A SACRIFICE FOR THEIR COUNTRY AND A COMMITMENT TO THEIR COMMUNITY:

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF VETERANS TRANSITIONING FROM SOLDIER

TO STUDENT

By

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requirements for the degree of

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

This is to certify that the Doctoral Dissertation of

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has been approved by the examining committee for the dissertation requirement for the Doctoral Program in Education Leadership in the Division of Education and Counseling, May, 2023.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to all current military soldiers, veterans, and deceased soldiers who sacrificed their lives to protect the United States of America. Thank you for your service to our country and for putting a down payment on freedom for us. I also dedicate this dissertation to three other individuals who entered my life in the 1970s and am able to have an opportunity to thank them today.

I dedicate this dissertation to Dr. Norman C. Francis, former President of the Xavier University of Louisiana. You accepted the Viet Nam Veterans by opening the doors of Xavier to us and earned a BA Degree. I say Thank you. Next, I dedicate this dissertation to Mrs. Audrey Oger Jean, who I met in 1975 when I was assigned to Phillips Elementary school as a probationary fifth-grade teacher. The days I spent observing you teach in your classroom is where I learned the mechanics of teaching. Many years I used your methods and strategies throughout my teaching career. What I learned from you brought new heights for me in my teaching career.

Lastly, I dedicate this dissertation to Dr. Ramona Jean Perkins, who supported and provided academic assistance to the Viet Nam veterans attending Xavier in the 1970s for many years. As Dr. Francis saw a need for educational assistance for veterans, you, as a student, were selected to provide tutoring to veterans. You rejuvenated their confidence by providing academic tutoring. I recall the success stories told by my fellow veterans. It was also evident in their improvement in coursework. Other Viet Nam veterans of Xavier and I thank you for your service. You were a part of our success.

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Abstract

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The purpose of this study was to explore the challenges and lived experiences of former military men and women as they transitioned from military assignments to students in institutions of higher learning. According to a study by the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs (2021), former military men and women encountered common challenges during re-adjustments, such as employment, maintaining healthy relationships, and pursuing educational endeavors. Using a descriptive phenomenological research design, the research study gathered information from individuals who have lived, witnessed, and joined a branch of the United States military. This study focused on identifying gaps in support services that hindered the needs of former military men and women enrolled in higher education institutions. The research study revealed six themes that emerged from participants' responses. (1) the Registration Process; (2) Understanding G.I. Bill Benefits; (3) the Environment; (4) Veteran Advisor; (5) Veteran Specific Services; and (6) Retention. The responses indicated consistency in the themes identified as challenges encountered by former military men and women who transitioned from the military.

Key Words: Challenges, Encounter, Experiences, Exploring, Phenomenological, Transition, Veteran.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Military personnel at all ranks can be impacted by horrific acts of aggression, including invasions, armed conflicts, blockades, revolution riots, insurrection sabotages, terrorism, nuclear attacks, and genocides. Such acts can contribute to military personnel's decision to move into civilian careers or enroll in institutions of higher learning to expand opportunities (Winkie, 2021). A twenty-first-century example of this is documented below.

On September 11, 2001, the United States of America fell victim to terrorism when extremists from Saudi Arabia and several other Arab nations hijacked four commercial airliners (Rodriguez, 2022). The hijackers flew two commercial airplanes into the World Trade Center in New York City, hitting the north and south towers. The third airliner hit the west section of the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia, just outside Washington, D.C., and the fourth airliner crashed in a field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Approximately 3,000 lives fell victim to these terrorist attacks, which resulted in a major U.S. initiative to prevent terrorism and to protect the United States. Terrorist acts, such as the one mentioned above, may often elicit patriotic responses and hence an inspiration for men and women to enlist in the armed forces.

According to DeSimone (2022), approximately 181,510 Americans enlisted for active-duty service, and 72,908 enrolled in the reserves in response to the September 11th attacks. Years later, many enlisted had either fulfilled their military obligations, retired from the United States military, or received a medical discharge. Eventually, all would return to a civilian lifestyle. In this light, the discharged veterans had to decide on their next professional endeavor. Military work ethics, such as commitment, integrity, accountability, loyalty, and service before self, now had to be tested and transferred to a civilian career, whether part-time or full-time.

The transition process and the choice of a new job warranted these soldiers to decide if preparation in higher education was necessary for post-military careers. According to Neitzel (2017), the advantages of earning a degree after completing military service could improve job opportunities and ease the transition to a civilian lifestyle. Results from a study conducted by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU, 2022) indicated that 87% of employers agreed that hiring college graduates is a sound investment, as they tend to be better prepared for employment. This researcher explored the possible challenges that military veterans could have encountered while transitioning from active duty to higher education, such as interacting with other students to establish friendly relationships on campus (McGee, 2022), adjusting and fitting into the campus culture (Belanger et al., 2021), and changing from an elevated (military) structure to a relaxed (higher education) environment (Jones, 2017).

According to Chandra (2021), a culture of nonacceptance of student veterans and the demand for veteran-specific student services were apparent in higher education. Robinson and Robinson (2022) argued that veterans who continued their education with adequate support would likely bolster their key to success and ease the transition from soldier to civilian life. Student Support Services Programs (SSSPs) are examples of the kind of services veterans need on college campuses.

The purpose of SSSPs is to escalate services to accommodate students with statuses of disabled, low-income, or first in the family to attend and receive a college degree. SSSPs address financial aid, counseling, and health issues that could hinder academic achievement. These support services are tools for students to break barriers (Department of Education, 2022). Previous studies, such as Falkey (2016), LeMire (2017), Alshuler and Yarab (2018), and Lim et al. (2018) provided important information about student support services available to other

identified distinct groups that received administrative and academic assistance. One such group is the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual (LGBTQIA) students.

As indicated, veterans are not the only subgroup who experienced a gap in services for growing sectors of minority groups in society and in higher education. In a research study by Eisenberg et al. (2017), qualitative data were collected related to LGBTQIA+ students from higher education communities and available support resources. The study examined social climate indicators such as community, the wellbeing of individuals, and economic and psychological welfare, which were potential risk factors among the LGBTQIA+ community and populations in higher education. These factors were relevant as they dealt with the nonacceptance of same-sex couples, hate crimes, and employment discrimination. The Eisenberg et al. (2017) study provided evidence that these social climate indicators impacted a person's ability to adapt to an unknown environment, and thus impacted academic achievement**.** Results from this study highlighted similar challenges that veterans may face as they transition from soldiers to students.

Additionally, Yssel et al. (2016) investigated students with disabilities in higher education. Specifically, the researchers examined perceptions of the relationships between students and faculty and the possible effect of relationships on the college experience for students with disabilities. The results of this study revealed the importance of faculty-student relationships, independence/self-determination, and a desire to be like any other student. Results from this study provided an important avenue for examining the experiences of disabled veterans.

According to Hattie (2020), teacher-student relationships positively affected student learning. When a teacher demonstrated a sense of caring, students with disabilities became

secure, comfortable, and felt equal to others despite a disability. These students also experienced increases in their levels of confidence.

As students developed trust and confidence in instructors, students were willing to work harder, take risks, and were not afraid to make mistakes (Hattie, 2020). Such will be the case with veterans returning to institutions of higher learning. Former military men and women have been described by some students as outsiders, making forming social connections difficult (McGee, 2022).

The importance of the faculty-student relationship is nothing new for veterans. In the military, soldiers consider the first sergeant their father, mother, and teacher. The first sergeant considers the soldiers under their command as sons, daughters, and students.

The first sergeant is responsible for ensuring that soldiers learn soldier skills under their command. These skills are leadership skills, teamwork, communication skills, dependability, accountability, and work ethics. The relationship between first sergeant and soldier is a team effort in achieving the goal of competence in soldier skills.

In addition to the soldier skills, a research study by Culpeper and Kan (2020) emphasized that a bond and a respected relationship between instructor and student veterans allowed the two to work jointly toward the goal of academic achievement. Results from Culpepper and Kan's study indicated that student veterans found learning to be enjoyable. These researchers cited building social relationships, interacting with traditional students and instructors, and establishing trust and confidence in staff and students as challenges. Once these barriers were removed, student veterans discovered ease in transitioning and began to enjoy academic learning. In a further research study, Pedler et al. (2020) suggested positive relationships between student veterans and instructors eliminated feelings of intimidation.

Statement of the Problem

According to a research study by the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs (2021), former military men and women encountered common challenges during readjustment. The challenges former military men and women faced during any transition could be long-lasting and stressful, particularly as they moved from a highly structured military environment to a relaxed higher education environment (Jones, 2017).

This study intended to address the challenges student veterans encountered while transitioning from military to civilian life. Among the challenges encountered are coping with the transition process into institutions of higher learning and identifying resources and support systems that institutions of higher education may have in place. Favorably addressing these issues will support former military men and women in their transition from military personnel to student veteran.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the challenges and lived experiences of former military men and women as they transitioned from military assignments to students in institutions of higher learning. To assist higher education institutions in providing meaningful support to veterans, in 2013, the Obama administration developed a series of "8 Keys to Success" designed to assist veterans and service members in transitioning and thriving into higher education classrooms (Baker, 2013). The series of success factors included:

- trusting in the campus community to promote success for veterans.
- ensuring consistent and sustained support from the university campus.
- ensuring that veterans receive academic counseling.

- coordinating and centralizing campus efforts and create a designated space for veterans.

- involving local communities, organizations, and government agencies.

- using specific instruments to collect and monitor veterans' information.

- providing comprehensive professional training for faculty and staff on issues and challenges unique to veterans.

- developing systems that ensure the sustainability of effective practices for veterans.

Successfully incorporating multiple aspects of the aforementioned "Keys to Success" can serve as one crucial step in minimizing the challenges of veterans' transition to unchartered territories. According to the U. S. Department of Veteran Affairs (2022), the University of Chicago received marked results as a participating member of the Military Assistance Program, Principles of Excellence Program, the "8 Keys to Success" Program, and the Yellow Ribbon Program. The university provided each student veteran and dependents with a cost of tuition plan, an academic plan with a timeline, a financial and an academic advisor, and acknowledged deployments such as students who are members of the military receive official military orders to report to their assigned units for a specific military troop movement overseas.

According to Brown (2021), the University of Chicago was ranked number six out of 443 national universities. Schools are ranked according to accepted indicators of excellence, such as enrollment, federal programs enrollment, outcomes, graduation rate, and student veteran services. According to the U. S. Department of Veteran Affairs (2022), listed below are highlights of accomplishments by the University of Chicago:

- **Enrollment**

- In the 2022 academic school year, the University of Chicago registered 17,834 students.

- There was an increase of 55 student veteran enrollees for the 2022 academic school year.

- **University of Chicago Federal Programs**

  - Principles of Excellence Program

  - "8 Keys for Success" Program

  - Yellow Ribbon Program

  - Department of Defense Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

- **University of Chicago Outcomes**

  - In 2018, the University of Chicago established the Veteran Scholars Initiative. This comprehensive program provides customized admissions, pre-orientation, advising, housing and resources to welcome and support the success of veterans.

  - The University of Chicago's initiative has been recognized for supporting student veterans.

  - The University of Chicago ranked #2 in Best Colleges for Veterans by *U.S. News and World Report*.

  - The University of Chicago ranked #6 in National Universities.

  - The University of Chicago ranked #12 in Best Value Schools.

  - The University of Chicago was named the nation's best college for veterans.

Research Questions

  This phenomenological study explored the challenges and lived experiences of former military men and women who transitioned from military assignments to students in institutions of higher learning. The study was guided by the following research questions:

  RQ1: What challenges do veteran students encounter when enrolling in institutions of higher learning?

  RQ2: How do veteran students cope with transitioning from soldier to student?

  RQ3: What resources and support systems are institutions of higher learning utilizing to sustain former military men and women in their transition from soldier to student?

Significance of the Study

  This research study identified transition strategies for former military men and women as they matriculate to an educational setting and may inform institutions of higher education about the support services and structures needed to examine what should be in place and what needs to be added. This study's findings should provide veterans with resources to guide their transition into higher education.

  Resources to support these transition strategies may include, but not be limited to, the development and functional implementation of a student veterans crises line, student veteran center, student veteran organization, student veteran spiritual advisor, student veteran cultural activity developer, disabled student veteran parking, student Veteran for Student Government Association, and priority veteran registration and orientation. Further resources may include organizing a veteran student support team with representatives from the institution responsible for admissions, registration, financial aid, veterans' benefits, academic advising, student health,

personal or mental health counseling, career advising, disabilities services, and any other office of the institution that provides support to veteran students on campus.

Institutions of higher learning can utilize the findings from this research study to develop operational manuals. These operational manuals can include, but not be limited to, a student veteran manual, credit transfer procedures, a procedure for filing complaints, academic planning manual, student disabled veteran's manual, financial aid, tuition assistance, and military observance manual. These resources can be housed in a dedicated office space on the university's campus.

Karmelita (2018) and Whilby (2022) conducted studies on the challenges of former military men and women transitioning from the military to student veterans. The first researcher, Karmelita (2018), conducted a narrative study to determine the necessary components to establish a program to assist adults in transition. Participants for the study were recruited and selected from a similar transition program for adult learners and enrolled or considered enrolling in an institution of higher learning. Participants provided lived experiences for the research and perspectives of postsecondary support through interviews and observation notes. The findings of this research indicated that six elements were needed for a successful transition program: (1) providing a genuine college experience, (2) relating the curriculum to real-life experiences, (3) connecting students to support each other, (4) integrating technology, (5) providing remediation, and (6) fostering effective relationships.

The second researcher, Whilby (2022), examined the lived experiences of international students who were ethnoculturally and linguistically diverse (ECLD) and experienced an academic transition to postsecondary education. Whilby's focus pertained to the challenges these students encountered while transitioning to academic writing and teaching approaches in a

Western Canadian university. The participants were selected based on educational backgrounds and the lived experiences of international students outside of Canada. Eight participants from a university in Western Canada, ethnoculturally and linguistically diverse, participated in the study.

The sharing of participants' lived experiences educated faculty, staff, and students about the unique experiences and challenges students faced with the academic transition. These experiences and challenges are crucial for policymakers to make sound decisions for transitional support initiatives for international students.

The results of Whilby's study (2022) revealed that linguistic, social, and cultural factors affected academic transition. Awareness of international students' experiences educated the university's decisions to develop more effective transitional support programs for international students.

Future research studies are also necessary to assess the Schlossberg's 4S Transition Model to comprehend the transitioning of former military men and women from military to student veterans. Schlossberg's Transition Model (Schlossberg et al., 1995) proposed four factors that influence an individual's scope to manage the transition: (1) situation, (2) self, (3) support, and (4) strategies. The situation factor outlines incidents an individual experiences while transitioning. The self-factor expounds on how encounters influence an individual's transition. The support factor is the aid accessible during a transition. The strategy factor focuses on existing coping strategies to help guide the transition. The significance of Schlossberg's Transition Model is discussed in greater detail in Chapter two.

Overview of Methodology

This phenomenological study explored the challenges and lived experiences of former military men and women transitioning from military assignments to students in institutions of higher learning. A qualitative research design was utilized to answer the study's research questions. According to Bhandari (2020), this process involved gathering and interpreting data from lived experiences to understand a phenomenon better. Utilizing this approach allowed the researcher to conduct semi-structured interviews, organize focus groups, take observational field notes, and construct a survey instrument to gain insight into the lived experiences of each participant.

Examining the lived experiences of former military men and women was instrumental in helping the researcher understand a veteran's life phenomenon. According to Delve and Limpaecher (2022), a phenomenon is an event or occurrence in one's life. This study utilized structured interviews to extract a description of these events and occurrences as told by the participants.

The study employed purposive sampling to select participants. Purposive sampling, as defined by Nikolopoulou (2022), is a process whereby the researcher, at his/her preference and understanding of the topic, selects a sample of individuals from a population for participation in a research study. The main goal of purposive sampling was to select individuals ideal for assisting the researcher to address the study's research questions. The sample size for the study consisted of 10 to 15 former military men and women willing to share those aspects of their lived military experiences.

Delimitations

Delimitations describe the content of the research or establish parameters. Delimitations are self-imposed restrictions to a study compared to limitations that have inherent limits to the methodology (Miles & Scott, 2017). Furthermore, delimitations are further limitations actively put into place by the researcher to control for factors that might affect the results or to focus more specifically on a problem (Theofanidis et al., 2019). In this phenomenological study, the following were declared delimitations:

- The study only included institutions of higher learning in Louisiana.

- Participants were former military men and women.

- The focus or scope of the study was on veterans and their transitional challenges from military to college campuses.

- The study did not focus on degree completion.

Assumptions

Assumptions are elements that are out of the researcher's control. In this study, it was assumed that the responses provided by the respondents were truthful.

The researcher also assumed that a sample size of 10 to 15 participants was adequate for understanding the phenomenon and that the data collected from this sample size yielded applicable and appropriate information for the study. Finally, the researcher assumed the results from this study would have some implications for veterans in institutions of higher learning, regardless of the veterans' locale and area of study.

Definitions of Terms

For the purpose of this research study, the following terms are defined as follows:

Commander refers to a military officer in charge of a command. They are an officer with

the rank of captain or lieutenant in charge of 100-250 soldiers. The responsibilities of a company commander are to develop soldiers to perform their military duties (Crisp, 2021).

First Sergeant is the assistant to the commander. The position is the Senior Enlisted Advisor to the company commander who oversees management of all allocated human and material resources in accordance with Army Policy. and other official guidelines. They are accountable and responsible for the maintenance of organizational property (Crisp, 2021).

Institution of Higher Learning is a college or university offering academic studies beyond high school (U.S. Department of Education, 2022).

Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) is represented by a code that identifies specific job specialties within the United States military (Veteran.com, 2021).

PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) is a psychological reaction that occurs after experiencing a highly stressful event (Patterson, 2022).

Veteran refers to an individual who served and completed his military obligation in the armed forces (SVA, 2019).

Veteran Student refers to 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 enrolled in an Institution of Higher Learning (SVA, 2021).

Organization of the Document

In summary, the Introduction provided background information on veterans and factors affecting their transitioning out of the military. The transitional challenges that the veterans faced were described in the Statement of the Problem**,** followed by an explanation of how the findings

from this study may aid institutions of higher learning in providing an infrastructure of support for military students. The questions that guided the research study were also provided in Chapter one, along with an overview of the methodology and the sampling method.

Chapter two, the Literature Review, provides an in-depth review of related studies on the transition process, specifically, veterans transitioning from military to civilian life. Chapter three provides a more detailed description of the study's research design and the rationale for the chosen methodology. Participant demographics and the type of sampling method used for the study are discussed. Finally, details regarding the instrumentation, data collection procedures, and data analysis techniques are discussed in Chapter four.

<center>**CHAPTER TWO**</center>

<center>**LITERATURE REVIEW**</center>

This literature review included a wide range of studies written by scholars and authors who know about the intersectionality of military life and civilian life. A research study conducted by Yin (2018) explained how members of society who are unfamiliar with general aspects of transitioning from military to civilian life misinterpreted or ignored research on the transition process. On the contrary, knowledgeable researchers viewed transition research as an opportunity to deepen their understanding of the transition process and to discover additional information on how to support veterans as they moved from a military culture to a civilian lifestyle.

The literature review begins with an explanation of the theoretical framework followed by discussions of the Schlossberg Transition Model, the military culture, the GI Bill, and characteristics of veterans in higher education. Next, studies addressing the challenges of transitioning from soldier to civilian life are discussed, followed by a detailed explanation of Lazarus' Model of Stress, Appraisal, and Coping. The literature review concludes with relevant studies on how veterans navigate the interactions between the military and institutions of higher learning.

Theoretical Framework

Schlossberg's Transition Model

Schlossberg's Transition Model was developed by Nancy K. Schlossberg in 1995 and updated in subsequent years. The Schlossberg Model placed its focus on an individual's transition type, impact, position, and resources. Additionally, how a person coped and the process used was based on a person's situation, self, support, and strategies.

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Schlossberg's (1995) transition model serves as the theoretical framework for this descriptive phenomenological research study. This model emphasizes how student veterans coped with transition, feelings, process utilized while transitioning, and recalled the process of change according to Schlossberg's four types of transition which are situation, self, supports, and strategies, referred to as the 4Ss of the transition model (Schlossberg, 2008).

Schlossberg's Transition Model (Schlossberg et al., 1995) posed four factors: situation self, support, and strategies that influenced a student veteran's scope to cope with the transition. The first factor, situation, outlined incidents student veterans encounter in transition. Self, the next factor, expounded on how encounters impacted a student veteran in transition. The third factor, support, referred to the help accessible to ease a student veteran's transition. The final factor, strategies, addressed solutions used by student veterans to cope with issues during the transition. The 4-S factors furnished an avenue for individuals to comprehend the factors impacting student veteran's transition outcomes and coping resources that student veterans utilized to make sense of control during the transition process (Goodman et al., 2006). Schlossberg's Transition Model, when applied, has been effective in comprehending and helping student veterans adjust to transitioning. Schlossberg's Transition Theory advanced into a framework that highlighted and defined coping mechanisms for student veterans to utilize during transitions (Evans et al., 1998). Therefore, Schlossberg's Transition Model was chosen to apply to the student veterans' transition because the model provides an adaptable structure for the lifestyle changes of soldiers to student veterans.

Schlossberg also referred to transition as any event or non-event when roles, habits, relationships, and regular routines resulted in a change within individuals (Anderson et al., 2022). The individual's perception of experiencing an event, or non-event, played a key role in

the transition process. For an individual to comprehend the meaning of transition, consideration was given to the context, type, and impact of the transition on an individual. The transition types were situation, self, supports, and strategies (Chickering & Schlossberg, 1995).

Schlossberg's Transition Model (see Figure 1) was applied to this research study as the theoretical framework. This framework addressed encounters, experiences, and needs related to student veterans, with recommended support services organized within the 4 Ss of the transition model for student veterans. Roberts (2022) conducted a qualitative research study to examine transition experiences encountered by undergraduate students departing selective health profession interest areas, such as radiologic, nursing, and dental hygiene, at East Tennessee State University. The results indicated alignment with the theoretical framework of Schlossberg's Transition Model (Schlossberg, 1981; Schlossberg, 1991; Schlossberg et al., 1995). Roberts (2022) acknowledged Schlossberg and reiterated that the occurrence or no occurrence of events might have impacted one's assumptions.

Figure 1 Schlossberg's Transition Model

Note. StudentAffairs.com: (Evans, N.J., Forney, D., S., Guido, F., M., Patton, l., D., and Renn,

R., A., (2010). Asynchronous RA Training**.**

Schlossberg's model addressed four suggested resources for coping, including situation,

self, support, and strategies. Unlike many classmates, veterans' experiences are vastly different

from most student populations in college. Whether one served in combat or not, the military

responsibilities and experiences acquired remain unparalleled to nonveterans. Whilby (2022)

added that individuals must review available coping resources during the transition. Individuals'

approaches to coping may differ from each other. Researchers have examined coping in a

military setting using the Schlossberg Model. For example, Parsons and Ash (2022) used the

Schlossberg Transition Model to address coping issues for National Guard students.

According to Schlossberg (1995), transition is any event or non-event that resulted in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles. Embracing Schlossberg's Transition Model in this research study explored means accepting the findings of events or nonevents that affect an individuals' roles, assumptions, relationships, and routines of student veterans' ability to move through a transition. More importantly, this theory allowed individuals to understand the effects of Schlossberg's resources for coping, including situation, self, support, and strategies veterans may have used as they transitioned into a new life (Anderson et al., 2011).

Situation. The situation is assessed based on the degree of influence from factors such as (a) trigger (i.e., the factor that started the transition); (b) timing (i.e., good or bad time for the transition); (c) control (i.e., the influence and power of an individual during the transition); (d) duration (i.e., the change permanent or temporary by the transition as); (e) role change (i.e., the responsibilities, duties, and positions of a person); (f) similar experiences (i.e., previous transitions are similar to the current transition); (g) concurrent stress (i.e., stressors caused by the transition); and (h) assessment (i.e., the situation is positive, negative (Schlossberg, 1995).

A service member adjusts to transition positively or negatively depending on the timing of the situation. As student veterans enter an institution of higher learning, factors indicated will affect individuals as situations occur. Student registration can trigger a stressful situation for veterans due to the time it takes to register for a class.

Self. In a research study by DiRamio et al. (2008), demographic and personal psychological characteristics were two categories of resources. The demographic characteristics were ethnic origin, gender, educational level, and marital status. The psychological characteristics were intelligence, emotional state, temperament, and personality. When former military men and women enrolled in higher education, many faced the reality of academic

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deficiency and needing academic support. Service members entering higher education performed under different values that were difficult to adapt to after leaving the military.

Furthermore, Baechtold and De Sawal (2009) suggested that former military men and women re-examined themselves for a world in which they must become adjusted. Livingston (2019) agreed with Baechtold and De Sawal and further added that although academics was the focus for student veterans in higher education, adjusting to a new environment may have affected academic performance.

Support. The Schlossberg's Transition Model categorized four entities related to support. Each category includes a network of friends, institutional support, relationships with others, and strength of family support. With the absence of transitional support from colleges, former military men and women faced difficulty. A veteran's transition success depended on the amount and level of support received from family, friends, and other resources such as church pastors, counselors, and veteran support groups. According to Veneziano (2021), the transition process could have been eased for former military men and women by joining veteran organizations for support on campus and being open to differences.

Strategies. This factor describes an individual's coping in response to stressful situations. Schlossberg et al. (2012) argued that coping was not behavior with conviction. Coping strategies were determined by one's responses to changing the situation and controlling the problem and stress after the transition.

According to McBain (2008), colleges or universities found a lack of support for student veterans. The research study further added that veterans appreciated advisors, faculty, and staff when they knew the military culture or how to speak their language.

Whilby (2022) confirmed the 4S system of situation, self, support, and strategies positively affect one's adjustment to change. Each factor had its variables and effects on individuals during transitioning.

Schlossberg's four types of transition emphasized how student veterans cope with transition feelings, processes utilized during the transition, and recall of the change process. All of these transition types were contributory factors in providing answers for this study's research questions.

In an updated version of the model, according to Roberts (2022), the second edition of the Schlossberg Model (Schlossberg et al., 1995) indicated three clear types of transitions associated with college students: anticipated transitions, unanticipated transitions, and non-events. The transitions were defined as follows:

- Anticipated transitions referred to a predicted outcome of an event.
- Unanticipated transitions referred to unpredicted or unscheduled events, such as car accidents.
- Non-events referred to events expected to occur but do not, such as failure to be admitted into law school.

Student veterans encountered transitions from time and through phases, which Schlossberg named moving in, moving through, and moving out of transitions (Schlossberg et al., 1995).

Moving in, moving through, and moving out was described as the transitioning process for student veterans. The moving-in type of transition referred to one who has mastered the rules and regulations of an organization or institution and could comply, such as a soldier who enrolled in an institution and became a student veteran learning its rules and regulations

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indicated in the student handbook. A second type of transition, moving through, is when an

individual is knowledgeable, experienced, and adjusted to the new environment. Here the student

veteran had adjusted to the institution and confronted the challenges of transition by functioning

satisfactorily in this new environment. Moving out of this type of transition is a culmination of

the transition process. The journey of the student veteran came to an end by completing the

required program of study, and the award of an earned degree bestowed by the university

president.

Schlossberg's four major factors may or may not have impacted a person's ability to cope

with transition. In the next section of this research study, the researcher explores organizational

culture and the characteristics of an organization's member's behavior such as emotions and

reactions to incidents.

Organizational Culture

Kapur (2020) and Schein (1999) defined organizational culture as a set of collaborative

assumptions related to an organization's values, expected behavior, and normal beliefs. These

assumptions comprised the formal and informal rules and regulations such as standards,

expectations, and norms that stir up acceptable or unacceptable behavior for members of the

organization. Schein (2010) described the personality of an organization and the reasons for the

behavior of its members, such as emotions and reactions to incidents.

The Organizational Culture Model discussed in this section of the research study paved

the way for organizations relative to culture. In the next section, military culture has been

addressed to gain an understanding of the military organization as applied to its culture.

Adhocracy organizational model culture emphasized putting into practice creative skills that

would contribute in an effective manner leading to enrichment.

Military Culture

Military culture, as defined by the Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC, 2019), embraced an organization's foundational values, beliefs, and behaviors consistent with its role and identified mission. Military culture changes consistently to maintain alignment with the military's mission. According to McCormick et al., (2019), the culture of the military is vital. Sensible values, such as honor, duty, integrity, loyalty, personal courage, respect, and selfless service, have defined the military culture.

According to McCormick et al. (2019), military culture was important because it represented the structure to pilot exemplary behavior in the military. The need for additional research on the acceptance and long-lasting effect of military culture would better address the needs of US military veterans' benefits such as healthcare, education, and home ownership. Expanding the vitality and understanding of military culture were crucial for veterans by enhancing core values and beliefs and closing the culture gap between civilian society and its military.

Pease et al. (2016) indicated that veterans of the Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) era wars experienced problems such as education benefits, health care, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) issues. The culture of the military continues to be essential because it also closes the gap between civilian society and the military.

Jacobs (2014) argued that language and culture define students. Understanding the language and culture of an institution helps students academically and socially. Furthermore, Jacobs posited that language, and the elimination of cultural barriers were crucial for the success of former military men and women in higher education.

The findings of Matt and Seal (2014) agreed with Jacobs (2014). To understand military culture, one must understand the person's perceptions, beliefs, and expectations. Additionally, Koenig et al. (2014) described culture as organizational and perspectives as a standard practice.

Furthermore, Hall (2011) suggested that former military men and women were a diverse group of individuals. Many perceived military culture as the opposite of the civilian environment. For this research study, culture was defined as norms of behavior, a code of manners, language, customs and beliefs, dress, and rituals (Reger et al., 2008). A research study by Arminio et al. (2014) detailed three components of military culture that affected former military men and women in transition: collectivism, rigid hierarchy, and masculinity.

Collectivism

According to Arminio et al. (2014b), collectivism in military culture is when one saw oneself as part of the group and defined the goals of the group as a priority over personal goals. Military unity developed group unification and unit identification, leading to a positive spirit, confidence, and preparation for combat (Arminio et al., 2014b; Petrovich, 2012). Assimilation into military culture is an experience all members of the military share. Demers (2013) found that basic combat training gave recruits a new purpose and goal. Petrovich further asserted that individuals enlisting in the military came from many diverse backgrounds and experiences. Navon and Morag's (2004) research findings agreed that the military gave personnel a new identity, social life, new ways, practices, and eligibility for GI Bill benefits such as home loans, healthcare, and education benefits. Collectivism in this research study is important because it addressed the fact that individuals saw themselves as part of a group rather than separate and apart.

Rigid Hierarchy

Arminio (2014) focused on the hierarchical structures and social relations between management members over subordinates. Each military branch had a similar chart of authority structure consistent across the military.

Upon arrival at basic military training (BMT), recruits are introduced to the basics of military culture with a new set of rules and standards that was the core of the military's rigid hierarchy. These standards, such as proper haircut, marching, photo identification, uniforms, saluting, and curfew, were regulation mandates for each service member and were enforced by members of a higher rank (Suzuki & Kawakami, 2016).

According to Absher (2022), in 1951, the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) was authorized and implemented by the Executive Orders of the President of the United States pursuant to his authority under Article 36, UCMJ (10 USC § 836). The purpose of the UCMJ was to execute laws to protect discipline within all ranks of the military, promote satisfactory order in the armed forces, and mandate consequences for non-compliance by any member of the armed service.

The UCMJ is a set of laws implemented to address criminal acts such as drunk driving, drug use, rape, larceny, and murder, in addition to conduct affecting satisfactory order and discipline in the military. Those laws include offenses such as absence without leave (AWOL), disrespect towards superiors, desertion, dereliction of duty, and failure to obey orders. Military members are accountable to a strict standard of conduct which is driven by all levels of authority in the military according to the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) and the Manual for Courts-Martial (Meyer, 2015).

According to McCormick et al. (2019), the military was considered an isolated and self-sufficient culture, and contract negotiations were the only interactions with the corporate environment. After service members departed the military, they continued to live by the same military standards. According to Suzuki and Kawakami (2016), many private and public companies viewed military culture as excessively strict and regulated-driven. Although the military had strict rules and regulations, they were mainly for military members to work as a team (Hall, 2011).

Masculinity

In the earlier years of the military, the draft mandated all males 18 years of age serve their country by completing a military obligation of 2 years. Though females were not mandated by the draft, they were inducted into the military on a voluntary basis. The draft was intended for males.

According to Strong et al. (2018), the military traditionally consisted of male dominated individuals by design, the draft. The research study conducted by (Arminio et al., 2014) suggested that 85.4% of active-duty military are men. All advertisements were designed to attract men. The military continued to assume male dominance over female members of the military. In a review of male vs. female rank, males outranked females in all branches. A disparity of promotion between males and females was only a portion of male dominance in the military.

Rumann and Hamrick (2012) suggested the use of cadence songs by commanders amplified male dominance in basic military training. Though the military bars these types of cadence songs, they continued to exist. Their study acknowledged an increase in diversity. However, the military culture has not transformed into equalization for men and women.

Thomas (2022) further suggested collectivism, masculinity, and rigid hierarchy affected former military men and women in transition within the military culture. The culture of the military as a society lived according to its own set of values, beliefs, history, and sociology, such as a code of conduct, oath of office, customs and beliefs, dress, and rituals.

The next section of this research study provides more detailed information relative to the GI Bill.

GI Bill (Brief History and Purpose)

A review of the GI Bill is well-documented, with veterans having received benefits dating back to 1636 (V.A. History, 2021). The Pilgrims of Plymouth Colony implemented a law that supported returning disabled soldiers in the colony. Years later, the Continental Congress of 1776 provided pensions to Revolutionary War-disabled soldiers.

The GI Bill connected to this study because of its educational benefits awarded to soldiers. Veterans have utilized GI Bill benefits to fund education costs, home loans, and healthcare.

Soldiers returning from military service often required attention and assistance in areas such as medical, unemployment, education, and housing to continue life after military service. In the early years dating back to 1636, returning soldiers received very little assistance from the government. In 1944, the U.S. Government addressed this issue and created the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (National Archives, 2022).

According to the National Archives (2022), the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, referred to as the GI Bill, became law on June 22, 1944. The purpose was to address and decrease unemployment and the possibility of postwar depression among returning veterans. The GI Bill also assisted returning veterans in adjusting to civilian life in the areas of education,

hospitalization, purchase of homes, and especially education benefits for tuition. This act also provided tuition, equipment, books, supplies, subsistence, and counseling services for veterans to continue their education in school or college. A research study performed by the National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics (NCVAS, 2017) suggested the overall goal of the GI Bill was to provide opportunities such as higher education, technical training, healthcare, and home ownership for former military men and women veterans of the U.S. military, and that goal continued to be a high priority.

In a summary report by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA, 2022), the Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act was signed into law on August 16, 2017, by former President Donald J. Trump. The "Forever Bill" was named in honor of Harry W. Colmery, a national commander of the American Legion. He wrote the language for the original GI Bill in 1944. The new bill increased benefits for housing, education, and dependents.

Hill (2019) found former military men and women were a growing population on college campuses. In the United States, about 4% of all undergraduate students are considered veterans. Furthermore, Hill (2019) agreed with the findings of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2018) that an estimated 5 million former military men and women would have registered for universities or colleges by 2022. According to Sachdev (2021), there were five advantages to having a strong support system. They were improved self-esteem, a sense of belonging, improved overall health and well-being, reduced stress, and emotional support. Student veterans have relied on the benefits of the GI Bill to fund their education. This research study provides useful information for student veterans in the application of the GI Bill.

Veterans in Higher Education

Former military men and women enroll in colleges and universities after military service to become competitive in the employment workforce. Skills acquired in the military have not always aligned with civilian occupations such as combat arms or infantry. Many former military men and women have had to retrain for other occupations for employment.

According to Bryant (2021), approximately one million Americans have currently utilized GI Bill® benefits for higher education programs. In 2020, student veterans pursuing higher education degrees accounted for 80% of enrolled full-time student body. Student veterans postponed enrolling in higher education institutions to serve their country. Student veterans have often been older, married, and have worked full- or part-time jobs while in school. Therefore, veterans tended to study and work in fields unrelated to their military specialty.

According to the Student Veteran Census Survey (SVA, 2019), nearly two-in-three student veterans' major or field of study were not at all similar to their military specialization. Student veterans' main motivations for taking courses may have been one of the contributing factors to this fracture:

- enrolling in college or university to change careers

- being more competitive in the job market and job promotion

- keeping their knowledge and skills fresh

- earning better pay to support families and self

- seeking career advancement and career achievement

- developing a sense of self-achievement

- seeking specialized training certification within an industry or job field

- acquiring future financial stability

Higher education policies existed to assist academic growth and academic achievement at higher education institutions. It is then important to understand how higher education policies were designed by higher education institutions By doing so higher education policy recommendations can then be formed. These policies have provided guidance for parents relative to enrollment, financial aid, housing, and tuition.

Wisker and Masika (2017) confirmed that higher education policies were designed to assist, support, and enhance academic growth and achievement for all students. The research study conducted by Cheslock et al. (2016) further confirmed that institutions considered students' academic growth and achievement when developing policies for management, operations and fiscal environment in setting goals, outcomes, and policies that could have possibly affected students. In another research study, Deming and Figlio (2016) encouraged higher education institutions to develop and implement policies that promoted academic achievement as well as being held institutionally accountable.

Challenges Transitioning from Soldier to Civilian Life

Life in the military is significantly different from life as a civilian. Transition to military life begins the day a cadet arrives at basic training. Men and women entering the military are introduced to an occupation based on their aptitude test results. This is similar to a rite of passage because one transforms from being a civilian to becoming a soldier. Men and women learn a new way of life. Soldiers live by the values of discipline, respect, and loyalty. Veterans completing a military obligation find themselves struggling upon returning home. In a research article by Brittany (2022), former military men and women encountered various struggles as they returned home from completing military obligations. These struggles were caused by relating to others not

aware of experiences, changed environment, PTSD, reconnecting with friends, and employment. Each veteran's struggles differed from the others.

Zaber and Wenger (2021) suggested that current veterans faced an inflated economy that made it difficult for Americans to achieve a middle-class lifestyle status due to challenges such as unemployment, pandemic health issues, cost of living, and career advancement. These challenges were trends veterans encountered as the transitioning process from military to civilian workforce progressed. Furthermore, a research study conducted by Ramchand (2021) further added that veteran challenges included mental health, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), housing, unemployment, and suicide.

According to Gumber and Vespa (2020), challenges were disturbing. There were indicators as evidence veterans have overcome transition challenges. For example, indicators such as gainful employment, enrollment in higher education, regular medical attention, and stability served as evidence veterans answered and conquered transitioning challenges. Transitions are completed when veterans have adjusted to the environment. According to Stilwell (2022), transitions for veterans were completed according to timelines that are set by the veteran and were able to meet the needs of each veteran. These needs could have been employment, education, health care, and managing expectations.

A research study by the U.S. Census Bureau (2019) indicated that veterans were often not successful in completing college. The study indicated that only 26% of veterans 25 years of age received a bachelor's degree. Veterans may have influenced this percentage of degree completion and continuance with the challenges of transitioning from soldier to civilian.

There is a vast difference between the college and military life structure. College life has embraced a very lax environment, while the military has embraced a very high-energy lifestyle.

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These differences in lifestyles have been challenging for individuals. College students consistently challenged institutional authority by closely reviewing the factual basis for claims. Veterans have been trained to follow orders.

Elliot (2015) compared traditional students to student veterans. His research study indicated that traditional students would have challenged authority. Student veterans have been trained to be obedient and trained to respect and obey authority. Traditional students have developed personal viewpoints, while student veterans have been accustomed to adhering to authority.

Student veterans and traditional students encountered several challenges during the transition process, such as financial aid, homesickness, adapting, and other factors affecting a student's college career. According to Terry (2018), obstacles faced by student veterans included missing home, financial concerns, and adapting to a new environment. He further confirmed these obstacles hindered the success path to academic success. The research study results also revealed that barriers were divided into intellectual, financial, and emotional categories.

The academic barriers for student veterans involved transitioning from the military to a college environment. Creating a Veteran Resource Center on campus has provided a haven designed for veterans to communicate with other veterans who understand veteran experiences. Azpeitia and Emerson (2022) confirmed that Veterans Resource Centers satisfied student veterans' needs, such as counseling, career, academics, and VA benefits certification. The study surveyed 130 student veterans to determine access, services, and utilization of the Veteran Resource Center. The results indicated that student veterans' needs were met with the assistance of a Veteran Resource Center.

In addition, veterans' primary financial barrier has been the managing educational expenses and personal finances. Student veterans continued to achieve despite these barriers. The Veterans Resource Center has been an excellent resource support for student veterans.

As the number of veterans increases on college campuses pursuing an advanced degree, institutions of higher education will benefit from guaranteed additional funds to develop and implement support services for student veterans. Institutions of higher education have rarely included funding in their annual budget review for specific veteran projects. The institution's lack of funding has made it difficult to support proposed projects for student veterans.

According to the U.S. Department of Education (DOE, 2022), in 2013, a college scorecard was developed by the U.S. Department of Education in conjunction with the US Government as an online tool for the public, parents, prospective students, and student veterans to view. Interested prospective students were allowed to view a college or university's cost and value in five areas such as graduation rate, cost per semester, employment rate, average amount borrowed, loan default rate, programs, and veteran information. These institutions continue to be in dire need of governmental financial assistance to support student veteran projects.

To assist institutions of higher education in support of student veterans, the U.S. Department of Education (DOE, 2012), under the leadership of Arne Duncan, Secretary of Education, awarded more than $14.3 million in higher education. These awards were designed to assist institutions of higher education in developing programs to support student veterans. The awards stipulated assistance and support for student veterans transitioning from military life to civilian life Department of Education, (2012). The U.S. government initiative further emphasized the need to help train and recognize student veterans' challenges when entering community colleges. Chief information officers developed and provided training opportunities for student

veterans in the areas of data science training programs, information technology trainees, health systems specialists, and deputy chief information officers.

Lazarus' Model of Stress, Appraisal, and Coping

Transitioning from soldier to civilian can be a disaster for some returning home after serving in the military. Former military men and women now face challenges such as communicating with other students, adapting to a new environment, health issues, and personal problems. Many of these challenges are burdensome, and veterans can benefit from strategies that will help them to cope with transitioning along with addressing the stress that may accompany the transition process.

As early as 1987, Lazarus and Folkman developed a model (see Figure 2) describing stress beginning in 1966 (Lazarus, 1966; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The model emphasized that the person-environment transaction (proactive coping) influenced the individual's stress response.

Figure 2 Lazarus' Model of Stress, Appraisal, and Coping Model
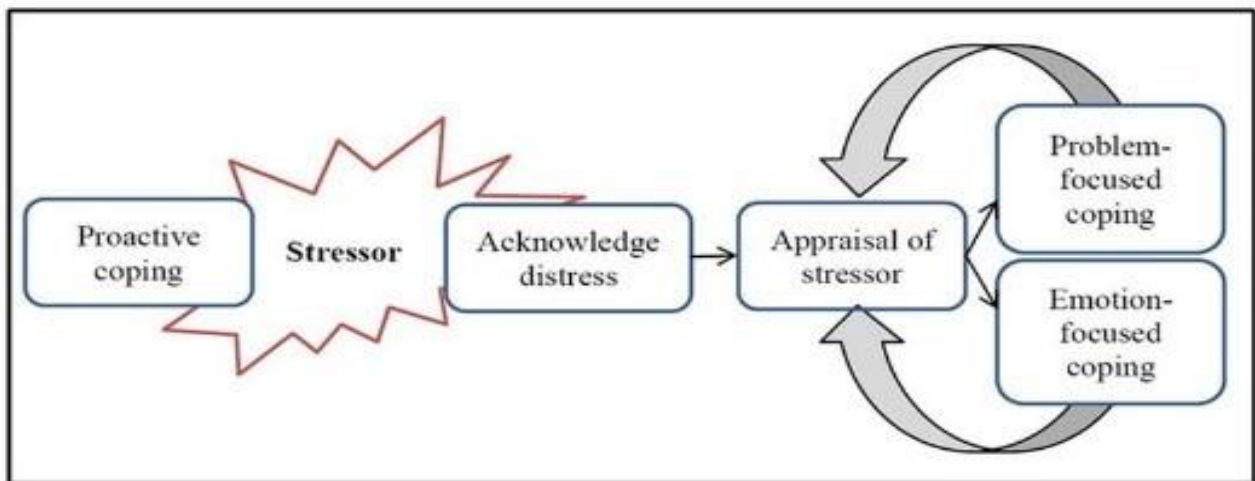
Note. ResearchGate: Jensen, C., Forlini. C., Partridge, B., & Hall, W. (2016). Australian university students' coping strategies and use of pharmaceutical stimulants as cognitive enhancers.

Lazarus' Model of Stress, Appraisal, and Coping Model and Schlossberg's Transition Model indicate two distinct connections relative to this proposed research study. The first connection is Lazarus Model of Stress, Appraisal, and Coping Model performs assessments of stressors and resources. The second connection is Schlossberg's Transition Model. This model focuses on an individual's transition type, resources, and how an individual copes, the process utilized is based on a person's situation, self, support, and strategies.

Sanderson (2022) explained that psychologist Richard Lazarus developed the Transactional Theory Model of Stress and Coping in 1960. The transactional model of stress and coping was based on two assessment factors: primary appraisal and secondary appraisal. Primary appraisal is the assessment of the stressors, and secondary appraisal is the assessment of the resource. An individual evaluated the stressors (primary appraisal) when an individual realized the presence of stressors. Resources to overcome stress (secondary assessment) are applied the moment stressors take effect. Coping strategies impact primary and secondary inspections selected by an individual. Psychological well-being, social functioning, and long-term health are affected by the stress response to coping. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), the transactional theory model appraised the stimuli of stress and coping consistently in the environment. When stimuli were appraised as harmful, challenging, or threatening, the appraisal process generated emotions.

The Schlossberg Transition Model was used for this research study because it focused on an individual's transition type, impact, position, and resources. Additionally, how a person coped and the process used is based on a person's situation, self, support, and strategies (4S). This model emphasized how student veterans cope with transition, feelings, process utilized while

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transitioning, and recalled the process of change according to Schlossberg's four types of

transition which are situation, self, supports, and strategies referred to as the 4Ss of the transition

model (Schlossberg, 2008).

The research study of Hopwood et al. (2022) defined person-environment transactions as

how an environment affects the behavior of an individual. The study examined the individual,

the environment, and the transactions with their personality while in that specific environment.

An individual's behavior is characterized by the present environment, which is fuel for specific

behavior. Stressors play a vital role in one's behavior. The unusual behavior of a veteran was

associated with a diagnosed case of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

In a research study conducted by Patterson (2022), transition stress and posttraumatic

stress disorder (PTSD) were crucial elements for causing havoc in the transition from soldier to

civilian. Transition stress is a high level of stress tied to moving into civilian life. PTSD is a

psychological disorder that affects a veteran's physical, mental, and social well-being. PTSD in

veterans has been associated with exposure to combat, acts of terrorism, experiencing sexual

assault, and experiencing the death of a loved one.

Additionally, Clemmenson (2022) concluded that returning soldiers would encounter

challenges during the transitioning process. Veterans, as they begin the process of transitioning,

encounter experiences such as difficulty relating and communicating with others. In their

absence, families may have created new traditions, and overall, adjusting to an environment they

once knew now is unknown. Clemmenson (2022) further concluded that completion of military

obligation and soldiers returning home is a rite of passage for former military men and women.

These soldiers may or may not have been prepared for this change in life. The stressors, such as

employment, health care, education, resume writing, relationships, housing, and financial stability, could be distractions or stressful situations.

Transitioning from military service to a civilian lifestyle is no easy task. Daily activities can be difficult until a routine has been established and have become a part of one's life. Everyone's transitioning is different. Transition is tailored for everyone, depending on their preparation for civilian life. One must remember this new life for former military men and women will be very difficult to manage. The need for support services is crucial. These services, offered through the local Veterans Affairs, provide former military men and women services such as health care, financial counseling, stress, education, and of course, procedures for applying for and receiving benefits for the GI Bill.

The researcher for this study examined problems that student veterans face daily that could lead to stress. The Lazarus model addresses problem-based focused coping and emotion-based focused coping strategies useful to student veterans in transition.

PTSD-Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

PTSD has been defined by the veteran's administration (VA, 2022) as a mental health problem caused by individuals observing life-threatening or traumatic events. Individuals with PTSD have been a part of a disastrous event or series of events such as witnessing or being part of active combat, bombings, horrific motor vehicle accidents, or someone passing away. PTSD can manifest through a series of symptoms, such as interpersonal relationships and sleep disorders and cause personality or lifestyle changes. The symptoms of PTSD have occured when something reminds the sufferer of a disturbing event, according to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs VA (2022).

PTSD is prevalent among student veterans. According to Medina (2022), awareness and knowledge of PTSD in providing medical assistance to individuals. Employers who have acknowledged the awareness of PTSD bring positive energy to the workforce due to their understanding of how it impacted an individual's mental health. Individuals diagnosed with PTSD can receive assistance from support groups, family, and medical assistance. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs VA (2022) PTSD has remained problematic for some student veterans.

This researcher's personal experiences as a student veteran in the 1970s, who encountered enrollment challenges with higher education institutions, witnessed a lack of knowledge within the staff and faculty in working with veterans' issues and resources and the institution's lack of cultural awareness to interact with veterans appropriately. According to Blecker (2021), issues that were challenges for veterans could be resolved by investing in resources, recruiting quality staff, and delivering regular training on veteran culture and needs.

The study conducted by Blecker (2021) added that many issues were challenges for a veteran not known to staff. Veterans were struggling with transition issues such as those listed below:

- Obligations outside of school, such as caring for families while pursuing their degrees.

- Mental health needs.

- Financial difficulties, food insecurity, and lack of shelter create further obstacles to education.

- Many campus staff and faculty are not culturally informed of veteran experiences and unique needs.

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- Disability offices and faculty may have a limited understanding of service connected injuries that have the potential to impact academic performance.

- Veteran resource centers (VRCs) on campus may be under-resourced and lack service coordination with other departments on campus.

Support for Student Veterans

A large number of veterans enrolling in colleges and universities have brought awareness of student veterans on campus. Just as these student veterans have been adjusting to a new environment, culture, and population, faculty and staff have also been adjusting to having student veterans in class. Though veterans, faculty, and staff of colleges and universities have been adjusting to each other, there has been a disconnect between student veterans, faculty, and university policies.

Today, student veterans are older and married and bring a wealth of knowledge and experiences. Student veterans have been transitioning from high energy to a relaxed environment. Many student veterans will encounter challenges, such as communication and enrollment barriers, adjusting to a new environment, interacting with younger students, health issues, and financial problems, that may be unfamiliar to faculty and staff. Because faculty members are unaware or unfamiliar with the challenges veterans encounter, veterans can feel a sense of not being accepted or wanted by the university and traditional students. Veterans become withdrawn and isolate themselves from faculty and students. As a result, veterans have experienced a sense of alienation, unsupported, and disconnectedness, and veterans will seek assistance from other veterans in order to survive the challenges encountered.

To assist higher education institutions in providing meaningful support to veterans, in 2013, the Obama Administration developed a series of "8 Keys to Success" that were to help

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veterans and service members transition into higher education classrooms and thrive once they are there (Baker, 2013). These success factors include:

- trusting in the campus community to promote success for veterans.

- ensuring consistent and sustained support from the university campus.

- ensuring veterans receive academic counseling.

- coordinating and centralize campus efforts and create a designated space for veterans.

- involving local communities, organizations, and government agencies.

- using specific instruments to collect and monitor veterans' information.

- providing comprehensive professional training for faculty and staff on issues and challenges unique to veterans.

- developing systems that ensure the sustainability of effective practices for veterans.

Successfully incorporating multiple aspects of the aforementioned "Keys to Success" could have served as one crucial step in minimizing the challenges of veterans' transition to unchartered territories. Colleges and universities receiving funding for federal funding have been mandated to comply with these requirements. Student veterans may have come to college with health issues resulting from being in the military. These health issues and other challenges could create difficulties for faculty and staff in working with students. College and university facilities, administrators, and others have been reviewing how student veterans are perceived.

Kognito and Craig (2022) involved colleges and university faculty and staff in determining the perception of working with veterans. The findings revealed that 70% of faculty members could not identify signs of health issues in veterans, such as distress, anxiety, and thoughts of suicide; 44% lacked knowledge related to challenges veterans encounter daily; 42%

expressed management issues in class debates that are sensitive for veterans; and 95% indicated that they were not familiar with the challenges faced by veterans.

Furthermore, Kognito and Craig (2022) strongly suggested that faculty and staff have a responsibility to engage themselves in student veteran activities, such as visiting a veteran resource center to show support as veterans pursue their academic degrees and future career growth. The results of Kognito and Craig's study were knowledge and understanding for faculties and staff as they provide instruction for student veterans.

Faculties and staff will get a view of the challenges encountered by students.

Institutional Role in Credit Transfer

Another university-based challenge is the limited amount of knowledge by universities and colleges related to the awarding of military transfer credit. This challenge has become a concern for veterans and the veterans' administration. The concern is the development of federal and state guidelines for awarding military transfer credits to be followed by universities and colleges. The registrar's office, certifying officials, and advisors have refused to acknowledge military transfer credit.

This refusal has caused veterans to enroll in courses previously taken at accredited institutions using education benefits to pay for the classes. The VA received an enormous amount of complaints related to the reluctance on the part of colleges and universities to award military credit for college courses.

Research by Bueche (2020) found that colleges and universities carefully revisited the current transfer of military credit into postsecondary academic credit practices and policies. The purpose of revisiting is to adjust or create new practices or policies to comply with federal and state guidelines in awarding academic credit for military education.

Knowing What Credits Will Transfer from Military Experience

Returning soldiers from military duty have found enrolling in colleges or universities challenging. The military has failed to prepare former military men and women for the student enrollment process. Several soldiers were not aware that military experience could count toward college credit.

The military education office has the responsibility to educate and inform soldiers of all available education resources. However, it is the soldier's responsibility to seek assistance. When soldiers return home and have enrolled in a college or university, academic advisors and counselors have not been advising these returning soldiers of college credit for military experience.

According to Absher (2022), the function of the Joint Services Transcript (JST) was to review submitted applications for transfer of military credit to colleges and universities on behalf of service members. Absher further explained that the JST notified the institution of interest through documented transcripts and information for recommendations. All active members and veterans were eligible for this service. The Joint Services Transcript (JST) provides a detailed synopsis of a service member's academic record. It also assisted academic advisors and counselors in career planning for service members and veterans. Student veterans are required to provide an official transcript to the Registrar for transfer of credit.

Three Ways Military Transfer Credit Awarded

In recent years, the military has allowed soldiers to continue their higher education by contracting with local colleges and universities to provide college courses on military bases in the evenings for soldiers. This allowed soldiers to work toward advanced degrees. Several members of the military have accrued college credit hours. Military service members have taken

advantage of this opportunity. However, many service members have complained about the procedure to get credit for college courses and credit for military experiences. Many service members were not aware of the procedures or guidance for applying for college credit. This research study addresses this issue with useful information.

An article published by the American Council on Education (ACE, 2022) explained the procedures for receiving credit for military service experiences through its Military Guide. The purpose of the military guide was to provide institutions with academic support and guidance in awarding college credit. A contractual agreement between the Department of Defense (DOD) and ACE was established to provide a source of information for courses and occupations.

The Military Guide includes:

- an upload feature for service.

- a streamlined course and occupation summaries format.

- courses and occupations evaluated by ACE for all military.

- Multiple ways to search for courses.

ACE has evaluated courses offered by military-affiliated defense institutions, joint DOD programs, and government agencies. These evaluations were located in the ACE national guide, which provided information about the evaluated course that is not in the Military Guide.

There are three standard methods by which service members received credit for military experiences:

1. College or university decides to award credit

2. Academic record assessment

3. Course description allotment

Veterans Who Become Students

According to Whitworth et al. (2020), veterans have been characterized as a diversified population consisting of many comparable groups. A defining similarity between these former military men and women was that they were veterans. The research study results found 200,000 veterans transitioned out of military service on a yearly basis. Half of the 19 million US veteran population were under 65, and ten percent are women.

Wilke (2018) stated that veterans transitioning out of military service caused confusion in their normal life. Through their lived military experiences, veterans changed the American business landscape. Many articles and studies focused on veteran transition as it related to Post Traumatic Stress (PTS) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), homelessness, and alcohol and drug addiction. The culture of veterans, such as a learned and practiced leadership style, behaviors, mannerisms, and values, has consistently found a way into American business and culture.

According to Jones (2017), life after military service has not always been an easy transition process from military to civilian life to student veterans. Student veterans have been required to adjust from living in a highly structured environment to a more relaxed environment. This way of life is one that many student veterans were not accustomed to while serving in the military. Transitioning from military service to civilian life is one of the most difficult challenges faced by soldiers returning from completing a military obligation.

Former military men and women begin a new life after completing their military obligation. The transition of these veterans has been challenging as they adjust to life as a veteran. Many of these veterans are expected to take advantage of the GI Bill education benefit and enroll in higher education to pursue a degree. Returning home from military service is a

challenge for veterans in seeking employment. Today's employers are seeking individuals to meet specific technical skill requirements. Veterans who lack employment requirements find themselves enrolling in higher education to acquire training skills to compete in today's job market. Veterans enrolled in higher education increases each year.

A research study conducted by the Student Veterans of America (SVA, 2021) found that student veterans were enrolled as full-time students in higher education institutions. Student veterans enrolled in 4-year public schools was 59%, 2-year public schools was 18%, 4-year private (not-for-profit) schools was 16%, private for-profit or proprietary schools was 4%, and other was 3%.

The Student Veterans of America (SVA, 2021) also revealed that 1 million student veterans received GI Bill benefits for tuition assistance and that student veterans were married, older, and employed full- or part-time. Also, the research study further suggested that female veterans consisted of 31%. The veteran female population has been vastly growing. Veterans are currently the fastest-growing demographic group in the U.S. Since 2016, female student veterans have grown to 4%.

Blecker (2021) explained that challenges faced by veterans are a result of limited knowledge by college or university staff responsible for assisting veterans. College and university staffs needed proper training on GI Bill benefits, interacting with veterans, and services offered to veterans by the college or university. Issues encountered by student veterans could be easily resolved by investing in professional development and interaction with the veteran's administration.

Furthermore, Blecker (2021) revealed that student veterans encountered the following challenges as they transitioned from soldier to student:

- Veterans enrolled in a college or university and not ready for the responsibility.

- VA education benefits are exhausted.

- Food, housing, and transportation are obstacles.

- Family obligations.

- Mental health issues continue to hinder student veteran success.

- Lack of training for staff and faculty.

- Availability of reasonable accommodations.

- Lack of support for veteran resource centers (VRCs).

Student veterans will continue to encounter challenges until colleges and universities understand veterans and their lived experiences.

Summary

The Literature Review presented several studies conducted to justify the positions of several scholars relating to this research study. Studies such as Anderson et al. (2022) conducted a research study to define transition; Whilby (2022) conducted a research study to examine coping resources for veterans during the transition; Clemmenson (2022) investigated challenges that student veterans encounter during the transition process; Patterson (2022) conducted a research study on transition stress and post-traumatic stress during the transition; and Zaber and Wenger (2021) conducted a research study to examine an inflated economy and its effect on student veterans.

Chapter three focuses on the Research Design and Methodology. Information about the participants and the sampling method is provided, along with the researcher's role in avoiding potential biases during the interview process. Chapter three also includes a discussion on data collection and analysis.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Organization of the Chapter

This study aimed to explore the challenges and lived experiences of former military men and women as they transitioned from military assignments to students in institutions of higher learning. Additionally, this study focused on identifying gaps in support services that hindered the unique needs of former military men and women who desired to enroll in institutions of higher learning.

The chapter introduced the overall purpose of the study. This study was linked to (1) the rationale for the research design, (2) the methodology and how suited it was for this study, and (3) the assumptions and restraints of the researcher. Chapter III also introduced the site selection, interview protocol, and detailed participants and the data collected procedures. Finally, the chapter concluded with information on how the data was analyzed. The delimitations and limitations of the study shaped the scope of this research.

Research Questions

The descriptive phenomenological study aimed to explore the challenges among veterans and their lived experiences while transitioning from military assignments to student veterans. Former military men and women experienced significant obstacles while serving the United States of America, which caused many of them endured emotional trauma and physical distress. Moreover, many former military men and women also encountered excessive issues while transitioning back into civilian life, such as enrolling in higher education and the lack of receiving adequate professional development training. To gain a deeper understanding of this

phenomenon with veterans who transitioned from soldiers to college students, the following research questions guided this study:

RQ1: What challenges do veteran students encounter when enrolling in institutions of higher learning?

RQ2: How do veteran students cope with transitioning from soldier to student?

RQ3: What resources and support systems are institutions of higher learning utilizing to sustain former military men and women in their transition from soldier to a student?

The Rationale for Research Methodology

This phenomenological study explored the challenges and lived experiences of former military men and women transitioning from military assignments to students in institutions of higher learning. A qualitative research design was chosen to answer the study's research questions. According to Bhandari (2020), this process involved gathering and interpreting data from lived experiences to understand a phenomenon better**.** This approach allowed the researcher to conduct semi-structured interviews, take observational field notes, and construct a survey instrument to gain insight into the lived experiences of each participant.

Examining the lived experiences of former military men and women helped the researcher understand a veteran's life phenomenon. According to Delve and Limpaecherm (2022), a phenomenon is an event or occurrence in one's life. Therefore, this researcher used interviews to extract a description of the lived experiences as told by former military men and women in an interview.

Assumptions

Simon and Goes (2013) suggested that assumptions are out of the researcher's control. The section presented critical assumptions of the research study. As supported by Simon and Goes, the following assumptions occurred during this research:

- Responses were accurate.

- Questions for veterans were impartial.

- Perceptions of respondents received immediate attention.

- Prejudice or personal judgment was not a part of the interview.

Population and Site Selection

The population targeted for this research study were ten retired or former military men and women enrolled or completing a degree program studies at a college or university. All research participants resided in the state of Louisiana. Also, research participants consisted of retired members who served in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine, and National Guard.

A research study by Lodico et al. (2010) stressed that the minimum number of participants within the study should be at the point of data saturation. However, Creswell (2012) argued depending on the diversity of responses, the sample size may range from one to forty participants. Bunce and Johnson (2006) suggested depending on the method design used, a participant range must be appropriate for the research study.

This research study explored the challenges and lived experiences of former military men and women transitioning from military assignments to students in institutions of higher learning. The essential requirement to participate in the research study was each participant was a former military man or woman who retired, completed, or enrolled in a college or university. This was the only specific criterion stipulated by the researcher.

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The veterans' organizations received fifteen interested potential participants' contact information and forwarded it to the researcher. Once the researcher received each potential participant's contact information, a master list of potential participants was organized. The IRB Approval Letter, A Letter of Request to Participate, and a Demographic Background Information Form were forwarded via email with a followed-up text message to each potential participant. (See Appendix E, IRB Approval) (See Appendix F, Letter of Request to Participate) and (See Appendix G, Demographic Background Information Form).

The researcher reviewed each participant's Letter of Request to Participate Form for the signature and each participant's Demographic Background Information Form. The researcher then used demographic information and ensured each participant was appropriate for the research study. Demographic information collected included name, age, gender, ethnicity, education level, and profession. Hammer (2022) indicated that the demographic information of each research study participant assisted researchers in comparing other research studies with similar populations.

The researcher selected ten of the fifteen potential participants for the research study. The remaining five potential were declared not suitable for the study due to three of the five potential participants were on active duty. The remaining two potential participants had availability issues due to their employment schedules. When the potential participants agreed, the researcher organized a master list of the ten selected research study participants with contact information for future notification emails.

The researcher emailed each of the ten selected participants of their selection for the research study. The researcher also emailed each participant an Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study Form for signature. (See Appendix H, Informed Consent to Participate in a

Research Study). Once each participant returned the signed informed consent form to participate in the research study, the researcher developed an official participant research study roster.

The researcher met with each participant via Zoom and provided further information, such as the process and length of each interview. Each participant agreed to a place, time, and date for the interview session. Each participant preferred to be interviewed at their home office. All participants received a copy of the interview questions for review. (See Appendix I for Interview Protocol Questions).

The researcher used purposeful sampling to acquire information from former military men and women participants. In purposeful sampling, participants were selected based on age and gender and possessed similar military service, characteristics, and experiences. Nikolopoulou (2022) suggested purposeful sampling is deliberate in selecting participants for research studies. As a result, participants shared similar traits and experiences. This population was small but significant in both experience and knowledge.

Establishing a rapport between the researcher and research participants was essential because it helped establish trust. This trust ensured responses were genuine, truthful, and accurate. The researcher, also a veteran, positioned his role as a researcher, not as a colleague. The researcher's main objective was to obtain data for the study from the number of participants.

The researcher encouraged participants to find a secure and private location for confidentiality. The researcher and each participant agreed upon an appropriate place, date, and time for the participant to be interviewed. All participants used individual home offices.

The researcher used Zoom video conferencing software to conduct ten 30-minute online interviews with each participant. Zoom video conferencing was a valuable and convenient tool when it was challenging to meet in person.

Instrumentation

Demographic Profile

Upon receipt of each participant's signed informed consent form to participate in this study, a Demographic Background Information form was issued to each participant. This information provided the researcher with background information such as gender, ethnicity, age, religion, profession, and marital status. The researcher used this information to ensure that the participant's background was suitable and similar to the population for this research study.

According to Hammer (2022), researchers must provide a comprehensive narrative of research participants for researchers and readers to make comparisons of a specific population for future research studies. Hammer further explained that background information is crucial in research studies. Gaps within the current research studies were exposed and encouraged future researchers to provide background information in their research studies.

Interviews

The researcher used semi-structured interviews to retrieve data from participants. The researcher used semi-structured interviews because the questions developed were generated based on the framework of this research study. George (2022) described semi-structured interviews as the research framework that will guide questions in collecting data. The researcher probed participants for additional information. Interview sessions were conducted using Zoom conferencing to accommodate for the location and availability of the research participants. This method was most appropriate and convenient for the researcher and participants involved in the research study.

The study conducted by Archibald et al. (2019) recommended researchers use Zoom video conferencing for interviews when location, availability, and other circumstances prevented

the researcher and research study participants from meeting in person. Archibald further explained Zoom conferencing as a cloud-based video conferencing service with special features and services such as safety features for recorded sessions, group messaging services, and capabilities for online meetings. In addition, researchers and research participants can communicate in real-time geographically using computers, mobile devices, or laptops. This study utilized the recording feature offered through Zoom and stored sessions securely without any claims. This feature was essential because it complied with the mandate of Xavier University Louisiana's Informed Consent Form. The information was confidential to protect compassionate data. In addition, Zoom has a secured safety feature.

Observations Field Notes

When research was conducted for the study, the researcher used field notes to document the actions of the participants. The notes reflected a sequence of events from start to finish, which included observations of the environment, important conversations, and other observable facts. The notes were essential as the researcher organized and analyzed the data.

The research study by Phillippi and Lauderdale (2017) expressed how important field notes were for research studies. They further encouraged those researchers collecting data to take field notes for improved and factual data. Field notes were essential for research studies because they documented actions that occurred in real-time while the researcher conducted research. The researcher of the study developed field notes during the interviews for each participant. In addition, the researcher organized observable actions from the Zoom recordings.

Data Collection Procedures

The following procedures were used to facilitate the proposed data collection procedures:

1. Upon approval of the application from the Institutional Review Board, correspondence was forwarded to Disabled American Veterans, the Louisiana Department of Veteran Affairs, and the Zulu Social Aid & Pleasure Club, Inc., and Veterans of Zulu veteran organizations that supported veterans. Correspondence included background information, participant criteria, and the approved letter from Xavier University of Louisiana's Institutional Review Board Committee. (See Appendix B, Letter -Disabled American Veterans), (See Appendix C, Letter- Louisiana Department of Veteran Affairs, (See Appendix D, Letter- Zulu Social Aid & Pleasure Club, Inc., Veterans of Zulu). (See Appendix E, Xavier University of Louisiana's Institutional Review Board Approved Letter).

2. The veterans' organizations received fifteen interested potential participants' contact information and forwarded it to the researcher. Once the researcher received each potential participant's contact information, a master list of potential participants was organized to contact. The IRB Approval Letter, A Letter of Request to Participate, and a Demographic Background Information Form were forwarded via email with a followed-up text message to each potential participant. (See Appendix E, IRB Approval) (See Appendix F, Letter of Request to Participate) and (See Appendix G, Demographic Background Information Form).

3. The researcher reviewed each participant's Letter of Request to Participate Form for signature and each participant's Demographic Background Information Form. Then, the researcher used demographic information that ensured each participant was appropriate for the research study—the demographic Form collected name, age, gender, ethnicity, education level, and profession. Hammer (2022) indicated that the

background information of each research study participant assisted researchers in comparing other research studies with similar populations.

4. The researcher selected ten of the fifteen potential participants for the research study. The remaining five potential were declared not suitable for the study since three of the five potential participants were on active duty. The remaining two potential participants had availability issues due to their employment schedules.

5. When the potential participants agreed, the researcher organized a master list of the ten selected research study participants with contact information for future notification emails.

6. The researcher emailed each of the ten selected participants of their selection for the research study. The researcher also emailed each participant an Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study Form for signature. (See Appendix H, Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study).

7. Once each participant returned the signed informed consent form to participate in the research study, the researcher developed an official participant research study roster for future reference.

8. The researcher met with each participant via Zoom and provided further information, such as the process and length of each interview. Each participant agreed to a place, time, and date for the interview session. Each participant preferred to be interviewed at their home office.

9. All participants received a copy of the interview questions for review. (See Appendix I for Interview Protocol Questions).

10. The researcher established a rapport between the participants because it helped establish trust. This trust ensured responses were genuine, truthful, and accurate. The researcher found his role as a researcher, not as a colleague. The researcher's main objective was to obtain data for the study from the number of participants.

11. The researcher used semi-structured interviews to retrieve data from participants. The researcher used semi-structured interviews because the questions developed were generated based on the framework of this research study.

12. The study utilized the recording feature offered through Zoom to store sessions securely without any claims. The quality was essential because it complied with the mandate of Xavier University Louisiana's Informed Consent Form Section A: Confidentiality. The information was confidential to protect compassionate data. Zoom has a secure safety feature.

13. The researcher then analyzed the data.

Data Analysis

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained data analysis encircled the collection, organization, and preparation of data that analyzed the data once it has been collected. The researcher collected, organized, and prepared data that explored the challenges and experiences of former military men and women who transitioned from military assignments to students in institutions of higher learning. The researcher used Creswell's (2009) six-step process and analyzed the qualitative data for the research study.

Step 1: The researcher collected, organized, and prepared the data to be analyzed. The researcher reviewed the Zoom recorded sessions and prepared the data for analysis.

Step 2: The researcher thoroughly reviewed the transcripts to gain a general sense of the data developed for a broad understanding of the ideas expressed and conveyed by the research participants.

Step 3: The researcher began the data analysis coding process. First, the researcher segmented the data into categories by categorizing phrases based on common language noted in the research participants' responses.

Step 4: The researcher used the coding process to describe the types representing the emerged themes generated by the data analyzed. During this step, the researcher identified codes and generalized the categories and emerging themes that described the overarching themes identified in the study.

Step 5: The researcher determined how the qualitative narrative represented the themes.

Step 6: The researcher interpreted the meaning of the participants' responses to articulate their perceptions and stories accurately.

Role of the Researcher/Bias

The researcher's objective and responsibility was the collecting of material related to the research study. The purpose was to retrieve data without bias. As a veteran who transitioned from the military culture into the higher education culture, it was crucial to remain proficient and respond appropriately to participants. The research study by Bogdan and Biklen (2007) suggested that it is essential to focus on the participant responses and remain objective.

The researcher's role was to capture incidents as they occurred and document notes to be included in the research. According to Mehra (2002), a researcher documents an individual's responses, including specific reactions. She further added a person who feels comfortable during

an interview is confident in their responses and does not allow personal emotions to influence their decision to respond truthfully.

According to Sorsa et al. (2015), bracketing in descriptive phenomenology research occurs when researchers reserve previously acquired understandings, attitudes, beliefs, judgments, and personal opinions for future learning. Mars (2021) recommended the following actions to avoid making judgments: (1) be understanding; (2) listen carefully; (3) get the facts; (4) focus on similarities, not differences; and (5) accept others' flaws. This researcher adhered to these recommendations.

Validity/ Trustworthiness

Responses from the participants assured the validity of this qualitative research study, and the findings reported by the researcher were correct and accurate. A research study conducted by Creswell and Creswell (2018) identified approaches used by researchers that ensured the validity of a research study. These approaches included triangulation, member checking, external auditing, rich and thick descriptions, negative or discrepant information, researcher bias clarification, prolonged time, and peer debriefing. To further validate the research study's findings, the researcher used interviews and observational field notes to collect data. These methods confirmed emerged thematic themes of the research study.

The dissertation chair and committee members completed an audit of the participant information which included an informed consent form, demographic background, and participant's transcript for review. Additionally, according to Motulsky (2021), member checking was a method used by researchers to present statements or quotes made by research participants for accuracy and correctness. The researcher used member checking and forwarded a copy of each participant's transcript to review for accuracy and correctness.

Trustworthiness in a research study consisted of the inclusion of four main ingredients, which are credible, transferable, confirmable, and dependable. In addition, researchers must ensure these entities are visible to validate the research study.

A research study by Pallipedia (2022) gave clear and concise, straight-to-the-point explanations of each entity of trustworthiness:

Credibility – Are findings true and accurate?

Transferability – Are the research study's conclusions pertinent to other students?

Confirmability – Results are based on the participant's responses.

Dependability – Future researchers can clone your study using this study's literature and information.

Ethical Considerations

To protect the identity and confidentiality of each research participant, pseudonyms, which are fake names, were assigned to each participant of the research study. Furthermore, after carefully reviewing the transcripts, the researcher forwarded a copy of the text to each participant to allow them to clarify and correct any misconceptions or to amend the text of the interview. The researchers' laptop was password secured to protect transcriptions of the date recorded. After one year, all files associated with this research study are scheduled for destruction.

Limitations

Limitations are described as weaknesses within a research study because of the researcher's scope and target population. Limitations are also restrictions and constraints within the research study (Simon & Goes, 2013). Due to its purpose, the study was limited to former military men and women. This phenomenological study aimed to explore the challenges and lived experiences of former military men and women as they transitioned from military

assignments to students in institutions of higher learning. This does not apply to all members, gender, race.

Delimitations

Delimitations are defined as chiefly concerned with the scope of the study. Delimitations describe the content of the research or establish parameters. Delimitations are self-imposed restrictions to the survey compared to limitations that have inherent limits to the methodology (Miles & Scott, 2017). Furthermore, delimitations are further limitations actively put into place by the researcher to control for factors that might affect the results or to focus more specifically on a problem (Theofanidis et al., 2019). In this phenomenological study, the following declared delimitations:

- The study only included institutions of higher learning in Louisiana.

- Participants were former military men and women.

- The study's focus or scope targeted veterans and their transitional challenges from military to college campuses.

Summary

Chapter three described the rationale for the design and methodology and its appropriateness for the data collection. Information about the participants, site selection, sampling methods, and the interview process were provided. The chapter included a discussion on the data collection procedures used and analyzed. The chapter concluded with information on how the data was analyzed and how the delimitations and limitations of the study shaped the scope or focus of the research.

Chapter four provides findings of the research study and demographic and background. Also, information about the study's participants was presented along with the study's research

design, followed by thematic diagrams arranged by categories or themes that emerged during the

interview process.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Introduction

The aim of this descriptive phenomenological research study was to explore the challenges and lived experiences of former military men and women as they transitioned from military assignments to students in institutions of higher learning. In Chapter four, demographic and background information for the study's participants were presented along with the study's research design, followed by thematic diagrams arranged by categories or themes that emerged during the interview. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary.

The researcher used a descriptive phenomenological research design approach to gather data from lived experiences, described by ten research study participants. Semi-structured interviews were used in meetings with former military men and women who lived, witnessed, or joined a branch of the United States military and transitioned to an institution of higher learning. The data collected during their transitional phase permitted the researcher to identify support services and strategies for transitioning from military life to students in higher education institutions.

The researcher developed a roster using pseudonyms once each participant agreed to participate in a scheduled 30-minute Zoom Conference. To protect the identities of the participants, the researcher assigned pseudonyms when collecting data (Heaton, 2021). Participants responded to questions depicting their experiences and challenges while transitioning from soldier to student. Demographic information from the study's participants was listed in the following tables.

Table 1 Student Veteran Rose

Gender	Educational Level	Branch of Military	Years of Service
Female	Associate Degree	Marine Corp	22

Rose was a Black 51year old retired female Marine Corp Veteran. She was a native of Baton Rouge, Louisiana. After completing high school in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Rose enlisted in the U. S. Marine Corps, served 22 years of active duty, and deployed twice to Iraq. Upon her retirement, several years later, Rose became divorced with three children. She became the sole provider of her family.

Rose decided to reside in Destrehan, Louisiana, with her three children and continued her education to embark on her new life as a single parent with a positive new beginning. She applied for G. I. Bill benefits and enrolled in Southern University in New Orleans to pursue a degree in Political Science. However, the challenges and academic demand was a bit overwhelming for her. She indicated during the interview that registration was very confusing and challenging, and there was a lack of support services for veterans. She also noted the need to develop more virtual learning programs for working veterans.

After completing her first year at Southern University successfully, Rose decided to enroll in a two-year law enforcement program and received an Associate Degree in Criminal Justice from Delgado Community College in New Orleans, Louisiana. She indicated that Delgado was less stressed and received better assistance. At the time of the interview, Rose became employed as a U. S. Marine Corp Protocol Officer with the Marine Force Reserve located in Algiers, Louisiana. In addition to her duties, Rose counseled veterans on the challenges they may encounter in transitioning from military to civilian life.

Table 2 Student Veteran Henry

Gender	Educational Level	Branch of Military	Years of Service
Male	Doctorate	Army	16

Henry was a Black 55year old Army Veteran. He was a native of Indianapolis, Indiana. After completing high school in Indianapolis, Indiana, Henry enlisted in the U. S Army and served 16 years of active duty, and deployed to Iraq. Upon his retirement, several years later, Henry divorced with one child.

Henry enrolled at the University of Indianapolis and received a B.A. in Education. Henry indicated that he experienced challenges with the University of Indianapolis enrollment process and receiving his G.I. Benefits which were delayed for a semester. He noted during the interview that he vowed to organize veterans to begin a support group to support veterans since the university lacked the support system to assist veterans.

After completing his Master's Degree in Administration, Henry was accepted into the doctoral program at the University of Indianapolis and received a Doctor of Education Degree. Henry was employed part-time with the Department of Veterans Affairs as an Educational Consultant serving veterans in the Indiana area.

Table 3 Student Veteran Judy

Gender	Educational Level	Branch of Military	Years of Service
Female	Masters	Army	32

Judy was a Black female, 60 years of age veteran, who served 32 years in the United States Army. Judy is a native of Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Upon completing high school, Judy entered the U. S Army to receive education benefits to fund her college. Judy was a divorced mother with three children. She served in the Louisiana National Guard and 21 years, was a federal employee.

After retirement, Judy applied her G.I. Bill benefits towards advancing her education. She graduated from Southeastern Louisiana University in Hammond, La., and received a Master of Science in Organizational Leadership from the Trident University of California. Following her studies at Southeastern Louisiana University, she was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Army Reserve Officers Training Corp. She transferred to Louisiana National Guard in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in 1989.

During the interview, Judy expressed concerns about the lack of support for veterans, the challenges veterans encountered during enrollment, veteran support services, and the lack of a campus veterans resource center. In addition, Judy volunteered with Baton Rouge VA, counseling veterans transitioning to civilian life after the military.

Table 4 Student Veteran John

Gender	Educational Level	Branch of Military	Years of Service
Male	Bachelor	Navy	20

John was a retired Black male Navy veteran 48 years of age who entered the U. S. Navy upon completing high school in New Orleans, Louisiana. He was a native of New Orleans, Louisiana. John was married with four children and served 20 years in the Navy. After completing his military career, John applied for and received G. I. Bill Benefits to fund his education. He enrolled in Southern University in New Orleans, Louisiana local, and received a degree in accounting

When John was interviewed, he expressed disappointment with the lack of veteran assistance when he attended registration at the university. He indicated that no one could assist veterans with G.I. Bill issues, enrollment assistance, or guide veterans with the process. He was adamant about needing a V.A. representative on campus to help veterans.

John applied and accepted a position as a certifying official at a local community college. John formed a veteran's group to assist and educate veterans on available benefits entitled to veterans via the Education G I Bill. He also worked as a work-study support liaison for veterans.

John organized a veteran's organization designed to build peer relationships among student veterans to share experiences as a means of support among themselves because there was no veterans center.

Table 5 Student Veteran Jim

Gender	Educational Level	Branch of Military	Years of Service
Male	Masters	Marine	5

Jim was a Black 60 old year male U. S. Marine Veteran who served five years of service with the U.S. Marine Corp. Jim was a native of New Orleans, Louisiana, and married with four children. After completing his military obligation, Jim returned home, used the G.I. Bill education benefits, enrolled in Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana, and received a degree in Mechanical Engineering.

When Jim was in the Marine Corps, he was introduced to mechanical engineering. He was trained as a level 1 engineer working with engines such as steam and gas turbines, internal combustion engines, power-using machines, and electric generators. Jim indicated in the interview he continued in the field of Engineering when he enrolled in Tulane University's Mechanical Engineering Program. Though excited about the school, he also indicated frustration with the university for not having resources for veterans, which caused stressful situations for him. In addition, the absence of a V.A. representative to assist Veteran students was challenging.

Table 6 Student Veteran Nick

Gender	Educational Level	Branch of Military	Years of Service
Male	Doctorate	Army	20

Nick was a native of New Orleans, Louisiana. He was a 50-year-old Army veteran married with three children and resided in New Orleans, Louisiana. Nick entered the Army after graduating from high school. He was trained as an Army Medic in the Army and became interested in the medical field. After serving 20 years in the Army, Nick continued his interest in the medical field, enrolled in the Xavier University of Louisiana, and graduated with a degree in Biology. He continued his pursuit in the medical field when he enlisted in the Tulane School of Medicine and successfully graduated in the field of medicine.

When Nick was interviewed, he recalled his deployment experience in Iraq. He indicated many soldiers had PTSD, which affected daily life.

He was also concerned universities lacked PTSD support services for veterans.

Table 7 Student Veteran Bertha

Gender	Educational Level	Branch of Military	Years of Service
Female	Master's Degree	Army	22

Bertha was a native of Baton Rouge, Louisiana. She was a Black 45 years of age female Army Veteran. She was married with two children and resides in Belle Chase, Louisiana. Bertha served 22 years in the U. S Army. After she retired from the Army, Bertha enrolled in Delgado Community College, New Orleans, Louisiana. She earned an Associate Degree in Criminal Justice. She continued her education, registered at the University of New Orleans, and received a Master's in Political Science.

In her responses to questions in the interview, Bertha was very explicit in her frustration and disappointment with the university she attended relative to supporting veterans. She indicated in the discussion there was a lack of knowledge about G.I. Bill issues, support services, and no veteran service center. Bertha volunteered her services at the university to assist veterans.

Table 8 Student Veteran Lilly

Gender	Educational Level	Branch of Military	Years of Service
Female	Master's Degree	Army	20

Lilly was a Black 47-year-old female Army Veteran married with two children. Lilly was a native of LaPlace, Louisiana. She served 20 years in the U.S. Army. After completing her military obligation with the U. S. Army, Lilly made Belle Chase, Louisiana, her permanent residence. She enrolled at Dillard University and received a degree in Political Science. She furthered her education, attended Louisiana State University (LSU), and earned a Master's in Accounting.

When interviewed, Lilly expressed concern about how universities are unprepared to receive the influx of veterans enrolled in their universities. She spoke of her experiences and challenges with the enrollment process, G. I. Bill benefits, and support services for veterans. The Veterans Administration also employed Lilly as a Veteran's counselor.

Table 9 Student Veteran Rick

Gender	Educational Level	Branch of Military	Years of Service
Male	Bachelor Degree	Army	15

Rick was a Black 60-year-old male Army veteran. Rick was a native of Alexandria, Louisiana. After completing high school, Rick enlisted in the U. S. Army and served 15 years of active. Unfortunately, Ruck was seriously injured in a training exercise and could no longer perform his military duties. He received a Medical Discharge and returned home.

Rick is married with three children and made New Orleans, Louisiana, his home of record. Rick enrolled in the University of New Orleans and received a B.A. in Elementary Education. When interviewed, Rick clearly stated his dissatisfaction with the university and how unprepared they were to accommodate veterans. His main concern was the enrollment process and the service provided to veterans. Rick was evident in the need for a V.A. representative to assist veterans.

Table 10 Student Veteran Ron

Gender	Educational Level	Branch of Military	Years of Service
Male	Bachelor	Navy	6

Ron was a Black 60-year-old Navy veteran who served six years of service with the U.S. Navy. Ron was a native of Lafayette, Louisiana. After completing high school, Ron enlisted in the U. S. Navy and completed six years of active duty. After fulfilling his military obligation, Ron married with two children and made New Orleans, Louisiana, his home.

Ron enrolled at the University of New Orleans and received a Bachelor's in education. He became a certified teacher in New Orleans Public Schools. When Ron was interviewed, he described his frustration and stressful situations caused by the lack of veteran support services. He recommended that universities should make every effort to accommodate veterans in the enrollment process and other assistance as needed to welcome veterans.

Thematic Findings

There were six main themes and twelve sub-ordinate themes that emerged from the data. These included: (1) Registration Process with a subordinate theme of (a) Orientation; (b) System Navigating (2) Understanding G.I. Bill Benefits with the subordinate themes of; (a) Complications; and (b) V. A. Representative; (3) Environment with the subordinate themes of; (a) College Culture; (b) Social interaction (4) Veteran Advisor with the subordinate themes of;

(a)Availability; (b); Degree Mapping (5) Veteran Specific Services with the subordinate theme

of; (a) PTSD; (b) Counseling; (6) Retention with the subordinate themes of; (a) Curriculum

Adjustment; (b) Virtual Education Programs. (See Figures I, II, and III for Themes and

Subthemes).

Figure 3 Theme Diagram: Research Question 1
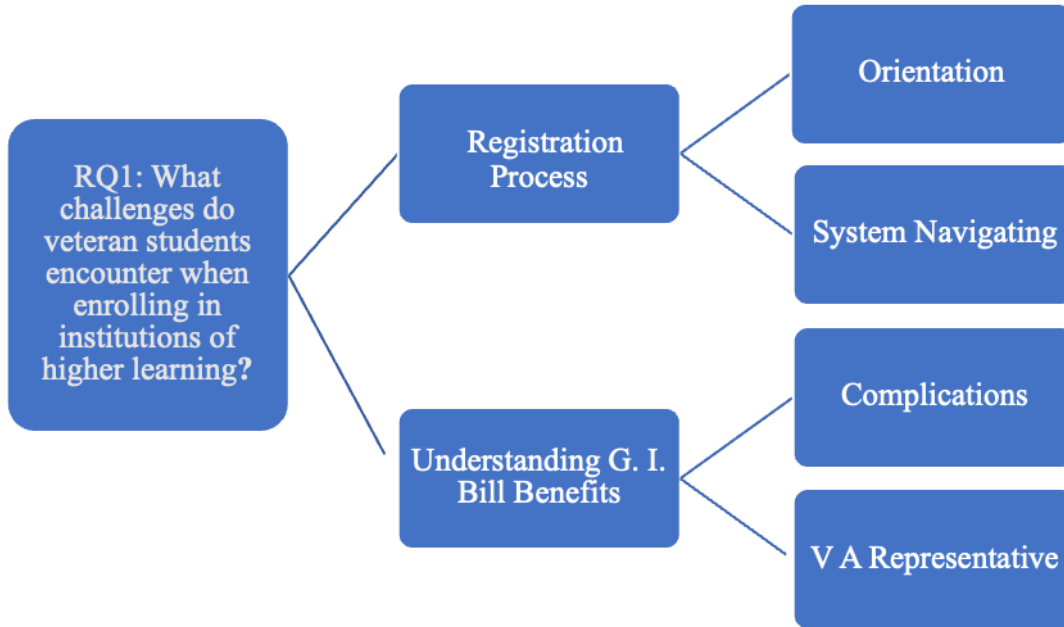
Research Question 1:

What challenges do student veterans encounter when enrolling in institutions of higher

learning?

Theme: The Registration Process

Soldiers returning from completing their military obligation to pursue a higher education

degree for the first time encountered challenges within colleges and universities' registration

process. All ten participants' responses agreed there was a need for a separate orientation

designed to address the specific needs of veterans as a priority. When interviewed by the

researcher, participants clearly expressed dissatisfaction with the registration process. Six of the

ten participants felt a different orientation for veteran students would have prepared them to

understand the college or university's registration process. Participants also expressed that a dedicated orientation for veteran students would have provided guidance in working through the process, such as knowing where specific offices are located and required information from veteran students.

Participants, when interviewed, also expressed their lack of registration information and knowledge caused difficulties as they navigated through the registration process. However, the other four participants found navigating the system not problematic as other veteran students did because they received assistance from friends who the university employed.

Subtheme: Orientation

The number of former military men and women enrolled in higher education increases yearly, Walter, (2019). As participants were interviewed, the results indicated all ten participants' responses agreed with the need for a dedicated orientation designed to address the specific needs of veterans as a priority.

Rose stated: *"A different orientation is needed because we need specific information to address our needs as veterans. Some of us have different needs, and the more information we get, the better off we will be."*

Henry stated: *" I believe we need a different orientation. This is a big campus; a tour will show us where everything is housed."*

Judy stated: *"I am interested in the university's support services to meet our needs as veterans. Some of us have specific needs, and I want to know what they are and how we get them."*

John stated: *"Financial support is my pet peeve. I want to know what financial support is available to veterans besides the G. I. Bill and the V.A. representative."*

Jim stated*:" We need to know what clubs and organizations are in place and how to become involved. This is an excellent way to interact with other students."*

Nick stated*:" I want to know about the university organizations for veterans and how we can establish one for veterans."*

Bertha stated: *"I am interested in academic support programs such as writing, tutoring, and math assistance."*

Lilly stated: *"I want to know about the various departments and their functions.*

Rick stated: *I am interested in the medical department and how we can access medical services."*

Ron stated: *"We need to meet the faculty and staff to interact to establish an understanding of veterans. "*

Subtheme: System Navigating

The subtheme of navigating emerged from participant responses to the interview question. The results from participant responses indicated six participants, Rose, Henry, Judy, John, Jim, and Nick, found system navigating in the registration process difficult for veterans. The other four participants, Bertha, Lilly, Rick, and Ron, found system navigation not problematic.

Rose stated: *"I found it challenging to find where to go for services. I was not given perfect instructions. We were not told this in the orientation. It seems you have to find a thing out for yourself."*

Henry stated: *"I found the health office after asking several people where the office was located. However, this was stressful and confusing."*

Judy stated: *"At the base, we were assigned a sponsor to help us get around and find things."*

John stated: *"Once we settle in and meet people, we will be all right."*

Jim stated: *"I was so lost trying to find where the financial office was located. I figured I would try and finish tomorrow. This was the pits. They expect you to know where everything is without the right directions. This was disgusting. "*

Nick stated*: "I found it challenging to navigate the process. They do not give you instructions and expect you to know where you are going. As a result, the process was very stressful. "*

Theme: Understanding G.I. Bill Benefits

All ten research participants described their lived experiences concerning receiving their G. I. Bill educational benefits at their respective colleges or university in their responses. Complications and V.A. Representation were two subthemes that emerged from this theme. The findings of former military men and women experience receiving G.I. Bill educational benefits at their respective colleges or university in conjunction with complications, and the availability of a V.A. representative is consistent with the research study of (Naphan & Elliot (2015); Mendoza, S. (2016); Goldsmith, (2017); Baskas, (2021). Furthermore, the participants in this research study and previous studies of (Naphan & Elliot (2015); Mendoza, S. (2016); Goldsmith (2017); Baskas (2021) were compelled to describe their lived experiences with the G. I. Bill in conjunction with complications and a V.A. representative to address issues of veterans.

Veterans found complications and the absence of a V.A. representative as issues that affected their enrollment process and experienced a delay in receiving benefits.

Subtheme: Complications

The subtheme complication provided a view of the participant's responses when asked about receiving G.I. Bill benefits and included ev*id*ence regarding how each participant responded. Seven of the ten participants, Rose, Judy, Jim, Rick, Lilly, Nick, and Ron, who applied for educational benefits experienced complications receiving benefits in time for registration. The other three participants, Henry, John, and Bertha, received their gifts on time; however, the amount was incorrect.

Rose stated: I was frustrated with V.A. for not ensuring my benefits arrived on time. I became more frustrated when the lady in the registrar's office could not find my paperwork. Before I became emotional, I just left and went to the V.A.

Lilly stated: *"When the university finance office notified me I would not be cleared to attend class, I went to the university and found the university certifying official did not receive any correspondence from the V.A. After that, my pressure got high, and I became so emotional I left before I got myself in trouble."*

Rick stated: *"It is sad the way veterans are treated. You sacrifice your life to protect your country, and they cannot see your benefits are available for you."*

Ron stated: *"I was appalled that the V.A. messed up getting my check to me. The pits were due to the V.A. not sending me my check-in time. As a result, I could not be cleared to attend classes. "*

Judy stated. *"I was not surprised. Several veterans did not get their checks. The university did not understand at all. All they wanted was their money."*

Jim stated: *"I was agitated because my check did not arrive on time. As a result, I could not attend class until the university received payment. The university was not interested in the V.A. not sending payments. They just wanted their money. "*

Nick stated: *"I became distraught my check did not arrive on time. The university could have been more understanding about us not receiving our checks in time. However, the university should have a deferred payment plan for veterans."*

Henry stated: *"I was very disappointed and disgusted I did not receive my educational benefits on time. However, I completed all the necessary paperwork. My frustration and stress came when I was told I had to go out of pocket."*

John stated: *"I was agitated and dissatisfied when I received a letter from the university informing me my financial obligations were unmet. I contacted the V.A. and was told payment was paid to the university, and I was cleared. I notified the university and was told the university had not received any fees. This issue continued until I discovered payment was made but filed under the wrong social security number. The whole ordeal made my pressure go up."*

Bertha stated: *"I was embarrassed and disgusted my benefits did not arrive on time. The situation worsened, and I began to experience stress due to the problem. I started to drop out the way I was treated."*

Subtheme: V.A. Representative

All colleges and universities should employ a permanent veteran's service representative to advise and assist veterans in obtaining the benefits to which they are entitled under federal, state, and local legislation. They provide advice for specialized social services, information about available service

The subtheme V.A. representative emerged as participants responded to questions about the availability and location of the Veteran's office on campus for veterans to visit for assistance. An analysis of the participant's responses from the interviews conducted revealed that five, John, Jim, Rick, Nick, and Henry of the ten participants experienced difficulties with the V.A. representative, and the remaining five participants, Rose, Lilly, Ron Judy, and Bertha, did not experience problems with the V.A. representative.

John stated: *"He was never there when I saw the veteran representative. Though he indicated the time he would return, he did not."*

Jim stated: *"He would schedule a meeting with the V.A. representative, but he would never attend. So, I called the V.A. and reported him.*"

Rick stated*:" I became very frustrated with the V.A. representative because he took too long to respond or give assistance."*

Nick stated: *"It was a waste of time speaking with this individual. He would always refer me to the V.A."*

Henry stated*: "Each time I met with the V.A. representative, he made me uncomfortable by blaming me for my issues. He never offered solutions. I decided to visit the regional V.A. for assistance."*

Rose stated*: "The VA representative at the school I attended was a student himself and was only available when not in school. Though this fact inconvenienced some veterans, they understood his situation and supported him by being patient. "*

Lilly stated: *"I had no problems scheduling an appointment with the V.A. representative. He was consistently seeing veterans, and I can appreciate him for that. All I did was put my name on the list. The wait time was one week."*

Ron stated: *"I was surprised to see the enormous number of veterans enrolled in the university. I did not have any problems with the V.A. representative. He was available. However, because of his scheduled appointments, it took about a week to see him."*

Judy stated: *"To be very blunt about it. I had no problems with the V.A. representative. All I did was schedule an appointment."*

Bertha stated: *"I had no problems seeing the V.A. representative. He was very helpful to me. Though bombarded with appointments, he managed to see who he could."*

Figure 4 Thematic Diagram: Research Question 2
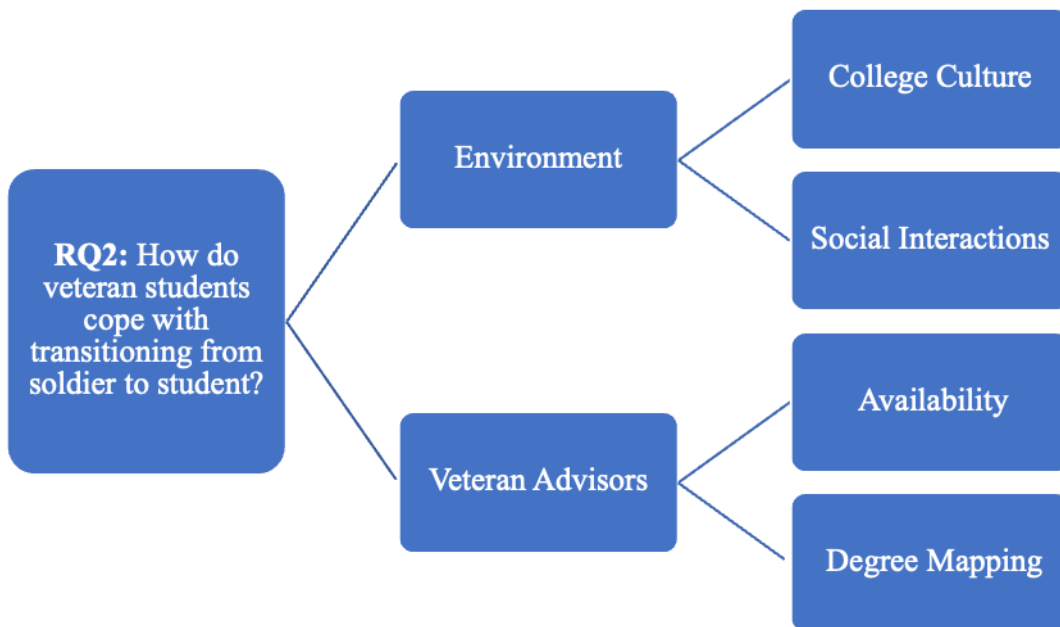
Research Question 2:

How do student veterans cope with transitioning from soldier to student?

Theme: Environment

The theme, Environment, examined the experiences of veteran students accustomed to living in a different environment from the colligate Environment. When compared yields the military and colligate environments, the military is highly structured and disciplined with rules and regulations supported by a chain of command all soldiers are required by law to follow. On

the other hand, the colligate Environment is more of a relaxed, unstructured atmosphere governed by local laws of the state. All ten research participants described their lived experiences of the Environment at their respective colleges or university in their responses. College culture and social interaction were two subthemes that emerged from this theme. The findings of former military men and women's experiences with college or university environments through college culture and social interaction are consistent with the research of (Kirchner et al. (2014); Heineman (2016); Hara (2017); Hunter-Johnson, Y. (2020). Furthermore, the participants of this research study and previous studies of (Kirchner et al. (2014); Heineman (2016); Hara (2017); Hunter-Johnson, (2020) were compelled to describe their livid experiences with the college or university environment to address issues of veterans.

Former military men and women enrolled in colleges and universities experience a form of shock as they enter new environments. In addition, the change in Environment often causes a culture shock for veteran students not accustomed to an unstructured college atmosphere.

The subordinate themes, College Culture and Social Interaction, analyzed the experiences and difficulties of coping in an unfamiliar environment as told by the participants being interviewed by the researcher.

Subtheme: College Culture

The subtheme, College Culture, emerged while students responded to questions about the college environment the researcher asked. Seven of the ten participants, Rose, Henry, John, Jim, Lilly, Rick, and Ron, responded by telling of their experiences entering a new environment. The remaining four participants, Judy, Nick, and Bertha, had no issues with the Environment.

Jim stated*:" When I returned home from active duty, I felt I was in a new world. All my old friends were gone or married, and the old neighborhood became new. It me about a*

year before I realized it was a new beginning. I had to regroup and get myself together. After being turned down for job after job, I decided to attend college and get a degree. I enrolled in the university and was hit with another eye-opener; the college environment was so different from the military Environment. I am twenty-six years old, attending class with eighteen-year-old young men and women. What frustrated me was the constant complaining about the assignments to turn in. All these youngsters wanted to do was party. I wanted no part of them because our priorities were different. I also had to adjust to a lazy environment where the attitude was Who cares."

"Henry stated*:" I was shocked when I enrolled in the university. I felt a little out of place because of the age difference. Here everyone was so relaxed at what they did no matter what. The kids were kids with all the complaints I had to hear each day. I would always tell myself if they only knew how good they had it. The Environment on campus was not so bad. My only complaint was that the university had no special activities designed for veterans. Everyone at the university said the same old saying, "Thank you for your service." I had no real problems because I attended class and left because I had a job. I do recall one incident that happened in class. A student had a video game he was playing while waiting for class to start. The video game he was playing gave off gunshot sounds. When I heard those machine gun sounds. I hit the floor for cover as though I was back in Iraq. When I realized where I was, I got up and explained to everyone I had PTSD. Some thought it was a joke and laughed. I became very emotional with tears because my battle buddy was killed. I decided I should go as I was leaving the classroom. My instructor grabbed and hugged me and said," I understand, son."*

Lilly stated: *"The Environment at my university was laid back from what I was accustomed to. I was a little dissatisfied because there were no organizations for veterans. Everyone on campus lived in their little world. I found it challenging to communicate with others because they were not friendly. I would say good morning while passing, and no one would return the gesture. I noticed during registration while going from office to office that personnel in each office seemed angry with the world. They did not greet you or welcome you. I felt not wanted. 'I expressed my concerns by completing the Form and dropping it in the box."*

Rick stated*: "When I arrived on campus for registration. I did feel a little out of place because of my age. However, the Environment, in my opinion, was very relaxed. When I was registering for classes, everyone I came in contact with was very cordial. Unfortunately, this was not the same for my classmates. The instructor had each of us introduce ourselves to the class. When I introduced myself as a veteran, I could see the cold expressions on some classmates' faces. As classmates continued to introduce themselves, five classmates said they had lost a loved one in the war. At that moment, everyone in class looked at me as though I was responsible. A student who had lost a loved one approached me and said, "You are lucky." In speaking with other veterans, they experienced the same. As I moved about campus, the Environment was relaxed, but I found individuals on campus not receptive to veterans. "*

*"*Rose stated: *I was very comfortable in the campus environment because my mother worked there for years, and I also knew many people who worked there. Individuals However, this was not the case with other veterans. I witnessed the cold treatment some veterans received when conducting business. Typically, I found the Environment to be the*

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opposite of the military. The military's Environment is a twenty-four-hour operation with individuals prepared to move out in New York second as part of their mission. The only twenty-four-hour procedure on campus is the security police. Some departments on the military base operate twelve-hour shifts while the campus does not. Overall, I think the Environment is good for veterans. The administration can do more to promote Veteran awareness. After all they pay tuition as well."

John stated: *"I was very disappointed when I arrived to start my education career on campus. I heard of the cold treatment the Viet Nam veteran received when they returned home, and now I see what these veterans went through. First, there was no veteran representative on campus to assist us. We are trying to navigate an unfamiliar environment and adjust to a new system. In this day and age, you would think colleges and universities would welcome veterans with open arms. Unfortunately, this was not the case. Many of us felt with the influx of veterans enrolled in these colleges and universities, one would think the administration would improve the Environment to accommodate veterans. Though the need for improvement in welcoming veterans is a reality, university employees should receive staff development training sessions from serving veterans."*

Ron stated: *"I found the campus environment challenging because it was unfamiliar. However, the university could have appointed someone to welcome veterans. I was amazed as I attended the student orientation, and veterans were not mentioned in any of the presentations, nor was there a Veteran representative. Some employees who worked in the offices were cordial, but I found the majority unpleasant. When you asked for information, they either did not know or did not bother to refer you to someone who*

could provide you with the correct information. Veterans were looking for signage

promoting veteran awareness. However, there is no such thing for veterans. In this

campus environment, veterans are a stand-alone population living in an environment that

could care less what we protected and sacrificed."

Subtheme: Social Interaction

The subtheme of Social Integration reflects the results of lived experiences as described

by participants of this study as they responded to questions during the interview. The results of

this subtheme indicated eight of the ten participants, John, Nick, Judy, Bertha, Jim, Henry, Lilly,

and Rick, described their experiences of social interaction among traditional students. The

remaining two participants, Rose and Ron, indicated they had no problems with social

interaction among conventional students.

John stated: *"When I went to class, most of my classmates were younger than me. As we*

introduced ourselves and I told them I was a veteran, some said, "Thank you for your

service." I was not shocked at this because this is the norm. They all seem to be lovely

kids. I got to know them in class discussions and when we had to work on group projects

together. Then the demons came out. In a class discussion, one classmate said, "That was

then, this is now; stop living in the past. That was the old way of doing things." I became

emotional and gave her a piece of my mind. After class, we continued the healthy

discussion for both of us. Eventually, we became friends and respected each other's age."

Nick stated: *"I got along with the kids in my classes. When we introduced ourselves, I*

noticed several classmates had a parent deployed. I guess this made a difference because

we had something in common. However, some needed an attitude check. I pretty much

communicated with those classmates whose parents were deployed. They invited me to

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meet their parents, which I did and established a bond. As I met their parents, several

were in the sandbox (Iraq) while I was there. Overall, I found these kids had no social

skills before entering college. Interacting among college kids is challenging for all, not

just veterans."

Judy stated: *"I found interacting with younger students challenging to handle. Many*

students in my class had bad experiences growing up or felt the world owed them

something. I have a child their age and was shocked at how they talked to each other and

the instructor. In class discussions, there were negative comments and a lack of respect

for each other. I was very dissatisfied with the etiquette of these classmates. I tried

talking to several of these classmates about their attitudes and reasons for their negative

attitudes and was told to mind my business. After talking to classmates in other classes, I

was told several of their applications were rejected by some clubs and organizations. The

university should have mandatory social activities to improve social relations with

students and veterans."

Bertha stated: *"My social interactions with traditional students were horrible. After they*

knew I was a veteran, they did not have much to talk to me about. I felt they were very

standoffish. When I attempted to converse with them, I felt the coldness in their voice. In

speaking with other veterans, some shared the same feelings with me. During the

orientation, I noticed no mention of social interaction activities that included veterans.

Most of the veterans at the university felt the need for student activity planners should

consist of veterans. This would be a great way to bring the two together."

Jim stated: *"I was not so concerned with the social interaction aspect of going to college*

though it is important because you work together. You must remember we are going into

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an environment where we know the population will be students younger than you who do not have the experiences you have. Many of them think they are God's gift and know everything. The social activities sponsored by the university did not include veterans. Therefore, regarding social interactions among traditional students, veterans are on their own."

Henry stated: *"I feel social interaction among veterans and traditional students. In the military, we are trained to work as a team to accomplish our goals. I realize these are immature kids with not many experiences as us, but we must find a way to interact with them. The university needs to develop a social interactions committee of veterans and traditional students to plan social events to unite the two."*

Lilly stated: *"There is a need to address social interaction among veterans and traditional students. I know of veterans who experienced issues with social interactions as I did. When we were at the orientation, all veterans sat together. However, all the conversations by presenters did not include veterans. I attended a freshman social and found myself the only Veteran there. This was done as the announcer called out the different groups."*

Rick stated: *"Social interaction is essential in organizing veterans and traditional students together. I felt the separation in the classes I attended. Instructors attempted to integrate veterans and traditional by telling everyone they did not want to see separate sections between veterans and traditional students. He purposely organized veterans and traditional students together when he assigned groups for a class project. However, I do not think the university is doing enough to promote social interaction among veterans*

and traditional students. Military activities are scheduled quarterly to promote social interaction among all ranks. This gives individuals a sense of belonging. "

Theme: Veteran Advisor

Veteran students enrolled in higher education attending colleges and universities depend very heavily on advisors to provide proper guidance and a pathway to completion of their academic studies, Rankin, (2021). The veteran advisor is responsible for retrieving resources, Counseling, providing educational planning, and other assistance beneficial to veteran students in achieving their academic goals. A VA-accredited representative will assist you in understanding V.A. benefits and entitlements V.A. (2022).

Eight of the ten study participants shared their experiences with veteran advisors of their respective colleges or universities. There were two subthemes, availability and degree mapping, that emerged from the theme leading theme Veteran

Advisor.

The findings of veterans receiving services from veteran advisors that included availability and degree mapping are consistent with the research studies of Poole (2015), Kraft-& Kau (2019; Zhang et al., 2019; Rankin (2021).

Subthemes: Availability

The subtheme of availability was revealed through the lived experiences as described by participants of this study as they responded to questions during the interview. Eight of the ten participants, Rose, Henry, Judy, John, Nick, Bertha Lilly, and Ron, described their experiences of the veteran advisor's availability to provide service to veteran students. The remaining two participants, Jim and Rick, indicated little or no interaction with the veteran advisor.

Lilly stated: *"I was disappointed with the veteran advisor because he would keep his appointment. I scheduled an appointment with him three and each time, he was not there. When I met with him, I was unsure where he had placed my appointment card. I did not feel comfortable with him because he did not give me any solid advice. He lacked knowledge of my program and was unsure if I needed to see my academic advisor. I did meet with my academic advisor, and it was the opposite. She reviewed my class schedule and gave me her contact info for future appointments."*

Rose stated: *"My veteran advisor was unavailable when I saw him. I was very dissatisfied because I had G. I. Bill issues, and he could have helped me. However, I did meet with my academic advisor. She was great. We somewhat agreed on my class schedule but worked it out."*

Ron stated: *"I could not meet with my Veteran advisor. However, I met with my academic advisor, who covered my schedule. I need to see my Veteran advisor because I had benefit issues. I rescheduled with him several times, and his availability was the pits. My academic advisor informed me the V.A. pulled him for training. To get my issues addressed. I went to the regional V.A. office, and they assisted me. Since I needed to get my class schedule corrected, my academic advisor was beneficial. I did get something accomplished."*

Nick stated: *"At the university I attended, the veteran advisor was on campus but overwhelmed with servicing other veterans. I was very dissatisfied because I had issues receiving my benefits. Though he was unavailable, my academic advisor was there to assist me with my schedule. The university should have more than one Veteran advisor because of the increased number of veterans enrolled. I am surprised the university did*

not get someone trained by the V.A. to assist at the university. The availability of veteran

advisors is just as important as academic advisors. I had to schedule an appointment

with the V.A."

Bertha stated: *"The veteran advisor at the university was difficult to pin down because of*

the number of veterans he scheduled to meet. I had issues with my benefits and needed to

see a Veteran advisor. The finance office informed me they had not received my tuition

payment from the V.A. I contacted the V.A. and was told my application was incomplete

and they needed information from the school. It took me two days to track down the

Veteran advisor to expedite my application and assist me in clearing up the mess at the

finance office. If I could not satisfy the financial obligations, all my classes would be

placed on hold. "

John stated: *"My veteran advisor was somewhat challenging to see because of the*

number of veterans he scheduled. The university's number of veterans enrolled increased;

I guess others needed to see him, and the time I needed to see him. I had to wait two days

before I finally got in to see him. I had benefit issues, and he corrected them immediately.

The wait was worth it. Since there have been many veterans in colleges and universities,

the V.A. and the university need to revisit adding or training an additional individual to

assist veterans. The finance office will place you on hold, and you cannot attend class."

Judy stated: *"I can appreciate having a Veteran advisor on campus to assist veterans.*

However, they must be accessible and available to veterans. I know veteran enrollment is

at an all-time high, but the colleges and universities should visit, adding the person to

accommodate this increase. Unfortunately, I had to wait nearly two days to see the

veteran advisor. This is also frustrating to me because of my PTSD issues. I become very

emotional when irritated, and waiting is difficult. I am sure other veterans experience the same symptom."

Henry stated: *"The veteran advisor at the university is tough to see. I appreciate him notifying all veterans of the increase in veterans scheduling an appointment. In addition, he was very thoughtful in placing a notice in the university news bulletin of his availability due to the increase of veterans requesting assistance. Though these colleges and universities were notified of the limited availability of the veteran advisor, the university should address this problem by adding additional support or requesting support from the V.A. Veterans are spending too much money not to have access to a V.A. or a different representative. I'm sure they can assign an additional individual to help reduce the workload."*

Subtheme: Degree Mapping

Degree mapping is a means to determine the length of time when a person will graduate. The degree map was designed for students to visualize their year for graduation from the year they enrolled in a two- or four-year program. The degree map provides requirements and recommended courses for each academic term, giving each student a map to follow to complete the degree**.** The results of this subtheme indicated all ten participants felt degree mapping was a necessary tool with positive results when used.

Rose stated: *"One of the first questions I asked when I enrolled in school was how long will it take me to complete all the classes for a degree.? She explained the entire course of study by semester. This gave me an idea of my graduation year. I appreciated her taking the time to explain what requirements and procedures I was expected to take. She also pointed out to me which courses are offered during the summer. With degree*

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mapping, I knew which systems would require me to concentrate more because of the demands of the course. "

Henry stated: *"Degree mapping allowed me to plan for the future, especially for the year I will be expected to graduate. It allowed me to budget for the years I will have additional expenses the V.A. will not cover. I was delighted to know where I was going and how long it would take me to get there. I advise every Veteran going to college to get with their academic advisor and veteran advisor and discuss degree mapping to plan their future."*

Judy stated: *"I heard of degree mapping from another veteran. I met with my academic advisor, and she explained everything to me. All my classes were laid out for me by semester. We also discussed each course and the level of difficulty for each period. My advisor also pointed out which courses are offered during the summer if I wanted to attend summer school. Degree mapping gave me pointed out to me the year I can expect to graduate. This allowed me to plan and budget for those expenses not covered by the V.A."*

John stated: *"My academic advisor scheduled an appointment with me to cover degree mapping. I heard other veterans discussing its usefulness as we began discussing my road to receiving my degree. I was able to decide what I needed to do to ensure I was enrolled in each semester because I have a full-time job and must adjust accordingly. Degree mapping gave me the year I was expected to graduate and the courses required for a degree. I found it to be instrumental."*

Jim stated: *"When I enrolled in the university. I asked my academic advisor to schedule an appointment for me to devise my degree map. We met, and I appreciated her taking*

the time to chart my path to graduation. She was able to lay out all the courses for me and explained the level of difficulty. The leading information I needed was my graduation year. Degree mapping was most helpful to me. "

Nick stated*:" Degree mapping was most beneficial for me. I was able to plot out the course of study with my advisor. I wanted to know what year I was expected to graduate. My academic advisor and veteran advisor met me and worked with me to devise my map for success. I knew where I was going and what it took to get me there. Degree mapping was beneficial for me. I would recommend degree mapping for all veterans."*

Bertha stated: *"My advisor met with me to devise my degree map. I was very appreciative she took the time with me to plan my success. We covered all the courses in the academic bulletin by semester and determined a graduation year. She also pointed me to the classes most students had difficulties with each semester. I would recommend to all veterans to make sure they get with their advisor and create a degree map. "*

Lilly stated: *"Degree mapping was a great way my academic advisor assisted me in determining the year I was expected to graduate. This was most helpful because it allowed me to plan financially for those incidentals the V.A. did not cover. My advisor also pointed out several courses and their level of difficulty. Degree mapping is a must for all veterans because it gives you an idea of what to expect and what classes you need to complete."*

Rick stated: *"Degree mapping should be the first thing all veterans should devise with their academic advisor. It allowed me to plan my future with my advisor and know where I was going and what it took to get me there. With degree mapping, my advisor painted a clear picture for me of all the courses involved in the program of studies. I was*

appreciative of knowing the expected graduation year. I strongly suggest all veterans

meet with their advisors and devise a degree map."

Ron stated: *"Degree mapping was beneficial for me. I met with my advisor and the*

Veteran advisor to devise a degree map. Degree mapping determined my graduation

year. My advisor reviewed all the courses in the academic bulletin and was able to point

out those courses most students had difficulty with. In addition to degree mapping

charting my road to completing all requirements, it allowed me to plan financially and

schedule my work hours with my employer. I strongly suggest all veterans see their

academic advisor and devise a degree map."

Figure 5 Thematic Diagram: Research Question 3
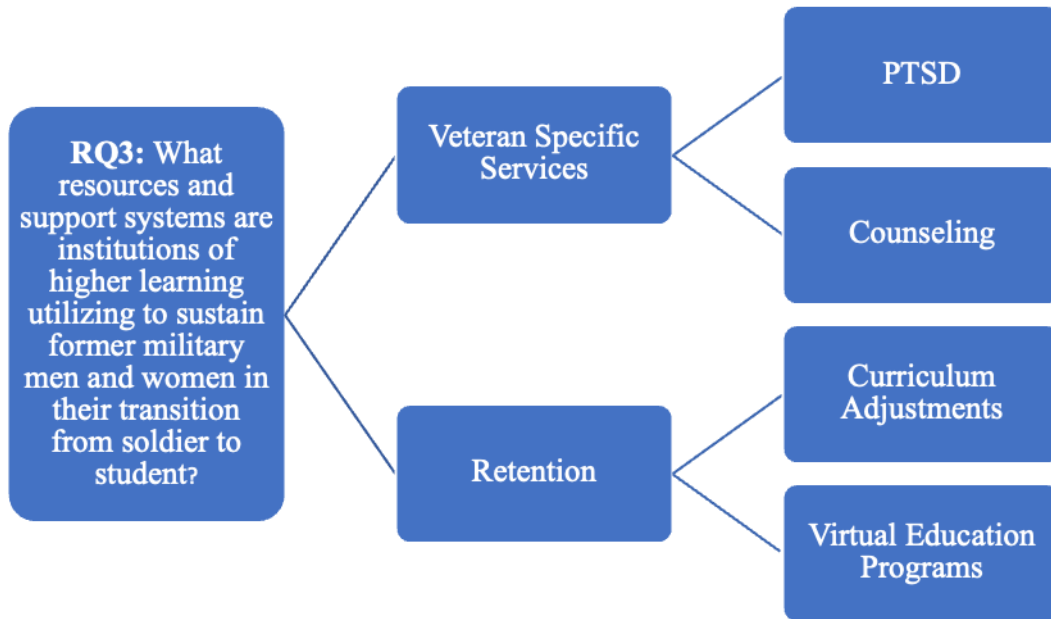
Research Question 3:

What resources and support systems are institutions of higher learning utilizing to sustain

former military men and women in their transition from soldier to student?

Theme: Veteran-Specific Services

Many colleges and universities are revisiting the services offered to various populations, specifically veteran students. Veteran-friendly colleges and university campuses commit to providing specific services to meet the needs of veteran students. Services such as academic support, financial aid, and Counseling. These colleges and universities are focused on providing services that will address the needs of veterans. All ten research participants described their lived experiences with Veteran Specific Services at their respective colleges or university in their responses. PTSD and Counseling were two subthemes that emerged from this theme. The findings of former military men and women's experiences with Veteran Specific Services at their respective college or university through PTSD and Counseling is consistent with the research of Falkey, 2016); Lemire (2017); Alshuler and Yarab (2018); and Lim et al., (2018), Chandra (2021).

Subtheme: PTSD

Veterans who returned home after completing their military obligation could have been exposed to various traumatic experiences during their time in the military. Veterans' traumatic experiences are intense responses to stimuli, including combative or protective behavior, anxiety, and flashbacks. This subtheme emerged due to participants telling of their lived experiences and the challenges they face today. All ten participants responded with some feeling of emotion.

Rose stated: *"I know a lot of veterans with PTSD. I was diagnosed with PTSD. However, when I was in school, I felt instructors had no clue about what we, as veterans, have been through. I often felt pressured when pressured for the correct answers. I would sometimes reflect on the days I was in Iraq. I guess what I am trying to say is individuals with PTSD will, at times, reflect on those days. The universities should address the*

specific needs of veterans. A trained professional should be on staff who can provide

PTSD services to veterans."

Henry stated: *"With the increase of veterans on college and university campuses, I think*

they need to adjust to us instead of us adjusting to them. Veterans who have PTSD should

have specific services available to accommodate their needs. I feel veterans deserve more

than what they are giving us."

Judy stated: *"Concerning specific services to address veterans with PTSD, Colleges and*

universities will begin to lose veterans if proper services are unavailable. Veterans need

these services to survive on campuses and at home."

John stated: *"I was diagnosed having PTSD. I informed my classmates and instructors of*

my condition so they would know what to do and who to call if anything was to get out of

the ordinary. The sad part of having PTSD is you never know when it will hit you. PTSD

requires consistent monitoring."

Jim stated: *"Veterans with PTSD should have access to necessary services as needed. I*

strongly feel colleges and universities should begin to realize they must evaluate their

campuses to see what alterations must be made to accommodate the Veteran."

Nick stated: *"All I have to say about veteran-specific services for veterans is that colleges*

and universities should do a better job when providing services. I feel it's not that

colleges and universities do not want to do anything for veterans. Instead, I think they do

not know where to start."

Bertha stated: *"Colleges and universities could begin to look at veterans differently.*

Veterans are a part of the student population and should be treated as such. They pay

tuition and other fees just as traditional students do. Veterans should be a top priority for

the university. No one can ever repat the men and women for their sacrifice for our

country."

Lilly stated: *"Veterans need specific services on campus. Unfortunately, the V.A. is not*

always accessible to veterans without an appointment. Universities and colleges should

evaluate their campuses to adjust to accommodate the Veteran."

Rick stated: *"I have PTSD and feel fine. I take medicine as prescribed and stay from*

incidents I know will trigger off a reaction. PTSD is controllable. It is up to the

individual."

Ron stated: *"I care about those men and women who attend higher education institutions*

who fail in their responsibilities to accommodate veterans. I am pretty sure they know the

specific services veterans need. Veterans deserve better than what they are getting today.

I want a federal mandate requiring colleges and universities to have specific services for

veterans."

Subtheme: Counseling

Veteran students seek counseling services for several reasons. These reasons can be for

an interpersonal relationship, PTSD, symptoms of depression and anxiety, discomfort in Social

settings, and other reasons. Whatever the case, counseling services must be available for Veteran

students. This subtheme emerged from participants telling of their livid experiences with

counseling services. All ten participants responded with some feeling of emotion. However, all

ten participants also indicated they preferred to use the V.A. because of the limited resources at

colleges and universities.

Rose stated: *"Though I very seldom used the services of a counselor, I was aware this*

service was available to all veterans. Veterans mostly used the counselors at the V.A.

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since they were better equipped to handle veterans. At the V.A., not only did you have access to felt limited resources."

Henry stated: *"I knew the counseling department was available for all veterans, but most of the veterans preferred to go to the V.A. because there were more resources for veterans. Also, most counselors were veterans; some had much in common with veterans. So, if I needed Counseling, I would prefer to go to the V.A."*

Judy stated*:" Counseling is essential for Veterans because it is a method that allows veterans to open up without fear and release the anxiety which hounds veterans. In addition, in speaking with other veterans, they felt more comfortable talking to a V.A. counselor because both were soldiers. I prefer a V.A. counselor for the same reason."*

John stated: *"I strongly prefer using the services of a V.A. counselor because I feel we have more in common than a university counselor. However, I was glad to know the university offered counseling services for veterans. Most of the veterans I spoke to felt the same way."*

Jim stated: *"A young lady who spoke at the orientation represented the counseling department. She was talking to the traditional students because she never mentioned veterans. I prefer going to the V.A. because I am a disabled veteran."*

Nick stated: *"At the orientation, a representative told us the university provided counseling services for all students. I thought I was a disabled veteran receiving counseling services from the V.A. I would prefer continuing the sessions at the V.A. I also thought about the resources at the V.A. compared to the university."*

Bertha stated: *"I appreciate the university offered counseling services, but I was seeing a counselor at the V.A. I had already begun receiving counseling services before the orientation. The VA has opened a case for me which I shared with the counseling department."*

Lilly stated: *"The counseling services at the V.A. was more intense with available additional resources than the university's counseling department. However, I did have a conversation with the director of the counseling department and shared with her my intent to use the services of the V.A. "*

Rick stated: *"The university had counseling services available for students. However, I decided if I needed counseling services, I would prefer using the benefits of the V.A. I felt the V.A. would be better because they deal with veterans all the time and had the resources."*

Ron stated: *"The university offered counseling services at the orientation. However, I visited the counseling department and notified them I had been receiving counseling services from the V.A. for the last six months. I preferred the V.A. because they had the additional resources I needed and participated regularly."*

Theme: Retention

For several years, colleges and universities have enjoyed the influx of veterans enrolling in their schools. These veterans brought a wealth of knowledge and V.A. funding sponsored by G.I. Bill educational benefits. However, when veterans' needs are unmet, they leave the college or university to pursue a college or university that will meet their needs. All ten research participants described their lived experiences with the retention rate at their respective colleges or university in their responses. Curriculum adjustments and virtual learning programs were two

subthemes that emerged from this theme. The findings of former military men and women's experiences with college or university in regards to Retention through curriculum adjustments and virtual learning programs are consistent with research studies of (Tucker-Kulesza et al., 2018);(Southwell, 2018); (Dixon, 2019);(Spriggs, 2022).

Subtheme: Curriculum Adjustment

One of the retention issues that guided the non-retention of veterans at some colleges and universities was the adjustment in the curriculum to meet the needs of veteran students. Colleges and universities compete for veteran enrollment because of the guaranteed tuition for veteran students through the G.I. Bill.

This subtheme emerged from participants telling of their livid experiences with colleges and universities adjusting their curriculum to attract and retain veterans. All ten participants responded with some feeling of emotion. All ten participants also indicated they preferred to attend colleges and universities prepared to adjust their curriculum to accommodate the Veteran. Each research participant described their livid experiences and thoughts about colleges changing the curriculum for veterans.

Rose states: *"The transition began when veterans returned from active military duty. Many will enter higher education to earn a degree for a better life. However, many veterans return from active duty with disabilities and find some colleges and universities' curricula cannot accommodate them because of their disabilities. I worry about veterans who use a wheelchair, those whose sight is limited, and other disabilities that prevent veterans from enrolling in higher education. I would like to see colleges and universities adjust their curriculum to accommodate our veterans who have disabilities."*

Henry stated: *"Colleges and universities should be mandated to review the number of veterans needing accommodations and design their curriculum based on need, veteran level of disability, and the frequency of classes offered. For example, some veterans have full-time jobs to support their families and can only attend classes in the evening."*

Judy stated: *"I think colleges and universities have a long way in adjusting their curriculum, especially with virtual learning, which is very accommodating. My son has taken online courses, and he found them to be worthwhile. Also, I know several veterans restricted to a wheelchair, and online courses were great for them."*

John stated: *"When colleges and universities adjust their curriculum, they accommodate veterans, which is a great way to retain them. Additionally, veterans are selecting schools based on programs, curriculum, and diversity in class offerings."*

Jim stated: *"If colleges and universities are adjusting their curriculums to meet the needs of veterans, I would like to thank them for caring for the Veteran. This is long overdue. Veterans attending college or university struggle to juggle attending class and work."*

Nick stated: *"I am glad some colleges and universities are considering reviewing their curricula to accommodate veterans. Veterans struggle to adjust their time to attend classes because of their work schedules. The adjustment of the curriculum, I am sure, will benefit all veterans."*

Bertha stated: *If schools adjusted their curriculum to accommodate veterans, they would be on the right track. Then, veterans will attend schools that fit their needs. This is a great way to retain veterans."*

Lilly stated*:" I never thought about colleges and universities adjusting their curriculum. However, veterans are accustomed to the norm, and changing their curriculum will*

retain and attract more veterans. In addition, these men and women have families, which is a top priority, not school."

Rick stated: "*Veterans enrolling in schools look at the time element when deciding to attend school. I was employed full-time and did not want to jeopardize my job for school. Also, I had a family to support, and they came first. I think if colleges and universities could adjust their curriculum to meet the needs of veterans, this would be very helpful for veterans".*

Ron stated: *"I wanted to go to school, but the time of school conflicted with my job. I looked at several schools' class offerings and their time, and there was no way I could be in both places simultaneously. Providing for my family was first."*

Subtheme: Virtual Education Programs

This subtheme emerged from participants telling their lived experiences with colleges and universities instituting virtual learning programs to attract and retain veterans. All ten participants responded with some feeling of emotion. All ten participants also indicated they preferred to attend colleges and universities that offer virtual learning programs to accommodate veterans who cannot participate in regular classes during the day due to employment hours. Each research participant described their experiences and thoughts about colleges instituting virtual learning programs for veterans.

Rose stated: *"We did not have virtual learning when I enrolled in college after the war. However, online programs' luxury allowed veterans and others to go to school from home and not interfere with their employment."*

Henry stated: *"Virtual learning was not available when I attended school. I wish we had the opportunity as those today. Also, this is another way to retain veterans because of their employment schedule."*

Judy stated: *"I am unsure if I wanted virtual learning because my computer skills were not up to par. However, I heard you are in trouble if you do not have power and your internet goes out. This is good for those veterans who have to work."*

John stated: *"I was first introduced to virtual learning during the COVID Pandemic. My children's schools used this feature, and I found it to be the same as being in the classroom. This is very good for veterans who cannot attend regular class schedules."*

Jim stated: *"Veterans would find this very good because they could continue working and attending class. This is a plus for full-time veterans who cannot adjust their work schedule to attend classes."*

Nick stated*: "If colleges and universities offer online classes, this would be a plus for veterans and other adults. Online learning was used during the pandemic. I am in favor of this learning for veterans. It also bests the hustle and bustle of attending classes on campus."*

Bertha stated: *"I think colleges and universities are moving in the right direction with offering online classes. This is a positive step in attracting and retaining veterans. Veterans seek ways to attend college without interfering with their employment."*

Lilly stated: *"If colleges and universities are to attract and retain veterans, they must review their curriculum and find innovative ways to appeal to all who want to continue their education. Offering online instruction is the way to go."*

Rick stated*:" that virtual learning is the most innovative way to accommodate veterans.*

Many veterans have families, and attending college and university during the day would interfere with their employment. Online learning is a great way to accommodate veterans."

Ron stated: *"Colleges and universities offering online programs are providing a needed service to veterans. Many veterans want to go to college to earn a degree but cannot because classes during the day interfere with the time of their employment. Online programs offered by colleges and universities would allow veterans to attend school."*

Summary of Findings

The aim of this descriptive phenomenological research study was to explore the challenges and lived experiences of former military men and women as they transitioned from military assignments to students in institutions of higher learning. The targeted sample size for this research study consisted of 10 former military men and women who completed or enrolled in a college or university after completing military obligations.

Participants of the study shared their lived experiences when interviewed by the researcher. However, the research study's findings indicated consistency in the challenges former military men and women encountered. The six themes that emerged from participants' responses revealed to the researcher represented issues faced by former military men and women who transitioned from military assignments to students in institutions of higher learning.

The research study's findings disclosed six of the ten participants interviewed experienced difficulty with student orientation and navigating through the Registration Process. The remaining four participants revealed minimum problems. In Understanding the G.I. Bill Benefits, seven of the 10 participants disclosed complications with receiving payment benefits, and the remaining three indicated they received payment benefits but incorrect amounts.

Participants also expressed dissatisfaction with the absence of a V.A. Representative. In interview responses related to the Environment theme, seven participants disclosed challenges adapting to the culture and interacting socially within the college or university environment, while the remaining three participants had no problems. Finally, regarding the theme of Veteran Advisors, eight of the ten participants disclosed challenges with the availability of a Veteran Advisor, while the remaining three indicated no issues.

Additionally, ten of the ten participants agreed with the Degree Mapping Process. With Veteran Specific Services ten participants indicated problems with specific services that included PTSD issues and a lack of counseling services for veteran students. Finally, regarding the theme of Retention, ten participants agreed that the lack of Curriculum Adjustments and Virtual Education Programs were reasons colleges and universities experienced a reduction in veteran student enrollment.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Summary of the Study

This descriptive phenomenological research study explored the challenges and lived experiences of former military men and women as they transitioned from military assignments to students in institutions of higher learning. This study focused on identifying gaps in support services of former military men and women enrolled in higher education institutions.

The Schlossberg's Transition Model (1995) was used as the theoretical framework. This framework guided the researcher in identifying support services for those encounters, experiences, and needs of student veterans transitioning from military life to institutions of higher learning. Schlossberg's Transition Model is centered around four coping strategies: situation, self, support, and strategies. The Model provided a flexible structure for the understanding lifestyle changes from soldiers to student veterans.

This descriptive phenomenological research study explored the challenges and lived experiences of former military men and women who transitioned from military assignments to students in institutions of higher learning. A qualitative research design was utilized to answer the research questions:

RQ1: What challenges do veteran students encounter when enrolling in institutions of higher learning?

RQ2: How do veteran students transition from soldier to student?

RQ3: What resources and support systems are institutions of higher learning utilizing to sustain former military men and women in their transition from soldier to a student?

In addition, the researcher gathered, organized, and interpreted the data from interviews given by the participants who shared their experiences with the researcher to understand the phenomenon better. The researcher captured firsthand information from individuals who lived, witnessed, or were part of the United States military and transitioned to an institution of higher learning. To that end, a descriptive phenomenological approach was selected for the research design. Kashef's (2022) research study explained that phenomenological research aims to expound on the phenomena experienced by an individual in a particular situation. A previous research study by Frogner et al. (2016) and the recent survey of Kashef suggested that lived experiences were described by a phenomenological research design.

Review of Findings

Six significant themes emerged from the participants' responses in describing their experiences as they transitioned from military assignments to students in institutions of higher learning. The researcher noted six phenomenological themes that emerged from interviews: (1) Registration Process, (2) G.I. Bill Benefits, (3) Environment, (4) Veteran Advisor, (5) Veteran Specific Services (6) Retention.

Findings of former military men and women regarding retention of veterans at colleges and universities challenges experienced by all research participants were consistent with the research studies of (Southwell, 2018); (Maldonado, 2021); and (Reynolds, 2022).

Retention rates of student veterans vary among colleges and universities. The most crucial barriers in the retention of student veterans at colleges were inadequate welcoming, lack of support programs for student veterans, and campus environment. The results of a research study conducted (Reynolds, 2022) indicated that retention rates at colleges and universities were low due to several reasons such as the culture shock of entering a college or university campus

environment, limited online instruction to accommodate the working student veteran, availability of courses, and lack of specific support services to meet the of student veterans.

Another finding emerged as veterans indicated that veterans are more likely to select colleges and universities that offer virtual classes. Virtual offerings significantly reduce absences since veterans are mobile as reassignments occur, avoiding missed classes. Virtual classes also support working student veterans.

The findings of this research indicated six main themes that emerged from veterans' lived experiences. These included: (1) the Registration Process; (2) Understanding G.I. Bill Benefits; (3) the Environment; (4) Veteran Advisor; (5) Veteran Specific Services; and (6) Retention. These themes were challenges veterans encountered enrolling in colleges and universities. These challenges can be problems for traditional students as well.

When interviewed, the themes that emerged from the participants alluded to challenges experienced by former military men and women enrolled in colleges and universities. Experiences documented by veterans in this study provided specific experiences and recommendations that provide a blueprint /action plan for each of the identified themes. By valuing these responses, veterans are more likely to experience a smoother transition from soldier to student.

Recommendations

Several research studies, one in particular Chandra (2021), provided specific recommendations that colleges and universities should offer to better serve student veterans. Colleges and universities implementing these recommendations which included specific services such as career planning, financial assistance, and assistance with campus environment

adjustments, recorded a change in marketing efforts resulting in increases in enrollment and persistence of veterans.

Implications for Colleges and Universities

Orientation/Onboarding

A dedicated veteran student orientation should be scheduled to provide specific information for student veterans enrolled in a college or university. Topics should include an introduction and assignment of the student veteran advisor, faculty and staff, and support services department representatives. Other support services should include; a discussion of G.I. Bill benefits, academic advisors, student veteran support services, disability services, counseling, financial aid. and veteran resource center.

Identifying Campus and VA Representatives

Colleges and universities should assign a staff member to serve as the school's certifying official who works with the VA representatives on related services for student veterans.

Creation of a Veteran Resource Center

Student veterans benefit from a designated space where they can interact with one another and obtain important information. A dedicated Vet Space optimizes academic success by offering easy access to valuable services. This will allow student veterans to meet and intermingle with other veterans and establish a veteran support group. Other services should include advising and tutoring, supportive peer mentoring, social events, benefits counseling, transition assistance, assistive technologies and training, and referrals to on and off campus resources.

Veterans Operation Manual – Implications for Practices and Procedures

Institutions of higher learning may utilize the findings from this research study to develop operational manuals. These operational manuals can include, but not be limited to, the student veteran manual, credit transfer procedures, a procedure for filing complaints, academic planning manual, student disabled veteran's manual, financial aid, tuition assistance, and military observance manual to be located in a dedicated office space on the university's campus.

Transfer Courses

This study provided evidence that there exists an issue regarding the transfer of courses in the Armed Forces on the part of many colleges and universities. While there is acceptance for courses from accredited universities, there is reluctance on the part of universities to credit courses offered by the armed forces. This position is sustained even as these courses are assessed, with transcripts, similar titles, and outcomes offered by university courses in degree programs. Those colleges and universities concerned with accreditation should be explored with accredited colleges and universities that accept selected courses from the Armed Forces.

Accreditation

Universities should partner with the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) which is the most important USA advocate and institutional voice for self-regulation of academic quality through accreditation to provide and shape policies regarding transfer courses for veterans. Colleges and Universities should create policies regarding the transfer of credits from the Armed Forces with the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

Credit given by some universities for Employment/Work Experience might serve as a model for guiding this goal.

Success map

The Obama 8 steps referred to in the Review of the Literature, is a first-step of areas that each university can use as a self-assessment of veteran services on their campus.

Implications for Further Research

Extended research should include veterans who were turned away or were not able to enroll in higher education due to universities' lack of infrastructure or personnel training and procedures to enroll veterans. Oftentimes, veterans were referred to campus personnel who had no knowledge of critical issues such as; matching the benefits of the government with the deadlines and requirements of the university. Again, voices from participants in this study provided insight into this area.

Universities should form an exploratory group to research and study results from this research to assess each campus employing the Obama steps and specific recommendations from participants in the study as a blueprint for increasing enrollment in higher education with services to support success and persistence as with non-veteran students.

This exploratory group should collaborate as a professional learning community with higher education institutions that are nationally recognized for their support for veterans such as the University of Southern Mississippi.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research studies are critical for colleges and universities in retaining veteran students, by addressing specific issues, and developing a plan to improve the admissions process in colleges and universities. By doing so, former military men and women will experience a smoother transition from soldier to student.

Conclusions

This descriptive phenomenological research study aimed to explore the challenges and lived experiences of former military men and women as they transitioned from military assignments to students in institutions of higher learning. Six themes that emerged from this study included: (1) the Registration Process; (2) Understanding G.I. Bill Benefits; (3) the Environment; (4) Veteran Advisors; (5) Veteran Specific Services; and (6) Retention. Findings from this study can serve as a guide for colleges and universities to develop a blueprint for successfully orchestrating the transitioning of former military men and women into higher education institutions.

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   Practice, 21*(1), 53

LETTER OF REQUEST FOR REVIEW TO IRB

<div align="right">
5010 Elysian Fields Ave.
New Orleans, Louisian70122
February 15, 2023
</div>

Charles Gramlich,
Chair of the Xavier University IRB,
PO Box 115C, Psychology Department, Xavier University of Louisiana,
New Orleans, 70125,

Dear Dr. Gramlich,

I am writing to request an expedited IRB review of my research proposal which is required before submitting a human subject research application. This is a new proposal seeking IRB approval. The following text provides information about key components of the project that will assist you in your determination and approval.

• **Title of project:** A Sacrifice For Their Country And A Commitment To Their Community: A Phenomenological Study Of Veterans Transitioning From Soldier To Student.

• **Funder of project:** Clarence A. Becknell, Sr.

• **Aim of project:** This phenomenological study aims to explore the challenges and lived experiences of former military men and women as they transition from military assignments to students in institutions of higher learning. All participants will be required to sign an Informed Consent Form.

• **Recruitment procedures:** Beginning in February 2023, potential participants, former military men, and women will be asked to participate in the research study, "A Sacrifice For Their Country And A Commitment To Their Community: A Phenomenological Study Of Veterans Transitioning From Soldier To Students. Letters will be emailed to potential participants requesting participation in this research study. Participation in the study is strictly voluntary with no compensation.

•**Participants**: Ten participants are expected to participate in this study.

• **Data collection:** The following instruments will be collected from each participant to include Letter of Request for Participation, Demographic Background Information, Interview Questions, and Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study.

• **Risks to the participant:** There are no risks to the participants in this research study.

• **Confidentiality:** All efforts to ensure participant confidentiality will be maintained. The participant's data will be coded and the master code will be kept separate from the data in a locked file, only accessible by researchers on this protocol. The researcher will also utilize the recording safety feature offered through Zoom and will store sessions securely without any claims. This feature is essential because it complies with the mandate of Xavier University Informed Consent Form Section A**:** Confidentiality.

Please contact me if you need additional information relative to my research project to determine the level of IRB application. I look forward to hearing from you and thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Clarence A. Becknell, Sr.
Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX B

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS

February 24, 2023

Disabled American Veterans
Veterans Organization
1250 Poydras Street
New Orleans, Louisiana 70230

RE: Permission to Conduct Research Study

Dear Program Director,

.   I am currently enrolled as an Ed. D Candidate at Xavier University of Louisiana and in the process of writing my Dissertation. The research study is entitled: A Sacrifice for Their Country and A Commitment to Their Community: A Phenomenological Study of Veterans Transitioning from Soldier to Student.

Due to the nature of the study, the participants will have to complete a 45-minute interview. Interested veterans, who volunteer to participate, will be given a consent form to be signed and returned to the primary researcher.

If approval is granted, I would like to receive email addresses of participants. An informed consent will be emailed explaining the purpose of the study, procedures, and confidentiality. The veteran's name and school's identification will be protected using pseudonyms.

I look forward to hearing from you and thank you for your cooperation. If you have any questions, please contact me at (504) 615-8655 or cbecknel@xula.edu.

Sincerely,

Clarence A. Becknell, Sr.
Doctoral Candidate

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF

VETERAN AFFAIRS

February 23, 2023

Louisiana Department of Veteran Affairs
1755 Florida Street 3rd Floor
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70802

RE: Permission to Conduct Research Study

Dear Program Director,

.   I am currently enrolled as an Ed. D Candidate at Xavier University of Louisiana and in the process of writing my Dissertation. The research study is entitled: A Sacrifice for Their Country and A Commitment to Their Community: A Phenomenological Study of Veterans Transitioning from Soldier to Student.

Due to the nature of the study, the participants will have to complete a 45-minute interview. Interested veterans, who volunteer to participate, will be given a consent form to be signed and returned to the primary researcher.

If approval is granted, I would like to receive email addresses of participants. An informed consent will be emailed explaining the purpose of the study, procedures, and confidentiality. The veteran's name and school's identification will be protected using pseudonyms.

I look forward to hearing from you and thank you for your cooperation. If you have any questions, please contact me at (504) 615-8655 or cbecknel@xula.edu.

Sincerely,

Clarence A. Becknell, Sr.

Doctoral Candidate

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY VETERANS OF ZULU

February 23, 2023

Zulu Social Aid & Pleasure Club, Inc.
Veterans of Zulu
732 North Broad Street
New Orleans, Louisiana 70119

RE: Permission to Conduct Research Study

Dear Program Director,

.   I am currently enrolled as an Ed. D Candidate at Xavier University of Louisiana and in the process of writing my Dissertation. The research study is entitled: A Sacrifice for Their Country and A Commitment to Their Community: A Phenomenological Study of Veterans Transitioning from Soldier to Student.

Due to the nature of the study, the participants will have to complete a 45-minute interview. Interested veterans, who volunteer to participate, will be given a consent form to be signed and returned to the primary researcher.

If approval is granted, I would like to receive email addresses of participants. An informed consent will be emailed explaining the purpose of the study, procedures, and confidentiality. The veteran's name and school's identification will be protected using pseudonyms.

I look forward to hearing from you and thank you for your cooperation. If you have any questions, please contact me at (504) 615-8655 or cbecknel@xula.edu.

Sincerely,

Clarence A. Becknell, Sr.
Doctoral Candidate

XAVIER UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs

1 Drexel Drive Suite 217C – Box 68
New Orleans, Louisiana 70125-1098
(504) 520-5444 (office) – (504) 520-7901(fax)

```
TO:    Clarence A. Becknell, Sr, Med., Principal Investigator
FROM:  Charles Gramlich, PhD, Chair of Institutional Review Board
Xavier University of Louisiana IRB
 DATE:     February 27,2023
RE:"A Sacrifice for Their Country and A Commitment to Their
Community: A Phenomenological Study of Veterans
Transitioning from Soldier to Student."
     The above-named study poses no more than minimal risk to
the participants and is eligible for expedited review. The
following actions have been taken regarding this study.
     1. The proposed study is approved.

     2. The informed consent is approved.

     3. The Demographic questionnaire is approved.

     4. The Participant interview Protocol is approved.  This
        study is approved for one year from the date of this
        memo.

To extend this study for more than one year, a request must be
made in writing to the Xavier University IRB at least two weeks
prior to
February 27, 2024. Any changes to the proposal that might affect
the wellbeing of participants must be approved by the IRB prior
to implementation.  Please inform the Chair of the IRB when all
data collection has been completed.


     This project is assigned study number #913 in the IRB
files. It is very important that you refer to this project
number in future correspondence regarding the study.

Reviewed and Approved
```

Charles Gramlich, PhD, Chair of Institutional Review Board
Xavier University of Louisiana IRB
cc. Kanesha Bailey Akinyemi, Associate V.P. for Research and Sponsored
Programs

LETTER OF REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION

Xavier University of Louisiana

1 Drexel Drive New Orleans, Louisiana 70125 (504) 486-7411

Date:

Dear

I am a doctoral candidate at Xavier University of Louisiana. As part of my graduation requirement, I will be conducting a research project entitled, "A Sacrifice for Their Country and A Commitment to Their Community: A Phenomenological Study of Veterans Transitioning from Soldier Student. This study has been accepted and approved by the Institutional Review Board of Xavier University of Louisiana.

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explores the challenges among former military men and women and their lived experiences while transitioning from military assignments to student. Moreover, many former military men and women encounter excessive issues transitioning back into civilian life, such as enrolling in higher education and receiving adequate support services.

I am requesting your participation as a research participant in this study. Your anonymity will be respected throughout the research and result process. There is no compensation of any kind available for your voluntary participation. You may withdraw your participation at any time you deem necessary without any penalties against you.

I will use your responses as resource material for my research. At your request, I will provide you with a copy of the final draft. Your answers will be reported in the study, however,

your identity, email, and other information connected to you is confidential. No identifying information about you will be available in any draft or final presentation.

If you have any questions about the project or your participation, please contact me immediately at (504) 615-8655 or you can email me at cbecknel@xula.edu. You may also contact Dr. Charles Gramich, Chair of the Xavier University of Louisiana Institutional Review Board (IRB) at (504) 520- 7397.

Thank you for you participation.

Clarence A. Becknell, Sr.

Doctoral Candidate

DEMOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Xavier University of Louisiana
1 Drexel Drive New Orleans, Louisiana 70125 (504) 486-7411
_____

Demographic Background Information

Name:

Address:

City, State, Zip Code:

Phone #:   **Email Address:**

The following questions will be asked to gather demographic and basic background

information from all participants in the study.

1. Please specify your ethnicity.
- o Caucasian/White
- o African-American
- o Native American
- o Latino or Hispanic
- o Asian
- o Other

2.. What gender do you identify yourself?
- o Male
- o Female
- o (Short Answer Space)
- o (Prefer not to answer)

3. What is your age?
- o 18 - 25 years old
- o 26 - 35 years old
- o 36 – 45 years old
- o 46 +
- o Prefer not to answer

4. What is your marital status?

- Single
- Married
- Widowed
- Divorced
- Separated
- Never married

5. What is your post-secondary enrollment status?

- Currently Enrolled
- Not Currently Enrolled (Degree Confirmed)
- Not Currently Enrolled (No Degree Confirmed)

6. What is the highest degree or level of education you have completed?

- Some High School
- High School
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Doctoral Degree
- Trade School
- Prefer not to disclose.

7. What type of post-secondary institution did you attend?

- Two-Year College
- Four-Year State University or College
  Four-Year Private University or College
- Others: _____

8. Which degree program did you follow at your post-secondary institution?

- Business
- Education
- Fine Arts
- Language
- Science
- Social/Behavioral Sciences
- Other: _____

9. **How many years did you serve in the military?**

   o 1 - 5
   o 6 -10
   o 11- 15
   o 15 +

10. **What Branch of the Military Did You Serve?**

   o **Army**
   o **Marine**
   o **Navy**
   o **Air Force**
   o **Coast Guard**
   o **National Guard**

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Xavier University of Louisiana
1 Drexel Drive New Orleans, Louisiana 70125, (504) 486-7411

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Title of Research Project: A Sacrifice For Their Country And A Commitment

To Their Community: A Phenomenological Study Of Veterans Transitioning From Soldier To

Student.

Name of Principal Investigator: Clarence A. Becknell, Sr.

Phone Number of Principal Investigator: (504) 615-8655

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

Clarence A. Becknell, a doctoral candidate at Xavier University of Louisiana is

conducting research entitled, "A Sacrifice for Their Country and A Commitment to Their

Community: A Phenomenological Study of Veterans Transitioning from Soldier to Student.

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore the challenges among former military

men and women and their lived experiences while transitioning from military assignments to

student.

Your participation in this research is requested to help the researcher explore veterans'

challenges during this transitional phase and to develop strategies that will help veterans to

succeed in post-secondary institutions. You have been selected as a possible participant in this

study because of your lived experiences as a veteran who attended a higher education institution

who may have experienced challenges that hindered you as a student.

B. PROCEDURES:

If you agree to participate in this research study, the following will occur:

1.	Review and sign Informed Consent Form agreement document to participate in this research study.

2.	Receive a list of questions for review.

3.	Schedule a 30 minutes Interview Session via Zoom.

4.	Participant gives oral permission to be recorded during the Focus Group Session.

5.	Participant takes part in 30 minutes Interview Session as mutually agreed upon.

6.	Participants will take part in one on one 30 minutes interviews as a follow-up to the Zoom Session.

7.	End of Participation by Participants.

C. RISKS: There are no known risks.

D. CONFIDENTIALITY:

The records and the recordings from this study will be kept confidential. Individual identities will not be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study. All data collection and retention methods i.e., questionnaires, tapes, transcripts, summaries will be given codes and stored separately from any names or other direct identification of participants. After the study is completed, all material will be discarded.

E. BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION:

There will be no direct benefit or compensation to you for participating in this research study. However, the anticipated benefit from your participation in this study is that your lived experiences will help to create an operational manual that all institutions of higher learning can utilize to ensure the successful retention of veteran students. The researcher believes that your

testimony and the results from this study will help to increase the graduation rates and the presence of veteran students on college and University campuses.

F. VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:

Your decision whether to participate in this study is voluntary and will not affect your relationship with the researcher or Xavier University of Louisiana. If you choose to participate in this study, you can withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without prejudice or consequences.

G. QUESTIONS

If you have any questions about the study, please contact Clarence Becknell, Sr. by calling (504) 615-8655. You can also contact Dr. Charles Gramlich, chair of the Xavier University IRB, at (504) 520-7397 with any questions about the rights of research participants or research-related concerns.

CONSENT:

YOU ARE MAKING A DECISION WHETHER OR NOT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY. YOUR SIGNATURE BELOW INDICATES THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY AFTER READING ALL OF THE INFORMATION ABOVE AND YOU UNDERSTAND THE INFORMATION IN THIS FORM, HAVE HAD ANY QUESTIONS ANSWERED AND HAVE RECEIVED A COPY OF THIS FORM FOR YOU TO KEEP.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (QUESTIONS)

Xavier University of Louisiana
1 Drexel Drive New Orleans, Louisiana 70125, (504) 486-7411

Interview Protocol (Questions)

The following protocol will be followed by the researcher and participant with proper and suitable decision for adding, adjusting, or eliminating interviewing questions:

Interviewer:
Clarence A. Becknell, Sr,

Interviewee:
Former military men and women veteran attended, attending, or graduated from college or university.

Interview Structure:
These interviews are semi-structured questions which can be omitted or revised during the interview process.

Pre-Interview Issues: Agreement to voluntarily be interviewed for this research study.
Determine a place for zoom conferencing.
Place to conduct this interview.
Agree on a specific date and time to conduct the interview.
Do I have your permission to record this Zoom Session?
Do you have an any questions or concerns?

Time of Interview:
Begin to record the interview at the scheduled time.

Script:
I want to thank you for participating in this project interview. This interview is a requirement of my dissertation research which is to explore the challenges and lived experiences of former military men and women as they transition from military assignments to students in institutions of higher learning. Your identity will not be revealed in the transcription. The Zoom recording of this interview is for my use only and will be housed in a secure place during the period of analysis. It will be erased upon completion of the project. If you need to ask any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Xavier University of Louisiana

1Drexel Drive New Orleans, Louisiana 70125, (504) 486-7411

Individual Interview Questions

The following interview questions listed are designed to retrieve information

from participants to support and guide this research study.

RQ1: What challenges do veteran students encounter when enrolling in institutions of

higher learning?

1. Describe your experience during your enrollment process as a veteran student?

2. What areas of the admission's process did you encounter challenges?
   - Registration and admission process
   - Financial Aid
   - Registration of Classes
   - Office of Disability Service

RQ2: How do veteran students
cope with transitioning from soldier to student

1. Describe how you felt when you began encountering challenges during the enrollment and admission processes?

2. What coping strategies did you use while encountering challenges during the enrollment and admission processes?

RQ3: What resources and support systems are institutions of higher learning utilizing to

sustain former military men and women in their transition from soldier to student?

1. What resources or support systems were provided by the institution to assist you through

the enrollment and admission processes?

2. What resources or support systems were available for you to be successful through your educational journey?
   - Mental Health professional
   - Tutor

IRB APPLICATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Please submit your competed in electronic format to ORSP@xula.edu with (IRB application) in subject line. *NOTE: All submissions should be in MS word format. PDF's are acceptable as long as they can be cut and pasted from. If this is an amendment to a previously approved protocol or revision (changes to a protocol, summary sheets, consent form, etc.), all changes need to be indicated in some fashion, usually by highlighting in another color text.*

Title of Study: A Sacrifice for Their Country and A Commitment to Their Community: A Phenomenological Study of Veterans Transitioning from Soldier to Student

Principle Investigator's Name: Clarence A. Becknell, Sr.

Mentor's Name: Dr. Timothy J. Glaude

Principle Investigator's Contact Information:
Address: 5010 Elysian Fields Ave.
Email: cbecknel@xula.edu
Phone: (504) 615-8655

The following summary must accompany your proposal. Be specific about exactly what participants will experience when they take part in your research and about the protections that have been included to safeguard them. (Careful attention to the following may help facilitate the review process).

1.   In a sentence or two, describe the background and purpose of the research.

        The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore the challenges and lived experiences of former military men and women as they transition from military assignments to students in institutions of higher learning. This study will focus on identifying gaps in support services that hinder the needs of former military men and women desiring to enroll in higher education institutions.

2.   What is the duration of the proposed research?

        The proposed research will begin once reviewed and approved by the Internal Review Board and end no later than April 19, 2023.

3.   Who will be the participants in this study? How will they be solicited or contacted?   Participants must be informed about the nature of what they need to do, including a description of anything that they might consider unpleasant or a risk. Please provide an outline or script of the information that will be given to participants before they volunteer. <u>Include a copy of the written solicitation and/or an outline of the oral solicitation. This would include Email solicitations.</u>

Participants for this study will be former military men and women completed or enrolled in a college or university after completion of military obligations. All potential participants will receive a formal invitation for participation via email or U. S. mail. The researcher will schedule a meeting with interested potential participants and request they read the solicit/consent form and answer any questions as requested. A written solicitation communication requesting voluntary participation is attached to this IRB Application.

4.   Briefly describe the involvement of human participants in the study.

The researcher will conduct 30 minutes one on one interviews via Zoom Conferencing with each human participant. Participants will respond to a series of questions depicting their lived experiences and challenges encountered while transitioning from soldier to student. A signed consent form will be required for each participant.

5.   What measures or observations will be taken in the study? If any questionnaires or other instruments are used, provide a brief description, and include a copy for review.

The researcher will observe and take filed notes the during the interview process. The session will be recorded which will allow the researcher to review and take additional field notes. All Interview questions are attached to the IRB application.

6.   Will the participants encounter the possibility of psychological, social, physical or legal risk? Yes _____ No_X___ If so, please describe. NOTE: being asked personal questions that elicit strong emotional reactions is considered a potential psychological risk.

7.   If there are any risks involved in the study, are there any offsetting benefits that might accrue to either the participants or society? NO   Please explain. (For example, if the participant will receive educational materials concerning their health, this could be a benefit.)

8.   Will there be any physical or mental stress on the participants, including a request for information that participants might consider personal or sensitive? Yes___ No___X_ If so, please describe.

9.   Will the participants be deceived or misled in any way? Yes ___ No__X_ If so, please describe and include an outline or script of the debriefing where the deception will be explained to them after the study.

10.   Will the participants be presented with materials that they might consider to be offensive, threatening, or degrading? Yes ___ No __X_ If so, please describe

11.   Approximately how many participants will take part in the study? Approximately how much time will be demanded of each participant? If participants will be required to attend more than one session, please indicate the total number of sessions and the amount of time demanded by each.

    There will be 10 participants for this research study. There will be one 30-45minute session per participant, totaling 10 sessions

12.   What steps will be taken to ensure that each participant takes part voluntarily? What, if any, inducements, or compensations will be offered to the participants?

    All potential participants will be given a solicit/consent form for signature agreeing to participate voluntarily. Each potential participant is required to carefully read the Informed Consent Form. Participants will not be compensated for their participation.

13.   How will you ensure that participants give their consent prior to volunteering?

    Will awritten consent form be used? Yes _X__ No ___
    If so, please include the form. If not, will oral informed consent be obtained? If so, please submit a copy of the script. If neither written nor oral informed consent will be obtained, please indicate why not and complete and attach the *Request for Waiver or Alteration of Requirement to Obtain Informed Consent* form. If either written or oral consent is to be obtained, please complete and attach the IRB *Informed Consent Document Check List.* (These forms are at the end of this Questionnaire.)

14.   Will any aspect of the data be made a part of any permanent record that can be identified with the participants? Yes ___ No _X__ If so, please explain.

15.   Will the fact that a participant did or did not take part in a specific experiment or study be made a part of any permanent record that can be identified with them? Yes___ No _X__ If so, please explain.

16.   What steps will be taken to ensure the confidentiality of the data collected? Be specific. You should include information about how the data will be stored once it is gathered.

    The researcher will transcribe handwritten notes from the research interviews onto a Microsoft Word document. Codes will be used for each participant in order to conceal their identity. The Word document

will have a password protection feature not available to anyone. The Zoom Conference recorded interview will be destroyed, after it has been transcribed, no later than April 19, 2023.

17. **Will any data from files or archival data be used? Yes ___ No __X_ If yes, please explain.**

18. **Has this study been considered or approved by any other IRB outside of Xavier? NO. If so, please indicate which IRB and attach a copy of the approval letter with this questionnaire. This should facilitate our review considerably.**

19. **Does the research require approval from any of the following Xavier University Committees: The Animal Care Committee (Yes ___ No__X_); The Biohazards Committee (Yes ___ No___); The Radiation Safety Committee (Yes___ No_X__)? If you answered "yes" to any of the proceeding, has the appropriate clearance been obtained'? Yes ___ No___ If so, please attach the letter of approval to this questionnaire.   If it has not, when do you anticipate that clearance will be granted?**
N/A

20. **What are the sources of funding for the proposed research?**

    NO SPECIFIC FUNDING NECESSARY

21. **List the clinical sites to be utilized during the investigation (If applicable).**

    NOT APPLICABLE

22. **List the contracted facilities for diagnostic tests and procedures, etc. (if applicable). NOT APPLICABLE**

    Attach a copy of the 1572 to the summary (if applicable). NOTE: The 1572 is required

    only for clinical trial studies and/or research involving the administration of drugs. The

    form and instructions for filling it out can be found at: http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/

    DevelopmentApprovalProcess/HowDrugsareDevelopedandApproved/ApprovalApplicatio

    ns/InvestigationalNewDrugINDApplication/ucm071098.htm#form1571

    NOT APPLICABLE

23. **Attach a copy of the Principal Investigator's resume/CV. If the research is being conducted under a mentor, include the mentor's resume/CV as well.**

24. **Informed Consent Document Check List**

Legally effective informed consent is to be acquired from each research participant or from the participant's legally authorized representative or guardian. The following check list is provided to assist investigators in the preparation of their informed consent forms. In general, all of the following must be present in the document:

✓ **(a) A statement that the study involves research, and an explanation of the purposes   of the research,**

✓ **(b) The expected duration of the participant's participation, and the approximate number of participants who will take part in the study,**

✓ **(c) A description of the procedures to be followed,**

✓ **(d) The identification of any procedures that are experimental,**

✓ **(e) A description of any reasonably foreseeable psychological, physical, or legal risks or discomforts to the participants,**

✓ **(f) A description of any benefits to the participants or to others that may reasonably   be expected from the research,**

✓ **(g) A disclosure of appropriate alternative procedures or courses of treatment, if any, that might be advantageous to the participants,**

✓ **(h) A statement describing the extent to which confidentiality of records identifying the participants will be maintained,**

✓ **(i) For research involving more than minimal risk, an explanation as to whether any compensation can be expected, and an explanation as to whether any medical treatments are available if injury occurs, and, if so, what those treatments consist of or where further information may be obtained, including emergency contact numbers. (NOT APPLICABLE)**

✓ **(j) An explanation of who to contact for answers to pertinent questions about the research and the research-participant's rights, including phone numbers of the principle investigator or their designated representative, and at least one individual, (usually an IRB representative) who is not directly associated with the study,**

✓ **(k) A statement that participation is voluntary and that refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the participant is otherwise entitled, and that the participants may discontinue the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which they are otherwise entitled.**

A completed copy of this checklist should accompany your proposal when it is submitted for review.

**REQUEST FOR WAIVER OR ALTERATION OF REQUIREMENT
TO OBTAIN INFORMED CONSENT**

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___ 1) The research involves no more than minimal risk to the participants. "Minimal"
        risk means that the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated
in
        the research is not greater than the risks ordinarily encountered in daily life or
        during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or
tests.

___ 2) The waiver or alteration will not adversely affect the rights and welfare of the
participants.

___ 3) The research could not practicably be carried out without the waiver of
informedconsent.

___ 4) Whenever appropriate, the participants will be provided with additional pertinent
information after their participation.

**Please explain in detail in the space below how each of the above conditions is met in
your proposal.   Attach additional sheets if necessary.**

APPENDIX K

CITI CERTIFICATION

CITI Certificate