Integration of Racially and Ethnically Diverse Modern Day Military Veterans in American Higher Education

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INTEGRATION OF RACIALLY AND ETHNICALLY DIVERSE MODERN DAY MILITARY VETERANS IN AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION
INTEGRATION OF RACIALLY AND ETHNICALLY DIVERSE MODERN DAY
MILITARY VETERANS IN AMERICAN HIGHER EDUCATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Workforce Development Education

By

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This study focused on examining the integration and transition challenges of racially and ethnically diverse modern day military veterans at a predominantly white research university. Modern day racially and ethnically diverse veterans who have been retained at the institution past their freshman year were invited to participate in the study. Tinto’s (1975) Student Integration Model (SIM) served as the theoretical framework for the study which focused on retention and academic support strategies that could be appropriate for racially and ethnically diverse modern day military veterans in American higher education. The methodology utilized in this study was phenomenology which utilized interviews as the primary method of qualitative inquiry. Eight primary themes emerged through the study including college aspirations, college transition, networking opportunities, campus involvement, campus support services, race and ethnicity issues, personal discipline, and nontraditional student status. These themes represent the experiences among modern day racially and ethnically diverse veterans as they have transitioned to college following their military careers as well as what has affected their continued enrollment at the institution.
This dissertation is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

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Cedric M. Kenner
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The journey to completion of this work would not have been possible without the support of my family, friends, and colleagues. First and foremost, to my loving wife and best friend, Aisha Kenner, this has been an incredible journey. This journey brought about many late nights and placed a lot of unexpected things in our path. I must say this experience has strengthened my love and admiration for you. You are such a beautiful person and I am grateful to be your husband.

To my grandmother, Beatrice Davie, I have so many loving memories of you. Those memories are priceless and will long live us both. I am truly appreciative of all that you have done for me. I love you Mama Bea!

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I would like to extend a special thank you to my committee members: Dr. David Deggs, Dr. Mike Miller and Dr. Kenda Grover. Dr. Deggs, I cannot express the amount of appreciation and respect I have for you. Your knowledge and expertise has been invaluable!

Finally, I would like to thank the military veterans who participated in this study. This would not have been possible without your willingness to contribute to this study.
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my deceased uncle, Mr. Leroy Davie. You have served as my inspiration and a father figure. As a youth in Lafayette, Kentucky, I did not quite understand the lessons you were teaching me and took those moments for granted. Those lessons have been instrumental to my growth and development as a man and father. I am truly thankful for all you did for me. You were a blessing!
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions throughout America are becoming increasingly diverse. According to Edmonds and McDonough (2006), the enrollment rates among students of color in the United States increased 50.7% between 1993 and 2003. The recent influx of racially and ethnically diverse students in higher education has challenged educational institutions to adapt policies in order to prioritize multiculturalism. Although greater attention has been placed on multiculturalism, degree attainment of racially and ethnically diverse students remains one of the more complex problems facing institutions of higher education in the United States (Bradley, 2009).

Although there has been growth in the number of racially and ethnically diverse students matriculating and graduating from college since the 1960s, access and completion rates for African American, Hispanic, and Native Americans have and continue to be lower than Caucasian and Asian students (Swail, Redd, & Perna, 2003). The National Postsecondary Education Cooperative (2006) concurred that degree attainment rates among students within these racially and ethnically diverse groups are far lower than Caucasian and Asian students. Likewise, Carter (2006) asserted that racially and ethnically diverse students have a higher incidence of leaving college than Caucasian students.

The culture on college campuses traditionally accommodates Caucasian students and those students who are from wealthier backgrounds. These accommodations require many racially and ethnically diverse students to navigate through a multitude of unfamiliar cultural norms. This, in some part, can be attributed to the large majority of African-American college students who chose to enroll at historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) until the
1960s. Following desegregation legislation predominately white institutions (PWIs) began to recognize the value of recruiting racially and ethnically diverse students (Oesterrieich, 2000). Thus, desegregation legislation combined with enhanced recruitment efforts by PWIs over the last several decades has afforded racially and ethnically diverse students access to all higher education institutions (Swail, Redd, & Perna, 2003).

In recent years, there has been an influx of military veterans in higher education due to a myriad of factors including the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, downsizing of the United States Armed Forces, increases in the unemployment rate of veterans, increases in the number of veterans participating in college education benefit programs, and aggressive recruiting by for-profit colleges (Radford 2009; Altus, 2010). This increase has caused higher education institutions to consider complex issues such as transition, retention, and academic support for military veterans. This increase in enrollment among military veterans of modern day wars illustrates how the Government Issued Bill (G.I. Bill) has brought about the “democratization of the American higher education” (Bound & Turner, 2002, p. 784).

The increase in higher education enrollment among military veterans coupled with use of their G.I. Bill benefits has created challenges for many higher education institutions. Military veterans have faced challenges when attempting to utilize their G.I. Bill benefits in order to access higher education. In order to address the needs of military veterans on college campuses, Congress approved the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Improvements Act of 2010 on December 15, 2010. This Congressional Act supports the Department of Education’s effort to provide federal grants to institutions that provide transitional and retention services to effectively meet the needs of military veterans. Other federal programs exist to assist military veterans in their efforts to pursue higher education in addition to this most recent Congressional Act.
Examples of these federal programs include the Veteran Resource and Information Centers (VRIC), Veterans Upward Bound (VUB), and the Transition Assistance Programs (TAP) (Altus, 2010).

The significant number of racially and ethnically diverse enlisted service members transitioning out of the military and into college also elevates the importance of developing a support system that is capable of addressing the needs of this unique population. Career counselors and educational administrators do not need to be experts on the specific needs of this population. However, career counselors and educational administrators need to possess an understanding and awareness of the wealth of resources available to the population (Clemens & Milsom, 2008).

The United States Armed Services have expressed the need to improve the educational support system for their military veterans. Yet the impact of current educational programs, policies, and services on enlisted service members' ability to participate in postsecondary educational offerings has received little attention (Covert, 2002). The lack of studies investigating the transition and retention of racially and ethnically diverse veterans in American higher education institutions can lead one to believe that there are limited services and programs equipped to address the needs of these students. Therefore, racially and ethnically diverse military veterans struggle to adjust to an educational environment which operates under a different value system than the military (Stalides, 2008).

Numerous challenges such as frequent moves, unpredictable work schedules, field training exercises and deployments, unsupportive supervisors, and rigid school residency requirements make it difficult for military members to participate in educational opportunities while on active duty (Covert, 2002). In addition, the socioeconomic status and educational
success of racially and ethnically diverse veterans prior to enlisting in the military has a tremendous impact on their educational aspirations. Where one begins his or her postsecondary education, or lack thereof, has a significant influence on educational aspirations, persistence and eventual level of educational attainment (McNealy, 2004).

Educational institutions are challenged with recognizing that racially and ethnically diverse veterans transitioning out of the military have unique needs that cannot be addressed exclusively with traditional academic support services. In some respect, many higher education institutions lack the forward thinking to compete against flexible and convenient for-profit, two-year, or otherwise accessible four-year institutions. Unfortunately, institutions that use the traditional “cookie-cutter” approach will have the difficult task of maximizing the racially and ethnically diverse military veteran's potential as a student (Bash, 2003).

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study was to examine the integration of racially and ethnically diverse military veterans at a predominantly white research university who have been retained at the institution past their freshmen year. Interviews were conducted with racially and ethnically diverse military veterans in order to gain greater understanding about how they have persisted at the institution.

**Statement of the Problem**

There is a limited number of racially and ethnically diverse modern day veterans who have successfully matriculated and been retained past their freshman year in American higher education. The experiences of those who have persisted have not been adequately researched. Consequently, there is a need to understand what has promoted success among racially and ethnically diverse modern day veterans in American public higher education.
There is much to be gained from a scholarly investigation of racially and ethnically diverse military veterans who are transitioning to higher education. Investigating members of this population provided data that would be useful for career counselors and military leaders as they seek to provide educational opportunities to veterans who are interested in attending a four-year educational institution. In addition, educational administrators may find the results of this study useful for developing support programs and resources for veterans.

**Significance of the Study**

This study was designed to provide insight for higher education institutions regarding the types of integration and academic support strategies that could be appropriate for racially and ethnically diverse military veterans in American higher education. The results of this study can aid in improving the experiences of future racially and ethnically diverse military veterans as they transition from their military careers to college. Likewise, the results of this can be used as a guide for developing appropriate integration and academic support services that would assist future racially and ethnically diverse military veterans.

Military veterans have vastly different experiences than the traditional college student. The variety of these experiences coupled with their racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds adds to the richness of educational institutions by creating a diverse population of students. However, military veterans have had unique experiences that can either hinder or help them adjust more easily to the demands of a four-year educational institution. Racially and ethnically diverse veterans were selected as the group of interest for this study as the researcher felt that they would be able to provide insightful information that could assist others who had aspirations to attend college. The researcher also felt that their experiences needed to be shared with higher education stakeholders including administrators, faculty, and staff.
Phenomenology Qualitative Tradition

This study utilized qualitative inquiry to collect, analyze, and report how racially and ethnically diverse military veterans have been persistent in college past their freshman year. The utilization of qualitative inquiry was necessary in order to understand the phenomena or "lived experiences" being studied (Creswell, 2007). It was the intention of the researcher to gain deeper insight into the experiences of racially and ethnically diverse military veterans through intensive one-on-one interviews. Throughout the process, the researcher examined the phenomena that racially and ethnically diverse veterans experienced as they transitioned and became incorporated into a predominantly white institution.

Criteria of Selecting Study Informants

Racially and ethnically diverse military veterans invited to participate in this study had been retained past their freshman year. They were undergraduates in good academic standing at the predominantly white research university where this study was conducted. The researcher worked through academic support staff and faculty to identify racially and ethnically diverse military veterans who met these criteria. Racially and ethnically diverse military veterans were asked to participate in an interview that was approximately one hour in length.

Description of Research Setting

This study was conducted at the flagship institution of a mid-South state. The regional area where the institution is located has a population of nearly 400,000 people and is characterized as one of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in the country. The institution, as the primary land-grant institution of the state, offers the state’s most comprehensive array of undergraduate, professional, graduate, and honors degree programs. The institution enrolls over 21,000 students
annually, with approximately 81% being Caucasian. The underrepresented student population of racially and ethnically diverse students comprises the other 19% of the student population.

**Theoretical Framework**

Vincent Tinto’s Student Integration Model (SIM) (1975) served as the theoretical framework for this study. Although it is unlikely that any one model could account for every conceivable reason that a student leaves college, Tinto’s Student Integration Model remains one of the most challenged yet influential models to explain aspects that influence an individual’s decision to leave college and how these processes interact to ultimately produce attrition (McCubbin, 2003). The researcher sought to look for explanations of how modern day racially and ethnically diverse veterans met the challenges associated with enrollment at a predominately white institution.

Tinto's Student Integration Model surmises that the higher the degree of integration of an individual into the college environment, the greater a student's commitment to the specific institution and to the goal of college completion (Tinto, 1997). Prior to Tinto’s Student Integration Model, the different types of leaving behavior such as academic failure, voluntary withdrawal, permanent dropout, temporary dropout and transfer were all grouped under the rubric of dropout (McCubbin, 2003). According to Tinto (1988), college and university students who drop out of college are often times more academically able than those who stay. Tinto aimed to differentiate between different types of behavior associated with an individual’s decision to leave college and assess the degree to which individual characteristics affected attrition.

Tinto’s Student Integration Model builds on those of theorist Arnold Van Gennep. Van Gennep (1960), author of *Rites of Passage*, saw life as being comprised of a series of three
stages. These stages within the rites of passage are *separation, transition* and *incorporation*. The rites of passage exist throughout all stages of life and have “led individuals from birth to death and from membership in one group or status to another” (Tinto, 1988, p. 440). Van Gennep believed “that the notions of rites of passage could be applied to a variety of situations, especially those involving the movement of a person or group from one place to another” (p. 441).

The first stage, *separation*, is often quite distressing for many students because they have to dissociate themselves from past communities. As military veterans transition out of the armed services, they will be encouraged to participate in transition assistance programs that are designed to foster their separation from the military. Fortunately, most are able to move out of *separation* and into the second stage, *transition*. During this stage military veterans have a difficult time becoming independent from their old environment while focusing on the new one. In this stage, military veterans can experience stress and a sense of loss that can pose serious problems as they attempt to persist in college. Often in this stage, military veterans may not feel they belong in their old environments but have yet to find their place in the new one. Military veterans who are transitioning to college may not have acquired the patterns of behavior appropriate to integrate into the campus community; therefore, educational institutions must become more sensitive to the needs of the military veterans in order to assist in overcoming those barriers. Military veterans who do get the assistance needed may withdraw early due to the inability to withstand and cope with the stress that this stage can induce (Van Gennep, 1960).

Finally, students move into *incorporation*, which is the third stage after they have accomplished full membership into the social and academic communities of the institution (Tinto, 1988). Military veterans, as well as other nontraditional students who participate in these
programs, are involved in various activities that demand much of their time; therefore, they want to focus on learning skills that can be integrated into their life and work experiences. Their roles as a spouse, caregiver, and community leader will be compromised to some extent by enrolling in college courses. For many, measuring success within these roles will become difficult due to the lack of experience in balancing those roles with the rigors of college coursework. Although they understand the value of education, they have not factored in the barriers that are created by their new role as a student. Situational, dispositional, and/or institutional barriers can be significant factors in the success of their current roles and in the decision making process of future endeavors. Van Gennep’s work provides a new dimension to the student departure process as well as a way of analyzing the longitudinal process of student persistence (Van Gennep, 1960).

**Research Questions**

Research questions that guided this study encompassed the three stages of Tinto's Student Integration Model (SIM):

1. What were the educational aspirations of racially and ethnically diverse military veterans prior to separating from the military?

2. What were the key factors that aided racially and ethnically diverse military racially and ethnically diverse veterans in their social and academic integration into college?

3. What social and academic support services were utilized by racially and ethnically diverse military veterans as they were incorporated into the college environment?

**Delimitations of the Study**

This study focused on the experiences of racially and ethnically diverse veterans who have been retained past the freshmen year at a predominantly white research university in a mid-
South state. Interviews were conducted to collect data that focused on how racially and ethnically diverse veterans had been persistent past their freshmen year.

**Operational Terms**

The following operational terms are provided to explain their use in this study:

1. *Discharged:* military service members who are no longer obligated by contract to the armed services.

2. *Military Veteran:* a current member or former member of the military who served in one of the following armed services: Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Coast Guard and is eligible for educational benefits.

3. *Transition:* requires a shift in an individual’s self-perception due to a change in the environment or situation.

4. *Persistence:* a student’s decision to continue on with his/her educational program through to graduation. Persistence is the opposite of attrition and related to retention.

**Assumptions Guiding the Study**

The interviewees in this study were assumed to be veterans eligible for educational benefits who had successfully transitioned to college. It was also assumed that they were undergraduate students in good academic standing at the institution where this study was conducted. Demographic information collected from modern day racially and ethnically diverse veterans who agreed to participate in this study confirmed that all participants met these assumptions.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

College campuses have been used to foster the development of citizen-soldiers for military service dating back to Colonial times (Neiberg, 2000; Gruber, 1975). The 1862 Morrill Act strengthened the relationship between higher education and the military by establishing military training programs at land-grant institutions (Abrams, 1989; Neiberg, 2000). According to Gruber (1975), Congress passed the 1916 National Defense Act (NDA) which created the “three components of the American military system still in use today: the active duty forces, the organized reserves, and the National Guard” (Neiberg, 2000, p. 23). NDA was also instrumental in creating the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) which standardized the training programs at colleges throughout the United States (Gruber, 1975; Neiberg, 2000).

Postsecondary Access for Military Veterans

Despite the economic assistance provided by the G.I. Bill as well as other educational benefits provided by the military, a disproportionate number of veterans choose to not enroll in four-year institutions (Stalides, 2008). Investing in a college education is a national priority and an economic necessity. Educational opportunity yields a broad array of benefits to both individuals and to society. Research has demonstrated that college has quantifiable personal benefits including higher salaries, improved health, and reduced reliance on welfare. Yet regardless of the efforts of ongoing educational campaigns and access to educational benefits such as the G.I. Bill, success within higher education remains a concern for military veterans who choose to attend (Cooper, 2010).

Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the G.I. Bill into law in 1944 which gave all postwar American veterans who were honorably discharged access to educational aid programs. The G.I.
Bill was instrumental in encouraging military veterans to attend college (St. John & Tuttle, 2004). The evolution of the G.I. Bill and the public sentiment about war may explain the underutilization of the legislation by military veterans today.

According to Olson (1974), there was a significant decrease in veterans attending college after the Korean War in comparison to post-World War II. Widespread anti-military activism bombarded veterans, causing many to feel unwelcomed on campus, making it necessary to maintain a low profile as students. Although there has been an apparent influx of modern day veterans enrolling in college, there remain a number of inhibiting factors that contribute to the underutilization of educational benefits. The implication is that military veterans either lacked higher education aspirations, endured frequent deployments, or encountered military leaders who do not encourage nor support educational opportunities (Radford, 2009).

**Military Educational Benefits and Programs**

For a number of years, the G.I. Bill has helped to increase military veteran access to higher education. As a result, funding will not be a major concern for future veterans. However, transitional support services for veterans will become even more important in the area of college administration. Changes to the G. I. Bill have had an effect on college enrollment among veterans, thus requiring an increase in the number of the services assisting veterans (Kleykhamp, 2007; Rumann & Hamrick, 2009).

**Overview of G.I. Bill.**

The G. I. Bill has become an integral part of American postwar history. The legislation of the G.I. Bill has changed the lives of millions of individuals and continues to significantly shape society. Obtaining a college education and owning a home were no longer mutually exclusive for individuals who qualified for the G.I. Bill as evidenced by the three underlying principles that
were imbued into the G.I. Bill. The first principle was the belief of President Thomas Jefferson that the ideal American should be a yeoman. A yeoman was considered to be an educated citizen and independent property owner who is self-sustaining. The second principle was a sense of common American values among veterans of war. The third principle which helped shape the G.I. Bill is that help should be provided to the returning veterans through more than just just cash (O’Donnell, 2001).

According to Olson (1973), President Roosevelt was instrumental in passing legislation providing veterans with education benefits. On July 28, 1943, Congress was asked to pass legislation providing veterans with educational assistance and unemployment benefits. The recommendations were based on reports from the National Resources Planning Board and the Armed Forces Committee on Post-War Educational Opportunities for Service Personnel. The committees focused on the economic health of the country during the post-war years. Although the recommendations were difficult to pass, the American Legion continued to voice their fear of the lagging economy and the prospect of troops returning to an environment of inflation and unemployment. The American Legion’s official newspaper, The National Legionnaire, was quoted as using the demand that “there must be no road hereafter from the battle-line to the breadline for our defenders!” (p. 599).

Congress created the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944, which was changed in 1985 to the Montgomery G.I. Bill as it is known as today, as a way to adjust the economic system and to ensure veterans had employment and educational opportunities. Although the nation felt indebted to the troops, the primary motive behind the G.I. Bill was initiated as an anti-depressant measure for the economy rather than for veterans (Olson, 1973). While Congress implemented the G.I. Bill to stimulate the economy, Black veterans claimed the “G.I. Bill had
the potential to jump-start the country’s embryonic civil rights movement” (Humes, 2006, p. 93). Unfortunately for Blacks, the G.I. Bill benefited White troops while funneling Blacks into trades. Due to acts of racism by those who oversaw the G.I. Bill educational benefits, Blacks were less likely to receive benefits as compared to the White troops and many Blacks enrolled in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) at a higher rate than at predominantly white colleges (Humes, 2006).

The Post-9/11 G.I. Bill was designed for individuals with at least 90 days of aggregate service on or after September 11, 2001, or individuals discharged with a service-connected disability after 30 days. Veterans must have received an honorable discharge to be eligible for the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill. The Post-9/11 G.I. Bill became effective on or after August 1, 2009. This program pays eligible individuals the following:

- Tuition and fees directly to the school not to exceed the maximum in-state tuition and fees at a public Institution of Higher Learning,
- A monthly housing allowance based on the Basic Allowance for Housing for an E-5 with dependents at the location of the school,
- A annual books & supplies stipend of $1,000 paid proportionately based on enrollment, and
- A one-time rural benefit payment for eligible individuals (Department of Veteran Affairs, 2009).

**Transition Assistance Program.**

Military combat skills were not considered readily transferable into a civilian career; therefore, Congress required military pre-separation assistance programs as a legal requirement
to service members who were separating from any branch of the military services. This was done in an effort to help military members transition to the civilian workforce. Military members separating from military service complete a pre-separation counseling checklist 90 days prior to separation. The service members are given the option of attending transitional services such as job counseling, placement services, financial planning, resume writing, and interview skills development. Each branch of the military has the flexibility to design its own programs and provide workshops focusing on veterans’ benefits, employment assistance, as well as pre-separation counseling (Clemens & Milsom, 2008). Table 1 includes the participation rates of service members in pre-separation counseling and transition assistance workshops by branches of the United States Armed Services.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Armed Services Branch</th>
<th>Total Separated/Retired</th>
<th>Number attending pre-separation counseling</th>
<th>Percent receiving pre-separation counseling</th>
<th>Number attending transition assistance workshop</th>
<th>Percent attending workshop</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Air Force</td>
<td>43,756</td>
<td>39,375</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>27,815</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army</td>
<td>85,190</td>
<td>77,146</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>28,464</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marine</td>
<td>31,319</td>
<td>27,849</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>21,397</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy</td>
<td>57,452</td>
<td>30,508</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>41,181</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coast Guard</td>
<td>4,037</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1,155</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total or Average</td>
<td>221,754</td>
<td>174,878</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>120,012</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Table developed from Bascetta, 2002.
According to the Veterans Education and Benefits Expansion Act, all branches of the military must be provided pre-separation assistance and workshops that aid military personnel in the process of leaving active duty (Bascetta, 2002). The evident divide between combat skills and civilian life has continued to hamper veterans as they transition into an educational environment. Due to the lack of information and data regarding this transition process, educational institutions and counselors have been ill equipped to handle veterans when these transitional issues occur (Stalides, 2008).

**Challenges to Accessing Education Among Veterans.**

Military personnel have faced cultural transition challenges that have generally been misunderstood by counselors in many education institutions. The military has specialized “goals, language, and technology which differ in significant ways from civilian culture” (Stalides, 2003, p.11). The military has been focused primarily on protection and securing the freedom of the United States from terrorism which engendered the masculine warrior mentality that has created the military culture (Stalides, 2003).

There have arisen numerous other challenges that make it difficult for military members to participate in educational opportunities or successfully transition into civilian life: disposition to education prior to enlisting, frequent moves, unpredictable work schedules, field training exercises and deployments, unsupportive supervisors, rigid school residency requirements, the acceptance of transfer credits, and the refusal of some colleges and universities to grant credit for military training and experience (Covert, 2003).

In *Veterans’ college choices; A process of stratification and social reproduction*, McNealy (2004) emphasized that veterans have an intensified pattern of loss and isolation when they transition from the military to the civilian culture because they have to re-adjust to an
entirely new culture with different norms. Even as early as 1946, Crespi and Shapleigh noted that veterans have increased levels of restlessness due to their frustrations involved with civilian readjustment. A cultural divide has grown between the military and civilian culture that caused these types of readjustment and re-socialization problems; however, the whole concept of veterans having a difficult time adjusting to the civilian world is often an over-generalized stereotype (McNealy, 2004).

The research has shown one of the major incentives for joining the military was the educational benefit offered to service members. Unfortunately, enlisted members were often recruited from lower socioeconomic areas and had low academic aspirations prior to enlisting. For this reason, many do not choose to utilize their educational benefits after they separate from active duty (Kleykhamp, 2007). Likewise, veterans from underserved areas in general, became less likely to understand how to calculate expected cost and navigate through financial aid programs offered through the military. The socioeconomic status and educational success of a veteran prior to enlisting in the military greatly impacts their educational aspirations. Low-income soldiers tended to view college as expensive and selective. Two-year colleges had started to become a viable option for veterans who wanted to attend college, but they were unsure of the educational commitment and financial obligations. Many of the veterans that have attended two-year colleges had more opportunity to gain confidence in their educational abilities focusing on core curriculum courses. Unfortunately, veterans “make college enrollment choices based on their life experiences, and their exposure to college” (McNealy, 2004, p. 53).

Military culture required a rank structure, or chain of command, and enculturation forces veterans to submit to a hierarchy of authority figures. Intrinsically, this style of structure was founded on a scaffold of violence, which is prohibited by civilian law. The military rewards
violent behavior with ceremony. Imprinting people with a warrior mentality has been proven to have an adverse effect on many veterans’ resocialization back into civilian culture. This cultural divide between military and civilian life will continue to hamper many veterans as they transition to an educational environment. Due to the lack of adequate information exploring this transition process, educational institutions and counselors are ill-equipped to handle veterans as these transitional issues occur (Stalides, 2008).

Covert (2002) offers recommendations on how to overcome barriers associated with postsecondary educational participation of veterans:

- Advise and assist soldiers in using nontraditional methods when specific or formal course offerings are not available.
- Establish procedures to monitor soldiers’ progress toward nontraditional educational, vocational, and career goals.
- Establish a coherent college credit or course transfer/acceptance policy with the college and universities operating at the local military installation, including accredited nontraditional tests and programs such as the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES) and the College Level Examination Program (CLEP).
- Assist soldiers in finding alternate funding sources such as grants and scholarships when tuition assistance is unavailable.
- Allocate training resources to ensure college representatives and education counselors have the requisite understanding to provide soldiers with accurate academic counseling and advice.
Strengthen the collaborative efforts of colleges/universities and the local military installation requiring a focus on improving the acceptance rate of credit for military training experience. (pp. 143-144)

Underserved Service Members.

Veterans who were considered underserved prior to enlisting in the military generally had a higher rate of not succeeding in higher education. Underserved veterans include minorities (culturally and ethnically), academically unprepared, socially unprepared, low socioeconomic status, first generation, and nontraditional students (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Dougherty, 2002). A large number of underserved students have enrolled in postsecondary education via four-year private and public institutions, but an even larger number have enrolled in two-year institutions. Although some four-year institutions have traditionally served this population, community colleges have been predominantly expected to provide postsecondary education to underserved populations (Freeman, 2007; Levin, 2001).

Additional characteristics began to accumulate for the underserved which added a greater risk in civilian society, increasing their statistical likelihood of failing to enroll in a postsecondary institution: unemployed, underemployed, impoverished, illiterate, and those for whom English is their second language, and those requiring public assistance. Levin (2003) has termed those in this subgroup of characteristics as, “beyond the margins,” which indicates that they are often ignored and have invisible status in higher education and society. Research showed this category of students often lacked awareness and understanding of potential employment, career paths, and related educational pathways, which impacted their failure in school and funneled them into low-paying jobs dwindling their future economic welfare (Freeman, 2007). The underserved attracted minimal direction to guide their decision-making
due to their lack of understanding of the knowledge and skills needed to be competitive in the labor force. This translated into the perspective of not knowing what classes they should take or where the classes would lead, and the inability to effectively identify the benefits provided by the military and institutions of higher education. A large number of underserved entered classes and programs with little self-confidence and low self-esteem (Freeman, 2006).

Underserved populations of veterans have garnered a need for greater attention in order to achieve their academic goals in postsecondary education. They cannot be expected to obtain a postsecondary degree on their own in the system currently designed for the success of the people from a civilian culture that does not exhibit underserved characteristics. Those who feel solutions should not target a minority population should be reminded any action designed to improve learning for minority students tends to improve learning for all students (Boylan, Bonham, & Tafari, 2005).

The ambition to attend college is a common goal among American youth, but information about college often is not as accessible or easily interpreted by many first generation and/or low-income students. Educators stated “those who do not enter or remain in college do not experience the same benefits, such as increased annual earnings, as a college graduate” (Bragg, Kim, & Barnett, 2006, p. 5). Understanding the impact of a college education on our economy, researchers and policymakers began targeting efforts to address access and success in college. These efforts have included an increased consciousness of the underserved students’ role in society; the economic impact of a college education imposed on a family and income opportunities, and the importance of developed curricular and institutional structures in higher education (Bragg, Kim, & Barnett, 2006; Freeman, 2007; 2006). American society produced a number of underserved students who lacked the academic consciousness of job opportunities, the
impact that an advanced education would have on their future, or how an education might advance their role in society. This lack of understanding put the underserved at a greater risk since they conducted life decisions about work and education with limited and often times skewed knowledge (Freeman, 2007; 2006).

When the underserved successfully gain access to college they first became consciously aware of the necessary skills needed to navigate through disproportionate educational systems and through a multitude of unfamiliar cultural norms. Various norms such as an individual’s involvement in a particular social group, their beliefs, and their personal values always played an important role in a person’s interest in education. Underserved students who were not able to navigate through the system and complete college preparatory curriculum more likely needed remedial courses which would have resulted in a longer stay in college. In recognition of these challenges, federal, state, and local governing bodies instituted policies, practices, and programs to increase underserved populations’ participation in higher education (Green, 2006). Important junctures for the underserved in higher education developed during the research: academic preparation for college, graduation from high school, enrollment in college, and persistence in college (Swail, Redd, & Perna, 2003).

**Retaining Veterans in Higher Education**

**Military Veterans as Adult Learners**

In recent history higher education military veterans have been portrayed as adult learners or nontraditional students (Choy, 2002). Bash (2003) posits that half of the students enrolled in higher education should have been as identified as adult learners, but many institutions of higher education simply lacked the understanding of how to retain nontraditional students. According to Bash, adult learners drew from personal experiences to make significant meaning out of
information provided in the classroom. Many adult learners think holistically, drawing from those personal experiences to process information. Bloom’s Taxonomy suggests many “adult learners seek upper-level competencies as a natural extension of how they have learned to experience life and their need for relevance and validation” (Bash, 2003, p. 106). This is a critical factor that will help educational administrators develop programs and retention methods for adult learners.

Adult learners who had to overcome the fear and anxiety of entering school reported spending years thinking about attending college. Bearing in mind military veterans are also likely to express reservations about returning to school, a significant number of institutions have increased the awareness and consciousness of faculty assigned to nontraditional students. Many institutions utilize transformation courses to prepare students for the educational environment and help them adjust to college-level course work. Bash (2003) utilized the analogy of educators being the farmers and adult learners being crops needing different fertilization than traditional students to describe the critical role instructors play in addressing the needs of adult learners.

**College Attendance During Military Enlistment**

The military does give the option for enlisted members to attend college prior to separating from active duty, but research shows that most enlisted members obtain a college degree after separating from the service. The military offers various educational options for service members while on active duty, but these programs have yet to generate significant numbers to show an increase in the educational attainment of active duty members. The Voluntary Education Program was seen as the main source for enlisted members to attend college. Unfortunately, few participants use this program to obtain a bachelor’s degree, or even attend college at all. Research shows that less than “1% of the participants in the program had
obtained a bachelor’s degree, and only 8% had obtained some college education by the end of their eighth year of service” (Rand, 1999, para. 4).

Racially and Ethnically Diverse Students in Higher Education

The demographics on college campuses are more racially and ethnically diverse than ever. In recent years, the enrollment rates of students of color in higher education increased by 50%. Higher education institutions, specifically those that are predominantly white across the United States, are developing strategic plans as well as revising mission and vision statements to prioritize and increase racial diversity within their student body. Although the ambition to attend college is common among racially and ethnically diverse American youth, the accomplishment is limited for a countless number of students of color.

In spite of the increasing population of racially and ethnically diverse students enrolled in community colleges and four-year educational institutions as well as the continued efforts to develop programs and new initiatives, racially and ethnically diverse students do not share the same level of success as their majority counterparts (Bradley, 2009; Bragg, Kim, & Barnett, 2006). The Pathways to College Network (2003) reported one-third of Caucasians in their late twenties have at least a baccalaureate degree in comparison to only 18% of African Americans and only 10% of Hispanics. This gap in educational attainment is extremely detrimental to the long term social mobility and earning potential of racially and ethnically diverse students. According to the Journal of Blacks in Higher Education (2005), African American familys’ income is 63% of the median income for Caucasian families. These statistics highlight the struggles of educational administrators over the last twenty years and the urgency needed to increase participation and retention rates of racially and ethnically diverse students in higher education (Stewart, 1988).
High school graduation rates of racially and ethnically diverse students between the ages of 18 to 24 have continued to increase since the late 1980s. Unfortunately, this did not result in an increase in college enrollment rates at degree-granting institutions for racially and ethnically diverse students until the 1990s. Although there has been progress made in terms of educational aspirations within the African American and Hispanic communities, graduation rates continue to pale in comparison to their Caucasian and Asian counterparts. Reports show that 46% of African Americans and 47% of Hispanics completed a baccalaureate degree between 1995 and 1996, compared to 67% of Caucasians and 72% of Asians (Swail, Redd, & Perna, 2003).

**Retention and Graduation of Racially and Ethnically Diverse Students**

Efforts to improve retention and graduation rates of racially and ethnically diverse students do not necessarily translate into successful outcomes. Despite barriers that can have a negative effect on a student’s predisposition toward college, the level of academic preparation in high school is positively correlated to a number of factors that contribute to college completion rates (Swail, Redd, & Perna, 2003). Likewise, many racially and ethnically diverse students who are admitted into PWIs face the challenges of overcoming social disadvantages and preparing for college-level work in what is often considered less than adequate educational systems. These challenges influence the lack of academic preparation for college entrance exams and encourage students to focus more on employment and educational opportunities that will provide short term success.

Educational researchers have discovered that college access links issues such as how low and middle income families pay college costs, how students who are traditionally underrepresented in higher education overcome social disadvantages, and how well high school graduates are prepared for college-level work. Research has indicated that racially and ethnically
diverse students encounter further stressors that can have a tremendous impact on their preparation for college which in turn causes them to need remedial courses. Because many racially and ethnically diverse students lack the academic preparation for college entrance exams and have limited access to educational resources, they choose to focus on activities that will provide short term success (Bragg, Kim, & Barnett, 2006).

According to Green (2006), in recognition of these challenges, federal, state, and local governing bodies have instituted policies, practices, and programs to increase racially and ethnically diverse populations’ participation in higher education. In the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, a proliferation of support services, state polices, and federal programs such as Upward Bound helped underserved students recognize that college was a viable choice and ushered them into postsecondary institutions.

Regardless of these efforts, studies show majority students have a higher probability of being retained and graduating from college than racially and ethnically diverse minorities (Carter, 2006). While some universities claim they are working toward their diversity goals, the significance of multiculturalism is not consistent throughout higher education institutions across the country. This lack of institutional diversity within their student body and faculty often causes students of color to feel detached from the campus culture, resulting in a higher probability of drop out (Bradley, 2009). Although many of the PWIs today are rapidly changing their institutional structure and challenging themselves to create a more welcoming educational environment for students of color, administrators and faculty are often uninformed of the struggles that racially and ethnically diverse students have to overcome on college campuses (Watson, Terrell, & Wright, 2002).
A phenomenological study conducted by Bradley (2006) identified several themes regarding experiences of racially and ethnically diverse students at Northern New England University (NNEU). The first theme discussed in the literature was the failure to intervene by faculty. It was a common theme expressed by participants who experienced prejudicial remarks made by Caucasian students in the classroom. Participants described racial incidents which were continuously ignored and avoided rather than being handled appropriately. According to Hooks (1994), fear often induces the practices of ignoring and avoiding discussions of racism. The academy cannot afford the avoidance of racial issues in the classroom due to the danger it can have on campus inclusion.

The second theme to emerge from the study was shifting of the expert and the spotlight. Participants in the study often described incidents in the classroom when they were racially targeted by faculty. The one lone person of color is also seen as the “native informant” because others in the class assume that this individual can address a question that pertains to the entire ethnic group (Hooks, 1994, p. 43). Participants also noticed when the topic of race was not discussed they were often forgotten or invisible to say the least (Bradley, 2006; Hooks, 1994). This finding emerged as students of color in predominately White classes were called upon to represent their entire race. Generally, in most college classrooms the professor is seen as the subject expert. However, the spotlight shift occurs when the professor unconsciously or consciously assumes that the student of color is the expert on the topic which causes the expertise to shift from the professor to student. This can be avoided by faculty members becoming more mindful of placing students in these situations and increasing their own cultural competences (Bradley, 2006).
The third theme was a need to structure curriculum in a way that encourages diverse learning. The academy was founded on principles that guided the White culture. Feagan and Sikes (1995) posited that Euro-American bias is at the core of American educational institutions. Everything from the courses, curricula, and research agendas are based on White Americans. Participants in the study believed the Euro-American classroom structure does little to support and promote diverse learning. They believed students in today’s society need an educational environment where diverse ideas can be openly discussed without fear. Classrooms of college campuses are an important factor in establishing “trust, respect, support, and community” (Bradley, 2006, p. 26). Furthermore, Kelly (2005) stated, “A respectful environment helps students trust their peers, critically examine their own biases, prejudices, and stereotypes, and foster open and honest dialogue” (p. 63). Participants in Bradley's study (2006) mentioned that educational institutions have to provide a classroom structure that will encourage open dialogue and that can be tailored to fit the students who are enrolled in the class (Bradley, 2006).

Regardless of the efforts by faculty and administration, offices of student affairs have been advocates for educating students on important issues that plague the university community. Departments within student affairs assist student in raising awareness and creating an inclusive environment that will help students of color feel connected to the educational institution (Stage & Manning, 1992). Although there is literature and policy implementation to deter racism on college campuses, it often results in minimal changes. It is extremely important for administration, staff, and faculty to research literature and begin to understand some of the challenges students of color face at their educational institution (Bradley, 2006).

Institutions of higher education cannot rely on departments with limited staff such as Affirmative Action, Multicultural Affairs, and the Office of Institutional Diversity and Education
to break the cycle of racist acts which can saturate the institution. The job of deconstructing the racist history is the job of every faculty, staff, and administrator on campus. It is also equally important to uphold the policies that are put in place to deter hate and promote a friendly environment for racially and ethnically diverse students. In addition, it is just as important for faculty, staff, and administrators to go through diversity training, and develop a more inclusive curriculum that is designed to support diverse learning (Bradley, 2006).

**Persistence Issues Among Racially and Ethnically Diverse Students**

St. John, Carter, Chung, and Musoba (2006) conducted a study that examined persistence rates of African American, Hispanic, and Caucasian students in public and private educational institutions in Indiana. By observing the differences between the groups, inhibiting factors as well as policies were closely examined with the intention of improving and implementing effective retention practices. The study revealed a strong relationship between socioeconomic status and student persistence in college in all ethnic groups. Specifically, Caucasian students whose parents had not completed college were less likely to complete college, while in African American and Hispanic students it was not a significant factor. The second observation regarding student persistence by St. John, Carter, Chung, and Musoba (2006) was high school curricula. In the state of Indiana, college preparatory curricula are placed in all high schools. As a result, college preparatory and honors curricula had a positive influence on a student’s persistence rate despite their ethnic group. This indicates that academic curricula in high school play a significant role in increasing persistence in students of color. St. John, Carter, Chung, and Musoba (2006) also observed that increasing the availability of advanced courses was correlated with high SAT scores in Indiana. However, the effect of simply taking the SAT had little impact on student persistence. They also found that despite their ethnic group, college choice had a significant
impact on student persistence. Students who attended state universities, private colleges, and research universities were more likely to persist than those who attended two-year colleges. Their research also indicated substantial differences in persistence across the three groups when choosing a major. For Caucasian students, choosing a major was positively correlated with persistence. However, for African Americans the areas such as health, business, education, and computer science were negatively correlated with persistence which raises questions about faculty and student engagement in academic programs (St. John, Carter, Chung, & Musoba, 2006).

A study conducted by Lavin and Crook (1990) examined ethnic differences in long-term educational attainment. Their findings indicated that underrepresented students were far more likely to leave college in comparison to Caucasian students. African American and Hispanic students who attended community colleges never earned their educational credentials and those who received diplomas were more likely to earn an associate’s degree. Furthermore, 40% of Caucasian students were more likely to go beyond the associate level compared to one-third of African Americans and Hispanics. Their research concluded that college persistence for racially and ethnically diverse students was a direct result of low grades and their educational experience in high school.

Hurtado (2001) attributed persistence among students of color with their academic experience. Racially and ethnically diverse students who interacted with diverse peers and faculty increased their critical thinking ability and writing skills. Hurtado posited that colleges can be more involved in the attrition of racially and ethnically diverse students by training faculty on various pedagogical strategies that will assist students of color in being successful in the classroom and in the campus community. However, a study by Feagin, Vera, and Imani
(1996) researched negative experiences of African-American students at PWIs. Results indicated that African American students were unable to devote as much time to their social and cultural development because of the amount of time focusing on intellectual survival. Their research revealed that African American students were not viewed as “full human beings with distinctive talents, virtues, interests and problems” (p. 14).

Smedley, Meyers, and Harrell (1993) researched the psychological distress and academic adjustment that affected minority students in their transition to college. Their research focused on psychological and sociocultural stressors such as racism and discrimination that could have a negative effect on the academic performance and ability to bond with the university. Bynum and Thompson (1983) examined dropout rates of racially and ethnically diverse students at four institutions. Their research aligned with Tinto’s (1975) Student Integration Model which concluded that attrition rates are linked to the students being connected to the educational institution. Students who are actively engaged in the campus environment are less likely to drop out of college prior to graduation.

Kuh (1995) confirmed that student engagement and involvement are important factors in student retention. Although universities provide retention programs that can assist students with overcoming barriers that can deter them from graduating from college, Huratdo, Carter, and Spuler’s (1996) research supported the notion that students in-college experiences rather than their background can have more of an impact on student persistence rates. In college experiences such as exposure to prejudice and discrimination have garnered attention as the major contributing factors in withdrawal behavior of racially and ethnically diverse students.

Tinto (1987) posited academic preparedness rather than socioeconomic status is a major determining factor in the college persistence rates between non-minorities and minorities. Tinto
affirmed educational achievement and persistence were correlated with educational experiences in elementary and secondary school. St. John, Paulsen, and Carter (2006) argued that student’s access to college and retention in college are linked to financial aid. These researchers brought forward research that supports influential factors such as a student’s means of paying for college and the cost of attendance on persistence rates. Berger (2000) examined students’ patterns of attending college as they relate to socioeconomic status (SES). Berger's research supported the idea that student persistence depends on their SES status at the time of enrollment. Students who were considered low income were more likely to drop out if their aid was not sufficient enough to pay for college. Unfortunately, for many low-income students and working class students college persistence is dependent on financial aid. Due to the rising cost of attendance and the high probability of receiving grants, low SES students will not be able to receive a baccalaureate degree without taking out loans. Further research on working class students concluded that they were less likely to remain in college if their work-study or loans were not adequate for the cost of college (Paulsen & St. John, 2002).

According to Green (2006), all students are expected to progress through an educational pipeline. The pipeline, so to speak, is helpful for policymakers, educators, parents, and students because it illustrates both the linear and cumulative aspects of a system in which each school year or grade serves as a building block for the subsequent year or grade. This system assumes that families of color and low income families could advise their children to work hard, participate in extracurricular activities and take advantage of programs that expose them to experiences that middle- and upper-class families routinely provide for their children, including college visits, tutoring, and preparation for entrance exams (Green, 2006).
Rothstein (2004) discussed the disparity between middle-class students and their lower-class counterparts. Specifically, the actions of middle-class parents affect their child's performance. The use of complex language, enforcement of behavioral norms consistent with those of schools, effective homework assistance, promotion of future orientations, and being role models sets higher expectations for middle-class students.

Because many racially and ethnically diverse students do not have access to a strong educational support system, they will not be prepared academically to persist in college. Although many educational systems are creating programs to target racially and ethnically diverse students who want to go to college, the overwhelming challenges can be very difficult to overcome for students who are not excelling in the classroom. The lack of family support and educational resources have also caused a large number of racially and ethnically diverse students to focus more on economic resources and quick fixes to a distressing financial situation. Many of them become reluctant to pursue college preparatory courses because of preconceived notions and personal experiences within an educational system that has placed labels on them.

According to Carter (2006), “academic preparation, adequate financial aid, and strong support networks in college are keys areas for academic persistence in minority students” (p. 42).

While statistics has proven that people who graduate from college have more earning potential, this should not be the only message that is delivered to racially and ethnically diverse students. Many of the underserved students encounter barriers that deter them from getting involved in educational programs, let alone going to college. Despite the overwhelming number of adult learning programs and educational opportunities outside of college, American educational systems have fallen into the trap that a college degree is the only way to be successful in our society. The educational message should include information about the
importance of short-term goals dealing with literacy and job training skills. These short-term goals will allow those racially and ethnically diverse individuals the ability to consider education as something that is obtainable by everyone. Without an initiative to change views and create a better perception of education, many of the racially and ethnically diverse students will remain disinterested in educational pursuits, thereby creating a barrier towards education. For decades many racially and ethnically diverse students considered the dream of attending college very difficult to accomplish, but through federal, state, local, and institutional programs numerous underserved students are capable of earning aid to help pay for college. Although these programs are helpful in bridging the gap, there still seems to be a gap between the racially and ethnically diverse students and students that are preparing for college (Green, 2006).
CHAPTER III
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the lived experiences of racially and ethnically diverse veterans at a predominantly white research institution who have been retained past their freshmen year. This study is characterized as phenomenology as the purpose was to provide a better understanding of what experiences have affected transition and integration to college among racially and ethnically diverse military veterans. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews that were conducted using questions based upon the three components of Tinto's (1975) Student Integration Model.

Statement of the Problem

There is a limited number of racially and ethnically diverse modern day veterans who have successfully matriculated and been retained past their freshman year in American higher education. The experiences of those who have persisted have not been adequately researched. Consequently, there is a need to understand what has promoted success among racially and ethnically diverse modern day veterans in American public higher education.

Research Questions

Research questions that guided this study encompassed the components of Tinto's Student Integration Model (SIM) which served as the theoretical framework for the study. This study addressed three primary research questions:

1. What were the educational aspirations of racially and ethnically diverse military veterans prior to separating from the military?
2. What were the key factors which aided racially and ethnically diverse military veterans in their social and academic integration into college?

3. What social and academic support services were utilized by racially and ethnically diverse military veterans as they were incorporated into the college environment?

Researcher’s Background

Military Service Experience

I served in the United States Navy as a Master-At-Arms prior to my current administrative role in higher education. I enlisted with the United States Navy after earning my master's degree. As an enlisted member of the United States Navy, I interacted with fellow service members ranging from new enlistees to those with over 20 years of military service. I often encountered fellow active Navy enlistees who were concerned about their career options after the military, including the option of attending college. I was often able to answer these questions given my prior work and education experience. I observed how frequent deployments, work schedules, unsupportive supervisors, and lack of educational aspirations prior to enlistment affected my fellow Navy enlistees. Many of my fellow enlistees who had aspirations of attending higher education had to place their plans on hold as active members of the United States Navy.

I went through the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) as the participants in my study did prior to my honorable discharge from the United States Navy. It was my experience that military career counselors and instructors in the program provided little to no information about the steps to attend college upon being discharged. I found that the Transition Assistance Program proved helpful information about employment opportunities. However, I was left to question
how the program might assist enlistees who were soon to be honorably discharged veterans in making the transition to college or utilizing their G.I. Bill benefits. I had an advantage among other enlistees in that I held a master’s degree prior to enlisting in the United States Navy and understood that the culture on a college campus is extremely different from that of the various branches of the military.

**College Administrator and Military Veteran Advocate**

As an African American male military veteran who has worked in various capacities in higher education for over 10 years at predominately white institutions (PWIs), I can recall meetings with student veterans who were frustrated due to the lack of support programs and mentoring opportunities. These student veterans often expressed how they experienced isolation from their classmates. I have often shared concerns from student veterans with the administrators, specifically the special challenges they face and the lack of adequate support programs. I have advocated for programs that would provide student veterans with assistance to navigate the transition from military service to college by providing mentoring as well as academic and social support services.

It is my belief that the special challenges that student veterans face can affect their transition and adjustment to college. I have seen many veterans enter college unaware of the challenges that they would encounter. They are often unaware of the support systems that might aid them in transitioning and becoming successful in college. Student veterans share some characteristics with other adult learners in higher education and I have observed that they often struggle to jointly manage work, family, and school obligations. These obligations often exacerbate the frustrations they face when attempting to navigate the systems that exist on campuses designed with traditional students in mind.
For example, I remember encountering one veteran who expressed his frustration that it has taken him over six years to obtain his bachelor's degree. Although he felt the instructors were helpful, he did not believe many of the classes were structured with nontraditional students in mind. He stressed his dissatisfaction with the organization and structure of the traditional higher education system. Like many adult learners, he was disturbed by the lack of flexibility that a system designed for traditional learners offered adult learners such as him.

Although I see many challenges related to serving student veterans in my current role, I have seen some progress. A registered student organization was formed for student veterans as a result of meetings with educational administrators and veteran support groups. I have served as advisor to that organization for over three years. A veteran resource and information center has also been implemented to assist with the transition and retention needs of veterans. Although these two actions demonstrate some progress, I continually come in contact with student veterans who have had unpleasant experiences. I have observed firsthand the transitional, financial, and academic challenges veterans have as they attempt to navigate through a system that is set up for traditional college students.

My experiences of working with military veterans as a staff member and as an African American veteran have allowed me to identify with the participants and helped to develop a trusting relationship with them. Although my experiences were different, I am able to relate to the stresses and demands of attending college as a military veteran, especially those who are racially and ethnically diverse. I have always wanted fellow veterans to view me as a concerned and resourceful advocate and my decision to undertake this study of racially and ethnically diverse veterans was a means for me to do so.
Researcher's Role and Lens

Although I have had similar experiences as an enlisted member in the military, I realized that my military service experience was different than the participants in my study. I relied on the views of the modern day racially and ethnically diverse veterans in my study rather than any predetermined views based upon my military experience. With this assumption in mind and through the use of a theoretical lens, I utilized the phenomenology qualitative tradition to collect data through interviews. Through application of Tinto's (1975) Student Integration Model, I was able to conduct interviews that allowed me to explore the lived experiences of modern day racially and ethnically diverse veterans. The interviews provided me the opportunity to ask pointed questions regarding their transition and adjustment to college. As the qualitative researcher, I wanted to fully understand the transition and integration process as they experienced them.

Based on the nature of the research topic, the paradigm applied to this study was grounded in advocacy/participatory with the application of critical race theory (CRT). Through this study modern day racially and ethnically diverse veterans were able to share their personal experiences regarding transition and integration to college. As participants shared their experiences, it was important to communicate that the issues being discussed are paramount to the study and that the results of the study could be used to create change in higher education. The information provided by the participants was focused on helping other racially ethnically diverse modern day veterans free themselves of constraints found at most predominately white institutions of higher education. Although this study may not create a political debate, it may very well provide supporting evidence that changes should be made in American higher education. The information provided throughout this research may serve as a guide to help
liberate and transcend racially and ethnically diverse veterans from the constraints of an unjust educational structure that limits self-development and self-determination (Creswell, 2007).

An understanding of the role of racism in American society is imperative to applying and understanding the use of critical race theory as the lens applied to this study of modern day racially and ethnically diverse veterans. Racism is a social construct that has directly affected the way individuals view privilege. Unfortunately, this has had a negative effect on the educational attainment of racially and ethnically diverse students. In order to overcome those barriers placed on the people of color, it is important that participants present their stories about discrimination. Racism and prejudices often go against the stated purposes of the institution's mission and negate efforts to increase diversity. However, racism and prejudices are often deeply embedded in the practices of the educational institution. Parker & Lynn (2002) argued that racism is entrenched in our society. Therefore it has shaped the way we think about laws and racial categories. According to Parker and Lynn (2002), Critical Race Theory has three main goals. The first goal is to allow people of color the opportunity to present their story. Critical Race Theory also allows for the "eradication of racial subjugation while simultaneously recognizing that race is a social construct” (p. 28). Finally, Critical Race Theory provides an opportunity for other inequalities and areas of difference to be addressed. It is the hope of the researcher that the information provided through this study will challenge the traditional paradigms and theories used to explain the experiences of people of color in higher education and build cases against racist educational administrators and policies that inhibit the educational advancement of students of color.
Human Subjects Approval

An application was made to the institutional review board (IRB) at the institution where this study was conducted. IRB approval was obtained before the study began. A copy of the IRB approval letter is included in Appendix A. The study was granted exemption from IRB oversight.

Interview Procedures

The researcher contacted racially and ethnically diverse military veterans via email to invite them to participate in the study. A copy of the email invitation is included in Appendix B. The email invitation explained the purpose of the study, criteria for participants, and how to schedule an interview with the researcher.

The researcher met with racially and ethnically diverse military veterans individually to conduct the semi-structured interviews. The interviews began with an overview of the informed consent document for the study, which specified the modern day racially and ethnically diverse veterans’ rights as participants in the study. Each military veteran was required to sign a copy of the informed consent document before the interview began. A copy of the informed consent is in Appendix C. Participants were also provided a copy for their records.

Interviews were audio-recorded. Interviews began with a "grand tour" question as suggested by Shank (2006) that allowed the interviewee to lead the researcher on a broad overview of their experience as racially and ethnically diverse military veteran who has been retained past their freshman year at the predominantly white institution. The interview guide approach was utilized in this study which allowed the researcher to "elicit the participant's worldview" (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 181) about the challenges they encountered at the institution.
The interviews were conducted using the interview protocol that is included in Appendix D. Interviews were semi-structured and the researcher worked to adequately address the three components' of Tinto's (1975) Student Integration Model which served as the theoretical framework applied to the study. Questions were designed to probe into and elicit explanations of how the modern day racially and ethnically diverse veterans experienced the three stages of Tinto's Student Integration Model including separation, integration and incorporation. The researcher monitored participant explanations of their experiences related to separation, transition, and incorporation per Tinto's Student Integration Model throughout interviews. The researcher concluded that data saturation had been achieved upon conclusion of the ninth interview with participants.

**Data Management and Analysis**

Audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed following the interview sessions. The researcher conducted a member check by asking interview participants to review a copy of their individual interview transcripts. Interview subjects were assigned an alias so that they could not be personally identified. The researcher maintained an audit trail of all activities regarding data collection and analysis procedures.

The researcher applied the steps for data analysis of a phenomenological study as recommended by Creswell (2007). Those steps included:

- Create and organize files for data,
- Read through text, make notes, form initial codes,
- Describe personal experience and essence of the phenomenon,
- Develop significant statements and group statements into meaning units,
• Develop textual description, structural description, essence of the experience, and
• Present narration of the essence (pp. 156-157).

**Trustworthiness of Data**

Four processes were utilized to ensure the qualitative interview data collected in this study was trustworthy as well as valid and reliable. The first process was the aforementioned member check procedure that was conducted with each participant in the study. The researcher also participated in peer debriefing to discuss the results of the interviews and to plan for future interviews. The triangulation method applied to this study was the triangulating analysts’ approach. The researcher identified four additional professionals with experience with racially and ethnically diverse military veterans to serve in this role. The analysts met to review transcripts of interviews of the study participants and the themes that emerged from the data. The analysts' insight assisted in verifying the results of the study and likewise provided feedback that was insightful regarding the meaning of the themes that emerged from the study. Finally, the researcher provided "rich, thick descriptions" (Creswell, 2007, p. 209) to allow "readers to make decisions regarding transferability" (Creswell, 2007, p. 209).
CHAPTER IV
FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to examine the integration of modern day racially and ethnically diverse military veterans at a predominantly white research university who have been retained at the institution past their freshmen year. Interviews were conducted with racially and ethnically diverse military veterans in order to gain greater understanding about how they have persisted at the institution. This study was designed to provide insight for higher education institutions regarding the types of academic support strategies that could be appropriate for racially and ethnically diverse military veterans in American higher education. The results of this study can aid in improving the experiences of future racially and ethnically diverse military veterans as they transition from their military careers to college. Likewise, the results of this can be used as a guide for developing appropriate academic support services that would assist future racially and ethnically diverse military veterans.

Research Purpose and Questions

This phenomenological study focused on the lived experiences of nine undergraduates who were racially and ethnically diverse military veterans who were retained past their freshman year. The interviews were conducted over a two month period during the spring 2011 semester. The questions posed in the semi-structured interviews were based upon the three components of Tinto's (1975) Student Integration Model including separation, integration, and incorporation. The following research questions guided this qualitative study of modern day racially and ethnically diverse military veterans:

1. What were the educational aspirations of racially and ethnically diverse military veterans prior to separating from the military?
2. What were the key factors that aided racially and ethnically diverse military veterans in their social and academic **integration** into college?

3. What social and academic support services were utilized by racially and ethnically diverse military veterans as they were **incorporated** into the college environment?

**Overview of Study Participants**

The nine participants who participated in this study were modern day racially and ethnically diverse military veterans who were enrolled during the semester in which this study was conducted and were all pursuing their baccalaureate degrees at the predominantly white research university. Participants in the study included sophomores (n=3), juniors (n=4), and seniors (n=2). Two of the participants (n=2) were female and seven (n=7) were male. Six of the participants (n=6) in the study were married with children. Participants in this study included modern day veterans who were African American (n=4), Asian (n=1), Hispanic (n=2), Native American (n=1) and one (n=1) person from two or more races or ethnicities. Four of the study participants (n=4) were working while attending school. Seven of the participants (n=7) were residents of the mid-South state where the study was conducted. Eight of the participants (n=8) identified themselves as first generation college students. The average age of study participants was 25.4 years.

The length of military service for the participants in this study ranged from four to eight years. There were four participants (n=4) who had been honorably discharged from active duty and the other five participants (n=5) were currently reservists. All five of the reservists had been sent on at least one deployment while enrolled at the institution. All nine (N=9) of the study
participants had participated in some form of transition program prior to separating from active duty in the military. Table two provides a summary of the participant’s demographics.

Table 2

Demographics Characteristics of Modern Day Racially and Ethnically Diverse Students Who had been Retained Past the Freshmen Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Race or Ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Martial Status</th>
<th>Employment Status</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>First Generation College Student Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chase</td>
<td>Italian/Native American</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danny</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin</td>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Not Employed</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monica</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Not Employed</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Not Employed</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table continued.
Individual Descriptions of Study Participants

The following descriptions are provided to give more background about the study participants' who had successfully transitioned to the predominantly white institution and had been retained past their freshmen year.

**Brenda**

Brenda has been in the Army National Guard for six years. Over the course of those six years, she has been on two deployments while enrolled at the institution. During her first deployment, an instructor did not grant her an alternate exam date, so she requested the company commander to push back her deployment date in order to take the exam. After her second deployment, she claims her responsibilities shifted more toward family rather than social activities on campus.

She is now a senior majoring in Human Resource Development and feels that she had two freshman years, one as a traditional and the other as a nontraditional student. In her traditional year, the only thing she would have changed would have been her choice in classes. Brenda believes her nontraditional year was a good one and would not change much about it. She claims to have been focused because she was motivated to graduate. If not for the second deployment, she would be done, but it hindered her ability to graduate in a timely fashion.
Although Brenda is single and has no kids, she stated that family responsibilities took over after her second deployment. The second deployment caused her to feel the need to alter her work and class schedule so she could be around parents and other family members. Brenda felt the need to spend a lot of time with her father after he was diagnosed with cancer. Despite inhibiting family factors, deployments, and the lack of expectations as a first generation college student, she understood the importance of graduating from college.

Brenda has exhausted her G.I. benefits but receives a tuition discount because she is a staff member at the institution. Despite experiencing several incidents of discrimination, Brenda enjoys the institution and believes it to be a good fit for her. She recalls several incidents of racial discrimination. “I am sure everyone has experience trying to cross the street in the cross walk and people speed up. I have had that happen, but I expect it. So it is not that big of a deal for me anymore.”

Charles

Charles had aspirations to go to college, but could not afford to pay for it. He spent four years in the Army and received a Purple Heart for his actions while in combat. Charles also completed the transition assistance program, but “it was not a big influence.” He stated, “Once you are in the military, they want you to stay in for twenty years, but if you are smart you won’t.” Charles had a difficult time transitioning out of the military because he felt disconnected to the traditional age students. He feels strongly that the traditional age students on campus have it too easy.

Charles claims coming to the predominantly white institution has opened his eyes to a whole new living style. He is a first generation college student who came to the institution from an urban area in a nearby state. According to Charles, “I came from the hood and most of these
white people up here have families that pay for everything they have. But for me, I have to work every day and take out student loans.” Although Charles is struggling with the transition, he understands the importance of finishing his baccalaureate degree. He often reflects back on his experiences growing up in a low-income area of a nearby state and seeing how that negativity impacted the youth every day in his neighborhood.

Charles admits it was difficult to change his mentality towards the traditional students. In an effort to adjust to this community, he has continued to build relationships with his co-workers and classmates. He understands that being motivated and goal oriented is important for college students. As a military veteran, he quickly recognized the barriers but feels that they will not deter him from completing his baccalaureate degree.

**Chase**

Chase needed income and a way to pay for college and as a result he joined the Army National Guard. Now with over six years of experience in the Army National Guard, he admits to having a difficult time transitioning to college and managing the Army National Guard, college, and family obligations. Chase is unique from other participants in this study because he returned to college to pursue a second baccalaureate degree. He received his first bachelor's degree in drama from a smaller four-year institution. While seeking employment prior to joining the Army National Guard, he realized the limitations of his degree and decided to return to college to become a teacher. “I found out it was really hard. I saw that you have to have that further education and start applying yourself.” He believes the opportunity to attend the institution is a second opportunity and wants to get it right. He credits his instructors with being supportive and understanding of his schedule and military obligations. “Faculty, they have been
some of my closest friends and support group. I would say the students, but I do not really feel connected to a lot of them.”

Chase is inspired by his wife and two kids. Although his family is supportive of his current educational aspirations, he cannot participate in many of the campus programs because of the two-hour commute and other responsibilities away from campus. He stated, “I have classes five days a week, so that is 10 hours driving a week. With gas, I am paying $500 just on gas. That is almost another rent payment.”

Chase is a native of the state where the institution is located and admits that he has little to no connection with the traditional age college students on campus. Upon his return to college, he claims his outlook on college was more mature. “When I was doing the undergrad thing, I remember I would stay up to two in the morning then cram and study for a final in the last minute.” Now he confesses to be the guy who goes to class and has already read the chapter. He stated, “I just put academics first and those little child games are behind me…I am more focused… as far as social life and as far as connecting with students I am more disconnected”.

**Danny**

Danny served in the Navy for four years prior to enrolling in college. He went into the military without plans to attend college. However, not long after being in the military, he started to change his perspective on going to college. He began to research colleges and started taking classes at a community college in a northeast state. Danny is heavily involved in campus activities and seeks out opportunities to network across the campus. Although he is from another state, he believes the atmosphere at this institution where the study was conducted is a good fit and has a lot of academic and support programs that can assist students. He credits campus
involvement and an open-minded approach to people for his quick acclimation to the institution where this study was conducted.

As a first generation college student, Danny knew the importance of making the most out of his college experience. When he arrived at this institution in 2007, he needed academic support and assistance with transitioning to college. However, he feels that the institution did not have adequate programs to assist veterans at that time. He realized that he could either push away everything or he could engage himself while in school. Danny noticed that he was older and often more mature than most of the other classmates.

He believes it is difficult for military veterans to transition to college. Danny emphasizes that a person must motivate himself or herself to get involved and seek out the help needed to be successful at college. According to Danny, “You can choose to embrace college or not. You can choose to embrace your campus or not. I chose to get involved.”

Kevin

Kevin was in the Marine Corps for eight years and received an associate’s degree while enlisted because he had plans to become an officer. Despite his educational aspirations, members in his command did not support his pursuit of a baccalaureate degree. Kevin recalled how difficult it was taking classes while on active duty. Commanders and other enlisted members were not as understanding and often made it complicated to leave work to go to class. Although there were some overwhelming challenges for him to overcome to pursue his degree, he understood this barrier because the military is focused on retaining good members.

Kevin grew up in a small town in the state. According to Kevin, he knew the only employment options in his hometown were farming or working in a factory. He recognized there were not a lot of big industries where he grew up and did not feel academically prepared to enter
college so he joined the military. Kevin admits that being at least eight to nine years older than students in his classes has caused him to struggle with the transition to college. He had to take his time with transitioning from the military because he was used to telling people what to do and now doing it and not getting a reaction was definitely hard.

Kevin also feels that the courses are more challenging at the institution than where he earned his associate's degree. He believes that those instructors were more relaxed because they dealt with military service members every day. They had the approach that if you could not come for a week they understood, and if you missed an assignment they helped you out. He feels that faculty at the predominantly white institution do not understand the needs of veteran students. Kevin stated that it was his impression that the faculty “expect you to be like a regular student.”

Despite being single and having no plans on starting a family until he graduates from college, Kevin understands that planning for his future is extremely important and requires a lot of planning. He is taking time to mentor other veterans on campus and looking for other opportunities to get involved.

Monica

Monica was in the Army for four years. She admits to joining the military because she did not have any college aspirations. She also claims to have enlisted in the Army because she had no family or financial support. She wanted to get away from her hometown in another state where she had a very unstable childhood. Although she began taking college courses while in the military, she admits to only taking those classes to advance in rank.

After Monica was honorably discharged from the military in 2004, she enrolled full time in college in 2006. She stated that she understood the importance of a college education once she transitioned back to the civilian sector after her separation from the Army. That transition to
college was stressful to her because she was attempting to balance working full time, being a parent, and attending school full time.

The road to completing her degree has been difficult due to her lack of college preparation and support from immediate family. Monica does not feel connected to campus due to the obligations outside, away from campus. She feels that it is a struggle to balance school and home because she dedicates a lot of her time to raising her children. She does not feel socially integrated into the institution or area as she does not have many friends in the area.

Monica has sought out assistance from staff members and various departments to help with her transition and address her academic concerns. Monica wants to be a positive role model for her kids, so she is motivated to complete her baccalaureate degree. Unfortunately, her past subpar academic performance has delayed her from graduation from college and has likewise exhausted her G.I. Bill benefits. She feels that her academic integration into the present institution was incredibly hard due to her past failures with online courses and the lack of social connectedness. She claims the classes are not that difficult, it is just hard for her to focus on school due to family responsibilities. So where the traditional student can go to class and join a study group, Monica feels that she has to miss some of the study groups because she has so many family responsibilities.

Robert

Robert has over four years of experience in the Army National Guard and is an active member in the campus student organization for military veterans. According to Robert, the organization has assisted in his social integration to college by introducing him to other military veterans and current active members of the military. Robert admits to having college aspirations
prior to entering the National Guard. He recalls showing up for new student orientation and registering for classes only to receive a bill that would deter his enrollment for two years.

Robert joined the Army National Guard to pay for college. Although he believes joining the Army National Guard was a wise decision, he feels that he is still transitioning to college. Robert admits struggling his freshman year due to his new lifestyle and the commute. Robert’s major hurdle was the one-hour commute his freshman year. The commute hindered his ability to participate in campus activities and affected his grades. Despite those challenges, Robert feels that being a first generation college student at this institution is considered a great accomplishment for someone in his family.

Now in his junior year, Robert is a single, full time student who has become involved with campus activities to help with the transition. Robert chose this institution because he has lived in the state since the age of four and a few of his friends from high school chose to attend the institution.

**Thomas**

Thomas believes the military “helped more than it hindered me.” According to Thomas the military gave him a sense of discipline and taught him time management skills. In fact, he claims to have never been late ever since the initial military training. Time management is one of the most important skills that he discussed in the interview. He believes being punctual to meetings, appointments, and class was a skill he learned in the military that prepared him for life as a college student. According to Thomas, “I had plans on going to college and thought joining the Army National Guard would make my college experience better.” Thomas joined the Army National Guard to see different parts of the world and get some disciplined training. He believes that military structure provided him with the essential skills necessary to be successful in life
Thomas has always had aspirations to go to college because of his parents. They both had a college degree and began preparing him for college by discussing college options at a young age. Despite his military deployments, he transitioned to college without any complications. Thomas believes being a member of the campus organization for veterans and having parents who went to college have both assisted him with the transition process. He is a graduating senior majoring in Business and feels that his transition was not as difficult because his father earned a graduate degree at the institution where the study was conducted when Thomas was a young kid. Although he considers the campus to be more traditional student focused, Thomas became acclimated to the institution at an early age, which helped him transition a lot quicker than other participants in this study.

Thomas is working part time and wants an opportunity to obtain a full time position soon. Unfortunately, current economic conditions have made it difficult for him to obtain a full time job prior to graduation. He has made several contacts in the area and is hopeful that once he graduates he will be able to find full-time employment.

Tim

Tim has served five years in the Navy reserves. He believes the discipline the military instilled in him has helped him focus more on personal goals and providing structure for his family. He feels that he has learned a great deal about himself while serving and going to college. Now seeking entrance into medical school, he does blame the military for causing him to stay an additional year in school due to a last minute canceled deployment. Tim stated, “I had my orders and itinerary and everything ready to go and they canceled it.” Although he believes joining the military was a wise decision, it has been difficult for him to balance being a student and raising a family while serving in the reserves.
Tim, a native of another state, is a graduating senior majoring in Biology. He is a first generation college student and a founding member of the campus organization designed to assist past and present military members with their transition process. Tim is now married with a child and finds it difficult to dedicate as much time to organizations that serve the needs of racially and ethnically diverse students. Although it is difficult for him to participate in these, Tim feels that these programs have been inspirational in his college experience by connecting him with campus resources.

Tim believes his racial diversity has hindered his education and does not consider the area a good fit for African American couples such as him and his wife. According to Tim, “this area does not have a social environment conducive enough for African Americans.” Although he has had some bad experiences as an African American male at the institution, he feels that the overall campus climate has gotten better for underrepresented students.

**Military Service Experience of Participants**

This study included nine (N=9) modern day racially and ethnically diverse veterans who were pursuing their baccalaureate degree at a predominantly white institution in a mid-South state. Participants in the study had served in the United States Army (n=2), the United States Navy (n=1), and the United States Marines (n=1). Four (n=4) were presently reservists in the Army National Guard and one (n=1) was a Navy Reservist. An overview of the military service experiences of study participants is included in table three (see page 56).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Number of Deployments While in College</th>
<th>Honorably Discharged</th>
<th>Years of Military Service</th>
<th>Completed Transition Assistance Program</th>
<th>Armed Services Branch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chase</td>
<td>Once</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Army National Guard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danny</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Navy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kevin</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Navy Reservist</td>
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Themes Emerging from the Data

The researcher applied the steps for data analysis of a phenomenological study as recommended by Creswell (2007). Those steps included:

- Create and organize files for data,
- Read through text, make notes, form initial codes,
- Describe personal experience and essence of the phenomenon,
- Develop significant statements and group statements into meaning units,
- Develop textual description, structural description, structural description, essence of the experience, and
- Present narration of the essence (pp. 156-157).

Through application of this process, eight primary themes emerged through the analysis of the interview data which described the experiences that modern day racially and ethnically diverse military veterans had as they transitioned and integrated into the college environment. Those eight themes included college aspirations, college transition, networking opportunities, campus involvement, campus support services, race and ethnicity issues, personal discipline, and non-traditional student status. A description of these themes based upon the data that collected through this study is provided as follows.

- **College Aspirations** - Modern day racially and ethnically diverse veteran's intentions to attend college prior to and after being honorably discharged from active military service.

- **Campus Involvement** - Modern day racially and ethnically diverse veteran's involvement in student organizations and campus activities at the predominantly
white institution.

- **Campus Support Services** - Programs and initiatives offered by institution offices designed to aid modern day racially and ethnically diverse veterans in their integration and incorporation into the college environment at the predominantly white institution.

- **College Transition** - Circumstances under which modern day racially and ethnically diverse veterans made the transition from military service to enrollment at the predominantly white institution.

- **Networking Opportunities** - Opportunities afforded to racially and ethnically diverse veterans to connect with other military veterans, fellow students, faculty, and staff upon integration into the predominantly white institution.

- **Race and Ethnicity Issues** - Experiences, feelings, and perspectives on being racially and ethnicity diverse at a predominantly white institution.

- **Non-traditional Student Status** - Attributes that modern day racially and ethnically diverse veterans felt made them different than the traditional students attending the predominantly white institution. Examples included being married, being employed (part time or full time), commuting from out of town to attend the institution, and being five or more years older than other students in their classes or academic programs.

- **Personal Discipline** - Attributes and skills acquired through military service that assisted modern day racially and ethnically diverse veterans in being successful at the predominantly white institution.
**College Aspirations**

Participant’s transition to college was often fueled by their aspirations of attending college prior to separation from the military. The participants joined the military for various reasons, and they were all aware that the military provided educational benefits to their service members. All participants with the exception of Monica and Kevin had aspirations of going to college prior to separation. Two participants, Monica and Kevin, felt that they were not encouraged to pursue a college education or received mixed signals about doing so while enrolled in the military.

When asking Monica about her educational aspirations while in the military, she did not think they were necessarily aspirations. She stated, “The only educational activities I took into consideration while in the military was in regards to obtaining promotions.” According to Monica, “If you had more school or different types of courses it was easier for you to move up.” Kevin also recalled feeling pressured from other service members and commanding officers to stay in the military and not pursue college. He explained, “They wanted to retain me in the military.” Kevin was given the opportunity go to take courses doing lunch or after work, but he does not believe the military valued higher education because of their efforts to retain him. Although Kevin was allowed to leave work thirty minutes early to go to class, many of his peers and higher ranking officers were not as supportive of his taking college courses. Kevin believes the aspiration to pursue a college education is based on the individual because members of the military are not supported to do so when on active duty.

In an effort to fulfill their college aspirations, a few participants took on-line courses prior to enrolling at the institution were this study was conducted. For example, Charles took online courses while state side and then he was deployed. He admitted taking on-line courses
while on deployment is mentally tiring because of the active duty schedule. He described the
difficulties he faced when coming off of patrol and having to go “back to my tent having to focus
on school.”

**College Transition**

Participants spoke about the excitement of entering college after transitioning out of
active military duty. However, this excitement was often short-lived, as participants realized the
difficulties of balancing their personal life with college enrollment. The participants also had to
adjust to civilian life where one does not have a pay grade or rank. For example, Kevin declared
“it was a real shock, going from an E5 with almost eight years to nothing…I thought
WOW!...This is not what I expected.”

Monica did take time to prioritize her responsibilities before enrolling at the institution.
Monica stated there was a lot going on in her life during the time of separation and she could not
reenlist. She explained how she was married with two kids and had to work after being
honorably discharged from the military. Monica summed up her situation by stating, “I had a
family, so I knew I had to get a job.”

The transition to college was a chaotic process for some of the participants because they
had to balance different responsibilities and change their mindset to being a student and not a
soldier. For example, Charles stated that while being in the military he "got so used to being a
soldier that I almost forgot how to live.” This statement exemplifies how this student veteran
found it difficult to transition out of the military and assimilate back to civilian life. This change
affected his transition to college.

Chase, who had aspirations of becoming an actor, claimed to still be struggling with the
transition process. He used what he considers “code switching,” a process that he describes
where he consistently transitions between military and civilian life, including his role as a college student. Chase feels that it has taken him years to transition from the military. He admits to placing his hands behind his back with legs spread apart in the parade rest position while shaving and making sharp ninety degree turns when walking.

According to the participants, the transition programs that they participated in prior to enrolling or returning to college provided little to any information on how to successfully transition out of the military and into college. Kevin believed that the program was more about transitioning into a career field rather than enrolling in college. Similarly, Charles felt that the program “focused on resume writing, interview techniques, where to go for medical attention, where to go for health care, what are your benefits when you get out. Education was not really a focal point.”

The transition to college also proved to be difficult for both those who intended to go to college straight out of high school as well as those reservists in the study who returned to the institution after a military deployment. Brenda had been on two one-year deployments. She explained how the deployments have changed her outlook on graduating from college. There have been so many cutoffs during some crucial periods of her college experience.

Some of the participants had to take remedial or developmental courses prior to enrolling in college level courses. Robert stated “I believe I would have done a little bit better academically if I would have went directly from high school to college, but the years out of college might have had a little bit to do with it.”

Although there are student support programs, all participants agreed that there should be more programs in place that are geared toward assisting veterans with the transition to college. Brenda suggested having a transition program geared toward racially and ethnically diverse
military veterans. Brenda went on to add her thoughts on programs that are geared toward the different subsets of veterans. For example, she felt that her needs as an African American female are different than that of a 22-year-old infantry white male.

**Networking Opportunities**

The participant’s ability to network with other veterans, students and staff members throughout the campus was found to be an integral part of their separation from the military and college integration. The connections that are made outside of family members and other military veterans were deemed to be important. The relationships that are formed with other military service members while enlisted cannot be replicated on a college campus.

Participants discussed the sense of pride and a level of trust for those who served. For example, Brenda relied on key individuals to assist her and did not utilize a lot of the academic support programs. An Army veteran and university staff member in the admissions department assisted her with processing VA benefits. Brenda’s networking ability was hindered after she returned home. She felt a little awkward after returning to college because she did not have a lot in common with her peers. Even though she desired to meet other students, she felt uncomfortable in doing so because of her military experience and her age.

Tim started building his network as early as his freshman year. According to Tim, “I knew the importance of meeting staff members and other veterans.” He recalled an experience when on deployment when he needed assistance with an instructor. Tim explained that the professor did not have the correct grade on record. Despite being on a deployment, Tim was able to reach out to an administrator and a few students to assist with his problem. After that incident, Tim felt relieved that he was able to get that grade change, but he also noticed how difficult it would be for other veterans who had not established a reliable network.
Campus Involvement

Participants consistently recognized that they were disconnected with campus despite their involvement in the student organization for military veterans as well as campus offices designed to assist military veterans. Most participants credit the student organization and offices with assisting with their integration and incorporation into college. However, family obligations, employment and other situational barriers often led to a sense of disconnectedness from the institution.

There were some military veterans who chose not to seek out assistance from campus services because they did not feel integrated into campus life. Monica stated, “I do not have too much in common with the people I come in contact with, so it was hard. I felt out of place at times.” Other veterans got involved with the student organization for military veterans and other campus organizations. Tim and Robert claimed that the student organization for military veterans helped with their social integration. Robert felt older than a lot of his classmates, so he figured getting involved would help him meet new people.

While integrating was important for participants, they faced barriers that were unique from traditional age college students. Chase knew the university had a lot of functions for students, but could not participate because of his commute. According to Chase, it takes him an hour to get back home, which amounts to two hours a day on the road. He currently has classes five days a week which results in ten hours of commuting time per week.

Participants openly shared their thoughts and perceptions of interactions with organizations and programs. Participants in this study seemed to lack interaction with traditional age college students or involvement in programs designed for traditional age students. Although they were involved in some aspects of campus, overall they felt somewhat disconnected and
wanted ways to enable themselves to integrate both socially and academically into the institution. For example during campus events or group meetings for class that are held at night, often participants were not able to attend because of the commitments outside of the classroom.

**Campus Support Services**

Participants also had to manage the transition of entering or returning to college and many of their experiences were affected by the use of campus services. Participants were not aware of existing programs and only utilized a few of the campus services. For example, Charles has not utilized any of the services. He was not aware that the services existed on campus and claims that he did not have a traditional orientation to expose him to those campus services. He has had to do a lot of research on his own about campus support services.

Monica was frustrated by the lack of services for military veterans. She recalls an incident when she did not even know class registration had begun. She did not get an email or other type of notice. She found out through another student while in class. Unfortunately, the advisor that usually talks to her about classes went on sabbatical, so she fell through the cracks.

Monica went on to explain her lack of use of the campus services. The only place she received information from other than the office that provides support to veterans was the academic counselors. She stated, “It is hard for me to go ask for help because I feel like a sore thumb. I feel like I stand out because I am nontraditional…There are a lot of places on campus that I have not been because I stick out”.

**Race and Ethnicity Issues**

Participants not only had to deal with navigating the college system, they also deal with concerns of racial discrimination or lack of diversity. Although a few of the participants never had any problem with racial discrimination, they all were affected by it due to the limited
number of racially and ethnically diverse students at the institution. Often being the only racially or ethnically diverse person in class created a level of discomfort. Tim described his feeling as, “I believe due to my ethnicity it has hindered my education in some aspects, but being in the military has helped because I have someone to go talk to.”

Monica knew the area was predominately white before enrolling at the institution. She recalls discussions from class about how the area does not meet the needs of minorities. Monica emphasized that she feels "secluded because there are not a lot of people of color speak in this area." She continued that “I am the only black female in most of my classes and that nine times out of ten, I am usually the only veteran.” Monica continued to express her frustration by stating that the institution should “offer more than just Greek life” for racially and ethnically diverse students of color. She continued, “There needs to be more programs that target ethnically diverse students and veterans.”

When asking Tim about his experiences as an ethnically diverse veteran, he does not think white faculty members want to help students of color as much as they would help other white students. Tim remembered an incident when he was outside an instructor’s office waiting to ask a question concerning course work. He was listening to how the instructor talked to a white student. According to Tim, “I was trying to get the same help on a particular problem and he pretty much wasn’t very helpful.” However, once Tim mentioned that he was a military veteran, the instructor treated him differently. Tim believed people of color are perceived differently from majority students at this institution. According to Tim, “I believe if you are an African American you are kind of looked down upon, but if you are in the military you get this certain stature. People look at you differently.”
Personal Discipline

As participants began navigating through class and their new environment, they experienced a shift in responsibility. Participants described discipline as being an important attribute that will enable them to finish college. At the center of their college experience is the way they are able to balance their life outside of college and still be retained in college. Thomas admits, “I think joining the military kind of helped me.” He claims to not be focused before entering the military. Danny added that the military experience has allowed him to "stay goal oriented." Chase also believed that his military experience has helped him overcome the challenges of attending college. He describes his view as:

My logistical mindset has really helped me pick apart and rationalize and reason what needs to happen. What are my goals? And what needs to happen. I need to find that missing link. My organizational skills are so much better. Articulation skills are a lot better, being more direct and not just assuming that someone has picked it up.

Robert commented on how the Army culture differed from the college environment. He stated that in the military you have to "take the drive and initiative" in order to be able to utilize the benefits that are available as active members of the military.

Nontraditional Student Status

A strong recurring theme was that of veterans who are not yet adjusted because they feel that the college campus is set up for traditional age college students. Some of the participants stated they felt more mature and had different responsibilities that the traditional age college students would not understand. Chase, who commutes over an hour each day, stated that his outlook on college and life was different from a lot of the students in his class. Chase takes pride
in being the guy who goes to class and has already read the chapter. He has placed academics first and does not have time nonsense. According to Chase, “All those little child games are behind me, so being back, academics wise I am more focused, as far as social life and as far as connecting with students I am more disconnected.”

Brenda stated, “The only part that has been difficult is the fact that I am at least eight or nine years older than students, so I had to be a little patient because they are a little immature at times.” Like Chase, Robert’s values changed toward college. He appreciates college more and feels that the traditional age students take things for granted.

**Summary**

There were several factors that inhibited the integration of the racially and ethnically diverse modern day military veterans who participated in this study. The participants indicated that balancing the rigors of college with their personal responsibilities outside of the classroom coupled with being racially and ethnically diverse made it difficult for them to acclimate to an institution that was more accommodating to traditional Caucasian students.

The most common factors that aided in their acclimation were the proximity of family members to the institution and the campus support services. Despite a few of the participants lacking college aspirations prior to separating from the military, several of them indicated intrinsic motivation to obtain a college degree as the most influential factor in their integration at the institution where the study took place.

The were several modern day racially and ethnically diverse military veterans who were involved in the campus student organization for veterans and also utilized the veterans affairs office as a sounding board for discussions involving integrating and acclimating to campus. These services were extremely influential as all who were involved in the programs have
extensive experience in working with active duty service members and military veterans. Certainly, the scholarship offers were significant when a veteran is a full time student or has exhausted their G.I. Bill benefits.

To summarize, despite a few disparities, the study results showed there were some common characteristics among the nine racially and ethnically diverse veterans who participated in this study. The majority of the veterans had college aspirations prior to separating from the military, with a few indicating that they went into the military to pay for college. Although a majority of the participants were first generation, all of them indicated that they knew the financial benefits of earning a baccalaureate degree. All of the participants indicated that the military developed the skills they needed to be successful in a civilian environment, specifically personal discipline. However, they did not believe the military provided them with a solid foundation or even adequate information about how to transition to college.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Study Purpose and Assumptions

This phenomenological study investigated the transition and integration of racially and ethnically diverse modern day military veterans at a predominantly white institution in a mid-South state. All participants in this study were pursuing their baccalaureate degree and had been retained at the institution past their freshmen year. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine racially and ethnically diverse military veterans in order to gain greater understanding about how they have persisted at the institution. Interview questions were based upon the three components of Tinto's (1975) Student Integration Model, including separation, integration, and incorporation.

This study was guided by a number of assumptions about the modern day racially and ethnically diverse military veterans who participated in the study. The interviewees in this study were assumed to be veterans eligible for educational benefits who had successfully transitioned to college. It was also assumed that they were undergraduate students in good academic standing at the institution where this study was conducted. Demographic information collected from modern day racially and ethnically diverse veterans who agreed to participate in this study confirmed that all participants met these assumptions.

Study Significance

This study was designed to provide insight for higher education institutions regarding the types of integration and academic support strategies that could be appropriate for racially and ethnically diverse military veterans in American higher education. The results of this study can aid in improving the experiences of future racially and ethnically diverse military veterans as
they transition from their military careers to college. Likewise, the results of this can be used as a guide for developing appropriate integration and academic support services that would assist future racially and ethnically diverse military veterans.

**Research Questions and Overview of Results**

Research questions that guided this study encompassed the components of Tinto's (1975) Student Integration Model (SIM) which served as the theoretical framework for the study. This study addressed three primary research questions:

1. What were the educational aspirations of racially and ethnically diverse military veterans prior to separating from the military?
2. What were the key factors that aided racially and ethnically diverse military veterans in their social and academic integration into college?
3. What social and academic support services were utilized by racially and ethnically diverse military veterans as they were incorporated into the college environment?

The researcher applied the steps for data analysis in a phenomenological study as recommended by Creswell (2007). Eight primary themes emerged through the analysis of the interview data which described the experiences that modern day racially and ethnically diverse military veterans had as they transitioned and integrated into the college environment. Those eight themes included college aspirations, college transition, networking opportunities, campus involvement, campus support services, race and ethnicity issues, personal discipline, and non-traditional student status. A description of the themes is included in Appendix E.

The first research question focused on the educational aspirations of racially and ethnically diverse military veterans prior to separating from the military. The results of this
study suggested that most modern day racially and ethnically diverse veterans who participated in the study had college aspirations prior to enlisting in the military and all experienced some degree of difficulty in managing the transition from the life of a military enlistee to the life of a college student at the predominantly white institution.

The second research question focused on the key factors that aided racially and ethnically diverse military veterans in their social and academic integration into college. Key factors identified in this study that have aided racially and ethnically diverse military veterans in their social and academic integration into college included campus involvement, networking opportunities, overcoming race and ethnicity issues, managing their non-traditional student status, and having an appropriate level of personal discipline.

The third research question focused on social and academic support services that were utilized by racially and ethnically diverse military veterans as they were incorporated into the college environment. Participants in this study identified campus support services designed to assist military veterans including Veterans Resource Information Center, Off Campus Connections, and Enhanced Learning Center. However, the participants in this study felt that their needs were not always adequately addressed through traditional campus support services.

**Discussion of the Findings**

This study was designed to provide insight for higher education institutions regarding the types of integration and academic support strategies that could be appropriate for racially and ethnically diverse military veterans in American higher education. The results of this study can be used as a guide for developing appropriate integration and academic support services for future racially and ethnically diverse military veterans at four year institutions.
The study examined the experiences of nine racially and ethnically diverse military veterans who all chose to attend a four-year predominantly white research institution in a mid-South state. The results of this study confirmed earlier research findings about the transitional challenges of an underrepresented population, provided new information relative to the transitional challenges of racially and ethnically diverse military veterans to college, and the factors that are influential in their integration process (Cooper, 2010; Radford, 2009; McNealy, 2004; Kleykhamp, 2006).

For many of the military veterans who participated in this study, the transition from military service to the college campus continues to be an ongoing process. While there was a physical migration, it was apparent that many are also experiencing an emotional migration from being in the military to becoming a college student. One could surmise that the sense of self among participants in this study has been challenged because of the differences between the culture of the United States military and the college campus. Each participant expressed a personal desire to complete their baccalaureate degree that was based upon some intrinsic motivation. However, they felt that the institution could do more to assist racially and ethnically diverse veterans with their transition to the institution by implementing programs and services to promote student integration and incorporation.

Most participants expressed their desire to obtain a college education to be better equipped to compete for employment. Likewise, most participants acknowledged the separation and transition programs they completed prior to their honorable discharge from the military failed to assist them in realizing their aspirations of earning a college degree. They understood the connection between educational attainment and the ability to compete for a higher paying job. However, the participants in this study described how management of the responsibilities
away from the campus, including family, work, and commuting schedules, was in direct conflict with the culture of the institution. Participants felt that the institution's culture supported the traditional students. Participants conveyed their aversion to campus services and felt that many traditional students took the opportunity to attend the institution or pursue a college degree for granted. Although this affected their outlook on college, the racially and ethnically diverse veterans who participated in this study did not allow this to deter them from getting a college education. The majority of participants in this study relied heavily on other veterans to assist them in their efforts to become acclimated to campus. The participants indicated they benefited more from networking with veterans and listening to their experiences with transitioning to college rather than relying on assistance that might be offered through the support services offered through the institution.

The participants in this study often chose to attend the predominantly white institution based upon its proximity to family or because they were natives of the state. However, they felt that the institution and area did not offer an environment that was conducive to the needs of modern day racially and ethnically diverse veterans. Veterans in this study identified themselves as adult learners or nontraditional students. Despite that the participants indicated that they enjoyed the campus and understood the services that were offered, they just expected more from the initial time of enrollment that would assist with the transition.

**Link to Theoretical Framework**

Tinto's (1975) Student Integration Model served as the theoretical framework for this study and guided the semi-structured interviews that were conducted with modern day racially and ethnically diverse veterans. Research questions were grounded in the three components of Tinto's model including separation, integration, and incorporation. The following is a description
of how the lived experiences of racially and ethnically diverse veterans who participated in this study experienced their (1) separation from the military and (2) integration and incorporation into college environment.

**Separation from the Military**

The first research question focused on the educational aspirations of racially and ethnically diverse military veterans prior to separation from the military. Two participants in the study indicated that they did not have any educational aspirations to go to college prior to joining the military. Although most modern day racially and ethnically diverse veterans who participated in the study had college aspirations prior to enlisting in the military, all experienced some degree of difficulty in managing that transition from the life of a military enlistee to the life of a college student at a predominantly white institution. This was attributed to challenges related to readjusting to civilian life, managing family and work responsibilities, and the inability of the military transition program to aid them in developing or executing plans to pursue their college degrees upon being honorably discharged.

**Integration and Incorporation into College Environment**

The second and third research questions focused on the integration and incorporation of modern day racially and ethnically military veterans into the college environment of the predominantly white institution. The participants in this study were at various stages of integration and incorporation into the campus. All participants preferred to utilize other veterans to assist with understanding campus culture and policies. They expressed concerns about the programs that were provided by the institution to assist racially and ethnically diverse veterans with the integration and incorporation to the college environment. Relevant themes that emerged from the data that affected their sense of integration and incorporation included networking
opportunities, campus involvement, campus support services, race and ethnicity issues, personal discipline, and non-traditional student status. Inherent in all themes is the concept that racially and ethnically diverse veterans who attend a predominantly white institution require assistance to overcome barriers that are not always addressed through traditional campus support services. Participants in this study indicated that their adjustment was at times exacerbated by lack of time to be involved in campus activities, having to overcome race and ethnicity issues, and managing their obligations away from campus as a non-traditional student. Modern day racially and ethnically diverse veterans indicated that taking advantage of networking opportunities, utilizing campus services designed for veterans, and developing personal discipline habits assisted in their integration and incorporation into the predominantly white institution campus environment.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

The purpose of the study was to examine the lived experiences of racially and ethnically diverse modern day military veterans as they transition and integrate into a predominantly white research university. There are also areas of research that are applicable to the institution where this study was conducted. Follow up studies might be conducted with racially and ethnically diverse veteran who were admitted to the institution but did not matriculate. Another study might explore the reasons for attrition among those who left before the end of their freshmen year. Finally, the views of racially and ethnically diverse veterans who graduated from the institution might provide valuable information in making improvements and adjustment to institutional programs and services.

Study participants' experiences indicated that future studies might be conducted which could explore the following issues among military veterans in American public education. Those areas of study include the following:
• Institutional Polices on Deployments - The results of this study found that military veterans and reservists had different experiences regarding how faculty and staff accommodated deployments required for their military service. Some participants also indicated that they took online courses while deployed to war zones. Although these courses were taken through other institutions, a study could also investigate how these actions affect student learning experiences.

• Use of the G.I. Bill - Some participants in this study had exhausted their G.I. Bill benefits and some had shared their benefits with family members. A study might examine the use of G.I. Bill benefits among modern day veterans (post 9/11) and older veterans. Such research ought to focus on how veterans manage this benefit to its fullest potential for themselves as well as family members.

• College Choice Among Veterans - Participants in this study chose to attend the predominantly white institution for a myriad of reasons. However, few of the participants felt connected to the institution or the area. Understanding the factors that lead to college choice among veterans could assist institutions in recruiting more military veterans, especially those who are racially and ethnically diverse.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of the study was to examine the lived experiences of racially and ethnically diverse modern day military veterans as they transition and integrate into a predominantly white research university. Information collected through semi-structured interviews with the racially and ethnically diverse veterans indicated that despite the reasons students choose to go to college, it is important that campus services have a better understanding of veteran and nontraditional
student needs. Modern day racially and ethnically diverse students represent a unique group of students in American higher education. Colleges and universities can greatly enhance campus diversity and multiculturalism efforts by aggressively recruiting and supporting the needs of this group of students.
References


APPENDIX A

Institutional Review Board Approval Letter
MEMORANDUM

TO: Cedric Kenner
    David Doggs

FROM: Ro Windwalker
       IRB Coordinator

RE: New Protocol Approval

IRB Protocol #: 11-03-513
Protocol Title: Retaining Ethnically Diverse Modern Day Veterans in American Higher Education
Review Type: ☑ EXEMPT    ☐ EXPEDITED    ☐ FULL IRB
Approved Project Period: Start Date: 03/15/2011 Expiration Date: 03/14/2012

Your protocol has been approved by the IRB. Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. If you wish to continue the project past the approved project period (see above), you must submit a request, using the form Continuing Review for IRB Approved Projects, prior to the expiration date. This form is available from the IRB Coordinator or on the Compliance website (http://www.uark.edu/admin/rspinfo/compliance/index.html). As a courtesy, you will be sent a reminder two months in advance of that date. However, failure to receive a reminder does not negate your obligation to make the request in sufficient time for review and approval. Federal regulations prohibit retroactive approval of continuation. Failure to receive approval to continue the project prior to the expiration date will result in Termination of the protocol approval. The IRB Coordinator can give you guidance on submission times.

If you wish to make any modifications in the approved protocol, you must seek approval prior to implementing those changes. All modifications should be requested in writing (email is acceptable) and must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact me at 120 Ozark Hall, 5-2208, or irb@uark.edu.

The University of Arkansas is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution.
APPENDIX B

Email Invitation to Participate in Study
Email Invitation to Participate in Study

Dear Student Veteran,

I am conducting research for my doctoral dissertation regarding the experiences of modern day racially and ethnically diverse veterans. You have been selected to receive an invitation to participate in my study because you have been retained past your freshman year.

I am seeking participants who meet the following criteria:
- Modern day ethnically diverse veterans,
- Retained past the freshman year, and
- Are in good academic standing.

Data will be collected through an individual interview which will be audio recorded and transcribed afterwards. An alias will be assigned to your interview transcript in order to protect your confidentiality.

If you are willing to participate in this study please review the attached informed consent document to understand your rights as a participant in this study. If you agree to participate after reviewing the consent document, please send me an email at ckenner@uark.edu.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions via email at xxxxxx@uark.edu or via telephone at 479) 575-4924. You may also direct questions to David Deggs, my dissertation director, via email at ddeggs@uark.edu or via telephone at 479-575-4924 or the IRB coordinator via email at irb@uark.edu or via telephone at 479-575-2208 regarding my study.

Sincerely, Cedric
Kenner Doctoral
Candidate
APPENDIX C

Informed Consent Document
Informed Consent Document

Title: Retaining Diverse Modern Day Military Veterans in Higher Education

Researchers:

Cedric Kenner
Doctoral Candidate Workforce Development
College of Education and Health Professions
Fayetteville, AR 72703
Phone: (479) 575-4924
xxxxx@uark.edu

David M. Deggs, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
College of Education and Health Professions
Fayetteville, AR 72703
Phone: (479) 575-4924
ddeggs@uark.edu

Description: Interviews are being conducted to gauge student feedback about their experiences as an ethnically diverse military veteran in higher education. You were selected because you are a veteran presently attending the university.

Risks and Benefits: There are no anticipated risks to participating in the study. However, the benefits include contributing to the knowledge base of retention and transition strategies used in higher education.

Voluntary Participation: Your participation in the research is completely voluntary.

Confidentiality: Data will be collected through an individual interview which will be transcribed. An alias will be assigned to your interview transcript in order to protect your confidentiality. All information will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law and University policy.

Right to Withdraw: You are free to refuse to participate in the research and to withdraw from this study at any time. Your decision to withdraw will not affect your standing with the university. Please do not sign this form if you choose to not participate in this research project.

Signature: _______________________________ Date: __________
APPENDIX D

Protocol for Semi-Structured Interviews
Protocol for Semi-Structured Interviews

Grand Tour Question

• What suggestions would you give an administrator on assisting ethnically and racially diverse military veterans who are transitioning to a predominantly white four year institutions?

Separation

• Discuss your educational aspirations prior to separating from the military.
• How difficult was it to separate from the military and transition to college? How did you manage that process? How long did it take?
• What types of colleges did you consider attending? Why did you choose the university?

Integration

• Discuss your experiences as an ethnically diverse military veteran at the university.
• What are key factors which aided your integration into college as a freshman? Can you specify how you managed social integration? How about academic integration?
• Would you change anything about your freshman year experience? Please explain.

Incorporation

• What role has academic and student support services had in supporting you past your freshman year? What has been good about these services? What could be done to improve them?
• Discuss your transition past your freshman year.
• Has your college experience changed since your freshman year? Please explain.
• What are some of the benefits of being an ethnically diverse military veteran at the university?
• Do you have any suggestions that can assist in the retention of ethnically diverse veterans at the university?
APPENDIX E

Description of Themes Emerging from Data
Description of Themes Emerging from Data

- **College Aspirations** - Modern day racially and ethnically diverse veteran's intentions to attend college prior to and after being honorably discharged from active military service.

- **Campus Involvement** - Modern day racially and ethnically diverse veteran's involvement in student organizations and campus activities at the predominantly white institution.

- **Campus Support Services** - Programs and initiatives offered by institution offices intended designed to aid modern day racially and ethnically diverse veterans in their integration and incorporation into the college environment at the predominantly white institution.

- **College Transition** - Circumstances under which modern day racially and ethnically diverse veterans made the transition from military service to enrollment at the predominantly white institution.

- **Networking Opportunities** - Opportunities afforded to racially and ethnically diverse veterans to connect with other military veterans, fellow students, faculty, and staff upon integration into the predominantly white institution.

- **Race and Ethnicity Issues** - Experiences, feelings, and perspectives on being racially and ethnicity diverse at a predominantly white institution.

- **Non-traditional Student Status** - Attributes that modern day racially and ethnically diverse veterans felt which made them different than the traditional students attending the predominantly white institution. Examples included being married,
being employed (part time or full time), commuting from out of town to attend the institution, and being five or more years older than other students in their classes or academic programs.

- **Personal Discipline** - Attributes and skills acquired through military service that assisted modern day racially and ethnically diverse veterans in being successful at the predominantly white institution.
Researchers' Vitae

Cedric M. Kenner is a native of Hopkinsville, Kentucky, and is the oldest of three kids of Linda Davie Meullion. He began work on his Doctor of Education degree in workforce education and development at the University of Arkansas in 2007 and graduated in December 2011.

Cedric earned his Bachelor of Arts in criminal justice in 1996 and his Master of Education degree in workforce development in 1999 from Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, Illinois. As an undergraduate, Cedric was a full-scholarship student athlete in football for the Salukis and was voted team captain his senior year. Cedric received his degree in four years and used his last year of eligibility to play for the Salukis while in graduate school.

He began his career in 1997 at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale as an Academic Advisor in the athletic department. In 1998, Cedric went to Illinois State University at Bloomington-Normal in the capacity as Assistant Director and Career Development Coordinator at the Karin L. Boone Athletic Study Center. After his tenure in athletics, Cedric joined the United States Navy as a Master-At-Arms specializing in antiterrorism and small arms instruction.

Cedric currently resides in Springdale, Arkansas, where he is employed by the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville as the Director of the Multicultural Center. In this capacity Cedric is in charge of all personnel, budget, and administrative tasks of the office. Cedric also works with faculty, staff, and students to ensure that the goals of the center and the diversity goals of the university are being met and advanced. In his spare time, Cedric enjoys spending time with his family, playing sports and serving as a member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.