-regard and these beliefs affect the peer group with which one connects. Students come to universities and colleges with multiple intersecting identities (Wurster, Rinaldi, Woods, & Liu, 2012), particularly if they function in additional roles such as parent, worker, and caregiver. In the familiar world of the military, the social and personal context for what constitutes a visible and acceptable identity is narrow; the “dominant values dictate norms and expectations” (Torres, Jones, & Renn, 2009, p. 577). The military reinforces that one subjugates their individual identity to the identity of the

group. One young man noted that “his real mission in life— in the Army— is being there for his troops” (Lewis, Forsythe, Sweeney & Bullis, 2005, p. 368).

These uniquely nontraditional student veterans stand apart from their campus peers by age, life experience, by envelopment in the military culture, and all too often by a close up view of war’s horrors. The word “veteran,” derived from “vetus,” means old, ripe, worn, belonging to the past. Hilman (2004) noted in his text, *A Terrible Love of War*, “Time alone does not make veterans” (p. 34). What Hilman spoke of was that their experiences shape many veterans. In addition to their training and the military culture that permeates the service person’s life, it is these experiences that foster the profound divide of perception from the student veterans and their non-veteran peers and teachers. Witkop (2002), in his book, *German Students' War Letters* shared what one twenty year old German student once wrote, “All about us death hissed and howled. Such a night is enough to make an old man out of one” (p. 151).

Despite our nation’s long history of military conflict, medical professionals are re-evaluating what they know about the physical, mental and emotional scars of war. Colleges and universities simply cannot conduct business as usual and expect to properly serve these students (Pulley, 2013). Returning home Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) are often met with others’ ambivalent attitudes toward the wars and may have difficulty relating to family and friends. They may also have mental and physical injuries and may experience a sense of loss after parting from their unit and intense focus on military imperatives (Doyle & Peterson, 2005; Milliken, Auchterlonie, & Hoge, 2007).

Questions remain about whether colleges are doing enough to recognize and understand their incoming student veteran population from such divergent backgrounds. DiRamio and Jarvis cite (Rumann & Hamrick, 2010), “For some (veterans) the need to be identified and

acknowledged has having served in the military is key, while others may choose to re-create or establish a nonveteran identity by concealing their veteran status” (p. 28). In Kovach (2014), half the student veteran subjects avoided sharing their veteran status or their self-identified “veteran’s perspective,” expressing a fear of being stigmatized as a veteran and for holding views “that seem outside the college norm.” This perception, that half the subjects held, tends to indicate the issue of feeling “safe” as a student veteran on campus was at the very least in question (p. 77).

Complications to College Inclusion and Academic Success

Many veterans who enroll in postsecondary institutions have endured the consequences of the Global War on Terror (GWT) such as extensive physical wounds, mental health issues and traumatic brain injuries (Church, 2009). There is strong evidence that veterans tend not to ask for help, seen most glaringly in their suicide rates that exceed combat losses (Kemp & Bossarte, 2012). Heaney (2016), an experienced counselor of combat veterans, put it this way, “They (veterans) are caught in an inherent paradox: they belong to a culture in which helplessness isn’t allowed, yet that same culture places them in situations where profound helplessness is a given” (p. 92). It has been shown that military related injuries impact student veterans’ capacity to assimilate into campus life. For instance, symptoms of both post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression increase the likelihood that student veterans will feel uncomfortable in situations such as crowded auditoriums, unfairly judged, and like they do not fit in on campus (Elliott, 2015; Elliott, Gonzalez, & Larsen 2011; 2012).

A side effect of military service is that no soldier, or veteran, wants to be the weak link on a team. Failure is not an option for these veterans and being a burden to anyone, such as professors or campus administrators, brings back the specter of being the weak link on a military

team. This is why so many cases of posttraumatic stress, anxiety disorders, alcohol and drug addiction, and medical issues go undiagnosed and untreated: veterans do not want campus community members to view them as weak or dependent upon anyone for assistance (Vacchi, 2012). The well documented issues and statistics of current era veterans have not gone unnoticed by employers and college faculty. Student veterans have been seen as having a greater depth and breadth of world experiences compared with traditional students, largely due to their military service and overseas experiences with other cultures (Ackerman, DiRamio, & Garza, 2009; DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchell, 2008).

Stigma of PTSD

According to a 2010 survey conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management, 46 percent of employers considered PTSD a significant obstacle to hiring employees with military experience. Another poll indicated that employers were concerned about the potential for violence but were not sure if that concern is valid, says Hannah H. Rudstam, a member of the senior extension faculty at the DBTAC-Northeast ADA Center in the School of Industrial and Labor Relations at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. Meinert cited SHRM researchers, who collaborated on the January poll to gauge employers' views on hiring veterans. The same study found that personnel managers were really struggling with understanding what accommodations in this area look like. "They have very, very little experience with these types of accommodations" (Meinert, 2011, para.17).

A 2011 Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) report that showed the unemployment rate was 12.1% for veterans who served on active duty at any time since 2001. For male veterans between 18–24 years of age, the unemployment rate was significantly higher (29.1%), than that of their nonveteran peers (17.6%) (BLS, 2011). Some veterans may matriculate into higher

education either because there are few other options available, or because doing so may increase their job marketability (Lang & Powers, 2011). Stigmas advanced through popular culture and news reports belie statistical data and affect veteran opportunities and self-image. A 2009 Department of Homeland Security report on Right-wing extremism was criticized for being politically charged and for furthering the stigmas of returning veterans, stating,

The possible passage of new restrictions on firearms and the return of military veterans facing significant challenges reintegrating into their communities could lead to the potential emergence of terrorist groups or lone wolf extremists capable of carrying out violent attacks. (p. 2)

Another study revealed that more than half of responses to a 2012 survey of employers conducted by Center for a New American Security acknowledge that companies “acknowledged that concerns about PTSD play a role in their hiring decisions” (Harrell & Berglass, 2012, p. 24).

In a 2012 NBC report on the concern of employers to hire veterans, president and CEO of the nonprofit, Disability Management Employer Coalition, was cited as saying, “The stigma of PTSD is at the top of the list,” said Carruthers. “These veterans are exactly the kinds of people you’d want to hire, they’re used to working as a team; they’re loyal; you give them an order and they follow through,” Carruthers said. “So some of this is related to the types of injuries we’re seeing and, I would say, really, due to the fear of employers in terms of bringing back these people. If they were coming home with broken legs, it would be a different thing. There’s a fear factor” (Briggs, 2012). Previous research has shown that mental health issues led student veterans to perceive faculty as judging them unfairly, but little is known about what faculty actually think of student veterans (Gonzalez & Elliott, 2016).

Other Traits of Student Veterans

In addition to the previous list of influences that research has attributed to complicating college inclusion and the academic success of student veterans, the following factors have been identified as additional traits that are unique to student veterans and whose adverse impact on college success is supported by research.

Continued military service. Student veterans that continue to serve through the National Guard or Reserve component of the military are often seen as barriers to their continued service. In Kovach (2014), college students who served in the National Guard and Reserve forces stated that they felt their academic experience had been complicated by active deployments or drills that interfered with studies and social life” (p. 53). Other studies have shown that the effects of a mid-term mobilization on the academic outcomes of student veterans who continue to serve remain unknown, and argued that “this lack of knowledge makes it difficult for college and university administrators and faculty to implement proper policies that enable student veterans to deal with such disruptions, withdraw appropriately, and then re-enroll in school” (Cate, 2014, p. 1).

Carpenter effect. The Carpenter Effect describes the profound sense of duty and instinctive selflessness veterans tend to exhibit, especially toward one another. This core value is reinforced in their training and often visible in their post service life. This effect was named by researcher Daniel Kovach in honor and recognition of Lance Cpl. William Kyle Carpenter, who deliberately threw himself onto a grenade in Afghanistan in 2010 to save his friend and fellow Marine, Lance Cpl. Nicholas Eufrazio. In Kovach (2014) student veterans adamantly campaigned for services and amenities for their student veteran peers that they, themselves, intentionally avoided using despite their own needs. Veterans become accustomed to responding to

needs, often and instinctively assuming the role of protector and defender. It is an inherent and developed trait that contributes to veterans' reluctance to seek help, whether it is for psychological, physical, or academic concerns.

Mental and physical injuries. As a civilian who spent years counseling military veterans and their families, Heaney (2016) articulates the transition veterans make in returning to civilian life.

In my years of working with the military, I noticed the misunderstanding soldiers faced from the civilian community. Rather than being seen as protectors –as warriors have been viewed in past cultures-our current culture struggles with how to view combat veterans. The cultural dissonance about recent wars spills over into our feelings about soldiers, creating another layer of difficult struggle for soldiers who fought and served. As I worked with the combat veterans, I began to understand: soldiers can't really arrive back home until we are able to receive them-not with parades and reintegration programs, but with a deep and profound willingness to honor their individual journeys into combat and back again. We need to reach out, listen, and understand the burdens they carried- to grasp the enormity of the task they undertake in the name of service to our country. (p. 125)

Due to major technological and medical advances current-era service members have an increased likelihood of surviving combat-related injuries. It has been estimated that 90 percent of injuries sustained in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) or Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) survived (Klocek, 2008). Hoge, Auchterlonie, and Milliken (2006) found that the prevalence rate for any mental health disorder was 19.1 percent among OIF veterans and 11.3 percent

among OEF veterans. Edward Tick, who has been counseling veterans since the 1970s, shared in (Kupfer, 2008),

Disabled American Veterans says the PTSD rate in modern wars is 100 percent. It's not whether you get PTSD; it's how severe your case is. The Veteran Administration (VA), of course, tries to keep the numbers low, but they are counting only the cases they have allowed into the VA system. Everybody who goes through a war is traumatized, unless they were already psychopathic or sociopathic. (p. 2)

While 88% of military members agree that mental illness can be treated, and 90% agree that treatment can help people gain control of their lives, the Veteran Affairs health system found that the stigma-related barriers are a major contributing factor to the lack of service utilization (Dickstein, Vogt, Handa, & Litz, 2010).

Warrior identity problem (WIP). The armed services often boast of their ability to improve maturity and independence in young men and women. Consequentially, many of them join the military with aspirations that their own identity can be established. Sugar (2004) proposed warrior identity problem (WIP) as a new diagnostic category and subcategory of identity problem. "Identity problem occurs in late adolescence due to interference in identity development and an absence of character synthesis. WIP appears to develop as a solution to identity problem in some individuals" (p. 279). Erikson (1959) posited identity formation as a lifelong, evolving configuration consisting of the integration of personal traits, assets, experiences, identifications, defenses, and "consistent roles" (p. 116). Identity formation is the major psychological development in late adolescent and involves a sense of self and competence that harmonizes and has continuity with the community and culture (Sugar, 2004). Given that most members of the military join in their late teens or early 20s, almost all of them have

developed primary adult identities as members of the military and identify with military values and culture. Military culture necessarily values rules, order, discipline and respect for authority (Gourley & Alexander, 2013).

Cultural Conflict: The Institution of Higher Learning and Military

There have been a number of incidents and factors that have impacted the relationship between the institutions of higher learning and members of the U.S. armed forces. An example of this would be the approach the U.S. has taken to waging war since Vietnam. There were those that have argued the harm of absolving Americans from meaningful involvement as in past conflicts. Cultural shifts have left the U.S. military organized and reliant upon professionals, as opposed to citizen soldiers. This has reduced the fighting force and “altered the relationship between the military and society in ways that too few Americans seem willing to acknowledge” (Bacevich, 2013, p. 14). According to Gonzalez (2012) student veterans feel uncomfortable when their professors’ version of military history departs significantly from their firsthand experience and when they are singled out as representatives of the military (DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchell, 2008).

The politics of the two domains, college professors and veterans, tend to be divergent. According to Gallup (2016), veterans are more likely to be Republican than are those of comparable ages who are not veterans. The conservative skew is at least minimally evident across all age groups, ranging from a 15-point difference in the percentage Republican between veterans and nonveterans in the 25-29 age group, to a 2-point difference in the 85+ group (Gallup, 2016). In a RAND report on civil-military gap in the U.S., Szayna, McCarthy, Sollinger, Demaine, Marquis, and Steele (2007) found that a disproportionate number of military officers identified with the Republican Party which raised concerns about the potential

politicization of defense issues. The report showed evidence “that policy differences between civilians and military hinge more on perceived differences due to occupational and professional interests than party identification per se” (p. xvi). Inversely, a survey by Gross and Simmons (2014) has shown that “the academic profession is indeed liberally oriented and a Democratic Party stronghold” (p. 8).

Colleges are supposed to be the arena of idea, open to diverse perspectives and spirited debate. The diversity of college and university faculty has been a subject of discussion, dispute, and priority for several decades, particularly since the 1960s. Equity in higher education became a national priority as a result of the civil rights movement. Despite discussions and the subsequent attempts of several local and national programs to advance faculty diversity, the national report card on accomplishments remains poor (Apprey, Hill, McGrann, & Wang, 2010).

Ricks (1997) cited the idea of a gap between the military and civilian American society as hardly new. For much of the nation's history, notes Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington in *The Soldier and the State* (1957), the U.S. military has had "the outlook of an estranged minority." In *The Straw Giant: Triumph and Failure—America's Armed Forces* (1986) he defined this as "the less-than-amicable separation of the military from the financial, business, political, and intellectual elites of this country, particularly from the last two." Journalist Arthur Hadley called this strained civilian-military relationship "The Great Divorce" (p. 274).

In an NPR interview, General Martin Dempsey, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, stated that the military “face[s] a deficit larger than our budget. And that is a deficit of understanding between those of us who serve in uniform and our fellow citizens” (Bowman, 2014). Kovach (2014) observed that, wittingly or unwittingly, organizations express their ideals through the standards and practices that govern who they accept. The lack of veteran presence,

not just student veterans but faculty and staff veterans on campus, undermines an effort to portray a college as a veteran friendly organization (p. 72). In a study of civilian-military relation during a time of war by Urben (2010), the research did not suggest that the officer corps had become dangerously politicized, though it did uncover several fault lines in the officer corps' nonpartisan ethic that were likely to attract the attention of both civil-military relations scholars and senior military and governmental leaders alike" (p. iv).

History professor and retired military officer Andrew Bacevich (2013) made this observation,

Many professors spent their formative years as students on college campuses that embraced a very different culture than that of the military. Activists, radicals, and hipsters celebrated a do-your-own-thing spontaneity drove culture. In their eyes, the army appeared cold, impersonal, repressive, and bureaucratic-an environment where 'stockade brutality and drumhead courts-martial' awaited anyone disinclined to conform. 'That such an institution might advance the cause of anyone's liberation anywhere was patently preposterous.' (p. 52)

The Morrill Act. Prior to the Morrill Act of 1862, military instruction came by way of one of the military academies (West Point or Annapolis) or through one of the civilian military colleges (e.g., Norwich, Virginia Military Institute or the Citadel) (Marcus, 2015). The conversations about American military leadership during this era were rooted in two dominate schools of thought. One viewpoint was predicated upon a "perceived functional need consistent with the prevailing social structure for a small, highly professionalized officer corps drawn from an increasingly small group at or near the top of the American social structure" (Neiberg, 2000, p. 19). In contrast to the country's ascribed need to be led by social elites, others saw, "a cultural

preference for citizen-soldiers, ill-prepared and unprofessional though they were, to act as a counterbalance to the antidemocratic tendencies Americans feared in their own officer corps (Neiberg, 2000).

It was during this time that Vermont Representative Justin Morrill became known. Morrill shared the cultural view of the citizen soldier with his friend and neighbor Alden Partridge. Partridge was the founder of Norwich – The Military College of Vermont, the oldest private military college in the United States and the birthplace of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) (Norwich University, 2016). Adding to this emerging view for military officer ranks to be filled with citizen soldiers was a need to improve upon America's future military leaders. The Civil War had revealed that few career officers had any sustained experience in commanding large units, and many quickly found their academy training in the teachings of Baron Antoine-Henri de Jomini outdated in an era of rifled weapons, telegraphs and railroads (Paret, Craig & Gilbert, 1986).

Stemming from Morrill's citizen-soldier views, the need for more military officers and concerns about the performance of some of the military leaders from West Point during the Civil War, Morrill's bill proposed that 30,000 acres of public land be sold to each state to generate funds to create public colleges (Neiberg, 2000). The Morrill Act's land grant colleges offered coursework specializing in agriculture, mechanical arts and military training (Britannica, 2016). Despite the existence of national military academies and private military colleges, placing military instruction in non-military, civilian colleges was unprecedented national policy (Marcus, 2015). The act led to the establishment of the National Defense Act of 1916 and ROTC that was later folded into the Student Army Training Corps (SATC) which was run by the War Department (Downs & Murtazashvili, 2012).

Philosophically, the Morrill Act was consistent with many traditional American beliefs about the proper way to commission officers for the army. It localized training and offered a civilian alternative to West Point graduates, yet it did not compel individuals to actually serve in the military if they chose not to do so (Neiberg, 2000). From its inception, deficiencies in campus leadership and the lack of equipment, such as uniforms and weapons for drilling, the act's vagueness precluded effective implementation for the next half century. It remained unclear whether military instruction must be compulsory or not (Lyons & Masland, 1959). Noted historian Gaddis Smith maintains that “ROTC was a problem from its inception in 1917” because of the less-than-stellar quality of its courses and instructors – a problem nationwide, according to other scholars of ROTC (Coumbe, Harford & Kotakis, 2010).

Faculty were generally lukewarm toward the officer training programs, and until the 1890s, “the colleges attempted to reduce the requirement to a minimum necessary to comply with the vague mandate” (Eddy, 1956; Marcus, 2015, p. 171). Marcus (2015) explained the divide in this manner, “The moral charter of institutions of higher learning is centered on freedom of inquiry and dissent, whereas the charter of the military places much more emphasis upon hierarchical authority and obedience” (p. 179). It was not until after WWII that the Army placed so much emphasis on their officers holding college degrees (Cardozier, 1993). It was during this same post-WWII era that protests against compulsory ROTC took place. These early peaceful protests signaled the coming descent regarding compulsory military training on college campuses. In 1949, a University of Wisconsin-Madison (UW-Madison) campus survey found that two to one, students favored making ROTC voluntary, (though the survey did not ask about abolishing ROTC altogether, a question that had been rejected by 80 percent of the students in a 1927 poll) (Levin, 2013).

In 1958, acting President, Julius Stratton, officially notifying the Army that compulsory ROTC was being dropped by a vote of the MIT faculty, but also reaffirming MIT's interest in continuing a voluntary program (Vandiver, 1995). It was student referendums, demonstrations and faculty and administration committees working to reverse the compulsory ROTC policy at the University of California-Berkley in the late 1950s, that culminated with Defense Department decisions to finally instituted such changes in 1962 (Johnson, Johnson & Clarke, 1964). The post-WWII decades of the 1950s and '60s saw a shift from compulsory to volunteer ROTC service; before the next decade they would shift again.

The anti-war movement on college campuses in the late 1960s and early '70s. This section contains a synopsis of the complex and turbulent cultural relationship that existed between institutions of higher learning and the U.S. government (military/ROTC) during the anti-war movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Several influential events served as a barometer for the nature of campus/military relations during this period. The political angst that existed on college campuses during this era was largely propagated by demonstrators and campus radicals that Horowitz (1990) referred to as the “Destructive Generation.” Aside from the civil rights movement, demonstrations most notably over the war in Vietnam, reached a fevered pitch during this period and were largely directed toward the government and their surrogates. ROTC programs were obvious targets for the anti-war movement (Means, 2016). The emergence of the “New Left” and the anti-war movement ushered in conflict that was staged through numerous events, organizations, and movements on college campuses across the country. The anti-war movement viewed “the nearly 500 (ROTC) units on over 300 college campuses as a recruiting organization through which the armed services would compete with the corporations for educated manpower” (Bruck, 1968, para. 9).

The Student Peace Movement (SPU) was started at Washington State University (WU) in 1964, by Ted Goetzel. The St. Louis Post-Dispatch quoted Goetzel as saying that SPU viewed “the Army of the United States as the invading army and our country as the country of aggression.” The SPU also saw the U.S. Army as the invader on the WU campus. Both students and faculty during this period took numerous steps to eliminate the ROTC program at WU. On December 7, 1968, the faculty of Arts and Sciences voted to eliminate academic credit for ROTC programs (Watson, 2001).

Harvard University was not immune to the campus unrest that became emblematic of the 1960s and 1970s. In 1969, campus violence would spread to all areas of the university. On April 9, five-hundred Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) members marched to the home of Harvard President Nathan Pusey chanting “Smash ROTC” and “ROTC must go” (Kirkpatrick, 2011, p. 79). On May 29, 1969, the Harvard Corporation negotiating Committee recommended termination of ROTC (Vandiver, 1995). After Harvard pulled out of the program in the 1970s, it paid MIT to take Harvard students into its ROTC unit (Keller & Keller, 2007).

Other prestigious institutions of higher learning felt violent opposition to government activities and institutions. In the aftermath of arrests that were made at an anti-ROTC sit-in on April 29, 1970 at Stanford University, “angry demonstrators smashed \$40,000 worth of windows in the business school, the president’s office, Tresidder Union, the police station, the post office, Lou Henry Hoover Library, etc...” (Grushfin, 1970, p. 1).

One of the most memorable events of this period happened on May 4, 1970 at Ohio’s Kent State University. Four students were killed and nine were wounded by National Guard troops during a protest of the bombing of Cambodia by the United States military (Bills, 1988). The Kent State shooting, combined with Nixon's invasion of Cambodia, led to protests at more

than 1,300 college campuses, with some 500 closed by student and faculty strikes. ROTC facilities were attacked, and police and National Guard troops were dispatched to more than a hundred colleges (PBS, American Experience, 2005).

Campus violence would continue to escalate; on August 24, 1970, four young anti-Vietnam War activists attempted to blow up the University of Wisconsin-Madison (UW-Madison) Army Mathematics Research Center (AMRC). Having associated the university's research connections with the U.S. military during the Vietnam War, the students used a car bomb to destroy a large portion of Sterling Hall, killing post-graduate physics student Robert Fassnacht and injuring three others (Fellner, 1986). In addition to the bombing, UW-Madison had the distinction of being the only university in the nation to have an officially recognized chapter of Labor Youth League, a youth group of the Communist Party in the early and middle 1950s (Levin, 2013).

Throughout 1969-1970 alone, 197 ROTC buildings came under assault at universities big and small, left-leaning and largely conservative, all across the nation (Means, 2016, p. 25). During the same period that the predominance of discourse was centered on opposition to the war, other factors fueled resentment between college students, members of our military and society's working class. The view of college students as being comprised of middle and upper-middle class draft dodgers was helped by college draft deferments that ran through 1968. "Essentially, young men in college or with university education had little or no chance of carrying a rifle through a rice paddy" (Kusch, 2001, p. 75). As Williams (1971) an exiled war resister himself points out, "In 1969, for example, out of the 283,000 men drafted, only 28,500 had attended college" (p. 41).

“The radical young, especially in the prestigious Eastern Ivy League colleges, talk as though they were a lost generation, condemned by the system and hauled away to Vietnam and killed or wounded – this has been the theme of many of youthful valedictorians, but it is nonsense” (Alsop, 1972, p. 34). A number of university faculty and administration were complicit in the draft dodging while the socioeconomically disadvantaged were sent off to war. A number of university presidents said their institutions would no longer forward grades or class standings to (draft) boards. Several professors stated they would give all A’s in their courses, since a B or a C might mean death in Vietnam for a student (Williams, 1971, p. 18).

Student draft deferments helped place the burden of combat on working-class youths who made up 80 percent of the U.S. soldiers fighting in Vietnam (Appy, 1993). Class bias inherent to the operation of Selective Service became a divisive issue. The antiwar movement actually consisted of a number of independent interests, often only vaguely allied and contesting each other on many issues, united only in opposition to the Vietnam War (Barrington, 1998). Draft deferments provided through 1968 meant millions of youths avoided military service. Nearly all of these students were middle class as just 17 percent of college students in the 1960s came from working-class or lower-middle-class families (Hall, 2009). In an analysis of 1,300 Illinois troops killed in Vietnam, social scientists concluded that the risk of death increased as income declined (Polenberg, 1980). American opinion pollster, Louis Harris, found that 76 percent of the U.S. public thought antiwar demonstrations “encouraged the communists to fight all the harder,” and 53 percent agreed with General Hershey (General Lewis B. Hershey, director of Selective Service), that students blocking draft offices and induction centers and interfering with military recruitment should be drafted (Williams, 1971).

The events of the 1960s and 1970s shaped the perceptions of those who occupied the college campuses, but also by those who labored to keep America running. People who watched their sons and daughters go off to war and the servicemen and women who fought the war in Vietnam. Perhaps more than any other point in history, the anti-war movement of the 1960s and '70s fueled the college/military cultural divide entrenching both sides in an "us vs. them" mentality. Public resentment was fueled by draft deferments, inequities of socioeconomic status and service, the razing and bombings of campus facilities, efforts by students to dodge the draft and the complicity of college administrators and teachers who saw their cause as just.

As the political pressures of this period brought about an end to the draft in February 1973 and a drawdown in Vietnam, followed by eventual end of the war in April 1975, the anti-war movement declined. It was in the relative safety of the early post-Vietnam era in 1975 that saw a growth in ROTC programs (Feldman, 1989). "ROTC eventually returned to Princeton, as it did to many other schools that had banished the program during the Vietnam era" (Tucker, 2015, p. 106). A century after the 1862 Morrill Act planted the seeds of compulsory military training at public land-grant colleges, cultural shifts on college campuses brought about a change to voluntary service. As the 1960s drew to a close, ROTC units were being disbanded on college campuses and many of their facilities occupied, razed and burned. As the end of the 20th Century approached, some college had yet to resume ROTC programs that were closed during the anti-war movement of the Vietnam era. The new millennium would challenge colleges to examine ROTC policy again, and offer reason to deny military programs on their campuses.

Gays in the military, don't ask don't tell. From the transitional time the Department of Defense (DOD) was born out of the War Department in the late 1940s, it came into existence with a significant problem: gay and lesbian citizens were not welcome to serve in America's

armed forces (Bérubé, 1990). As is widely recognized even by opponents of admitting homosexuals openly in the U.S. military, gay and lesbian soldiers have served faithfully and courageously in every conflict since World War II (Burg, 2002). As Army psychiatrist, Jonas (1946) was quoted in (Bérubé, D'Emilio, & Freedman, 2010), a soldier who had engaged in a single homosexual act could be routed from one hospital to another and assigned a diagnoses ranging from “Constitutional Psychopathic State” and “Sexual Psychopath #1507” to “Emotionally Unstable,” “Psychoneurosis,” and even “No Disease.” Like the diagnosis, the disposition of homosexual cases aroused disagreement and disorder. “At one station a psychiatrist would recommend separation for all homosexual individuals, while at another station the psychiatrist would refuse to recommend separation for any homosexual individual.” In practice, Jonas concluded, psychiatry during the war “was truly a ship without a rudder” (p. 151).

As the war neared its end and the need for new troops lessened, the policies banning homosexuals were enforced with increasing vigilance, and many gay men and lesbians were discharged involuntarily. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, acknowledging a homosexual orientation barred an individual from military service (Herek, 2012). Citing Hippler (1989) in (Herek, Jobe, & Carney, 1996) “By the 1970s, however, a movement was emerging in the United States that pressed for the civil rights for gay men and lesbians. The military policy was one target of this movement” (p. 6). Other challenges to the policy during this period were mostly unsuccessful, leaving the policy outcomes to the volition of military commanders (Herek, 2012).

In early 1981 the Pentagon announced its new policy on gays and lesbians that was designed to comply with the Justice Department request that the Pentagon have a consistent policy toward individuals who admitted or were found to be gay or lesbian (Korb & Rothman, 2013). The 1981 DOD policy stated unequivocally that “homosexuality is incompatible with

military service” (DOD Directive 1332.14, January 28, 1982, Part 1, Section H) (GOA, 1992a). According to a 1992 report by the Government Accounting Office (GAO), nearly 17,000 men and women were discharged under the category of homosexuality in the 1980s (GOA, 1992b).

In the early 1990s the status of gays in the military became a prominent national and campus issue. Pitzer College in Claremont California was the first college to ban ROTC in 1990 over protest of the military’s anti-gay policies (Stewart, 2001). By the 1990s, many colleges had not reinstated their campus ROTC programs that were disbanded twenty years earlier during the Vietnam era, but permitted students to attend drills and coursework at neighboring campuses. It was not until 1995 that Harvard University ended its support of their students in MIT ROTC. The program was briefly funded by an alumni group, but by the end of the century, ROTC had no officially recognized place at Harvard (Keller & Keller, 2007).

Harvard President Drew Faust says that the reason for the ban’s continuance was not pacifism; the army’s “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy does not align with the university’s anti-discrimination stand. While banning ROTC, Harvard continues to host other military oriented programs, such as the National Security Fellows program consisting of a large percentage of military officers (Winerip, 2009). In 1990, according to survey data by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at UCLA, 42 percent of professors identified as "liberal" or "far-left." By 2014, that number had jumped to 60 percent (Abrams, 2016). Winerip (2009) cites Harvard professor Ruth Wisse and her criticism of the ROTC ban, calling the DADT argument a “smokescreen for antimilitary bias,” claiming “these universities were so cowed by the antiwar protests of the ‘60s that they would do anything not to stir up the same issues again.”

While the data confirms those university and college faculties have long leaned left, a notable shift began in the middle of the 1990s as the Greatest Generation was leaving the stage

and the last Baby Boomers were taking up teaching positions. Between 1995 and 2010, members of the academy went from leaning left to being almost entirely on the left. Moderates declined by nearly a quarter and conservatives decreased by nearly a third (Abrams, 2016).

As cited by Herek (2012), Kosovo (1990) argues that by 1992 civilian opposition to the policy on gays in the military appeared to be increasing. The grassroots movement had spread to where “many national organizations had officially condemned the policy and many colleges and universities had banned military recruiters and Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) programs from their campuses in protest of the policy” (p. 7). After lengthy public debate and congressional hearings that became the focus of the issue in the early 1990s, President Clinton and Senator Sam Nunn (D-GA), chair of the Senate Armed Services Committee, reached a compromise which they labeled “Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue.” By the terms of this agreement service members would not be questioned about their sexual orientation or discharged simply for being gay. Engaging in sexual conduct with a member of the same sex, however, would still constitute grounds for discharge (Herek, 2012).

In 1993 President Bill Clinton signed the “Don't Ask, Don't Tell” statute (DADT) into law. As cited in (Jenkins & Patashnik, 2016), Valelly argued, “It codified the proscription on gay and lesbian service, and thus gave it new life” (p. 75). As Nadler and Maglasang are cited in Goldberg (2016) “In 1993, when this policy was instituted, the majority of U.S. citizens did not fully support equal rights for homosexuals, but subsequently negative attitudes have decreased, and acceptance of equal rights for sexual minorities has become a majority opinion in the United States” (p. 338). As the new millennium settled in, the Overton Window (of public discourse) had shifted in favor of gay rights. In 2008 the controversy of DADT was highlighted in the

presidential campaign and eventually repealed under the Obama administration in December 2010 (Goldberg, 2016).

Forty years ago, ROTC units disappeared from Yale, Harvard, Columbia, Stanford and other elite schools, casualties of Vietnam-era tension and academic power struggles. Now, those same schools are moving toward welcoming ROTC units back thanks to the imminent demise of "don't ask, don't tell," the policy barring gays from serving openly in the U.S. military (Winerip, 2009). Flynn (2011) points out, that even before DADT's repeal, the dean of students at Columbia asked the university community "to consider whether the right question may no longer be 'How could we ever formally recognize ROTC on our campus,' but, instead, 'How can we not welcome them back?'" According to the U.S. Army Cadet Command (2016), Army ROTC has a total of 275 programs located at colleges and universities throughout the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and Guam with an enrollment of more than 30,000. It produces over 70 percent of the second lieutenants who join the active Army, the Army National Guard and the U.S. Army Reserve. More than 40 percent of current active duty Army general officers were commissioned through the ROTC.

As stated in the study's limitations, most traditional national postsecondary databases exclude a portion of the student veteran population while including other military populations, such as military dependents that have utilized a parent or spouse's educational benefits, which makes accurately analyzing student veteran postsecondary populations and academic outcomes difficult at best. A 2013 Government Accounting Office (GOA) report to Congressional committees, highlighted actions needed to improve evaluation and oversight of ROTC programs (U.S. Government Accounting Office, 2013). A 2013 study found that at the nation's self-proclaimed most highly selective colleges, the 31 invitation-only members of the Consortium on

Financing Higher Education (COFHE), had significantly fewer student veterans than were reported in 2011. The colleges reported that just 168* undergraduate veterans were enrolled out of 118,784 total undergraduate seats. The asterisk is because some colleges do not report student veterans and some know only estimates. That was an enrollment of 0.14% (Sloane, 2013).

Cultural Competencies of Veterans

Cultural competency is defined as the ability to understand an organization's culture, what is valued, how traditions influence operations, and how symbolism is used to reinforce actions (Rhoads & Tierney, 1992). In addition to the six competencies identified by American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), several scholars have suggested that cultural competency is also essential for presidents and other leaders of colleges (Amey, 1992, 2005; Eddy, 2009; Kezar et al., 2006). College presidents use their cultural competencies to effectively navigate college and district-level cultures (Eddy & Boggs, 2010). This is demonstrated in how organizations value and promote diversity, inclusion, equity, and academic excellence (American Association of Community Colleges, 2016). Understanding what influences teaching faculty perceptions of student veterans and informing appropriate cultural competencies is supportive to creating and sustaining an inclusive learning environment for student veterans.

Serving Veterans on College Campuses

Training for teaching faculty on the cultural competencies of working with student veterans can have a significant impact on their transition onto campus and into the academic environment. It is important for colleges to understand that many service men and women, as well as members of their families, face issues differently than a lot of traditional students do. Some of these issues may include: being a first-generation college student, having to relearn

successful studying habits, adjusting from service member to student, becoming accustomed to physical injuries, and living with invisible injuries (Lovitt, 2013).

Identifying student veterans in the classroom could help guide appropriate conversations and prevent unintended conflict. According to Lovitt (2013),

While sharing our personal and political beliefs is an important part of the higher education experience, as it helps us create a more informed understanding of the world, staff and faculty must be aware that there are many instances in which these beliefs can be taken as a personal insult. (p. 13)

In a 2013 study by Gonzalez and Elliot, research showed that the same group of teachers who were less likely to participate in training to learn about the needs of veterans, were more likely to discuss military-related issues in class, including their views on the post 9/11 wars (p. 3). An established best practice for faculty is recognizing that criticism of the military can be taken personally by student veterans and cause them to feel isolated (American Council on Education, 2011).

In an effort to promote inclusion, colleges have examined the distinctiveness of various groups, such as gender and race within the context of the college campus and identify the cultural competencies appropriate to their integration. Given the uniqueness of student veterans within the context of a college campus, identifying the cultural competencies of this group would seem an appropriate accommodation. In response to invisible barriers to such inclusion, some institutions of higher learning have developed a suitable range of training and policies designed to promote student success across a diverse and growing spectrum of identities. One such program, called “Our Wisconsin,” is “aimed at increasing knowledge about cultural differences and promoting community among incoming students” (Savidge, 2016).

Summary

The post 911 era has been marked by prolonged wars in Iraq and Afghanistan which have been fought by a smaller, more professional fighting force than previous wars in American history. During this period, student veteran populations have risen on college campuses due to post-service employability issues, needed credentials in many professions and increased opportunities afforded through the POST 911 GI BILL educational benefits they have earned. Institutions of higher learning have attempted to meet current era student veteran with accommodations designed to promote enrollment, retention and graduations rates. For some student veterans, their perception of these interventions on their success is questionable. According to Kovach (2014), student veterans tend to see the colleges who have made student veteran accommodations as not necessarily, “Veteran friendly,” but as simply offering student veterans what is appropriate and necessary.

One of the commonly reported invisible barriers cited by student veterans is the lack of understanding shown to them and their experiences by teachers and their non-veteran peers. In response, institutions of higher learning were collecting data in an attempt to find creative solutions to the issues and barriers intrinsic to the nature of current era veterans. Aside from recognizing the unique needs associated with an increase in student veterans, a duty complicated by insufficient recording and reporting, there were barriers in the classroom and on campus that are not being addressed through the veteran specific facilities, amenities and services colleges are instituting. Studies have helped to identify complications to the inclusion and academic success for student veterans, but complex identity issues, unfair stigmas and the military\college cultural divide complicate their transition from military service to civilian and college life.

The U.S. military is a very diverse organization, yet the typical political leanings of its members have shown to generally depart from the tone found on college campuses. Studies have demonstrated that student veterans are encountering people in the classroom that likely come from a divergent background and are very likely to hold different political views. The stage for much of the conflict and courtroom of public opinion has been and remains the college campus. This environment is also where the contest between compulsory military training at public colleges was largely fought. The compulsory military training that was part of the Morrill Act of 1862 began the debate of the appropriateness of instituting mandatory military training in public colleges. Over the past century and a half, there have been a number of incidents that have highlighted the cultural divide that has existed between institutions of higher learning and members of our military.

The Morrill Act received immediate push back from academic circles and the National Defense Act of 1916, which spawned the formation of ROTC, intensified the debate. Eventually, the Committee on Militarism in Education (CME) was established in 1925 by John Nevin Sayre, Norman Thomas and E. Raymond Wilson to combat military training requirements at public schools and universities. The CME fought to eliminate compulsory ROTC service at state universities (Swarthmore College Peace Collection, 2015). After a century, culture and discourse on college campuses ushered in a change from compulsory to voluntary military training.

Within a decade the antiwar movement became the vehicle to push ROTC off of many college campuses. Flynn (2011) argued that ROTC had become a proxy battle over the war in Vietnam. Radicals bombed or burned dozens of ROTC buildings during the spring semester of the 1969-1970 school years. The violence was not confined to colleges that were considered

“hotbeds of radicalism,” ROTC outposts at such hardly countercultural institutions as the University of Idaho, DePauw University, the University of Virginia, SUNY-Buffalo, and the University of Kentucky experienced attacks. A generation later, many of the ROTC programs have not returned.

During the 1990s, many observers expressed concerns about the state of civilian-military relations in the United States. Although the expression of these concerns was muted in the immediate aftermath of the attacks on 9/11, the underlying issues they raised remain salient (Szayna, et al., 2007). Colleges cited discriminatory military policies that barred gays from serving as the basis for denying ROTC back on campus, a position disputed by some in academia as anti-military bias. Given the large sums of research funding colleges were accepting from the Defense Department and institutions like Harvard continued to host overt military panels and discussions at the Kennedy School of Government, it seemed as though colleges were selective about where they were directing their protests against discriminatory government policy. A compromise was first made with DADT in 1993, and after a shift in public opinion the law was repealed in 2010. Multiple studies and insights revealed that permitting gays to serve openly had no real impact on the effectiveness of the military. According to the military, was summed up by Pentagon spokesman Capt. John Kirby: "Impact?" he said. "Negligible, if that" (Schofield, 2012). Flynn (2011) cites journalist, teacher and peace activist Colman McCarthy in demonstrating that the animus toward the military is more deeply rooted than the seventeen-year-old DADT policy. Opposition to ROTC is as old as ROTC itself. Adding, “It should not be forgotten that schools have legitimate and moral reasons for keeping the military at bay, regardless of the repeal of ‘don’t ask, don’t tell.’”

Chapter III: Method and Procedures

This chapter outlines the process and methods used to complete this study. Regarding research, it is the study that dictates the methodology, not the other way around. The design of this study was to understand and assign meaning to the experiences and perceptions of teaching faculty toward student veterans. The values and beliefs through which people develop and interpret the world are complex things to measure or contextualize.

The following research objectives formed the basis of the study and the data gathered:

1. Understand the influences of faculty perceptions of student veterans.
2. Understand faculty attitudes toward accommodations for student veterans.

Research Methodology

According to Marshall and Rossman (2011), Tracy (2013), and Yin (2011), In qualitative methodology, the researcher looks at settings and people holistically; people, settings, or groups are not reduced to variables, but are viewed as a whole. The qualitative researcher studies people in the context of their pasts and the situations in which they find themselves. (as cited in Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2016, p. 9)

Therefore, the researcher has chosen qualitative research as the best method to understand the research objectives. According to Creswell (2013), a phenomenological study, “describes the common meaning of several individuals of their lived experience of a concept or a phenomenon” (p. 57). This occurs when people, sometimes very diverse individuals, derive the same or very similar meaning from a personal experience. Phenomenology has a long history in several social research disciplines including psychology, sociology and social work. Phenomenology is a school of thought that emphasizes a focus on people's subjective experiences and interpretations of the world. That is, the phenomenologist wants to understand

how the world appears to others (Trochim, 2006). The use of a qualitative interview was to let the respondents tell their own stories on their own terms. Qualitative research transcends the simple boundaries of check box answers and the limitations of Likert scale intervals. Qualitative analysis permits the researcher an opportunity to ensure clarity in the questions posed to the respondent, as well as follow up lines of inquiry to promote understanding and shared meaning. The study involved the collection of qualitative data utilizing structured (guided) interviews with teaching faculty at mid-western two-year colleges and four-year universities. According to Lichtman (2013), the purpose of a structured interview is to eliminate the role of the researcher and to introduce objectivity. Face to face interviews that utilize open-ended lines of questioning afforded the researcher and subject the benefits of body language and other nonverbal communication. The distinct advantage of the structured interview versus a questionnaire is that the researcher can interact with the respondent, thereby reducing the number of unusable or *don't know* answers (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007).

The job of researchers is to make sense of these stories and experiences in a meaningful way with a view to learning more about humankind and, often, to affect change, whether that be in terms of influencing policy and practice or enhancing understanding at an individual or institutional level (Shaw, 2010). The research design was intended to have a balance that permitted subjects to speak freely and offer untrammelled anecdotal stories toward their insights and meaning yet provide adequate structure to ensure sufficient answers that promote generalizable data. The research design was intended to have a balance that permitted subjects to speak freely and offer untrammelled anecdotal stories toward their insights and meaning yet provide adequate structure to ensure sufficient answers.

Subject Selection and Description

The researcher used professional leadership contacts to select a convenience sample of two regional institutions. In addressing concerns of validity with convenience sampling, the researcher randomly selected participants that were representative of the population. Regarding the concept of saturation, or the point at which no new information or themes are observed in the data, the number of subjects were selected based on Creswell's (1998) recommended between five and twenty-five interviews for a phenomenological study. The population for this study consisted of the five randomly selected faculty from a mid-western technical college and five faculty from a mid-western university. The five faculty members from each institution were randomly selected from different departments by the College Faculty Senate Chair at the University and the Vice President Institutional Effectiveness at the two-year college. From the technical college, faculty names were added to an online randomizer and a subject list was generated. The process was repeated until five applicants from five different departments accepted the email invitation to participate in the study. From the university, faculty were randomly identified by the faculty senate chair and were then approached by the researcher to voluntarily participate in this study. Members of the population held positions that teach with one and two-year certificate and degree programs at the two-year college level and undergraduate and graduate students at the university level.

The subjects were asked a series of open-ended questions from an interview schedule (Appendix). Respondents were asked to explain their remarks and offer an example in support of their perspective or belief. Respondents were encouraged to speak candidly and freely and elaborate to add context to their responses. The initial questions were designed to establish basic information and gain insight to the circumstances and factors that have influenced the subject's

values and beliefs. This line of questioning examined the individual's background, education, political views, military service or the experience of a family member and how much they knew about it and how it made them feel.

Instrumentation

The instrument for this study was developed through the research objectives and literature review. To increase reliability, the initial instrument was evaluated through a pilot study. Pilot interviews were conducted with college professors with whom the researcher had a relationship. The pilot was intended to test the interview schedule for question clarity and completeness of responses. Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007) suggest that a prototype of the observation schedule should be piloted to uncover any weaknesses in the instrument. Utilizing a previously constructed instrument emphasizes internal validity, generalizability, and better management of the data. In addition, focused observation schedules and interview schedules eliminated the collection of superfluous data which could compromise the efficiency and power of the analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

To understand the first research objective: *Understand the influences of faculty perceptions of student veterans*, the researcher developed an initial line of questioning in the interview schedule (Appendix) that examined the subject's background. The questions studied the subjects' academic focus, military service or service of an immediate family member(s) and how much they knew and how they felt about their service. This portion of the interview also collected data on how the subject identified politically as well as their perception of their peers' political leanings. In addition, the respondents were asked how many of their college peers they knew were a veteran.

To understand the second research objective: *Understand teaching faculty attitudes toward accommodations for student veterans*, the researcher developed a second line of questioning in the interview schedule (Appendix) that examined the subject's perceptions and experiences with classroom behaviors. This line of questioning examined if faculty attempted to identify student veterans in their classroom and their rationale for doing so. The faculty's views on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and if the wars come up in classroom discussion was also looked at. This line of inquiry also looks at the teacher's perception of how their peers view the wars and their experiences with student veteran behaviors in the classroom.

Data Collection Procedures

Once written permission was established to conduct research at their institution, five teaching faculty members were randomly selected from five different departments. Subjects were given an overview of the research and IRB protocols and consent forms were explained and signed. The data collection phase of this research was conducted during February and March of 2017. Interviews were done in person with each of the ten randomly selected subjects. Each interview was recorded using an Igsix brand digital voice recorder for accuracy of responses and to facilitate transcriptions for coding and analysis. In addition, hand written notes were taken to guide follow-up questions and capture inaudible cues and other non-verbal communication. To minimize error and the risk to validity and reliability, the research utilized a scripted interview schedule and selected a neutral location on the campus of the teaching faculty to conduct the interviews. In the event that a face to face interview cannot be arranged, subjects or alternates may be questioned using a Skype, a video conferencing application that affords the researcher visual observation of the subject.

Data Analysis

The interview recordings were transcribed using Rev.com, an online transcription service. The interview transcripts were hand coded using an interpretational analysis process. This involved looking for emerging patterns and conceptual similarities in the answers given by the respondents in the study. Each transcript was read through several times and synthesized responses were noted and grouped. The questions, subjects and their responses were arranged into a graphical organizer to assist the researcher in finding similarities and patterns of perception. Interpretational analysis is used to find constructs and themes that can be used to describe and explain the phenomenon being studied (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). Themes and sub-themes were grouped and given descriptive labels to aid in analysis and organization.

Limitations

This study dictated the methodology that was used, and understood that qualitative research is more subjective than statistical analysis or empirical calculation. This study was limited to participants from two colleges in a relatively small area of the Midwest. This can offer valuable information on the experience of faculty, but a larger sample of subjects may contribute to the theoretical saturation of data, or the point in which adding participants does not yield any new information. In addition, a more ethnically, spiritually, and racially diverse pool of interview subjects would also add much to the description of values, beliefs and life experiences cohort differences may exist that influence the perception of teaching faculty toward student veterans. Cohort differences may exist between the age groups of the participants and the current population of teaching faculty in the Midwest. A further limitation could be the inherent flaws of self-reporting and the tendency to mask or disguise

opinions or views that seem unfairly critical or prejudiced, especially against groups that are considered a social taboo such as veterans.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to present the methodology, instrumentation, data collection and analysis of the study. Additionally, the section identified the study's limitations to validity and reliability. Data was compiled and analyzed by the researcher using an interpretational analysis, while noting the limitations to this study. Through the data that was collected and analyzed, patterns of perceptions and relevant themes were identified that provided insights to the research objectives. The analyzed data is presented and explained in Chapter Four.

Chapter IV: Presentation of the Findings

This chapter explains the data that was generated through the study's research design. Qualitative phenomenological research is complicated by the researcher not knowing what they are looking for. For that reason, several lines of inquiry were used and the environment and questions were designed to produce verbose and unreserved answers.

Research Methodology

This chapter outlines and describes the data that was collected during a series of interviews with two- and four-year college faculty during the spring of 2017. The data collection was subjected to interpretational analysis. In an effort to understand the research objectives, the questions from the interview schedule (Appendix) covered a variety of topics and themes that were designed to elicit insights helpful to understanding what shaped the perceptions of faculty working with student veterans. The topics explored through the interview questions included military heritage, political persuasion, awareness of student veterans and their transitional barriers and issues such as PTSD. Other lines of inquiry visited in the interviews included perceptions of their professional peers and academic institutions, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the perceived obstacles and benefits of military services as it relates to college success, the subjects' views on the military and college culture and faculty training and accommodations for student veterans.

The research methodology used in this qualitative phenomenological study was comprised of interviewing ten faculty members from two and four year Midwestern colleges to comprehend the study's objectives; *Understand the influence of teaching faculty perceptions of student veterans* and *Understand teaching faculty attitudes toward accommodations for student veterans*. Understanding faculty perceptions of student veteran and classroom accommodations

toward their college success is helpful to identifying potential barriers in the classroom and determining the appropriateness of staff development training. The results of this study may be helpful to college leadership to inform veteran specific training for faculty.

Subject Selection and Description

For this study, professional academic contacts were used in the selection of a convenience sample of two public, Midwestern colleges within 200 miles of the researcher were selected for the study. The institutions were contacted and consent to conduct research was applied for and granted from UW-Stout's Institutional Review Board. The population for this study consisted of the five randomly selected faculty from a mid-western technical college and five faculty from a mid-western university. The five faculty members from each institution were randomly selected from different departments by the College Faculty Senate Chair at the University and the Vice President Institutional Effectiveness at the two-year college.

From the technical college, faculty names were added to an online randomizer and a subject list was generated. The process was repeated until five applicants from five different departments accepted the email invitation to participate in the study. From the university, faculty were randomly identified by the faculty senate chair and were then approached by the researcher to voluntarily participate in this study. Members of the population held positions that teach with one and two-year certificate and degree programs at the two-year college level and undergraduate and graduate students at the university level. The eleven faculty subjects that were interviewed represented nine different academic disciplines and college departments across three different Midwestern campuses that ranged from 100 miles to more than 150 miles apart.

The testimony of one of the university subjects was not used, as the digital voice recording was discovered to have data corruption after the conclusion of the interview. The data

corruption limited the research data to bits of actual testimony that could not be transcribed. The handwritten observations and follow-up questions from the researcher's notes were insufficient for coding. A second interview with the same subject was not scheduled due to subject availability and the consideration that their testimony would be tainted by the subject's foreknowledge of the questions; an opportunity not afforded the other subjects. Due to subject availability and time, two alternate subjects were interviewed via Skype video conferencing. The remaining interviews were conducted in a neutral conference room.

The subjects of this study represented a diverse group along the lines of gender, college type, academic background, focus, and age. Table 1 delineates the subject's basic demographic backgrounds that leads to establishing the heterogeneity of the faculty used in this study. Characteristics such as military background are broken down in Table 2 and were used to explain findings of the study's objectives.

Table 1

Subject Demographic Breakdown

Demographics	Number
Female	3
Male	7
2 year college faculty	5
University faculty	5
Bachelors degree	1
Masters degree	4
Doctoral degree	5
25-35 years of age	3
46-55 years of age	5
56 and older	2

Instrumentation

The instrument used in the data collection for this study (Appendix), was a series of 24 open ended questions and 17-25 subset and follow-up questions that examined the subject's experiences and views across a number of areas. These areas included their background and influences, familial military heritage, political affiliation, perceptions of their professional peers and organization, and their awareness of student veterans and issues that affect them. Other lines of inquiry investigated included potentially inflammatory topics and views that may be shared in class, the subject knowledge and opinions of the current wars, personal experiences with veterans, and questions that explored their beliefs on college, military and popular cultures, veteran specific training for faculty and classroom accommodations for student veterans.

Data Collection Procedures

Interviews were conducted at each campus utilizing a private, neutral location that was prearranged through the institution's student services office. Subjects were presented with a copy of the participation consent form which they were initially emailed. Participants read and initialed this copy; it was retained by the researcher for the research records. A brief overview was given that described the lines of inquiry and data collection process, after which the researcher verbally requested the consent of the subject to begin the formal interview and start the digital recording.

Subjects were asked a series of open ended and sub-set questions from the interview schedule. Unscripted follow-up or clarification questions were also asked depending on the subject's response or interviewer's understanding, interest or intuition. The researcher took additional notes regarding changes in the subject's body language, follow-up questions, and noted the recording time for specific comments or responses to later aid in coding the data. All

interviews were recorded with a digital recording device. The final question offered the respondent an opportunity to share anything that they believed would be helpful or relevant to the study, after which the recording was terminated.

At the conclusion of the subject interviews, the digital audio files were verified, their corresponding subject code numbers were relabeled and the file was uploaded to a password protected location on the researcher's computer. Files were uploaded to Rev.com in order to generate transcripts from the digital audio recordings. While reviewing the transcripts and notes of the interviews during coding, several follow-up and clarification questions were discovered. Specific subjects were emailed these questions and provided an opportunity to apply any explanation they felt was necessary to form a response. The emails were securely maintained with the transcripts.

Data Analysis

The transcript data from each interview was read through multiple times. The subject responses to questions were grouped and synthesized according to the themes and patterns of perception. The hand coded data was evaluated using an interpretational analysis of emerging patterns and conceptual similarities. Themes and sub-themes that emerged were grouped and given descriptive labels. The groups were then reanalyzed and reorganized to describe and explain the phenomenon being studied. The graphical organizer consisted of a grid with the subjects running along the first column and the questions running along the top row of each page. The subjects' synthesized responses filled the corresponding grid squares. This permitted the researcher a visual comparison of responses for identifying patterns and for reduction purposes.

As a result of how the data was coded and analyzed using labeling, graphical outlines and interpretational analysis, the findings in this chapter are not presented in a sequential manner consistent with the numbered questions of the interview schedule. The value or relevance of the subject's testimony or answers to questions was not necessarily revealed directly, but through their examination, in conjunction or contrast, with other pieces of information. Multiple pieces of data had to be examined for patterns to emerge and for the researcher to identify a relationship between responses given and the subject's age, academic focus, or shared experience.

The first four questions of the interview schedule focused on the subjects' background, military service and sense of military heritage. Three of the ten subjects had served in the military, but in three different military branches and during three different eras. Two of the subjects experienced prolonged deployments and combat. One of subjects expressed an interest in joining the military, but was pressured not to enlist by his mother who had lost her brother in Vietnam. Although only three of the subjects served in the military, six of the subjects identified as having a military heritage. Table 2 illustrates the background and heritage of the subjects.

The reasons subjects gave for identifying as having a military heritage included, multiple generations of military service within their immediate family, members of their immediate family (parent, sibling, spouse, child) who were career military, and/or their father or both parents serving during a war era. Of the four subjects who did not identify as having a military heritage, two had members of their immediate family serve in the military (including Vietnam service), one had no veterans they could identify in the past three generations, and both parents of a foreign born subject had compulsory military service in their native country.

Table 2

Military Background and Heritage

Group	Number
Faculty Veterans	3
Faculty Veterans with combat experience	2
Post 911 Era	1
Vietnam Era	1
Post Vietnam Era	1
Non-veteran	7
Considered Military Service	1
Identify as having Military Heritage	6

The Literature Review of this study examined statistics from broader research of how military personnel and campus faculty politically self-identify. One study of over 7,200 faculties' voter registrations at 40 leading U.S. universities showed college teachers identify Democrat to Republican by nearly a 12 to 1 ratio (Langbert, Quain, & Klein, 2016). In an effort to understand if political affiliation influenced the perception of student veterans by faculty, subjects were asked how they self-identified politically on a scale of very liberal, somewhat liberal, moderate, somewhat conservative, and very conservative. Two subjects politically self-identified as "very liberal." These subjects were both from the university level; they both were academically focused in the social sciences and were both in the 25-35 year old group. Three of the subjects identified as politically "moderate." Of the three that identified as moderate, there were no demographic metrics, such as age group, gender, institutional level, military heritage, degree attained or academic focus that were common to all three subjects. Half of the subjects

identified as “somewhat conservative.” As with the subjects that identified as moderate, faculty identifying as somewhat conservative did not have any of the demographic metrics common to all the subjects. Coding identified that this group all had immediate family in the military, despite one not identifying as having a familial military heritage. The two subjects that were combat veterans both identified as somewhat conservative.

Faculty Perception of Peers and College

When the subjects were asked to describe their professional peers using the same five point scale, they all identified them as “somewhat liberal” or “very liberal.” The subjects that identified as “very liberal” had not served in the military, had not considered themselves as having a military heritage, and defined themselves as having little knowledge of the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The subjects that identified as “very liberal” also both self identified as a “3” on a 1-10 scale of their knowledge of the wars, with the average respondent being a 5.4 on the 10 point scale.

When asked if subjects felt their campus was a diverse environment, two subjects at the two-year college said “yes” citing varying opinions and different ideas seem welcome and by efforts by their institutions to promote diversity. The three other 2-year college faculty subjects claimed it was not a diverse environment, explaining how the Midwestern region complicated meaningful diversity of culture. None of the university faculty would characterize their campus as diverse, reiterating the largely rural geographic barriers of Midwestern campuses in attracting diverse populations.

The next question asked subjects if they felt their campus was “veteran friendly,” leaving the respondent to infer or attach their own meaning to “veteran friendly.” Nine of ten subjects affirmed their belief that their college was a veteran friendly place. One respondent stated that

they “had no reason to believe it was not.” The reasons respondents cited for claiming their campuses as “veteran friendly” included the college and faculty expressing pride in military service members, accommodating veteran specific needs such as benefit counseling and allowing deployments, and recognition of service through signs and artwork. Research of student veterans has shown that although they express an appreciation for gestures like art work and veteran related ceremonies, student veterans expressed pragmatism for the utilitarian nature of efforts by colleges to show support. One student from (Kovach, 2014) expressed “...the importance of programs and ceremonies on campus that highlight service and sacrifice, such as Veterans Day and Memorial Day, but personally felt the biggest value resides in the commitment to addressing the individual needs of student veterans” (p.52).

Views on the Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan

Subjects were presented with the open ended question, “*What are your opinions of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan?*” Abridged responses included: questioning what they don’t understand, but wanting to trust the intentions and motivations of the country’s leadership; not feeling knowledgeable enough to have an opinion, but very concerned with how many veterans are returning; viewing wars as awful situations; fearful of how their son will return from deployment; never was a fan of the conflicts; view the wars as unnecessary, but feel the campaigns need to be seen through to the end; sees war as bad “period”; doesn’t feel they know enough to have an opinion; and, strictly opposed to the wars. One combat veteran respondent claimed that they questioned the wisdom of getting involved in the wars, but are resolved in their support of the troops. The subject that was deployed during the current era of military conflict stated that they supported the war efforts, having seen how the military was helping people in those countries.

In an effort to understand how subjects see themselves within their professional environment, subjects were asked, “*Based on your perception, what do most people at this college think of the wars?*” In general, subjects viewed their professional peers as opposed to the wars. One subject commented that people tended to keep their views to themselves and like-minded people. Another respondent felt faculty supported the troops but not the wars, while one subject and combat veteran characterized their peers as “disengaged” and “unsupportive of the wars.” The faculty subject who was the only current era combat veteran and who had also stated he could not name a faculty peer that was a veterans shared a more elaborate viewpoint. When asked the same question about the perception of his peers toward the wars, he felt that his peers, “...really want to say and do anything they can to help soldiers and appreciate their service, and it's great and wonderful and all those things, but then you get deeper in the conversation, you can sense that they don't think we should be there, we're spending too much money, we should withdraw, those kinds of things.” Kovach (2014) concluded that criticism of wars, especially by those who did not serve can alienate student veterans, positing, “It is this very lack of understanding that at times, overtly or unwittingly becomes evident on campus and in the classroom, which has the greatest impact on the perception of student veterans and contributes to their, “us versus them” mentality that undermines their willingness to assimilate to a perspective they view as not only biased and prejudiced against them, but unenlightened or deprived” (p.62).

Significant Experiences with Veterans

In an effort to understand what influences the perceptions of faculty toward student veterans, the interview schedule used in the study's data gathering phase included a line of questioning that examined if the subject reported any significant experiences with veterans in or outside of the classroom. Eight of the ten subjects reported having significant experiences with

veterans that they claimed shaped their perception of student veterans. Of the two subjects that did not report any significant experiences with veterans, one was of foreign decent and stated that they did not really see a purpose in identifying student veterans in the classroom. The other subject that reported not having any significant experiences with veterans was new to teaching, reported no family military history or heritage, and cited that his perceptions were, “unfortunately” shaped by the media, stating, “I think that's probably the biggest influence at this point.”

The experiences shared by faculty that they reported influencing their perception of student veterans included: intentionally identifying student veterans in the classroom, building relationships with them and learning from their experiences and perceptions; being in a committed relationship with a veteran with PTSD and other transitional issues; having a son in the military who is deployed overseas; growing up in a place and time where the older neighborhood boys enlisted or were drafted and sent to Vietnam and seeing how some of them returned; having a student veteran commit suicide and seeing signs the day before it happened, spending 23 years in the military as active and reserve soldier; experiencing intense combat during Vietnam and volunteering at VA facilities; and citing their work as a therapist to struggling veterans as a meaningful experience.

For faculty veteran and nonveteran alike, the significant experiences they shared were presented as the very fabric or framework of their interpretations of student veterans. That is not to say all student veterans are viewed as violent or suicidal based on a faculty’s significant experience with a veteran that was. However, the subjects’ significant experiences made them more wary of the potential for issues faced by student veterans and the magnitude, including life or death scenarios echoed loudly and often by popular culture and the media.

Nearly all of the subjects who shared their influential experiences with veterans demonstrated a noticeable physical shift that could be characterized as a serious and reflective focus during this line of questioning. The subjects that described their significant experiences were asked the follow-up question (13a), “*Did this experience shape your perception of student veterans?*” The subject that was in a personal relationship with a veteran who had PTSD cited that she tended to be more cautious with student veterans. This subject also was one of three subjects that identified the trait “violent” with military training and culture. The subject that was a mother of a Marine expressed a sense of pride for the service of student veterans’ service that she encountered in class. Another faculty felt empathy for veterans in general and that they had gleaned a lot from their student veterans’ experiences and insights in the classroom, but they did not want to intrude (by asking questions).

The subject that experienced the student veteran suicide shared that they “realized that there are issues going on and that they (veterans) may look okay on the outside, but they are not okay on the inside.” Faculty interviewed in this study that had personal experiences with veterans in or outside of the classroom, stated that their experiences were a significant influence on their perceptions of student veterans. Despite expressing cautions and concerns, faculty were inclined to be supportive of student veterans. The significant experiences shared by faculty were expressed as an important connection they held with student veterans and fostered an inclination to take action beyond their admiration to what they perceive as a deserving group that holds unique views and face distinctive barriers in their pursuit of higher education. This action translates into engagement with student veterans that would be difficult for them to interpret as disinterest or apathy.

Military, College and Popular Culture

Studies have indicated that some of the grandiloquent or pernicious stereotypes and misconceptions people have of veterans, such as “the hero” or the “violent drunk,” can be attributed, in part, to how they are portrayed by popular culture (TV and movies). When the subjects of this study were asked if they believed veterans were accurately portrayed by popular culture, decisively and overwhelmingly said “no.” The minority of respondents felt that popular culture portrays veterans as, “somewhat” accurately or that people and events portrayed by popular culture are “dramatized” but “fairly true.”

When asked if they felt there was a cultural divide between military and college culture, the subjects unanimously stated that they felt such a divide existed. When asked to define or describe the divide they see, subjects defined the divide in a variety of terms and imagery. One faculty shared that military culture is one of structure, whereas college culture is more of exploration. A subject referred to the bond of shared experience; stating this was not exclusive to military culture, but given the closeness and uniqueness of military service, little rivals the cultural bond. Another faculty cited the structured background of military culture promoted an uncommon unity. One respondent explained it as a “silent divide” where they felt “political correctness obscured some acceptance issues” for veterans traversing from military to college culture. Another subject described military culture as necessitating “rigid thinking,” whereas another commented on seeing a shift in college culture that is “not reinforcing critical thinking.” The two subjects who shared the distinction of being combat veterans had very similar responses in defining the difference in culture. They both cited the “very different” life experience of those exposed to military culture.

Without directly asking the faculty veteran subjects to which group they more distinctly identified, it was the impression of the researcher that the faculty veterans, particularly the combat veterans, identify more as a “veteran” than a member of the “faculty.” Their noticeable alignment to the veteran perspective was evident in their tone and inflection to a number of questions, as well as their perceptions of their professional peers. Although all of the faculty subjects identified a college/military cultural divide and shared the perception that student veterans held views that were seen as “outside of the college norm,” it was the subjects who were combat veterans that spoke from that viewpoint in describing their faculty peers level of understanding and sense of engagement of the wars. The identity of military service was evident in how the two subjects both cited the uniqueness of military service, especially on a college campus, and how their service was the most significant factor in shaping their perception. Moreover, the researcher got the impression from the nuance of the conversations the two combat veteran subjects shared with their nonveteran faculty peers, that their peers tend to noticeably see them as a veteran, most distinctly in conversations about the military or wars.

Trait Recognition

Subjects were read a list of fourteen traits and asked to respond with a “yes” or “no” if they associated the trait with military training and culture. The traits that were read to them were: *respectful, extreme, inclusive, obedient, humanitarian, violent, cultured, tolerant, educated, aggressive, compliant, open-minded, compassionate, and anxious*. The patterns that emerged included: All of the subjects identified “respect” as a trait of military training and culture and nine of ten similarly identified the quality of “compliant.” None of the male subjects, including two combat veterans, indicated that the trait “violent” was not associated with military training and culture, whereas all three of the female subjects identified the trait “violent” with

military training and culture. The female subjects included a former counselor to combat veterans, a mother of a Marine and the former partner of a combat veteran who demonstrated behaviors that were described as “violent” and consistent with “PTSD.” Although the subjects who were combat veterans shared distinct patterns of perception with the trait recognition questions, it was the two 25-35 year old female subjects who shared significant veteran experiences that had the nearly identical responses to the trait recognition exercise.

Veteran Specific Training

Several of the subjects attributed what they had identified as significant life experience to their prior contact or work with veterans. These experiences included military service and troop leadership training and having an academic/professional focus in psychology that included trauma sensitive training and counseling veterans. Other insights included having experienced a close family member’s military to civilian transition that included obstacles like PTSD. None of the subjects have had student veteran specific training as a part of their instructional preparation or professional development training. All of the subjects affirmed or eagerly affirmed their interest and desire to participate if they were offered student veteran specific training.

Question 16 of the interview schedule (Appendix) posed the question, *“If you were to look at this interview as a friendly conversation or personal reflection, has it influenced or changed your perception of student veterans?”* Seven of the ten respondents simply stated “no” or that it just made them more reflective in the moment, but the conversation had not changed how they felt about student veterans in general. Three subjects tended to take more time and be more reflective in answering this question. Without prompting, these three subjects offered deeper insights to their affirmative responses. Speaking specifically about reserve and National Guard students, one faculty shared that they felt there was more that the college and faculty

could be doing for this particular group of student veterans. The subject continued by acknowledging that student veterans' needs do not stop when they are transitioned into college, since reserve and National Guard commitments put special demands on their time for balancing school with family obligations, training and deployments.

Another faculty had claimed that they have become more conscious, realizing the importance of such conversations about student veterans and what happens in the classroom. This subject's comments about their raised awareness became noteworthy during the coding of their transcript, when comparing how they responded to an earlier line of questioning. The same subject did not attempt to identify student veterans in the classroom nor did they claim to see a purpose in doing so. The third subject who demonstrated a deeper interest in question 16 was relatively new to teaching; they stated that the question made them more aware of the fact that they need "more education, all around" and had them wanting to "ask more questions of their students." The most distinct shifts in perception brought on by the question about how the interview "influenced or changed your perception of student veterans" happened to be with subjects who had not served in the military and self identified as have no military heritage.

Question 14 asked the faculty subjects, "*What unique challenges or needs do you think student veterans bring to college and the classroom?*" One faculty observed that student veterans "...carry harsh life lessons that can be a wet blanket of reality to younger, non veteran students." Another subject stated that student veterans, "seem to miss the structure and routines" ...of military service. This same teacher commented in another line of questioning that some of their student veterans struggled with ambiguity and needed to be told exactly what to do.

Several of the subjects referenced a unique challenge for student veterans was their adaptation or

transition from a very different culture and environment, where student veterans were wary, cautious, and demonstrated “rigid thinking.”

One subject characterized their experience as “having to prove themselves to their student veterans and earn their respect,” stating that it was “difficult to push ideas on them if they didn’t believe it.” During the data coding, this comment aligned with other subject responses in describing “rigid thinking” as a unique challenge that the subject felt student veterans bring to the classroom as well as a trait of military training and culture that contributes to or explains the divide between military and college culture.

The next question posed to the subjects asked, “*Do you believe a student’s military service brings any value to the college experience?*” Every subject affirmed that despite noting challenges in previous lines of questioning, subjects believed that military service brings value to a student veteran’s college experience. The examples that were cited include; discipline, being goal oriented – and having clarity with their goals, demonstration of leadership ability – that can benefit an entire class, real world perspective - seeing the outcomes of policy, a richness of experiences – that enhance learning and content, being able to take instruction and criticism, valuing education – having a work ethic and sense of time commitment, exposure to diversity, demonstrating teamwork – being collaborative and behavioral and cognitive maturity –, critical thinking.

The question that asked if students’ military service brought value to their college experience evoked the same resolute reactions subjects shared in their responses to a minority questions from the interview, such as seeing college/military cultural divide and student veterans holding views seen as outside the college norm. Faculty recognition of the values associated with military service is critical to student veterans developing an informed perception of their

teachers and institutions of higher learning; one that belies the stereotypes expressed by student veterans in other research.

Accommodations

Question 18 asked “*What are your attitudes toward veteran specific accommodations in the classroom?*” Subjects responded in a variety of ways that suggested a lack of clarity to what accommodations might look like for student veterans and what their institutional guidelines and resources were. Responses included: the college tries to accommodate every need, expressing a willingness to be accommodating, several subjects expressed concern over their actions being construed as showing favoritism, citing a need to “carefully study the problem,” offering supports that are “fair and reasonable,” and ensuring that their support is considerate of “any other group or need.” All of the subjects expressed support for veteran specific accommodations, offering the comments, “We don’t do enough” and “they’re exceedingly important.” The researcher would describe the composite view drawn from the responses to the question regarding faculty attitudes toward veteran specific accommodations as, a genuine commitment to differentiation or accommodations toward meeting the needs of student veterans in the classroom. However, this altruistic, composite view or “commitment” is clouded by a range of uncertainty in the knowledge of veteran needs, institutional guidelines and policies, college and community resources for veteran, and reluctance by faculty to engage student veterans for what the researcher would characterize as a lack of vital skills and knowledge.

Limitations

A limitation of this study involved social conformity as it applies to the concept of saturation, or the point at which no new information or themes are observed in the data. The number of subjects selected for this study was based on Creswell’s (1998) recommendation of

between five and twenty-five interviews for a phenomenological study. After interviews with eleven heterogeneous and randomly selected faculties, from nine different departments within two college systems, across three different cities, saturation was not discovered within specific questions or perceptions. Despite the diversity of the subjects across personal experience, professional backgrounds and demographic lines, the commonality in the opinions they expressed suggests institutional and social forces influencing their perceptions. This phenomenon will be examined further in Chapter Five.

Summary

Discussions about veterans in general tended to make faculty more reflective and raised the consciousness of veteran related issues and behaviors in the classroom. Faculty did not have to serve in the military to consider themselves as having a military heritage. The perceptions of the faculty interviewed have of student veterans is most often shaped by personal experience with veterans in or outside of the classroom. Aside from serving in the military, some of the encounters offered by subjects included working with veterans through a VA facility in a professional or volunteer capacity, coping with an immediate family member's experience, influences of military heritage or culture and direct interaction with student veterans in the classroom.

The female subjects that participated in this study shared similar perceptions of wariness toward student veterans that included concerns of "triggering" them. The female members of this study were the only subjects to identify the trait "violent" as attributed to military training and culture. All of the female subjects had personal and professional experiences with veterans in and outside of the classroom. Subjects with limited or no personal experience with veterans (e.g. having no military heritage or friends or family who have served) were less likely to

identify or see the value of identifying veterans in their classroom, less likely to see the barriers and benefits of military service as it applies to college, and expressed the most pliable perceptions throughout the interview.

The themes that emerged across the entire group of subjects in this study included their belief that their campus was a veteran friendly place. During the word association exercise, the entire group identified the trait “respect” with military training and culture. All of the faculty in this study saw student veterans as holding views outside the college norm, and regardless of where the subjects identified politically, they described their professional peers as being “liberal,” “more liberal” (than themselves) or “very liberal.” All of the subjects attempt to develop relationships with students that are identified as veterans and the entire group believed military service brings value to the college experience.

Although half of the subjects did not attempt to identify student veterans, most of the subjects stated that they felt they had an awareness of student veterans in their classrooms. One subject describing their experiences as being “not very aware” and another commenting, “Unless they tell me (that they are veterans) I don’t know.” The faculty veterans from Vietnam and post Vietnam eras, asked students directly about their military service and believed it was important to identify student veterans in an effort to provide guidance and assistance. One of these subjects was a combat veteran who volunteered at area VA facilities and the other experienced a student veteran suicide. The current era faculty veteran stated that he did not ask student veterans directly, but was able to identify which students had served in the military through opportunities to self identify. The subject used military terminology, identified as a veteran, and tried to create a “safe” environment for student veterans to open up or share their status.

Half of all subjects from this study could not identify a faculty veteran in their department or college. None of the subjects had veteran specific training.

Chapter Five will present the summary and share the collective stories, conclusions and recommendations of this research.

Chapter V: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

The intent of this study was to examine the attitudes and beliefs of faculty toward student veterans at two Midwestern colleges in an effort to help institutions of higher learning better serve this growing population. Qualitative interviews were conducted with teaching faculty in an effort to achieve the following objectives:

1. Understand the influence of teaching faculty perceptions of student veterans.
2. Understand teaching faculty attitudes toward accommodations for student veterans.

Understanding these objectives was a complex undertaking, as there was no empirical data on human perception of returning veterans in the higher education environment. The purpose of this chapter is to lend understanding to the study's objectives and contextualize the broader meaning derived from the perceptions of the faculty subjects used in this study. The researcher chose qualitative research as the best method to understand the research objectives, as according to Creswell (2013), a phenomenological study, "describes the common meaning of several individuals of their lived experience of a concept or a phenomenon" (p. 57).

The researcher used professional leadership contacts to select a convenience sample of faculty from two regional institutions. Five different faculty members from each institution were randomly selected from different departments by the College Faculty Senate Chair at the University and the Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness at the two-year college. The subjects were asked a series of open-ended questions from an interview schedule, which established their background information, their perceptions of their academic peers, their experiences with veterans and their knowledge and views on a number of issues. The transcribed interviews were coded using interpretational analysis to identify themes and patterns of

perception among the faculty subjects. The themes gave meaning to subject's values and beliefs, and the actions that were shaped by them.

Summary/Discussion

The outcome of this study was to, "Inform a college and classroom environment that promotes enrollment, retention and graduation rates of current era veterans." This study was designed to understand teaching faculty's attitudes and beliefs toward current era student veterans at mid-western technical colleges and universities. Understanding their perceptions and examining what shapes them could help college leaders to be more intentional in determining the level of need and appropriateness of veteran specific training for teaching faculty.

The findings of this study showed that most faculty had an awareness of student veterans in the classroom, however the styles and methods of identifying them and the views faculty held regarding the appropriateness and approach to identifying them varied greatly. The level of awareness of student veterans by the faculty seemed appropriate, as the current and prolonged wars have produced a number of inconvenient facts and unfortunate issues that tend to pervade our culture. In Kovach (2014), the researcher analogized that veterans were like clean water and good schools, in that everyone claimed to support them, but the definition of support was subjective with the most telling differences revealing how or if they demonstrated a commitment of their convictions through action. Resting on socially compliant virtues without meaningful action may carry burdensome consequences. This was seen most glaringly in the experience of one subject who shared that he had noticed behaviors in a student that he identified as being consistent with PTSD the day before the student veteran committed suicide. Since that incident, that subject asked the students in his classes if any of them were veterans. It seemed rhetorical, but when pressed on why he used that approach, he stated, "I just need to know."

There was a unique sense of pride, fellowship, and loyalty expressed by members of the armed forces toward one another that in military circles, referred to as “Esprit De Corps.” This sense of fellowship and loyalty was the basis of the Carpenter Effect, which described the sense of duty and selflessness veterans tend to exhibit toward one another beyond their military service in places like colleges. One subject of this study experienced the significant adversity of a current era veteran that she was in a committed relationship with and who was trying to reintegrate to civilian life and college after a combat deployment. The faculty observed that the veteran sought the support of members of his old unit, commenting that, “vets tend to seek the support of other vets,” and “they also seem to isolate themselves” (in the absence of other vets).

Faculty veterans as well as subjects who reported significant personal experiences with veterans expressed a greater sense of the uniqueness of military culture, with its values and vernacular that lend to its exclusivity. Veterans of the United States military made up about nine percent of the civilian population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015), this is a number hardly represented on college campuses. As the current era military participation rate has contracted to less than one half of one percent, only 33% of Americans under the age of 30 were directly related to a service member, which contributed to 77% of veterans feel misunderstood by civilians (Pew, 2011).

Previous research had identified that a barrier to inclusion and college success was that student veterans do not feel understood by college faculty. The responses by faculty subjects of this study revealed that the stereotypes they were inclined to identify and describe of student veterans were not unfairly judgmental or disparaging, but spoke to what they believed were byproducts of military training and culture. Examples of such stereotypes included exercising rigid thinking, being inclined to needing specific or detailed instructions and demonstrating

discipline and maturity. This was contrasted by this researcher's qualitative interviews conducted with student veterans in an earlier study, in which student veterans expressed anxiety over being stereotyped, but were inclined to believe negative or disparaging stereotypes of college faculty and colleges in general (Kovach, 2014). Examples of the stereotypes most often held by student veterans included college faculty as being very liberal and anti-military and teachers not caring about or recognizing the value of a veteran's experience or sacrifice.

The study's first objective was to: *understand the influence of teaching faculty perceptions of student veterans*. In the absence of prior military service or significant personal experiences outside the classroom, faculty subjects were reliant on their observations and interactions with student veterans in their classrooms. Although all of the subjects believed that military service brought value to the college experience and all of the subjects reported that they attempted to develop relationships with students identified as veterans, most of the faculty subjects defined their knowledge of transitional barriers faced by student veterans as "not much" or "limited." One subject who stated that he had no military heritage and had not intentionally identified veterans in the classroom was asked what shaped his perception of student veterans, to which he reflectively replied, "Unfortunately, some of it is the media."

Compared to the subjects' knowledge of transitional issues faced by veterans, there was a greater awareness by faculty of the signs and symptoms of PTSD. However, the subjects' "awareness" was based on their perceptions, as few had any formal instruction in dealing with PTSD. Additionally, awareness is of limited value without intervention or knowledge of the resources to appropriately address the need or concern. Perceptions rely on an individual's experiences, interpretations and emotions. While some subjects seemed appropriately equipped

and well-served by their particular set of influences, it would appear that relying on such influences limits most.

Another theme that materialized was how faculty subjects perceived their peers politically and how their peers viewed the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. In Chapter Four, it was revealed that despite half of the subjects politically identifying as “somewhat conservative” and three of the ten subjects as “moderate,” all of the subjects described their professional peers as politically “somewhat liberal” or “very liberal.” Regardless of where the subjects politically identified, they tended to see their peers as to the political left of them.

Similarly, when faculty were asked their views on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, three were resolute in their opposition to the wars, four expressed concerns for those serving in our military, but voiced no opposition to the wars. Two faculty members expressed support of the wars despite questioning the motivations for getting into the conflicts. The faculty member who had deployed as a member of the armed forces supported the wars, citing that understanding world politics and our position in the world, “it was a good idea.” Again, the views of the faculty subjects appeared more centrist compared to how they described their professional peers’ views on the wars. Three subjects offered no opinion of their peers’ views for a lack of perspective or being new or simply unaware, while seven subjects described their peers as opposed to the wars.

Faculty subjects seemed to understand that opposition to the wars does not imply a lack of support for members of the military, as many veterans hold views that share in their opposition. However, it is important to note that a tendency exists for some members of the military to conflate criticism or opposition to the wars with a lack of support or animus toward former and present members of the military. It is also important to note that this perception does not apply to all veterans, but given the potential damage it can do to faculty/student veteran

relationship building, great care should be taken in expressing one's views. This observation draws a parallel with the propensity of student veterans to believe stereotypes about college faculty and "rigid thinking" that several faculty subjects cited as a by-product of military culture and training and also a unique challenge of student veterans.

After examining the perceptions faculty subjects shared of their professional peers politically and in terms of their views of the wars, it seemed intuitive to ask, "If this is how the faculty subjects tended to see their peers, how do they see student veterans?" Based on the subject interviews, with all the questions and answers, unvoiced evidence and nuance, the answer was that faculty are supportive of student veterans. The views held by faculty tended to be as unique as their individual experiences. In the absence of significant personal experience such as military service, a military heritage or coping with a veteran spouse, child or immediate family member's adversity, subjects expressed an indifference or aversion to overtly engaging student veterans in a classroom environment.

Subjects who identified as having a significant personal veteran experience, including combat experience and coping with the hardships of others, tended to not be affected in a manner that would cause them to be unwilling to engage student veterans in the classroom. Despite the two subjects who were combat veterans having significant differences in age, academic majors and the branches and eras of their military service, they shared very similar values and beliefs across this study's metrics of perception. Both subjects cited their military experiences as what shaped their perception of student veterans.

The study's second objective was to *understand teaching faculty attitudes toward accommodations for student veterans*. Accommodations did not appear to be a question of willingness on the part of the faculty. All of the subjects expressed a willingness to

accommodate student veterans, sharing comments such as, “They (accommodations) were exceedingly important,” faculty were “very willing to accommodate,” and willing to do “anything that is fair and reasonable,” yet there was uncertainty regarding their college’s policies on accommodation, resources, and privacy concerns of veteran students. This ambiguity seems to affect the approach taken by faculty in identifying and engaging student veterans in the classroom.

In addition to the lack of clarity that seems to exist about college policy regarding accommodations, there seems to be reluctance with some faculty to engage in conversations with student veterans for fear of offending or “triggering” them. This reluctance to engage by subjects who have not experienced a negative encounter with a student veteran in the classroom seems to suggest that stigmas or stereotypes might exist, despite subjects not acknowledging them under direct questioning about possible stereotypes faculty might have of student veterans.

This reluctance to engage included relying on student veterans to self- identify and avoiding asking about their military service, translates to missed opportunities to demonstrate the value and appreciation they profess they have for student veterans and complicates the early detection of issues that may arise. Knowing the campus and community resources for veterans is of significant importance to student success and should be made aware and accessible to faculty and students alike.

Conclusions

All of the subjects of this study shared positive views of veterans regardless of background or military heritage; however, critical views and opinions directed against veterans in society or at student veterans on college campuses are most often considered a social taboo. Collecting data on the critical analysis of student veterans by faculty proved challenging, as

research conducted on the perception of student veterans (Kovach, 2014) yielded very candid discussions that seemed untrammelled by professional reservations. This section will focus on conclusions of the study's objectives.

The conclusions of the first objective, *understand the influence of teaching faculty perceptions of student veterans*, entails a range of meaning and explanation. Perceptions are complex things without empirical data to compare. Each subject's perception was unique, but under examination and compared to the responses of their peers, noteworthy conclusions can be drawn. Faculty who have served in the military or have had a significant relational or professional encounter with veterans tend to see their engagement with student veterans as more of a personal obligation than a professional responsibility. Interview notes reflected that subjects who served in the military and who shared the distinction of a significant veteran encounter spoke about student veterans with a sense of reverence and concern. While two subjects without military heritage or any significant veteran experiences were supportive of student veterans in their responses to interview questions, but cited the media as an influence to their perception and made comments that may be misinterpreted as inconsiderate, such as referring to military service as "doing a job."

For some faculty, their lack of personal experience can be girded by etiquette, congeniality, the altruistic tendencies of educators, or the apparent social pressure to express support for veterans regardless of one's views of the current wars. The data and researcher conclude that given the sensitive and solemn nature of veteran related issues, most notably the epidemic suicide rates often used to call attention to current era veterans, faculty tend to proceed with extreme caution when engaging student veterans. This reluctance may create the appearance of indifference. The intention of making information, training and resources

available to faculty is not meant to stir faculty to cavalierly engage student veterans, but to ease the anxiety of uncertainty with useful information and a better sense of people who identify as veterans.

When considering the second research objective, *understanding teaching faculty attitudes toward accommodations for student veterans*, it is noteworthy that all of the faculty subjects were abruptly supportive of veteran accommodations, despite many of the subjects being unable to describe what they might look like. When engaged in discussions triggered by the interview questions, all of the subjects expressed a generally positive perception of student veterans, they all recognized the value military service brings to the college experience; giving adequate examples and they all advocated for accommodations for student veterans. In addition, each subject acknowledged student veterans face barriers to college success, they all recognized the cultural divide between college and military life, every subject recognized that student veterans tend to hold views that are considered outside the college norm and all of the subjects reported making an effort to develop a relationship with student veterans they identified in their classroom.

Despite the shared recognition of the faculty subjects regarding these observations and acknowledgements, none of the subjects had ever received veteran specific training from an academic perspective and every subject expressed an interest in volunteering for veteran specific training if it were offered. Student veterans were seen as relevant and valued members of the campus community by the faculty subjects, yet several subjects expressed a lack of thought given to student veteran regarding issues of inclusion and the invisible barriers to success they face in college. Some faculty subjects expressed reluctance to question or engage student veterans out of concerns for privacy issues or fear of triggering them. Based on the

findings of this research, there is considerable room for colleges to promote and build understanding that would serve both sides of the college/military cultural divide. Student veteran seminars, training and resources for faculty are essential to making every encounter faculty have with student veterans leave a positive impression and helps to meet the student's needs.

Faculty who lacked a significant personal experience with veterans exhibited a reluctance to engage student veterans in the classroom for concerns of privacy or being insensitive to issues that they may be able to recognize, but do not understand. The researcher concluded that in lieu of faculty having a significant personal experience with a veteran or veterans that have shown to increase a willingness to engage student veterans in the classroom, training or seminars could help faculty engage student veterans in a way that dispels stereotypes of indifference and apathy. As a faculty and student veteran, the researcher was left with a very positive impression of the subjects that were interviewed for this study. To put it another way, the deficits that were discovered through this research were not a question of the subject's disposition, but of skills and knowledge that could be simply developed.

Recommendations

In this section the researcher will offer recommendations derived from this study. It is the hope of the researcher that the conversations, feedback and experience collected as a researcher, veteran, teacher, student and veteran advocate will offer meaningful insight to the challenges and opportunities faced by each of these functions. There are many interrelated facets to the complex issues facing current era veterans and the institutions of higher learning that seek to support them in their transitions. The recommendations made in this section are designed to have an impact on the most significant of the issues faced by student veterans. In addition, the following suggestions provide sufficient overlap as to offer an appropriate response to the

invisible barriers to student veterans' college success. It is the hope of the researcher that the recommendations made in this section are simply the beginning of how increased awareness and a commitment to serving student veterans through action can transform institutions of higher learning and have a significant impact on student veteran enrollment, retention and graduation rates.

Faculty training. It has been the experience of the researcher that faculty who participated in this study tend to be altruistic in their approach to working with student veterans, and that their approach is academically serving in nature. However, subjects were unclear of their college's policies or if policies even existed regarding things like protocols with student veteran resources and perceived privacy issues. Some of the faculty subjects in this study pledged their support to student veterans and claimed they tried to develop relationships with student veterans, but avoided asking their students if they were veterans. Multiple subjects made mention of privacy concerns as a way of explaining their reluctance to ask. One subject expressed disinclination to engage student veterans about their veteran status based on what they describes as concerns for the student's privacy, yet when pressed, the subject was unable to state the institution's policy or if any such policy addressed asking a student if they had served in the military.

The importance of having conversations about student veterans with faculty should not be overstated. The research makes a compelling case for such conversation, which would shed light on where faculty understanding rests with regard to college policy for accommodations and issues such as student privacy. College faculty who seek to engage student veterans have to be willing to ask questions and develop an understanding important to relationship building. According to student veterans, a reluctance to engage student veterans in the classroom or the

avoidance of faculty asking questions directed at student veterans can be misinterpreted as apathy or even resentment. Research as indicated the veterans on college campuses are more inclined to embrace stereotypes and stigmas, such as college professors being hostile to veterans.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that institutions of higher education offer faculty opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge of working with student veterans through professional development seminars and trainings. All of the subjects expressed an abrupt willingness to participate when they were asked: *How likely are you to voluntarily attend student veteran specific training if it were offered to you?* Faculty seminars and trainings are valuable resources for having important conversations about student veterans in the classroom, asking questions and sharing information. From a prior study by this researcher conducted with student veterans at a Midwestern university, a critical barrier expressed by student veterans was not the facilities and amenities offered by the campus, but the level of perceived understanding of their needs expressed by faculty (Kovach, 2014). A reluctance to engage student veterans for fear of offending them belies the very nature of a veteran friendly organization.

Orientation. Like most any identity, faculty recognition of military service symbolizes value; this erodes the stereotype that colleges do not value military service and creates a positive schema for student veterans that should be reinforced early and often. Orientations are a valuable opportunity to breakdown stereotypes and make an important first impression with student veterans. Orientation at the beginning of a course is an important time to connect with student veterans by sharing any personal connection to the military, such as the faculty member's your military heritage or personal experiences that illustrates an awareness and value to students who have served. This is also a time to mention or reiterate the services and amenities available

to student veterans on campus and open the door to needed accommodations by offering opportunities to meet privately.

Top-down coordination. Top-down coordination is essential to the development and sustainability of the kind of systems and resources that will be impactful in raising awareness of faculty and offering them the resources and information critical to addressing student veteran needs. Communication is essential when collaborating with local communities and organizations to align services and supports for student veterans. This study illustrated the lack of information faculty had of policy and resources their organizations offered student veterans. Administration is essential for disseminating uniform data on the campus and community resources and implementing systems for collecting, reporting and tracking information relating to student veteran's health and academic success. Additionally, administrative oversight is critical to colleges developing future studies that generate broader data on student veterans; data that lends reasoned policies and intentional staff development training.

Final Thoughts

Today, many former and current members of the military are entering institutions of higher learning to use their generous educational benefits in the hopes of finding a meaningful career. Colleges that are not prepared to meet the needs of these unique students are missing a tremendous opportunity to work with members of this deserving population. The subjects of this study impressed the researcher with their professionalism and altruistic devotion to their students and craft. But thoughtful appreciation alone will not help recruit, retain, and support student veterans to program completion. The adage of, "We don't know what we don't know," certainly applies here. Although student veterans in other studies have expressed frustration and concerns of being stereotyped, they tend to believe the stereotypes of college faculty. And the

absentminded, innocent missteps and even the reluctance to engage student veterans by faculty tend to reinforce stereotypes and inaccurate perceptions held by student veterans. Colleges need to recognize the uniqueness of student veterans and prepare faculty to guide them through this very different culture and its distinctive set of challenges. That requires understanding the military culture and training that shaped their skills and abilities, which according to the faculty, student veterans tend to have many.

Lastly, faculty did not need to be convinced that student veterans bring valuable diversity, practical leadership ability, and a richness of life experience to the college campus and classroom. The attitudes and beliefs of faculty toward student veterans exceed any service or amenity a college can offer student veterans in transition and remains the most important influence of student veteran enrollment, retention and graduation rates.

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Appendix: Interview Schedule

I am going to read you some questions regarding your background, influences, personal experiences and your observations and insights regarding college and classroom environments and student veterans. Your answers are intended to be open-ended and your identity will be kept strictly confidential, so I would encourage you please speak freely. At any time you can request to have your testimony withdrawn from the study or terminate this interview.

This interview will be recorded for the accuracy of your answers my notes. With your permission, I will start the recording and begin the interview.

***Start recording

1. Briefly summarize your background to include your academic focus, years of experience and any significant personal or professional influences.
2. Have you served or ever considered serving in the military? Why or why not?
 - a. If served: How would you characterize your military experience?
3. Has any of your immediate family served in the military?
 - a. If so: How much do you know about their experiences?
 - b. How do you feel about these experiences?
4. Would you consider your family as having a military heritage?
5. On a political scale of very liberal, somewhat liberal, moderate, somewhat conservative and very conservative, where do you see yourself?
6. Using that same scale, in general, how do you tend to see your professional peers identify politically?
7. How many of your professional peers are veterans?
8. Do you view your campus as a diverse environment? In what ways?
9. Do you believe your campus is a veteran friendly place? Why or why not?
10. How aware do you believe you are of student veterans in your classroom?
 - a. Do you attempt to identify student veterans in your classroom?
 - b. Why or why not? If not, do you see a purpose in identifying student veterans?

- c. How do you identify student veterans? For example, do you ask, do they share through an oral or written assignment or identify military tattoos or apparel?
 - d. For the student veterans you suspect or identify, do you ask them about their service or intentionally developed relationships with them?
11. How aware would you say you are of the transitional issues that have been documented in studies of student veterans?
- a. How about the signs or symptoms of PTSD?
12. Within your classroom or subject area, how likely are you to share opinions or discuss the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan or other potentially politically divisive topics with students?
- a. What are your opinions of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan?
 - b. On a scale of 1-10, how knowledgeable about the wars would you say you are?
 - c. Do you tend to see student veterans as holding views outside the college norm?
 - d. Based on your perception, what do most people at this college think of the wars?
13. Have you had any significant experiences with veterans on or outside the campus or classroom?
- a. Did this experience shape your perception of student veterans? How?
14. What unique challenges or needs do you think student veterans bring to college and the classroom?
- a. Do you believe a student's military service brings any value to the college experience?
 - b. Do you believe veterans are accurately portrayed by popular culture (TV and movies)?
 - c. Have you had veteran specific training? If so, where, what type, when? Was it helpful? In what way(s)?
15. I am going to read to you some traits and I want you to tell me your immediate reaction, using "yes" or "no" if you associate the trait with military training and culture?
- Respectful, extreme, inclusive, obedient, humanitarian, violent, cultured, tolerant, educated, aggressive, compliant, open-minded, compassionate, anxious.
16. If you were to look at this interview as a friendly conversation or personal reflection, has it influenced or changed your perception of student veterans?
- a. If so: In what ways?

17. What would you say shapes your perception of student veterans?
18. What are your attitudes toward veteran specific accommodations in the classroom?
19. How likely are you to voluntarily attend student veteran specific training if it were offered to you?
20. Would you say there is cultural divide that exists between military and college?
21. How would you describe or define this cultural divide?
22. Do you believe there are stereotypes that student veterans have of college faculty?
23. Do you believe there are stereotypes that college faculty have of student veterans?
24. Is there anything else you would like to share that you believe is relevant to my study?

Thank you, this concludes my questions. I may contact you in the future to ask additional questions or conduct a continuation study. I appreciate your willingness to assist with this research.

***Stop Recording