

**SOCIAL BARRIERS TO HIGHER EDUCATION
AMONG STUDENT VETERANS**

An Honors Thesis Prospectus Presented to the Department of Sociology

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ABSTRACT

The new post-9/11 G.I. Bill, which took effect on August 1st 2009, vastly increased the educational funding available to men and women who served in the armed forces. Attending not only community colleges, but also public and private universities has become affordable for returning veterans for the first time since the WWII G.I. Bill of 1944. However, the transition from active military duty to being a student is complex and often socially challenging. Previous research shows that well under two-thirds of veterans continue their education after their military service ends, and those that do are susceptible to debilitating feelings of social isolation. I employ survey and in-depth interview research to answer the questions: Why do some veterans choose specific institutions of higher education? and How do characteristics of these educational institutions influence the social success of these student veterans? This study found that self-perceived social isolation does not necessarily prevent a student veteran from succeeding academically or getting involved on campus – often it merely reinforces certain defining aspects of a veteran's identity. A successful transition is composed of a myriad of social, financial, and personal elements which can heighten or alleviate self-perceived social isolation. I found that three elements had the most significant impact on a veteran's successful transition: being involved in a number of heterogeneous social circles; having some preexisting knowledge about the institution of higher education; and the size and heterogeneity of student body.

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INTRODUCTION

The conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq have been a paramount issue in United States politics since the early 2000s. The conflict areas in Iraq (beginning officially in 2003) and Afghanistan (beginning in 2001) have held US troop strength of between 170,000 to 251,000 (DiRamio, Ackerman and Mitchell 2008; Wright 2008). With a current political commitment to decrease troop strength in these areas, our society will witness the return of thousands of young men and women from armed service. Many of these veterans will be taking advantage of the opportunities promised by the US government to better their social and economic positions through education. As Wright points out, while “two-thirds of high school students go on to college, ... the percentage of low-income students who pursue higher education is far lower. Many military veterans have low incomes and a new GI Bill that provides adequate support to veterans would enable more low income students to attend college” (2008:14). Thus, the new post-9/11 (or “21st Century-GI Bill”) is slated to make a college education a real possibility for many who joined the armed forces precisely to increase their financial opportunities for a higher education.

Our current political period where we are likely to see an increased influx of veterans returning home from conflict and going to college opens up a number of pertinent research questions. These questions include how today’s political climate impacts the social and educational opportunities of returning veterans, how today’s economic recession affects communication techniques or programs available to returning veterans, and what government-sponsored aid programs are available. Because many returning veterans have served in conflict

zones such as Iraq and Afghanistan, social reintegration is often a major challenge to achieving a higher education.

The American Council on Education, which convened in 2008 for a conference on veterans' education, says it plans to survey institutions to identify helpful practices and hold focus groups of veterans to learn more about their needs (Field 2008). The relative newness of the post-9/11 GI Bill has recently opened up the opportunity for many veterans to attend institutions of higher education (a broader range of institutions with a broader range of tuitions), and the transition of these veterans to institutions of higher education has had little time for academic study.

The new post-9/11 GI Bill provides much more comprehensive funding for educational expenses than bills of the last two decades – enough aid for military personnel and recent veterans to attend the most expensive public college in their state (Field 2008). While it has been compared to the post WWII GI Bill of 1944, which helped to democratize higher education, the magnitude of returning veterans is much smaller and no socioeconomic transformation, such as the previous mid-twentieth century growth of the middle class, is expected (Field 2008; Wright 2008). Still, campuses across the country are likely to experience an influx of student veterans, and must prepare financial, social and psychological services accordingly.

As Herrmann, Raybeck and Wilson say, “There is a widespread lack of knowledge about the unique needs of veterans in higher education and the wider society, and too few veterans obtain a college degree” (2008:1). Military and traumatic combat experiences can alter an individual's life in a number of profound ways: psychological damage can ensue, social

relationships will likely be altered and decision making skills can be drastically impaired (Alcaras 1995; Carter, Cullen and Wright 2005; DiRamio et al. 2008; Herrmann et al. 2008; Hofman 2003; Jakupcak et al. 2005; Manderschied 2007; Prevost 1998; Renshaw 2008; Solomon, Dekel and Zerach 2008). This social isolation can be especially profound on a college campus where veterans will often find themselves the oldest one in the classroom, having had experiences to which other students cannot relate, and in need of a broad range of social and psychological services (DiRamio et al. 2008; Field 2008; Herrmann 2008).

The frustrations experienced by currently returning veterans are well expressed in the website communityofveterans.org:

The challenges faced can vary from person to person. Maybe you miss being deployed. Maybe home seems unfamiliar, and you feel distant from the people you love. Work can seem meaningless, the old rhythms gone. Frustration can mount to the point of making you edgy. As with anything, different people grapple with different issues. They can surface as soon as you return, or they might not appear until further down the road.

Frustration, emotional mood swings and other debilitating effects of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) keep many veterans away from college campuses. Many of those who do attend prefer a community college because they are more convenient – financially and logistically – and cater to the needs of returning veterans (Field 2008). Coupled with this are the social obstacles to attending “top 500” institutions, such as the idea that veterans are “not smart enough,” come from different socioeconomic backgrounds than the majority of the students, and feel intimidated

by the social atmosphere of four-year institutions that they perceive as unwelcoming to veterans (DiRamio 2008; Field 2008).

“Top 500” institutions – most commonly seen in the ranking from the US News and World Report – are drawn from the “QS World University Rankings.” This QS World University Ranking is based on five surveys: (1) The Academic Peer Review which is based on a worldwide online survey distributed to academics (weighted both geographically and by discipline); (2) The Employer Review, similar to The Academic Peer Review, but instead gathers opinions from employers globally; (3) the faculty: student ratio at an institution – seen as a standard of teaching quality; (4) citations per faculty – a measure of the research strength of an institution – and; (5) international factors such as the proportion of international students at an institution (with the assumption that international students travel far distances to seek out the highest quality of education) (QS Top Universities 2010). These surveys are then statistically combined to produce the “top 400” or “top 500” lists that are prevalent in college ranking data. What is striking about this statistical analysis is that, besides the faculty: student ratio and the citations per faculty, the other measures of “top” are subjective, taking into account the opinions of employers, students and other institutions. This contributes to a notion that to be “top” an institution's quality of education must not only be objectively superior, but also superior in the eyes of others. This emphasis on prestige can be a dissuading factor for many veterans who may be intimidated by a school's academic reputation.

All these educational debates go on in the context of a post-Vietnam and post-WWII social and political climate. Society at large has recognized the transforming social potential of providing higher education access to veterans, as well as the debilitating social isolation and lack

of social reintegration felt by returning soldiers. Education is important; many veterans joined the armed forces simply to gain access to a higher education. The question remains how men and women who have served in the military make a successful transition to an institution of higher education, and what best facilitates this transition?

LITERATURE REVIEW

State of Current G.I. Benefits for Higher Education

Access to higher education for veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts is a relatively new phenomenon being studied. There is a strong agreement that financial concerns – even with the increased funding of the post-9/11 GI Bill – still play a large role in deterring veterans away from four-year institutions (DiRamio et al. 2008; Field 2008; Herrmann et al. 2008; Wright 2008). The post-9/11 GI Bill, which took effect on August 1st, 2009, provides for tuition and fees paid directly to the school for those who served at least ninety days of active duty service. This amount cannot exceed the tuition and fees at the most expensive state institution of higher education in the state in which the veteran will attend school. In Michigan, this maximum yearly tuition is \$18,421.00 (USDVA 2009). The Bill also provides for a monthly housing allowance based on the Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) for an E-5 with dependents based on the ZIP code of the location of the school (USDVA 2009). An annual book stipend of \$1,000, paid proportionately based on enrollment, is also available (USDVA 2009).

On top of this, the Yellow Ribbon Program provision of the Post-9/11 GI Bill allows institutions to enter into an agreement with the Veterans Affairs department of the government to fund tuition costs above the highest in-state undergraduate tuition rate by matching each additional dollar that an institution of higher learning contributes toward an eligible student's tuition costs (up to 50 percent of the difference between the tuition and fees covered by the Post-9/11 GI Bill and the total cost of tuition and fees). Only individuals entitled to the maximum

benefit rate (based on service requirements) may receive this funding. The previous Montgomery GI Bill program (which is still currently being used by many student veterans) provides up to 36 months of \$1,300 per month for educational benefits to full-time students. This amount is tiered based on full-time or part-time student status. Because of the much more generous benefits of the new GI Bill, college – and more expensive colleges – are becoming affordable for the first time in many decades for veterans.

In 2007, three out of five students using GI benefits enrolled in community college rather than four year public institutions (Field 2008). A large explanation for this is that community colleges and vocational training schools institutions give academic credit for military experience, while many private and public four year non-profit universities do not (Herrmann et al. 2008; Field 2008). Because veterans can readily apply their military experience for course credits, they are able to graduate in a relatively short period of time while balancing work, studies and family obligations (Field 2008).

There is also a strong social component to how veterans choose higher education. Four-year institutions seem intimidating, unwelcoming veterans and not experienced in handling the unique social and psychological needs of veterans (Field 2008). Compared to the traditional college student, veterans tend to be older – half of GI-bill recipients are between the ages of 25 and 34 – and are often married (Field 2008). The 2008 study by DiRamio, Ackerman and Mitchell used in-depth interviews to analyze veterans' transitions to one of three research universities in different regions of the United States. This study showed that veterans' desire to “keep a low profile” increased their social isolation and recommended the implementation of university-sponsored veteran services, such as a mandatory veteran-only orientation.

While some top universities, such as Dartmouth, are taking the lead in preparing their campuses for an influx of veterans, many other schools have not yet reevaluated how their veterans services will meet the needs of this new wave of returning veterans (Field 2008; Wright 2008). There is a need expressed in the literature to evaluate the weaknesses of these university veteran services, but very little actual research has been accomplished. The study by DiRamio, Ackerman and Mitchell (2008) is the exception, and I will provide me with a good basis for conducting my research.

History of the Military at the University of Michigan

Though the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) has a well respected relationship with the University of Michigan campus today, and ROTC members are a welcomed sight every Thursday dressed in their uniforms, the history of military presence on the campus has not always been so comfortable. ROTC has been on the University of Michigan's campus since 1916, when the university accepted a War Department proposal that an ROTC be established at every university across the country. During the 1960's Vietnam era, the ROTC became a target of student protests – protests similar to the objections by anti-war students to war research done by universities. In a 1970 anti-war journal article Bill Bachmann asserted: “By its maintenance of war research and war recruiting as well as ROTC, the university actively supports large-scale murder in defense of economic exploitation” (Bachmann 1970).

The Vietnam-era anti-war movements spurred by young liberal college students began on the University of Michigan's campus in 1967. Students at universities and colleges across the

United States launched campaigns against ROTC, which they saw as an arm of the government extending exploitation and oppression into their campuses. Over all, ROTC enrollment was hurt significantly by these protests that subsequently impacted school policies in some cases, making ROTC enrollment optional or making ROTC class-work non-credit earning (Eynon 1981).

After the peak of the conflict in 1969, a faculty review committee presented its findings to the Board of Regents. Despite earlier inclinations to recommend restrictions that would effectively hobble the ROTC and force the Defense Department to withdraw altogether, the University of Michigan's committee proposed that 1) ROTC no longer hold departmental status, 2) ROTC personnel no longer hold academic titles, 3) the university stop its annual subsidy for the program, and that 4) a committee be formed to oversee ROTC to improve the quality of instructors and course offerings (Eynon 1981). Since the anti-war protest era the University's relationship with ROTC has remained cooperative and few, if any, anti-ROTC protests take place at institutions of higher education throughout the country.

Socialization and Social Environment

In the decades following the Vietnam War, many studies were conducted concerning why veterans appeared to have a difficult time reintegrating into post-war society. Unlike wars of the past, the conflict in Vietnam was not widely supported by the general public, nor were returning veterans enthusiastically reintegrated into society (Carter et al. 2005; Manderscheid 2007). Because Vietnam occurred during a unique period in American history, a period characterized by mass internal unrest, the onset and spread of the drug culture, and economic recession, current literature argues that the specific social conditions of a time period have an

effect on an individual's relationship with society (Carter et al. 2005). Carter et al. collected longitudinal data from the Marion County Youth study (1964-1979) to track a sample of men over a 15-year period. Their resulting report, "A Life-Course Analysis of Military Service in Vietnam," states that it is likely that the social, political, and economic factors distinguishing the Vietnam era in American history influenced the developmental trends of individuals, especially returning veterans.

Though socially and politically we may have distanced ourselves from the climate of the Vietnam era, our current economic recession parallels the post-Vietnam economic climate. According to the United States' Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics the current unemployment rate, for the third quarter of 2009, is 9.7% (Bureau of Labor Statistics). This is up from 4.8% for the third quarter of 2001, approximately when our current conflict in Afghanistan and Iraq started. Similarly, in the third quarter of 1959, the beginning of the Vietnam War, the unemployment rate was 5.3% while at the conclusion of United States' involvement in the conflict in 1975 the unemployment rate, was 8.5%. This unemployment rate slowly improved, decreasing to 7.7% in the third quarter of 1976 and 6.9% in the third quarter of 1977, but never achieve the pre-Vietnam War levels until the late 1980s (Bureau of Labor Statistics). These elevated unemployment rates make finding employment a challenge for any job-seeker, especially returning veterans who may have non-transferable skills or difficulty adjusting to conventional employment.

Though there is little any one individual can do to prepare him or herself for a return to an economic recession, research shows that by playing an active role in one's social community a veteran can facilitate his or her successful reintegration (Manderscheid 2007; Obenchain 1992).

Because many people are geographically mobile, in any one community many members move away and new community members replace them within a one to two-year period. Frequently, a veteran's former peer group will have changed appreciably because of this mobility, drastically changing the social environment to which they return (Manderscheid 2007). Successful reintegration into the community can be facilitated through participation in support groups composed of others with similar experiences, and facilitated service opportunities such as veteran participation in local schools, nursing homes, and other community institutions (Manderscheid 2007). This successful reintegration helps returning veterans relate to and communicate with a social environment markedly different from the one they left. Obencahin's (1992) "Symbolic recognition: Ceremony in a Treatment of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder" uses ethnographic and participant observation to conclude that a veteran's community also plays a large role in the success or failure of their transition home. A simple community gesture such as a 'welcome home' ceremony can reduce feelings of alienation and social isolation by affirming a veteran's experiences and displaying mainstream acceptance of the veteran and his or her service.

Aside from macro-level social and community impacts, military experience also impacts developmental trends in individuals and their ability to reintegrate into society (Alcaras 1995; Carter et al. 2005; DiRamio et al. 2008). The military transforms civilians into soldiers through a process that attempts to strip individuals of their self-identity, removing them from past social networks and circumstances, and providing them with a new set of social and behavioral expectations (Carter et al. 2005). In this way, an individual's entire method of communication and social interaction may be altered by military experience. Military experience promotes the

development of ego defense mechanisms, including anger, rage, isolation, self-isolating behaviors, intrusive recollection of the military and war, and sleep disorders – behaviors which are attributed to PTSD – during the reintegration period (Alcaras 1995). Carter et al.'s (2005) “life-course-based theory” – a theory that individuals advance through age-graded social roles that potentially alter previously established individual developmental trajectories – helps explain how combat experience changes the lives of veterans. Turning points – such as military experience – within a life-course may redirect individuals away from long term, established behavioral patterns, such as easy communication with one's friends, family and community. The findings of both the study by Carter et al. (2005) and Alcaras's (2005) study, “Military Socialization During the Vietnam Era: Differentiated Aspects of Trauma and Conditioned Responses,” indicated that adult antisocial behavior among Vietnam veterans may stem directly from participating in the Vietnam War.

Previous research has also shown that engaging with the social environment of an institution of higher education positively affects a student's academic and social success. In their 2009 study “Delicate Engagement: The Lived Experience of Community College Students Enrolled in High-Risk Online Courses,” Bambara, Harbour, Davies and Athey used in-depth interviews to explore the relationship between social isolation among community college students enrolled in online courses and their academic and social engagement with the school's campus and course material. Their findings strongly supported the idea that engaging academically with course material increases a student's academic success and motivates him or her to remain enrolled in the school and develop social ties with the campus.

Similarly, in their 2008 study of community colleges, “Information Networks and Integration: Institutional Influences on Experiences and Persistence of Beginning Students,” Karp and Hughes found that students' self-reported integration – their sense of belonging in the educational institution – is positively associated with their continued enrollment in the school. They went on to conclude that the establishment of “Student Success” courses by community colleges, which emphasize academic success tools such as prioritizing skills and time-management, heavily facilitated this integration. Other research supports this idea that the creation of “Student Success” courses or programming by educational institutions helps teach undergraduates how to succeed academically. Svanum and Bigatti's 2009 article on engagement and college success, “Academic Course Engagement During One Semester Forecasts College Success,” found that programs focused on teaching first-year undergraduates how to build basic academic skills increased students' engagement with their coursework, academic success as well as the educational institution's freshman retention rate.

The relationship between a school's academic and social environment and the experiences of its students is also mitigated by race and gender. Previous research indicates that the experiences of minority college students are different from the majority of undergraduates as minority students are much more likely to be the first in their families to attend college, come from a lower socioeconomic status than their peers, and be underrepresented on predominantly white campus. In her 2007 article, “Settling into Campus Life: Differences by Race/Ethnicity in College Involvement and Outcomes,” Mary Fischer asserts that African-Americans and Hispanics are much more likely than white students to drop out of school because of the obstacles that these students face during their transition from life at home to an institution of

higher education. Fischer found that it is especially important that minority students establish formal and informal social ties to fellow students on their school's campus during this transition as these ties are more significant for increasing the freshman retention rates of black and Hispanic students than for white students.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Other Risk Factors

Military experience – PTSD in particular – is linked with a number of negative social consequences. Research on PTSD shows that the disorder increases social isolation and its negative effects, such as unemployment, homelessness, and divorce (Alcaras 2005; Hofman 2003; Jakupcak 2008; Lepage and Garcia-Rea 2008; Obenchain 1992; Renaud 2004; Rosenheck 1994; Smigel 1950; Soloman et al. 2008). The social anxiety experienced by Vietnam combat veterans with PTSD has been linked to mood disturbance (including depression), social withdrawal, and isolation (Hofman 2003; Prevost 1998), as well as a higher propensity to commit violent acts and express anger and hostility (Jakupcak 2008; Prevost 1998).

The relational dynamics of combat veterans with PTSD show that combat veterans with PTSD avoid social interactions leading to attachment, thus making social interaction and communication especially problematic (Renaud 2004). In his study “The Attachment Characteristics of Combat Veterans with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder,” Renaud administered the Experience of Close Relationships (ECR) Scale, the Post-traumatic Cognitions Inventory (PTCI), the Mississippi Scale for combat PTSD, and a demographic questionnaire to test for relationships between attachment avoidance, attachment anxiety, cognitive distortions associated

with PTSD, and PTSD symptom severity to 49 self-selecting male veterans with combat-related PTSD. In almost every case, PTSD contributed to socially isolating behaviors. This social isolation has many potential long-term damaging effects (Renshaw 2008; Rosenheck 1994; Smigel 1950). Spouses of combat veterans with PTSD have higher rates of psychological and marital distress than do spouses of veterans without PTSD (Renshaw 2008) and veterans exhibiting socially isolating behaviors are less likely to maintain a steady job or residence (Renaud 2004; Rosenheck 1994; Smigel 1950).

Group-based therapy has been shown to alleviate these PTSD related communication problems (Cave 2000; Jones 2000; Prevost 1998; Suter, Lamb, Marko and Tye-Williams 2006). Group-based therapy allows veterans to relate to a social network of similar individuals – a relief from the fact that veterans are in the minority in most social settings, especially institutions of higher education. Therapy programs provide support for coping with the social and economic effects of discrimination, increase the participants' knowledge about the causes, consequences, and treatment of PTSD, decrease emotional and social isolation, improve veterans' emotional expressiveness, communication, relationships, relief from depression, increase confidence, and decrease the prevalence trauma symptoms (Jones 2000; Lepage 2008; Cave 2004).

Identifying as a minority also exacerbates feelings of social isolation and inhibits effective communication (Jones 2000; Suter et al. 2006). Jones (2000) used ethnographic observation and in-depth interviews in his study "Group Therapy Program for African-American Veterans with Posttraumatic Stress Disorder" to find that the legacy of racism and cultural differences between African-Americans and Caucasians often creates barriers that interfere with effective participation by African-American veterans in PTSD treatment programs. Participants

in African-American-only treatment groups reported that they felt comfortable in honestly expressing their thoughts, beliefs, and feelings in this setting rather than a multi-ethnic setting. Women veterans are also of special concern, as they are in the minority among returning veterans, and Suter, Lamb, Marko and Tye-Williams (2006) and Jakupcak (2008) find that PTSD manifests itself in markedly different ways between men and women. While men with PTSD are prone to more overtly aggressive outbursts – often related to a temporary loss of temper – women are more likely to report lower levels of general well-being for longer periods. Suter et al. (2006) assert that group therapy specific for female veterans is especially helpful in reconstructing a woman's individual identity post-service.

Risk factors for homelessness and joblessness after war-related and non-war-related traumatic experience include lack of social support at the time of discharge from military service, and post-military psychiatric disorder and social dysfunction as explaining high rates of veteran homelessness (Lepage et al. 2008; Rosenheck 1994). Rosenheck's 1994 study using data from 1,460 male veterans who participated in the National Vietnam Veterans Readjustment program showed that post-military social isolation, psychiatric disorder, and substance abuse had the strongest direct effects on homelessness, although substantial indirect effects from stressors related to being in the war zone and from pre-military conduct disorder were observed. Several other pre-military factors (e.g., age, childhood physical or sexual abuse, placement in foster care during childhood) also had direct effects (Rosenheck 1994; Smigel 1950).

THERORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL QUESTIONS

As stated before, previous research has indicated that military experience – PTSD in particular – alters one’s ability to relate to and communicate with a former social environment (Alcaras 1995, Carter et al. 2005, DiRamio et al. 2008, Herrmann et al. 2008, Hofman 2003, Jakupcak et al. 2005, Manderschied 2007, Prevost 1998, Renshaw 2008, Solomon et al. 2008). What my study seeks to understand is how military experience affects the levels of social isolation in institutions of higher education. Veterans' friendships with non-veteran students, the support they receive from faculty and staff, and their feelings of being incorporated into the campus will hopefully provide insight into social obstacles for veterans seeking a higher education, factors influencing veterans' decisions to attend specific schools, adequacy of campuses in addressing these obstacles, and ways to understand levels of perceived social isolation.

To test how service in the military affects levels of social isolation, I will research levels of self-perceived social isolation among veterans attending four-year universities, both public and private, and two-year community colleges or vocational training schools. I will be specifically studying student veterans attending institutions of higher learning in the southeast Michigan area. The concept of “social isolation” will be indexed by indicators of subjective feelings of ability to identify with other students on campus, and subjective feelings of comfort when interacting with fellow students, faculty, and staff on campus. Because I am not sampling veterans who did not choose to attend an institution of higher education I cannot be certain how

the demographic characteristics of student veterans differs from the demographic characteristics of non-college goers.

To place this social isolation in context, I will also be looking at veterans' military experience, involvement on their school's campus, and transition period from military service to an institution of higher education. The component variables included in under "military service" include when a veteran joined the military (before completing high school or after completing high school and before completing an undergraduate degree); whether a veteran deployed to a combat zone during her or his time of service and time elapsed since that deployment; and whether a veteran was on active duty and time elapsed since that active duty.

The variables included under "involvement on campus" include the type of institution attended or most recently attended (including the distinctions between public and private, and institutions with and without research departments); number of hours per week participating in student and veteran organization and clubs; and hours per week working for pay. Under "transition to institution of higher education" are the veteran's main considerations when choosing his or her school, including social, academic, financial and logistical; the significance of financial concerns; and the existence of preexisting social networks on their school's campus.

METHODOLOGY

This study used mixed methods: in-depth open-ended interviews, and online electronic surveys. I conducted two pilot interviews, after which I formulated the formal in-depth interview and the online electronic survey designed. The in-depth interviews and surveys then occurred simultaneously.

Participants and Recruitment

In total, I studied 61 participants; eight were given in-depth interviews and 53 were given online surveys. All were veterans of the armed forces (20 veterans of Army service, 12 veterans of Navy service, 11 veterans of Marine Corps service, nine veterans of Air Force service, five veterans of National Guard service, one veteran of Coast Guard service and three veterans of two or more of divisions of the armed forces). I selected participants based on three criteria: (1) veteran status, (2) enlisted or commissioned in armed forces service before completing an undergraduate degree, and (3) currently attend or attended within the last four years an institution of higher education in southeast Michigan. A total of 47 participants had attended four-year public undergraduate universities for their undergraduate degrees, six had attended four-year private undergraduate universities, five participants had attended military or service academies, and three participants were students at a two-year community college. At the time of the interview 42 students were undergraduates and 31 students were in graduate level programs.

I recruited all participants via email with student organizations, campus veteran affairs representatives and snowball sampling from participants. The recruitment emails specified two options for participation: in-depth interviews and electronic survey. I asked participants not to participate in both methods, so as to not cause misrepresentation in the data. I notified potential interviewees as to the criteria to participate and the \$5 monetary incentive for all interview participants and the chance to win a \$10 monetary incentive for survey participants (see Appendix).

Procedure: In-depth Open-Ended Interviews

I briefed participants that the motivation behind the study was to better understand the social obstacles present in the transition to an institution of higher learning for student veterans. The informed consent document detailed that the interviews would last between 30 and 90 minutes, individual names would not be included in the analysis, the identity of the interviewee would be kept confidential to the extent provided by law, the information garnered from each interviewee would be assigned a code number, and the list connecting the name to this number would be kept in a locked file. The informed consent document then went on to describe that when the study is completed and the data have been analyzed, the list will be destroyed and none of the interviewee names would be used in any report (see Appendix). I notified interviewees that the interview would be audio-recorded and interview notes would be destroyed within one year of the completion of the project. Participation was completely voluntary and posed minimal

risk. I then gave each participant a \$5 monetary incentive before the beginning of the interview. I conducted all interviews in a private room with no outside interruption.

Before the interview began, participants completed an eight-item demographic questionnaire pertaining to their gender, race, age, year in school, major in school, marital status, hometown, military branch and service history to replicate the demographic information asked for on the electronic survey. I asked participants 32 open-ended in-depth interview questions pertaining to five subjects: (1) their transition to their chosen institution of higher education, (2) their involvement in organizations on their school's campus, (3) the obstacles they faced when achieving a higher education including financial, social and medical barriers (4) their socialization toward the military, four-year research universities and community colleges, and (5) their utilization of support services available on their school's campus (see Appendix).

I chose questions pertaining to (1) transitions to institutions of higher learning and (2) involvement on campus in order to elaborate on previous research that indicated that military experience – PTSD in particular – alters one's ability to relate to and communicate with a former social environment (Alcaras 1995, Carter et al. 2005, DiRamio et al. 2008, Herrmann et al. 2008, Hofman 2003, Jakupcak et al. 2005, Manderschied 2007, Prevost 1998, Renshaw 2008, Solomon et al. 2008). These two sets of questions attempted to assess the participants' perceived levels of social isolation in a new social environment. Sample questions regarding transitions to institutions of higher learning included: "Please describe how you perceive the general welcomingness of the campus atmosphere. How welcoming have you found fellow students? How welcoming have you found the faculty?" "How did your military background impact your

transition to your school?” and “Through what mediums did you first begin to interact socially on campus?” (see Appendix).

Questions regarding involvement on campus assessed the percentage of time participants spent on academics, work, family obligations, seeking new friends and social networks and maintaining old friends and social networks. Samples included: “Do you still regularly communicate with your friends from the military? If so, how so and how frequently?” “How many credits are you currently enrolled in at the University of Michigan? Do you feel this allows you a balance between academic life and social or extracurricular life?” and “How many hours per week do you generally spend in new extra-curricular activities? Which activities?”

I asked questions pertaining to (3) the obstacles that faced the student veteran in making the decision to attend an institution of higher in order to assess the impact of obstacles found in previous research, including financial, logistical and access to medical treatment for PTSD and other psychological impairments (Carter et al. 2005, DiRamio et al. 2008, Field 2008, Wright 2008). Questions regarding financial obstacles were especially important as historically many military veterans have low incomes and the new post-9/11 GI Bill now provides increased financial support, enabling more low-income student veterans to attend college (Field 2008, Wright 2008). Sample questions included: “How did the GI benefits impact your decision to choose your institution of higher education?” “How did the feasibility of commuting to school impact your decision to attend your institution of higher education?” and “How did the availability of day-care at your institution of higher education impact your decision to attend that school?”

I asked questions regarding (4) attitudes toward the military before and after military socialization and attitudes toward institutions of higher learning before and after or during attendance in order to assess the amount of support received from social networks (such as friends and family) both for joining the military and enrolling in a university or community college. Sample questions included: “What were your family's and/or friends' impressions of the military growing up?” “What were your family's and/or friends' reaction to the fact that you were enlisting?” “What were your family's and/or friends' reaction to the fact that you were enrolling in your school?” “While you were growing up, what were your family's and/or friends' impressions of university educated people with bachelor's or higher degrees?” and “While growing up, what were your family's and/or friends' impressions of community college educated with at most an associate's degree?”

Because frustration, emotional mood swings and other debilitating effects of PTSD as well as logistical and previously mentioned financial and concerns keep many veterans away from college campuses (Field 2008), I asked questions regarding (5) the ease of use of on-campus financial, social and medical support services and the knowledge of on-campus services specifically targeting student veterans. These programs included veteran-specific student orientations, mentorship programs, veteran-specific financial aid counselors, and counseling and psychological services effective in handling the symptoms of PTSD. Sample questions included: “How did you hear about the social or psychological support services on your campus?” “How would you critique the financial aid services offered by your school?” “How have these social or psychological support services helped you address your problems since your transition to your

school?” “What, if any, problems have you experienced accessing the support services that you need?” and “What further support services would be helpful?”

Procedure: Online survey sampling

By opening the webpage to the electronic online survey, participants were able to read the informed consent form. This form was identical to the in-depth interviews except the monetary incentive included a chance to enter to win a \$10 monetary incentive at the end of the interview and the electronic survey contained 28 questions which lasted approximately ten to fifteen minutes (see Appendix).

The survey questions were divided into five sections: (1) background and demographic information, (2) experience in the military, (3) information on the veteran's current or most recently attended institution of higher education, (4) the veteran's involvement on the school's campus and (5) the veteran's perception of his or her social isolation in the campus environment. I intended the categories of the survey to mimic those of the in-depth interview, but in a more concise way that would allow more respondents to participate in a small amount of time, thus broadening the pool of participants and increasing the response rate.

While the survey collected the backbone of the statistical and easily-categorized data – including age, gender, race, marital status, school name and type, reasons for attending a specific school, etc. – the goal of the in-depth interviews was to elaborate on theoretical gaps in the survey data where description was more appropriate. These descriptions included the transition from the military to civilian life to student life, the social obstacles to school involvement and

one's perception of the campus atmosphere. The combination of these two methods optimized both breadth and depth of research.

In order to gauge the relative expandability of my electronic survey sample I compared the demographic information to the demographic characteristics of the United States Armed Forces as a whole and a large public university. I choose the University of Michigan to be the comparative undergraduate institution since an overwhelming majority of respondents (over two-thirds) attended the University of Michigan as undergraduate students. The electronic survey findings were thus compared to data gathered by the United States government on the population characteristics of the United States Armed Forces as well as to data gathered by the University of Michigan – Ann Arbor Office of the Registrar on the population characteristics of its 2008 entering freshman class.

RESEARCH HISTORY

Originally, I had embarked on studying the differences in decision-making processes between veterans who attended four-year versus two-year institutions of higher education. I was interested in seeing what factors influenced a veteran to choose a two-year community college or vocational school now that the new post-9/11 GI Bill was providing sufficient financial support for veterans to attend more expensive four-year universities. However, while I was collecting my data I faced a number of obstacles that forced me to refocus my study. Though representatives from Wayne State University, the University of Michigan and Madonna University were extremely helpful in reaching out to student veterans on their campuses, I did not have similar experiences reaching out to community colleges and vocational schools in the area. Delayed and failure of response from my numerous attempts to contact community colleges in the area severely limited my data from student veterans attending two-year institutions. Because of this, my data does not include as many responses from these student veterans as originally I aimed for and subsequently was insufficient for a comparison of these two student veteran populations.

My study became focused instead on the experiences of student veterans currently attending college and how their social relationships and involvement on their campuses helped or hindered their acclimation to academic life after experience in the military. In further study, I would also like to look at more specific variables such as the type of student organization student veterans participate in, and whether this organization was political, community service, religious or otherwise. I believe these would help me understand the relationship between participating in student organizations and the self-perceived social isolation among student veterans. I would

also like to further research the experiences of minority veterans and veterans who attend community colleges, as I believe this would help construct a more representative sample.

FINDINGS

Demographics and Sample Comparison

The demographics of the survey respondents are listed in Tables 2 - 6. The average age of respondents was 30.8 years (see Table 2), and the modal current year in school was a graduate student (though all respondents were asked to answer according to their most recent undergraduate semester) (see Table 3). The modal marital status was married (42 percent), followed closely by single (40 percent). Divorced respondents comprised 9.43 percent of the sample as did respondents who indicated they were unmarried but in a committed relationship (see Table 4). Most respondents were not primary caregivers to children (68 percent) (see Table 5). Eighty-three percent of respondents were male and also 83 percent were white (see Table 6). Two respondents identified as Hispanic, three respondents identified as Black or African-American, one respondent identified as Asian, one respondent identified as two or more races and two respondents did not identify a race. Because of the extremely small percentage of African-Americans, Hispanic and Asian respondents – 5.8 percent, 3.9 percent and 1.96 percent respectively – and the fact that identifying as a minority significantly affects the transition process back to civilian life (Lepage 2008), the African-American, Hispanic, Asian, and respondents who identified as two or more races were recoded under the variable “minority” to give more statistical significance to minority experience.

Because the majority of respondents were recruited from the University of Michigan – Ann Arbor, I compared this study's survey sample to the demographic information from the University of Michigan's Registrar's Official Enrollment Reports (Figure 1) in 2009. We can see

that minorities total 21.5 percent of the students enrolled at the University of Michigan identify as minorities (Black, Asian, Native American, Hispanic or Other). This study's survey sample of veterans had only 13.7 percent minority respondents, making the sample under-representative of the school's minority population. Similarly, Figure 1 indicates that 47.6 percent of the University of Michigan's student population is female. The student veteran survey sample, with only 17 percent female respondents, also is not representative of the University of Michigan student population as a whole.

When comparing the survey demographics to the demographics of the population in the military services taken from the Department of Defense's "Population Representation in the Military Services" (see Figure 2), the survey is also under-representative of minorities in the military. According to the Department of Defense's 2005 report, the armed services was 13 percent African-American, 14 percent Hispanic and eight percent Other (including American Indians and Alaskan Natives, Asians, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, and those of two or more races). This puts the percentage of minorities in the armed services as 35 percent, a much higher figure than the 13.9 percent of this survey sample.

However, the percentage of women in the armed forces active service in 2005 was 16 percent, and the percentage in the armed forces reserves was 20 percent (see Figure 2). The survey sample's 17 percent female respondents make the survey comparable to the overall armed forces population. Also comparable is the educational level attained before joining the armed forces. According to the Department of Defense, 89 percent of entering armed forces members had high school diplomas in 2005 (see Figure 2). In this survey sample, 83 percent of respondents joined the armed forces after completing high school but before completing and

undergraduate degree, the remaining 17 percent joined before completing high school (see Table 8). This makes the educational level of the survey respondents also comparable to the overall armed forces population.

Social Isolation

Table 9 lists the data for indicators of self-perceived social isolation. Forty-seven percent of respondents indicated that they felt like “few students on campus are like me and can identify with me,” followed by 30 percent indicating that “some students on campus are like me and can identify with me.” Eleven percent of respondents indicated either that “almost all” or “the majority of students are like me and can identify with me” and a similar 11 percent of respondents indicating that they felt that “almost no students on campus are like me and can identify with me.” The majority, 66 percent, of respondents indicated that they felt “very comfortable” interacting with fellow students, faculty, and staff on their campus. Thirty percent responded that they felt somewhat comfortable and four percent felt “not at all comfortable” with this interaction.

When I analyzed this social isolation data further, patterns began to emerge that supported previous research relating deployment to a combat zone to social isolation. Table 10, which lists military experience, shows that 54 percent of respondents deployed to a combat zone during their active duty service. I then broke the social isolation indicators into respondents who did deploy and those who did not: respondents who did deploy were more likely to report that they couldn't identify with fellow students on their campus as well as more likely to report they

were not comfortable interacting with fellow students, faculty and staff on their campus. The average end year of a respondent's last date of deployment was 2005 (see Table 10), and the average end year of active service was also 2005 (see Table 11). Thus, the average respondent had had a five-year transition period since their active duty (if respondent had been on active duty) as well as a 5-year transition period since their deployment to a combat zone (if respondent had deployed to a combat zone).

Table 11 shows the strong negative correlation between deployment year and self-reported ability to identify with others on campus as well as the strong negative correlation between year of last deployment and comfort interacting with others on campus. Thus, the more recently a student veteran had deployed to a combat zone the more likely s/he is to report high levels of self-perceived social isolation. The year a respondent's active duty service terminated appeared not to be correlated with either ability to identify with other students on campus or comfort interacting with fellow student, faculty and staff.

While deploying to a combat zone had been associated with social isolation in previous research (Cave 2004; DiRamio et al 2008; Hofman 2003; Jones et al. 2000; Obenchain 1992; Renaud 2004; Soloman et al. 2008), what was a more surprising were the findings that identifying as a female or as a minority decreased the likelihood of self-perceived social isolation among student veterans. Both females and minorities were more likely to report being very comfortable when interacting with others on campus, though females were slightly more likely to report that they could not identify with fellow students on campus. Minority student veterans were also more likely to report being able to identify with fellow students on their campus and were more comfortable interacting with fellow students, faculty and staff on than non-minority

students. Table 7 shows that on average females participated in more hours of extracurricular activities per week than males, and minorities participated in more hours of extracurricular activities than non-minorities. This difference is most pronounced when we look at the difference between minorities and non-minorities, as minorities participate in almost a full hour and a half of extracurricular activities more per week than their non-minority peers. This finding is especially significant, as previous research had indicated that minority and female veterans were more susceptible to social isolation because of their already marginalized place in society (Jones et al. 2000; Suter et al. 2006).

Having children did not appear to affect either indicator of social isolation. Respondents who were the primary caregivers to children were slightly more likely to report ability to identify with fellow students and comfort interacting with others on campus (see Table 5). To make sure this result was not confounded by age, I analyzed the mean age for respondents with children and those without. As Table 5 indicates, the average age for respondents who were primary caregivers to children was 35.4 years old, much higher than the average age for respondents without children (28.5 years old). I then looked at the correlation between age and levels of social isolation and found that age was very weakly negatively correlated with ability to identify with other students on campus, and that it was negatively correlated with comfort interacting with fellow students, faculty and staff (see Table 2). While this negative correlation between age and levels of social isolation was expected, it indicates that being a primary caregiver does significantly decrease levels of social isolation among student veterans when the parenthood variable is not confounded by age.

Being in a committed relationship also decreased the likelihood of expressing social isolation. I recoded the marital statuses of married and committed but not married into a new variable called “commit.” The results of this variable can be seen in Table 4. Being in a committed relationship made it more likely that a respondent indicated that s/he could identify with fellow students as well as felt comfortable interacting with fellow students, faculty and staff. This relationship is likely stronger than indicated by the mean comparison, as being in a committed relationship is much more likely as age increases, and thus is also confounded by age.

When comparing the levels of social isolation between respondents who joined the military before graduating high school to those who joined after graduating high school I found little difference (see Table 8). Though respondents who joined the military before completing high school were less likely to indicate that they could identify with fellow students – most likely because almost all students at a public or private institution of higher education have high school diplomas – there was virtually no difference between respondents who joined the military before or after completing high school and their comfort when interacting with fellow students, faculty and staff.

Table 3 shows the relationship between a respondent’s year in school and his or her self-perceived level of social isolation. Because it was unknown if respondents who had graduated reported their level of social isolation during their 4th or 5th year (if applicable) of undergraduate study, responses were recoded to upperclassmen (3rd year and higher, also including graduates who responded according to the most recent semester) and lowerclassmen (1st and 2nd-year students). When recoded, the differences between these two groups are striking. Lowerclassmen are much more likely to report that they can identify with fellow students, than upperclassmen,

but upperclassmen are much more likely to indicate that they are very comfortable when interacting with fellow students, faculty and staff on campus.

The Decision to Attend an Institution of Higher Education

To gain more insight into the decisions of student veterans to attend specific institutions of higher education, I compared the relationship between the factors influencing a student veteran's decision and her or his self-perceived level of social isolation. Table 12 lists the reasons indicated by respondents for choosing their specific school: attending the school for a specific academic program, attending the school because of preexisting social ties or familiarity with the institution, attending the school because of support services available to veterans on the campus, attending the school because of encouragement from family/friends or an academic counselor, and attending the school because of the ease of commute or close proximity.

Attending school for a specific academic program, rather than for a general liberal arts degree, is very strongly associated with lower levels of self-perceived social isolation. Almost half (47 percent) of student veterans claimed that a specific academic program offered at a school significantly influenced their decision to attend that school. These respondents who indicated that they chose their specific undergraduate institution of higher education for a specific academic program were much more likely to indicate that they felt like they could identify with fellow students on campus and that they were comfortable interacting with these students, as well as faculty and staff, than student veterans for which a specific academic program was not a significant reason influencing their choice of school.

Most student veterans (70 percent) did not choose to attend a specific institution of higher education because of social ties or familiarity they had with the institution prior to enrolling. However, having preexisting social ties with an institution of higher education before making the decision to attend that school had a slight impact on self-perceived levels of social isolation. Though there is no relationship between having preexisting social ties or familiarity with an institution of higher education and the ability to identify with fellow students, it did make student veterans more comfortable when interacting with fellow students, faculty and staff on the campus. A similar 74 percent of student veterans did not choose a specific institution of higher education because of encouragement they received from friends, family, or an academic counselor. Still, encouragement from family, friends or an academic counselor made a student veteran more likely to be comfortable interacting with fellow students, faculty and staff on campus, but made identifying with others on campus slightly less likely.

The most common reason for student veterans to choose to enroll in a specific institution of higher education is the close proximity of the school to their current home or the ease of the commute to the school. Almost 60 percent of student veterans listed this as a significant factor in choosing their undergraduate institution. When looking at the relationship between the ease of the commute/ proximity of a school and levels of self-perceived social isolation, we can see that the ease of commute/ proximity of a school was associated with increased likelihood of identifying with fellow students on campus as well as increased likelihood of being very comfortable when interacting with these fellow students as well as faculty and staff.

The most striking relationship between a reason for enrolling in an institution of higher education and a respondent's level of self-perceived social isolation was choosing an

undergraduate institution because of its support services for student veterans. Though only 15 percent of student veterans indicated that the support services available to veterans on a school's campus influenced their decision to attend that school, those that did were much more likely to report feeling socially isolated. Student veterans that indicated veteran support services influenced their decision were less comfortable when interacting with fellow students, faculty and staff as well as much less likely to report being able to identify with fellow students on campus.

School Experience, Transition, and Involvement

Table 13 lists data the influence of financial incentives from the government for veterans to continue their education. An overwhelming 86 percent of respondents responded that their ability to receive funding from the government because of their military service influenced their decision to continue their education – 62 percent of respondents responded that financial incentives were a strong influence on their decision to continue their education. Tables 14 – 15 list the survey data collected on number of academic credits being taken, weekly hours of employment, and weekly hours of extracurricular activities. The average number of credits currently or most recently taken at an undergraduate institution was 11.4, which is just under a full-time level of 12 credit hours. The average respondent worked 12.5 hours per week, participated in 5.1 hours of extracurricular group activity per week, and participated in just over one half hour of veteran-specific extracurricular-group activities per week.

One clear result of the survey was that involvement in student organizations or veteran-specific extracurricular activities decreased a respondent's likelihood of reporting that they could identify with a majority of students on their campus while increasing the likelihood that they could report high levels of comfort when interacting with students, faculty and staff on their campus. Table 14 shows the correlations between number of hours per week participating in extracurricular activities and levels of self-perceived social isolation. Time spent participating in extracurricular activities is negatively correlated with ability to identify with other students on campus, but strongly positively correlated with being very comfortable when interacting with these students as well as faculty and staff.

When this extracurricular activity is broken down into hours weekly spent in veteran-specific extracurricular activities and non-veteran-specific extracurricular activities, the data shows that both are negatively correlated with the ability to identify with other students, but that veteran-specific activities have a much stronger negative correlation. The correlation between comfort interacting with other on campus and hours of extracurricular activities participated in per week is made even stronger by excluding veteran-specific extracurriculars, though veteran-specific activities are still slightly positively correlated with comfort interacting with others on campus. The numbers of hours employed per week is positively correlated with ability to identify with fellow students on campus and weakly positively correlated with comfort interacting with fellow students, faculty and staff on campus.

Table 15 shows that individuals who attended military service academies were much more comfortable interacting with fellow students, faculty and staff on their campuses, followed by students attending large heterogeneous public universities and finally by students attending

smaller private colleges who were the least likely to report being very comfortable when interacting with others on campus. Interestingly, this order was reversed for the other indicator of social isolation (student veterans' ability to identify with fellow students). Students from smaller private colleges most likely to indicate they could identify with their fellow students, followed by students at large heterogeneous public universities, and then by students who attended military academies.

The reasons for choosing to attend a specific institution of higher education, as well as the involvement on that school's campus, also varied between the types of undergraduate institutions. Student veterans attending smaller private colleges were much more likely to indicate that an easy commute, encouragement from family, friends or an academic counselor, and their preexisting social ties with the school influenced their decision to attend their specific institution of higher education. Students at private colleges also participated on average in the fewest total hours of extracurriculars per week (just over one hour), as well as the fewest number of veteran-specific extracurricular activities (only about 10 minutes per week).

Students who attended military academies for their undergraduate degree (who at the time of this study were attending graduate school in southeast Michigan) were most influenced by the ease of commute or proximity of their school when deciding on an institution of higher education. Students from military academies were most likely to indicate that the support services available to student veterans influenced their decision to attend a specific institution of higher education compared to students attending public or private universities for their undergraduate degree. A school's specific academic program, their preexisting social ties with the school, and encouragement from family, friends or an academic counselor all had very

minimal influence on these veterans' decision to continue their education. Student veterans from military academies participated on average in the greatest number of extracurricular activities per week (5.75). They also devoted the most time to veteran-specific extracurricular activities per week (2.25 hours).

Students attending large public universities were also most likely to indicate that the ease of commute or proximity of a school influenced their decision to that institution of higher education. However, only 53 percent of students from public universities were influenced by this factor, compared to 83 percent of students from private colleges and 75 percent of students who had attended military academies. Compared to these other student veterans, student veterans attending public universities were most likely to indicate that a school's specific academic program influenced their decision to attend that institution of higher education. Students from public universities also participated in 5.5 hours of extracurricular activities per week and almost all of these were non-veteran-specific extracurricular activities (5.1 hours per week) with only an average of 30 minutes per week devoted to veteran-specific extracurriculars.

DISCUSSION

Defining Social Identities

Every individual participates in many activities that help define his or her social identity – for example being a student, being a soldier, being African-American or Jewish, being an activist or being a parent. Student veterans, who in this study participated in an average of five hours of extracurricular activities per week, are no exception. One explanation between the negative correlation between student veterans' participation in extracurricular activities and ability to identify with others on campus is that the highly specific mission statements of many student groups define the social identities of their members by setting priorities on how their members define themselves. For example, an individual who is more likely to participate in an environmental activist extracurricular group may be more likely to identify only with other environmental activists because his or her participation in this social group helped to define him/herself as a person. Similarly, participation in veteran-specific extracurriculars helps to reinforce a student's specific veteran identity, thus decreasing the likelihood that s/he will identify with the majority of non-veterans student on his or her campus who have not had this defining military experience.

Participation in group activities highlights an individual's personal convictions and identity, thereby reducing the social emphasis on identifying with a heterogeneous majority – such as the majority of students on a college campus. However, participation in group activities also has a strongly positive effect on the level of comfort when interacting with other students, faculty and staff. Veteran-specific extracurricular activities magnify and maintain a student's

veteran identity by channeling a veteran's social interactions with fellow veterans. While participating in veteran-specific activities increased a respondent's comfort interacting with others on campus, it also heightened self-perceived levels of social isolation by reinforcing a veteran-specific identity – an identity that is often drastically different from most undergraduate students on campus.

Logically, participation in group-based activities provides frequent opportunities to interact with many members of a campus including fellow students, faculty advisors, professors, and many others. We know from previous research that increased experience interacting with others through group-based activities increases a student's integration into a school's campus (Bambar et al. 2009; Fischer 2007; Karp et al. 2008; Svanum et al. 2008; Wolf-Wendel, Ward and Kinzie 2009), and this integration likely makes students more comfortable when interacting with members of the campus. Veteran-specific activities are more weakly correlated with comfort interacting with others on campus as they do not extend a student's circle of social interaction much farther than the veterans with whom a student veteran is accustomed to interacting. When asked “How have extracurricular student groups helped you interact on campus?” Robert, a 24-year-old undergraduate, replied:

“The majority of the people are in their older 20s and married and stuff so they probably have a totally different college experience – what with being married and having all those other obligations. But I think it's difficult just being older in class and not having any way to really connect to people. Within the [student veteran] group now it's getting better just because people know about it and it's getting easier to get people to come out and at least talk to us. And then we have the older ones who have been here a couple years and have friends here that they can meet and all that stuff so it's a little bit easier for [new student veterans] to transition.”

Robert first acknowledges that student veterans are already a distinct sub-population of his school's campus due to their difference in age, housing and martial status. A veteran-specific student group is a comfortable social outlet for these veterans because, as Robert says, it creates a social network of people with common interests and experiences. Most of the social networking of this veteran-specific group occurs in student veteran-to-student veteran interaction, thus broadening a student veteran's social circle, but mainly through veteran-to-veteran social contact.

The online survey results also indicate that those student veterans who were influenced to attend a specific undergraduate institution based on the existence of veteran support services at that institution reported higher levels of social isolation. By seeking out veteran support services on campus, student veterans have claimed their veteran identity and assessed their own particular needs and skill sets accordingly. While student veteran support services are most likely to play a positive role in a transition to an institution of higher education, student veterans who are more likely to use them are also more likely to identify themselves primarily as veterans and, thus, different from the majority of students on campus. This increases self-perceived social isolation because these student veterans are less likely to see similarities between themselves and students who have not had their military experience and therefore likely confine the majority of their social interaction to other veterans to whom they can relate.

This is supported by the survey findings that student veterans who were influenced in their choice of an undergraduate institution based on the student veteran support services available also participated in an average of one more hour per week of veteran-specific extracurricular activities. When asked “Why is it often easy to identify with fellow students who

have also had military experience, regardless of their other demographic information?” Steven, a 32-year-old graduate student, responded:

“At the core of it, the service to country, the service to something bigger and that understanding that people make sacrifices for their country – whether it's time away or, in the worst cases, life – I think that makes the bond really tight because most people in the military have deployed at some point, whether it's just away on a ship for seven months or it's actually into a war zone, and they're just used to living with two other guys shoved up next to you in these tiny little racks or on the floor or some tent crammed up or not getting sleep for 72 hours because there's missiles flying all overhead and you're down with communications and no is not an answer – you have to get those communications back up. And I think everyone in the military has had a similar experience. That stuff that we have in America that a lot of us are used to having, they've lived without.”

This military experience Steven described creates what many respondents acknowledged as a “military bond.” This bond was difficult for many respondents to describe to me, (someone with no military experience), but the majority of respondents who discussed such a bond indicated it was comprised of willingness to make large sacrifices, ability to maintain friendships after months (or even years) of separation, and comfort with or knowledge of “being without” (being without amenities such as air conditioning, electric toothbrushes, a comfortable bed or – more abstractly – privacy, consumer choices, or personal safety). When I asked Steven to elaborate about the concept of “being without” he responded:

“I remember walking through the grocery store after my first deployment and walking down an aisle dedicated to dental care and you just like look at all of the stuff that's here and I remembering thinking 'God, there's just so much crap in America! We just have *stuff*.' And in the dental care aisle, I was just looking at all the different toothpastes and thinking: 'I just want toothpaste.’”

This profound experience common among many veterans creates a bond. This bond – an almost instant understanding that regardless of age, gender, race, or socioeconomic status, another veteran fundamentally understands at least one of your most significant life experiences – is especially salient in an academic setting where student veterans make up a very small minority of undergraduates. Veteran-specific extracurricular activities assist many undergraduate student veterans in developing social circles on campus, but often this social circle insulates student veterans from non-veterans on campus by highlighting and reinforcing their veteran identity – an identity comprised of experiences to which the majority of campus cannot relate.

Not all extracurricular activities have such self-defining effects. Group activities such as employment or participating in a club sports team expose individuals to many other students on campus, but in a way that does not highlight any specific portion of their identity. In this way, participation in these social activities expands one's social circles to a broader and more heterogeneous population. When asked “How have you gotten involved on campus?” Robert responded:

“I joined a business frat here, just for a way to meet people by. Cause my first semester I met people, but I noticed after my first semester you don't talk to the people you had class with because you say 'oh we'll talk' but then you have a different schedule and you never get a hold of them so I wanted something to like meet more people so I rushed that and joined that. And I liked that a lot ‘cause I didn't want to be in a social fraternity because I couldn't do that, I was too old to do that. But it worked out well with the business frat ‘cause it gave me a group of friends.”

Robert joined his business fraternity for social reasons and it gave him a social circle separate from the veteran-specific social network of his veteran-specific extracurricular activities. By

expanding the heterogeneity of his social circles, Robert was able to successfully ingrate himself into his campus and expand his social network.

Similarly, getting a job on campus both provides well-needed money for any college student as well as a new social circle of coworkers. Though the primary purpose of seeking employment is not usually to decrease social isolation, it increases the number of people an individual interacts with in a given day or week. Moreover, these coworkers have not chosen to take this job for any reason more specific than earning money – undergraduate campus jobs do not usually require a highly specific skill set and thus the coworkers whom an individual is interacting with are more likely to be a heterogeneous mix of people with many different interests, experiences and social circles.

Though previous research has indicated that identifying as a female or as a minority problematizes the transition away from a military career and the transition to an institution of higher education (Fischer 2007; Jones et al. 2000; Suter et al. 2006), this study indicates that it also helps expand an individual's identity beyond being a veteran by providing other identities with which s/he may opt to identify. While the survey respondents were all student veterans, female and minority student veterans were also female student veterans, African-American student veterans, female Hispanic student veterans, and the like. Belonging to not one but two minority groups helps student veterans expand their ability to identify and relate to fellow students on campus due to the expanded number of defining social identities they are able to claim. In these cases, being a veteran may not be their strongest or most comprehensive self-definition; the other minority community to which they belong gives them a second way to identify with and relate to the majority.

“I’m as well rounded as I’m ever going to get”

Interestingly, the more focused a student's educational program, the lower their self-perceived level of social isolation. Often, an undergraduate liberal arts degree at a “top 500” institution is seen as much as a process to define one's identity and foster the development of life-skills as it is about receiving an academic education. This idea is increasingly being adopted by community colleges as well. We know from previous research that first-year programs such as learning communities and mentoring experiences that teach students basic academic and life skills have been shown to increase academic success and freshman retention rates in both universities as well as community colleges (Karp et al. 2008; Svanum et al. 2009). However, I argue that this finding is not applicable to undergraduate student veterans.

Student veterans who are both significantly older than their non-veteran peers have already undergone a defining socialization process – the socialization of military boot camp. During interviews, respondents frequently reported that upon entering their undergraduate institution they were comfortable with and able to articulate their individual identity and need no more life-skills training. When asked “Did you ever encounter any hostility from fellow students, faculty or staff because of your military background?” Steven commented on the experience of a friend. He prefaced that what he would describe wasn't outright hostility, but instead a lack of understanding.

“[My friend] walked into his first week at MBA and they were like 'We're going to talk about leadership this week. We're going to talk about case studies.' And so [my friend] said 'So, is that like you're a young second lieutenant and you walk into Iraq and you have company. And your sergeant has his gun in a detainee's mouth and he's ready to

blow his brains out and your the 22 year old officer that has to say “No sergeant, that's bad” even though that sergeant knows that that guy has just killed four of his own guys. Is that leadership?”

This striking example parallels the frustration that many interviewees reported experiencing during their undergraduate careers. When respondents spoke about being asked to participate in workshops that many undergraduate institutions put into place to develop the general life skills of their undergraduates they often spoke about being frustrated. Steven's example was about leadership skills, but other respondents indicated workshops, seminars or classes involving skills such as problem-solving, ability to be a team player, or coping well under stress. Not only have they received training for these skills during their military careers, but they've also applied these skills over and over – often to situations to which fellow students cannot relate.

Often it is merely the different environment that can be difficult to adjust to for student veterans, not necessarily the course or workshop material itself. Most first year undergraduates come immediately from 12 years of schooling, not four to six years of career experience frequently unrelated to their academic field. When asked “How has your transition to college academics been?”, Lisa, a 29-year-old undergraduate student explained:

“It's been a little bit hectic. Coming back to school after I've been out for what, six years now? It's definitely been an increase in the workload that I'm not used to. And it's a different way of thinking. In the Navy it's just go go go and learn along the way as quickly as you can. Here you have take time and actually to sit and read and read and read and study a lot. It's just adapting to that change has been difficult I'd say in the first couple weeks up until midterms but I think I'm settling in to a pace where I can keep up with the readings and the workload.”

Of course, transitioning to college life can be problematic for any new student, not just student veterans. However, most students are making the vertical transition from one academic step to the next (high-school to college); student veterans are making the horizontal transition from active duty to civilian life on top of transitioning back to school. Institutions of higher education frequently teach an analytical way of thinking, or at a different pace, or with different teaching modules than veterans had been trained with during their military careers.

Rather than the well-rounded education most liberal arts degrees provide to their recipients, attending school for a goal-oriented academic program better fits the socialization a veteran has undergone through the military to constantly be working toward a specific goal. Working toward the goal of passing a specific academic program puts a student in close working contact with other students working toward the same academic goals and thus increases a student's ability to recognize similarities and identify with fellow students as well as interact with fellow students, faculty and staff in the completion of this goal. When asked “Why did you choose to continue your education?” Kurt, a 29-year-old undergraduate, said:

“I wasn't really concerned with making friends. I have a circle of friends outside of school that I've made over the years. Me being in college is different from somebody who's 18 being in college; they come for the college-experience. I'm here to get a piece of paper.”

Kurt easily identifies what he hopes to take away from his undergraduate experience – a diploma. Because undergraduate student veterans inevitably have more life experience than straight-out-of-high-school undergraduates, they are more likely to have a social network of friends in place and also more likely to have identified their specific goals in life.

Supporting this explanation is the fact that the further a student is in his or her undergraduate education, the more unlikely s/he is to identify with fellow students. The extent of a freshman or sophomore undergraduate's experience at an institution of higher education may be insufficient for her or him to recognize the differences between him/herself and fellow students – after all everyone has the commonality of being new to the institution. However, by senior year student veterans will likely be able to identify differences between themselves and the majority of students on campus, and those student veterans who have not chosen a specific academic program will likely be feeling the frustration of re-learning life skills.

Deployment experience can compound the frustration that student veterans feel while attending undergraduate institutions. As stated previously, those student veterans who did deploy to a combat zone during their time of service were more likely to report higher levels of self-perceived social isolation than those who did not deploy both in their ability to identify with others as well as comfort interacting with others on campus. This is supported by previous research, as those who deploy to areas of combat are more likely to return with symptoms of PTSD. PTSD, which is known to be an aggravating factor of social isolation and inability to connect with a social environment (Cave 2004; Hofman 2003; Jones et al. 2000; Obenchain 1992; Renaud 2004; Soloman et al. 2008), is something that must be diagnosed and treated. The shorter the transition period from time of deployment until current time at an undergraduate institution means that the veteran has had less time to adjust to a new social environment and thus will be less likely to have developed social networks and support systems and assessed his or her ability to interact with this new environment. When asked “Did you feel like you had an adequate period of time to transition to civilian life?” Robert commented:

“I got back in December and I didn't go to school ‘til August so I had like a period of time to get used to it – for the first three months there's no way I could have been in school I would have been just going crazy. It takes you a while to get used to regular life again, but since I had time to get ready before I came here I didn't have as much of effect transitioning to being a student, but I could see where if you just got back within a couple of months and then tried to come you should definitely take a lighter class load.”

Many other respondents indicated that their transition time from the military to school was too short to adjust properly. Once at school, the academic pressure of adapting to a new non-military way of learning, frustration with not being able to identify with the majority of their fellow first-year peers because of differences in age and life experiences, and frustration with being expected to relearn the life-skills they learned in the military forced some student veterans to take time off school to devote to the transition process. Some respondents reported that being at home was challenging because friends or family members had assumed their former social roles during their absence. Thus, school became either an aggravator or a release from the social frustrations of transition.

Preexisting Social Knowledge

Unsurprisingly, having a familiarity with the campus atmosphere at an undergraduate institution before enrolling in classes results in decreased likelihood of a student veteran reporting self-perceived social isolation. Having knowledge of a college campus before attending that specific school gives an individual experience with the social norms and expectations on that campus. This familiarity with social norms can indicate to an individual whether or not they will fit in at a specific school before they make the decision to attend. Those student veterans who

were influenced to attend a school because of their knowledge of its campus atmosphere undoubtedly identified with its social norms and thus experience less social isolation upon enrollment.

Supporting this is the finding that student veterans who received support from friends, family or an academic counselor to attend their specific undergraduate institution or those who indicated that their ease of commute to campus influenced their decision to attend were less likely to express social isolation. Because student veterans are more likely to be older and married than their fellow undergraduate students, relocation is often difficult or impossible because of family commitments. When asked “Why did you choose this particular institution of higher education?” Kurt responded:

“My family and I are close and it's important to me to be close to them. It's nice to be able to go home in the middle of the week to see my parents because I miss them. In the military I spent a lot of time away from my parents – even on the holidays I couldn't always get home so it's nice to not have to plan out a trip to see my family.”

Because Kurt was unmarried, he didn't have to consider the well-being of a spouse or child when choosing an institution of higher education. Kurt's sentiments to remain close to home were echoed even more strongly by married respondents who were reluctant or unwilling to relocate their families for the purpose of continuing their education.

Most undergraduates, though they may be attending a school hundreds of miles away from their home, become familiar with their institution of undergraduate education during their first month of living on campus. This is due in large part to effort that many universities make to acclimate and orient their first year students. Communal living – such as in dormitories or other

shared housing – facilitates the development of social networks of information dissemination for freshmen, as does the many campus-wide events that encourage freshmen to get involved in campus student organizations. Student veterans often feel that living in dormitories is not appropriate for them because they are older, have families, or have other such living arrangements. This makes acclimating to a campus much more difficult. When asked “Did you live on campus during your first year at your college?” Robert spoke regretfully about his living arrangements.

“[Living off-campus] was probably my biggest regret. I never had a freshman year – the dorms. I couldn't have done that when I got back ‘cause it would have been really weird to be like 24 and living in a dorm room, but I wish I would have been able to have that, just because I feel that's the way you meet the majority of your friends that you know throughout college and really get involved. I wish I could have had that.”

Almost all the student veterans I interviewed lived off-campus during their first year of school, and all that did so claimed that either their age or family commitments made student housing inappropriate. Still, there are many other ways to acclimate to an institution of higher education. Support from family, friends or an academic counselor reaffirms that an individual will be able to succeed at their given undergraduate institution and that a social support system in the form of those friends, family or counselor is already in place should difficulties arise. While having a support system is important for any undergraduate student, student veterans have many unique social and psychological needs for which the effectiveness of a preexisting support system is even more important. Most college campuses have their own Veterans Affairs representatives – such as the University of Michigan, Madonna University and Wayne State University from which I drew my survey sample – because they recognize this need of the

specialized financial, social and medical needs of student veterans. Thus, having a preexisting support system already in place that understands not only veterans' needs but an individual's personal needs is extremely beneficial to lowering levels of self-perceived social isolation.

Though distinct from receiving encouragement from friends, family or an academic counselor, having preexisting social ties also has an effect on self-perceived social isolation. A preexisting social circle on campus decreases the likelihood that a student veteran can identify with fellow students on campus. My explanation for this is that having a group of friends on campus before coming to an undergraduate institution de-emphasizes the need to meet new people. This can have an isolating effect by preventing a new student from interacting with a more heterogeneous mix of people and finding more people to whom they can identify. This is supported by previous research that in order for students to successfully integrate into a new college community they must separate from a previous home community (Fischer 2007). This social isolation effect is especially confounding for student veterans. The social environment that a veteran returns to will likely not be the same place that they left years ago, thus their interactions with former friends may not provide the social stimulation needed to prevent isolation.

Heterogeneity of Student Body

The type of institution of higher education a student veteran enrolls in also affects their levels of social isolation. The survey data indicates that when a respondent has come from a military service academy to a non-military institution of higher education they are unlikely to

identify with a majority of other students on campus. Conversely, attending a smaller private college drastically increased a respondent's ability to identify with others and the ability of individuals to relate to others on campus. Respondents attending large heterogeneous public universities generally reported a level of self-perceived social isolation close to the survey mean. The data for how comfortable student veterans were while interacting with others on campus was exactly reserved: student veterans who attended military service academies were the most comfortable interacting with fellow students, faculty and staff on their campuses, followed by students attending large heterogeneous public universities and finally by students attending smaller private colleges who were the least likely to be comfortable when interacting with others.

When asked “How does a person overcome the first two rigorous weeks at a military academy?” Steven responded:

“It's a big brainwash. You strip away everything that is individualized. They shave everyone's head, the girl's hair gets cut down to here [indicates shoulder-length], they take away everything that makes you unique all your clothes your hats your bracelets your rings – gone. They put you all in the same uniform and then they force you to work together. And in doing so you have to learn everything about your friends, your classmates, and you know that if you're by yourself you're going to fail.”

This military socialization provides individuals a crash-course in how to successfully and efficiently interact with others. However, it is also a life-shaping experience to which non-veteran undergraduates cannot relate. While most freshman undergraduates are all undergoing the socialization process of college together, student veterans have already had a very potent military socialization.

The much stronger influence of the ease of commute or proximity to the campus on student veterans attending smaller private schools likely accounts for the higher likelihood of identifying with others on campus. Student veterans attending smaller private colleges were more likely to indicate that an easy commute influenced their decision to attend a specific school and, as explained previously, an easy commute is likely to increase a student's ability to identify with others because a student is already familiar with the college or regional or local social norms. This preexisting knowledge provides an individual insight into whether or not s/he will fit in on campus before she makes the decision to attend. This is supported by the fact that student veterans attending private college were also more likely to indicate that their preexisting social ties with the school influenced their decision to enroll. Familiarity with a school before enrolling is strongly correlated with the ability to identify and relate to others on campus because of previous knowledge of social norms and expectations, but less likely to express high levels of comfort interacting with others on campus because a student often limits him/herself to a preexisting social circle.

This relationship can also be explained by looking at the number of hours per week an average student at a private, public or military academy participates in. Students at private colleges participated on average in the fewest hours of extracurriculars per week, while students at military service academies participated the most. As explained previously, because participating in extracurricular activities has a defining effect on a student's social identity while familiarizing a student with interacting on the campus, participating in extracurricular activities is positively correlated with comfortably interacting with others and negatively correlated with ability to identify with fellow students on campus.

Moreover, the low frequency of students attending private college who participate in extracurricular activities can be explained by the make-up of the school's campus. Smaller, more homogeneous private colleges are likely to have less student veterans participating in extracurricular activities because they are already so able to identify with fellow students on campus and find the experience and attitudes of other students like their own. Because smaller private schools are more likely to have a more heterogeneous student religious affiliation, students attending a private religious institution of higher education will be more likely to identify with and relate to the students around them whether it be through the common religious affiliation of the private school or the smaller and more homogeneous campus. In large, heterogeneous public schools students will likely feel the need to find their social niche and therefore seek out extracurricular activities as a way to meet students with experiences and interests similar to their own, such as indicated by Robert's desire to join a professional business fraternity as a way to meet new friends. Thus the heterogeneity of a school's campus can influence the levels of self-perceived social isolation student veterans at that school experience by providing or restricting opportunities for students to interact with students from a range of different experiences, ages and backgrounds.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study show, first, that the majority student veterans surveyed were likely to report that they were comfortable to very comfortable when interacting with fellow students, faculty, and staff on campus, but they also felt that only few to some students on campus were like them and could identify with them. Failure to identify with other students on campus does not necessarily prevent a student veteran from succeeding academically or getting involved on campus. Though the social isolation indicators of comfort when interacting with others on campus and ability to identify with fellow students were correlated, these two measurements were impacted by different aspects of a student veteran's higher education.

While being involved in student organizations on campus greatly increased a student veteran's likelihood of reporting s/he was very comfortable interacting with students, faculty and staff on campus, it also decreased the likelihood that s/he would report being able to identify with others on campus. This can be attributed to the fact that student organizations are likely to instill or reinforce defining aspects of an individual's identity – aspects that allow them membership in the organization. Most student organizations are likely to have this effect on veterans and non-veterans alike; however, veteran student organizations, though an invaluable resource for many veterans making the transition from the military to school, will reinforce a student's veteran identity therefore reinforcing a major social difference student veterans have from the majority of the student body.

Interviews from this study support previous research that has shown the socialization process of the military can alter the life-course of an individual (Alcaras 1995; Carter et al. 2005). Many veterans who have experienced profound or traumatic events during their time in the military feel unable to relate to those around them who have not had similar experiences – thus, veteran support groups are an important outlet for many veterans' social needs. Student veterans may most identifying with other veterans on campus and restrict their social interaction to veterans groups or social circles, but it does not necessarily follow that student veterans are uncomfortable when interacting with non-veteran students, faculty or staff. Student veterans involved in activities which increase the heterogeneity of their social groups with more cross-cutting social ties are more likely to report that they are able to identify with the majority of students on campus. This ability to identify with more students is likely due to their increased exposure to a heterogeneous group of fellow students. Having a job on campus and participating in a specific academic program produce this broadening effect.

Second, the social norms present on a school's campus also have a large impact on the self-perceived social isolation of student veterans. Having preexisting social knowledge of a campus allows students to gauge how likely they are to “fit in” on campus before deciding to attending that institution of higher education. Fitting in on campus, of course, lowers levels of self-perceived social isolation and increases the likelihood of being able to identify with fellow students. A small homogenous campus, such as those often found at private schools, also increases the likelihood of being able to identify with fellow students because of strong, common social norms such as a school's religious affiliation. In public universities the large

heterogeneous campuses without strong, unifying social norms often compel students to join specific student organizations to adequately define their identity.

Financial and social constraints specific to veterans influence their decisions to attend these schools. The ease of commute to an institution of higher education or its close proximity to their current home was the most significant influence on a student veteran choice of a specific school. This is supported by previous research that veterans are more likely to be older and have family commitments or families they cannot uproot to attend college (Field 2008). Even though higher education may be accessible financially, there are many other social obstacles student veterans must face. Physical disabilities, mental and emotional health impairment from PTSD and problematic social communication are all more prevalent in veterans returning from areas of conflict (Cave 2004; DiRamio et al 2008; Hofman 2003; Jones et al. 2000; Obenchain 1992; Renaud 2004; Soloman et al. 2008). These obstacles, not widely addressed on many college campuses, prevent veterans from accessing the educational support services they need.

Lastly, and perhaps the strongest explanation of self-perceived social isolation of student veterans, is the secondary socialization they have already received from their military experiences. The experience of 'discovering oneself' typically present in the course and event programming of the liberal arts departments of most colleges and universities will likely be lost on individuals who have already undergone military career training and have had many socially defining experiences. For many freshman undergraduates, moving to college is the first time they've lived away from home or made major life decisions for themselves. First-year student veterans – on average four to six years older than their freshman peers – have lived away from

home for years and have already made the major life decision of joining the military, likely followed by other major life decisions – sometimes even life-or-death decisions.

Many new student programs, orientations and student groups will likely be focused on broadening students' horizons and familiarizing them with themselves. This has a socially isolating effect on many student veterans who have already gone through a secondary socialization through the military and applied this personal knowledge to their careers in the military. Unable to bond with their fellow freshman during the process of self-discovery, they are again isolated by the fact that they most often live off-campus with their families, or even with roommates “their own age” as they feel often living in campus housing is inappropriate. This age difference extends to many student organizations which veterans feel “too old” for, such as many social fraternities and sororities.

This study only established certain elements of the transition to an institution of higher education that can reduce or increase a veteran's self-perceived level of social isolation without evaluating the veteran assistance programs available at specific institutions. Hopefully, this study will support further and more specific research into the effectiveness of on-campus veteran transition programs at various institutions of higher education. With the attention that the new post-9/11 GI Bill has directed on veteran-specific educational programs, now is the time to reevaluate more broadly how our society perceives, acknowledges and values the needs of those who have served our country, often at great social cost to themselves.

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Recruitment for Online Survey

Email message:

Hi [name],

My name is Amelia Clapp and I'm an undergraduate in the Honors Program at the University of Michigan. I am in the process of collecting information for my honors thesis on social barriers for higher education among student veterans. I was given your name/email by [name of organization or contact person]. The purpose of my thesis is to better understand why veterans make the decision to attend a community colleges or four year universities and how to improve our education system to better serve the needs of student veterans. If possible I would like to send you a link to a 10 - 15 minute electronic survey assessing the social obstacles to student veterans. No names or otherwise identifying information will be asked for by the survey, and you have the opportunity to win a \$10 gift card to Starbucks for your participation. I would greatly appreciate your assistance in helping me complete my thesis.

My phone number is 734.883.3925 and my email is ameliajm@umich.edu. I would be happy to answer any questions.

Thank you,
-Amelia Clapp
The University of Michigan, BA 2010
Honors Sociology, Political Science
734.883.3925

Recruitment for In-person Interview

Email message:

Hi [name],

My name is Amelia Clapp and I'm an undergraduate in the Honors Program at the University of Michigan. I am in the process of collecting information for my honors thesis on social barriers for higher education among Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. I was given your name/email by [name of organization or contact person]. The purpose of my thesis is to better understand why veterans make the decision to attend a community colleges or four year universities and how to improve our education system to better serve the needs of student veterans. If possible I would like to arrange a 60-90 minute interview at your convenience. I would greatly appreciate your assistance in helping me complete my thesis.

My phone number is 734.883.3925 and my email is ameliajm@umich.edu. I would be happy to answer any questions and will provide a consent form upon the start of the interview.

Thank you,
-Amelia Clapp
The University of Michigan, BA 2010
Honors Sociology, Political Science
734.883.3925

In-Person Interview Informed Consent

Protocol Title: SOCIAL BARRIERS TO HIGHER EDUCATION AMONG STUDENT VETERANS

Please read this consent document carefully before you decide to participate in this study.

The purpose of this study is to understand social obstacles faced by veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts seeking a higher education.

Participation in the study will involve a 30-60 minute interview. Individual names will not be included in the analysis. Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. Your information will be assigned a code number. The list connecting your name to this number will be kept in a locked file in my faculty advisor's office. When the study is completed and the data have been analyzed, the list will be destroyed. Your name will not be used in any report.

The interview will be audio-taped. The audiotape and the interview notes will be destroyed within one year of the completion of the project. You can refuse to answer any question or to stop the interview at any time. Withdrawing from the project will not result in any negative consequences for you.

Your participation poses minimal risk. Participating in this survey will help further knowledge of resources available to returning veterans and their effectiveness. You will receive \$5 for your participation.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is no penalty for not participating.

Whom to contact if you have questions about the study:

- Amelia Clapp, Honors Undergraduate Student at the University of Michigan, Phone: (734)883-3925
- Frederick Wherry, Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Michigan, Principal Investigator's Faculty Advisor. Phone: (734)647-4443
- Silvia Pedraza, Professor of Sociology at the University of Michigan, Principal Investigator's Faculty Advisor. Phone: (734)647-3659

Whom to contact about your rights as a research participant in the study:

Should you have questions regarding your rights as a participant in research, please contact the Institutional Review Board, Behavioral Sciences, 540 E. Liberty #202, Ann Arbor, MI 48104, (734) 936-0933, email: irbhsbs@umich.edu.

Agreement

I have read the procedure described above. I voluntarily agree to participate in the audio-taped interview and I have received a copy of this description.

Participant: _____ Date: _____

Principal Investigator: _____ Date: _____

Online Survey Informed Consent

Protocol Title: SOCIAL BARRIERS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION AMONG STUDENT VETERANS

Please read this consent page carefully before you decide to participate in this study.

The purpose of this study is to understand social obstacles faced by veterans seeking a higher education. Participation in the study will involve a 28 question survey. The survey should last approximately 10 – 15 minutes. Individual names will not be asked for nor included in the analysis, instead your information will be assigned a code number. Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. The list connecting your name to this number will be kept in a locked file in the Principle Investigator's faculty advisor's office. When the study is completed and the data have been analyzed, the list will be destroyed. Your name will not be used in any report.

The Principal Investigator will receive the survey results electronically through Qualtrics online survey software. The results will be kept confidential by a password protected online account. All results will be destroyed within one year of the completion of the project.

Participating in this survey will help further knowledge of resources available to returning veterans and their effectiveness. At the conclusion of the survey you have the option to enter into a drawing for one of two \$10 Starbucks gift certificates. To enter, you must leave your email address. The Principal Investigator will receive your email address independently of survey data. No email addresses and survey data will be linked. All winners will be randomly selected from the list of email addresses received and contact via email.

Your participation poses minimal risk and is completely voluntary. There is no penalty for not participating. You can refuse to answer any survey question, skip any survey question or stop the survey at any time. Withdrawing from the project will not result in any negative consequences for you.

Whom to contact if you have questions about the study:

- Amelia Clapp, Honors Undergraduate Student at the University of Michigan, Phone: (734)883-3925
- Frederick Wherry, Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Michigan, Principal Investigator's Faculty Advisor. Phone: (734)647-4443
- Silvia Pedraza, Professor of Sociology at the University of Michigan, Principal Investigator's Faculty Advisor. Phone: (734)647-3659

Whom to contact about your rights as a research participant in the study:

Should you have questions regarding your rights as a participant in research, please contact the Institutional Review Board, Behavioral Sciences, 540 E. Liberty #202, Ann Arbor, MI 48104, (734) 936-0933, email: irbhsbs@umich.edu.

Agreement:

By clicking submit you acknowledge that you have read the procedure described above and voluntarily agree to participate in the electronic survey.

IRB Number: «HUM00029453»

Document Approved On: «6/18/2009»

In-Person Interview Questions

Demographics

1. What is your age?
2. What is your year in school?
3. What is your current marital status?
4. What is your race or ethnicity? What do you identify as/ call yourself?
5. What was your highest level of education before coming to your current school?

Transition

6. Why did you choose to come to your current school? (encouragement from counselor, pre-existing social network?)
7. Are you currently being funded by the federal government for your tuition expenses (VA benefits, Pell Grant, etc)?
8. Are you currently receiving aid specifically from your current school for funding your tuition/ living expenses?
9. Please describe how you perceive the general welcomingness of your current school's campus atmosphere. How welcoming have you found fellow students? How welcoming have you found the faculty?
10. What problems have you faced since your transition to your current school socially, financially or otherwise?

Involvement on Campus

11. How many credits are you currently enrolled in at your current school?
12. How many hours per week do you generally spend in extra-curricular activities? Which activities?
13. How many hours per week do you spend working for pay?
14. What has been your biggest barrier in getting involved on campus?

Support Services:

15. What types of social/ psychological support services on your current school's campus have you used or do you use now?
16. How did you hear about these social/ psychological support services?
17. How have these social/ psychological support services helped you address your problems since your transition to your current school?
18. What problems have you experienced accessing the social/ psychological support services that you need?
19. Have you found the services at your current school to be adequate in addressing the needs of veterans?
20. What further support services would be helpful?

Online Survey Questions

Background Information

1. What is your age?
2. What is your year in school?
 - 1st year undergraduate
 - 2nd year undergraduate
 - 3rd year undergraduate
 - 4th year undergraduate
 - 5th year + undergraduate
 - Graduate student
 - Graduated, currently not enrolled
3. What is your current or most recent undergraduate institution?
4. Have you been previously enrolled at an undergraduate institution that is **not** the school you are currently attending? If yes, which one and what were your dates of attendance?
 - Yes/No
 - Please list previous undergraduate institution and dates of attendance
5. Which best describes you?
 - Single
 - Married
 - Divorced
 - Committed, not married
 - Widowed
6. Do you have children for whom you are currently a primary caregiver?
 - Yes/No
7. What is your race?
8. What is your gender?

Military Experience

9. What is/ was your branch of service in the United States armed forces?
10. Did you enlist? If so, what year?
11. Were you commissioned? If so, what year?
12. What year did your active duty service terminate? What year did/ will your reserve service terminate?
13. Did you deploy to a combat zone during your active service? If so, what were your last dates of deployment?
 - Yes/No
 - Please list dates of deployment

School Information

14. What were your main considerations when choosing to attend this school? Please choose all that apply.

Academic reputation

 - Affordability
 - Encouragement from family or friends
 - Encouragement from academic counselor
 - Pre-existing social network
 - Familiarity
 - On-campus support services for student veterans
 - Ease of commute to campus
 - Specific academic program
 - Campus atmosphere
 - Proximity to current residence
15. From the possible considerations when choosing to enroll in an institution of higher education listed above, please rank your top three criteria in order of importance to you. Indicate your first choice with the number 1, your second choice with the number 2 and your third choice with the number 3.
 - Affordability
 - Encouragement from family or friends
 - Encouragement from academic counselor
 - Pre-existing social network

- Familiarity
- On-campus support services for student veterans
- Ease of commute to campus
- Specific academic program
- Campus atmosphere
- Proximity to current residence

Financial Considerations

16. Is your education currently in full or part being funded by the post-9/11 GI Bill?

-Yes/No

-How much influence did your ability to receive funding from the government because of your military service have on your decision to continue your education?

- No influence
- Minimal influence
- Moderate influence
- Strong influence

17. How much influence did your ability to receive funding from the government because of your military service have on your decision to attend your specific institution of higher education?

- No influence
- Minimal influence
- Moderate influence
- Strong influence

School Involvement (For graduates, please answer according to your most recent academic semester).

18. How many academic credits are you currently taking?

19. How many hours per week do you work for pay?

20. How many hours per week do you spend participating in **group** activities such as student organizations, volunteer organizations, intramural sports clubs, ect.?

21. How many hours per week do you spend participating in veteran-specific **group** activities?

22. How many hours per month are you involved in military service?

23. Please choose which of the following best describes how you relate to your campus environment at your current or most recent school.

- I feel that almost all students on campus are like me and can identify with me.
- I feel that the majority of students on campus are like me and can identify with me.
- I feel that some students on campus are like me and can identify with me.
- I feel that few students on campus are like me and can identify with me.
- I feel that almost no students on campus are like me and can identify with me.

24. How comfortable do you feel interacting with fellow students, faculty and staff on your campus?

- Very comfortable
- Somewhat comfortable
- Not at all comfortable

25. Thank you for your time and thoughtful responses in completing this survey. If you have any additional information you would like to include, or you would like to be contacted with further information about this study or the support services available on your campus, please indicate so here and leave your email address if applicable.

26. If you would like to be entered into the drawing to win a \$10 Starbucks gift certificate please include your email here. All winners will be contacted by email.

Figure 1: University of Michigan's Office of the Registrar Enrollment Statistics 2009

**The University of Michigan -- Ann Arbor
Enrollment by School or College, Ethnicity, and Gender
For Term 1760 (Fall 2009)**

		U.S. Citizens & Permanent Residents									
		Minorities									Nonres
		Grand Total	Total US & PR	Total Minorities	Black	Asian	Native American	Hispanic	White	Unknown	Alien
Grand Total		41674	36392	8971	2204	4895	254	1618	24917	2504	5282
	Female	19844	18013	4717	1300	2412	141	864	12174	1122	1831
	Male	21830	18379	4254	904	2483	113	754	12743	1382	3451
Percent		100.0%	87.3%	21.5%	5.3%	11.7%	0.6%	3.9%	59.8%	6.0%	12.7%
Architecture & Urban Planning	Female	297	238	53	10	33	0	10	170	15	59
	Male	333	288	54	11	26	2	15	213	21	45
	Total	630	526	107	21	59	2	25	383	36	104
Art and Design	Female	404	383	72	12	41	2	17	282	29	21
	Male	135	131	22	6	9	2	5	101	8	4
	Total	539	514	94	18	50	4	22	383	37	25
Business Administration	Female	918	758	271	52	189	3	27	430	57	160
	Male	2019	1560	421	54	297	8	62	989	150	459
	Total	2937	2318	692	106	486	11	89	1419	207	619
Dentistry	Female	347	313	85	25	45	1	14	218	10	34
	Male	297	270	48	9	27	2	10	213	9	27
	Total	644	583	133	34	72	3	24	431	19	61
Education	Female	419	392	96	41	31	2	22	280	16	27
	Male	138	131	27	12	6	3	6	97	7	7
	Total	557	523	123	53	37	5	28	377	23	34
Engineering	Female	1734	1374	390	95	222	7	66	912	72	360
	Male	6371	4742	1115	176	745	20	174	3327	300	1629
	Total	8105	6116	1505	271	967	27	240	4239	372	1989
Information	Female	250	206	42	9	23	4	6	153	11	44
	Male	166	123	30	4	16	1	9	83	10	43
	Total	416	329	72	13	39	5	15	236	21	87
Kinesiology	Female	417	407	70	29	17	3	21	316	21	10
	Male	449	436	83	56	9	2	16	328	25	13
	Total	866	843	153	85	26	5	37	644	46	23

**The University of Michigan -- Ann Arbor
Enrollment by School or College, Ethnicity, and Gender
For Term 1760 (Fall 2009)**

		U.S. Citizens & Permanent Residents										
		Minorities									Nonres	
		Grand	Total	Total	Native					Nonres		
		Total	US & PR	Minorities	Black	Asian	American	Hispanic	White	Unknown	Alien	
Law	Female	511	470	144	33	83	4	24	283	43	41	
	Male	654	612	111	24	52	13	22	413	88	42	
	Total	1165	1082	255	57	135	17	46	696	131	83	
Literature, Science & the Arts	Female	10128	9509	2486	716	1207	82	481	6416	607	619	
	Male	8116	7443	1737	427	924	46	340	5185	521	673	
	Total	18244	16952	4223	1143	2131	128	821	11601	1128	1292	
Medicine	Female	622	583	192	35	105	8	44	343	48	39	
	Male	568	536	146	17	108	2	19	325	65	32	
	Total	1190	1119	338	52	213	10	63	668	113	71	
Music, Theatre & Dance	Female	462	427	74	26	35	2	11	319	34	35	
	Male	579	553	93	35	30	4	24	413	47	26	
	Total	1041	980	167	61	65	6	35	732	81	61	
Natural Resources&Environment	Female	163	149	18	2	12	0	4	122	9	14	
	Male	130	116	9	2	5	0	2	105	2	14	
	Total	293	265	27	4	17	0	6	227	11	28	
Nursing	Female	846	820	128	48	42	6	32	657	35	26	
	Male	78	77	11	4	3	2	2	59	7	1	
	Total	924	897	139	52	45	8	34	716	42	27	
Pharmacy	Female	234	212	91	6	79	1	5	107	14	22	
	Male	164	141	53	12	34	1	6	78	10	23	
	Total	398	353	144	18	113	2	11	185	24	45	
Public Health	Female	624	529	154	55	80	3	16	339	36	95	
	Male	280	210	46	9	31	1	5	151	13	70	
	Total	904	739	200	64	111	4	21	490	49	165	
Public Policy	Female	141	132	34	8	16	2	8	93	5	9	
	Male	152	128	28	12	10	1	5	83	17	24	
	Total	293	260	62	20	26	3	13	176	22	33	

**The University of Michigan -- Ann Arbor
Enrollment by School or College, Ethnicity, and Gender
For Term 1760 (Fall 2009)**

U.S. Citizens & Permanent Residents												
Minorities												
		Grand	Total	Total	Native						Nonres	
		Total	US & PR	Minorities	Black	Asian	American	Hispanic	White	Unknown	Alien	
Rackham	Female	267	197	56	25	13	4	14	136	5	70	
	Male	218	167	34	5	22	0	7	126	7	51	
	Total	485	364	90	30	35	4	21	262	12	121	
Social Work	Female	461	450	104	48	30	6	20	326	20	11	
	Male	74	74	19	8	4	2	5	51	4	0	
	Total	535	524	123	56	34	8	25	377	24	11	

Excluded Enrollments (Postgraduate Medicine and Visiting Scholars)

	Female	599	464	157	25	109	1	22	272	35	135
	Male	909	641	167	21	125	1	20	403	71	268
	Total	1,508	1,105	324	46	234	2	42	675	106	403

Table A-3. FY 2005 Applicants* for Active Component Enlistment by Race or Hispanic Ethnicity, Service, and Gender with Civilian Comparison Group

RACE or ETHNICITY	MILITARY SERVICES												TOTAL DOD		16-24 YR OLD CIVILIAN				
	ARMY			NAVY			MARINE CORPS			AIR FORCE			Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total							Males
a. Number																			
White	60,007	11,203	84,060	33,337	7,085	40,302	35,738	3,209	36,947	21,903	6,690	28,593	159,887	36,007	193,894	11,864,775	10,266,036	21,853,281	
Black	11,990	3,099	17,969	11,614	4,061	13,015	3,990	687	6,627	6,482	2,392	3,184	31,316	12,489	44,225	1,879,718	2,162,898	3,992,613	
Asian	1,071	425	1,502	3,708	999	4,297	316	122	398	208	171	379	4,859	1,717	3,218	137,979	141,698	279,688	
Hispanic	1,893	969	2,463	2,648	734	3,382	918	99	1,017	820	411	1,231	6,279	1,804	8,083	554,148	571,617	1,143,785	
Two or more	1,650	668	2,318	671	211	882	466	31	513	443	286	729	3,224	1,218	4,442	37,897	45,164	83,021	
Unknown	943	297	1,240	1,011	317	1,328	153	27	182	170	186	356	2,679	827	3,506	321,441	361,374	623,115	
TOTAL	105,514	20,916	132,030	33,936	14,284	67,699	43,948	4,619	48,282	29,666	12,240	41,331	231,834	57,679	289,713	14,053,917	13,931,698	27,966,605	
Hispanic	15,421	4,097	17,518	8,094	3,794	11,528	7,523	896	8,419	3,281	1,397	4,638	31,869	9,314	42,323	2,403,609	2,318,998	4,903,897	
Not Hispanic**	52,093	20,419	74,912	44,602	11,560	56,162	36,325	3,723	39,843	19,843	10,843	26,473	199,835	48,365	248,260	11,650,308	11,612,699	23,033,378	
TOTAL	105,514	20,916	132,030	33,936	14,284	67,699	43,948	4,619	48,282	29,666	12,240	41,331	231,834	57,679	289,713	14,053,917	13,931,698	27,966,605	
b. Percent																			
White	65.40%	55.93%	63.44%	82.21%	31.86%	60.44%	81.56%	72.39%	80.76%	73.36%	61.72%	72.59%	68.57%	59.76%	68.97%	78.98%	71.96%	76.14%	
Black	11.29%	20.43%	13.14%	26.52%	28.01%	22.18%	8.99%	15.39%	9.59%	13.42%	22.07%	17.18%	13.25%	22.27%	15.27%	13.33%	19.10%	14.24%	
Asian	1.02%	1.98%	1.19%	7.09%	6.99%	7.07%	1.34%	2.39%	1.47%	1.39%	0.92%	0.92%	2.44%	2.97%	2.39%	0.89%	1.01%	0.99%	
Hispanic	1.79%	2.69%	1.83%	4.06%	3.14%	5.09%	2.09%	2.49%	2.11%	2.82%	3.39%	2.94%	2.71%	3.12%	2.79%	4.09%	4.10%	4.10%	
Two or more	0.89%	1.19%	0.94%	1.89%	2.21%	1.94%	0.81%	0.61%	0.79%	1.27%	1.52%	1.39%	1.39%	2.10%	1.37%	0.27%	0.32%	0.30%	
Unknown	10.07%	16.49%	17.71%	1.94%	2.36%	2.05%	4.22%	4.92%	4.29%	2.89%	3.65%	3.11%	9.82%	5.36%	9.37%	NA	NA	NA	
TOTAL	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	
Hispanic	12.72%	15.22%	13.23%	16.09%	19.01%	17.09%	17.16%	20.39%	17.44%	11.22%	13.02%	11.75%	14.24%	16.09%	14.61%	16.69%	16.01%	17.03%	
Not Hispanic**	87.28%	84.78%	86.77%	83.91%	80.91%	82.91%	82.84%	79.61%	82.56%	88.78%	86.98%	88.25%	85.76%	83.91%	85.39%	83.31%	83.91%	82.97%	
TOTAL	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	

* Refers to NPS individuals whose first form of application (Physical or AS/OS) was in FY 2003.

** Includes individuals who indicated non-Hispanic ethnicity or did not respond to ethnicity question.

Rows and columns may not add to totals due to rounding.

Source: Civilian data from Bureau of Labor Statistics Current Population Survey File, October 2005; military data 2005.

Figure 2: Population Representation in the Military Services

Table 1: Data Codes and Descriptions

Code for this Study	Variable	Description
age	Age	A respondent's current age, if currently enrolled in an undergraduate institution, or age when most recently enrolled in an undergraduate institution.
yr_school	Year in School	A respondent's current or most recent year standing at an undergraduate institution. Responses were ordinal ranging from 5 (fifth or more year senior) to 1 (freshman).
commit	Relationship Commitment	A respondent's level of commitment in a relationship with a significant other when enrolled in an undergraduate institution. 0 indicates not committed (single, divorced, widowed), 1 indicates committed (married, not married but in a committed relationship).
marital_sts	Marital Status	A respondent's current marital status. 1 indicates single, 2 indicates divorces, 3 indicates widowed, 4 indicates committed but not married and 5 indicates married.
minority	Minority Status	A recode from the variable “race” indicating a respondent's identification as a minority. 0 indicates no, 1 indicates yes. Minority statuses indicated for this study were African-American/Black, Hispanic/Latino/Latina, Asian-American/Asian, two or more races and Other.
children	Children	Whether or not a respondent was a primary caregiver for a child/children at the time of her enrollment at an undergraduate institution. 0 indicates no, 1 indicates yes.
gender	Gender	A respondent's identified gender. 1 indicates female, 2 indicates male. No other genders were indicated by survey respondents.
entr_yr	Military Entrance Year	The year a respondent joined the military either by enlisting or being commissioned.
entr_school	Educational Level	Level of education attained before joining the military. 1 indicates before completing high school, 2 indicates after completing high school but before completing an undergraduate degree.

school_type	Type of Undergraduate Institution	The type of undergraduate institution currently or most recently attended by respondent. 1 indicates a public university, 2 indicates a private university, 4 indicates a military service academy. 3 would have indicated a community college or vocational school, but was not indicated by any survey respondents.
ac_rep	Academic Reputation	Whether or not a respondent's current or most recent undergraduate institution's academic reputation significantly influenced her decision to attend. 0 indicates no, 1 indicates yes.
spec_ac	Special Academic Program	Whether or not the ability to enroll in a a specific academic program of a respondent's current or most recent undergraduate institution's significantly influenced his decision to attend. 0 indicates no, 1 indicates yes.
ease_prox	Ease of Commute	Whether or not a respondent's ease of commute to campus significantly influenced the respondent's decision to attend. 0 indicates no, 1 indicates yes.
preexist	Preexisting bonds with the Undergraduate Institution	A recode of three variables “familiarity,” “preexisting social network” and “campus atmosphere” indicating previous social ties with the undergraduate institution. Includes whether or not the respondent is familiar with, has preexisting social ties to or know and likes the campus atmosphere of a her current or most recent undergraduate institution and significantly influenced her decision to attend. 0 indicates no, 1 indicates yes.
supp_vet	Student Veteran Support Services	Whether or not the support services available to student veterans on campus significantly influenced a respondent's decision to attend. 0 indicates no, 1 indicates yes.
encourag	Encouragement from Others	Whether or not encouragement from family, friends and/or an academic counselor significantly influenced a respondent's decision to attend his current or most recent institution of higher education. 0 indicates no, 1 indicates yes.
finance	Financing Higher Education	The level of influence of financing from the government because of veteran status to attend an undergraduate institution. Responses were ordinal ranging from 4 (strong influence) to (0) no influence.
ext_org	Non-veteran-	The number of hours per week a respondent participates/ participate

	specific Extracurricular Activities	in non-veteran specific extracurricular activities at his current or most recent undergraduate institution.
ext_vet	Veteran-specific Extracurricular Activities	The number of hours per week a respondent participates/ participate in veteran-specific extracurricular activities at his current or most recent undergraduate institution.
extra	Total Extracurricular Activities	A recode of “ext_org” and “ext_vet.” The total number of hours per week a respondent participates/ participate in veteran-specific extracurricular activities at her current or most recent undergraduate institution.
isolate	Self-Perceived Identification with Others	A respondent's ability to identify with fellow students on campus. Responses were ordinal ranging from 5 (I feel that almost all students on campus are like me and can identify with me) to 1 (I feel that almost no students on campus are like me and can identify with me).
interact	Comfort Interacting with Others	A respondent's level of comfort interacting with fellow students, faculty and staff on campus. Responses were ordinal ranging from 3 (very comfortable) to 1 (not at all comfortable).
deploy	Deployment to a Combat Zone	Whether or not a respondent was deployed to a combat zone during his military experience. 0 indicates no, 1 indicates yes.
deploy_yr	Year of Deployment to a Combat Zone	The year a respondent deployed to a combat zone, if applicable.
terminate	End-Year of Active Service	The year a respondent's active military service was ended.
uppclass	Upperclassman Status	Whether or not a respondent was an upperclassman (an upperclassman is defined as a 3 rd year, 4 th year or 5 th plus year. Graduated respondents were also included as they responded according to their most recent undergraduate semester. 0 indicates lowerclassman, 1 indicates upperclassman.

Table 2: Age and social isolation indicators among student veterans

Average age in survey sample

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
age	53	30.81132	6.844584	22	54

Correlation of age and ability to identify with fellow students
(obs=53)

	age	isolate
age	1.0000	
isolate	-0.0197	1.0000

Correlation of age and comfort interacting with others on campus
(obs=53)

	age	interact
age	1.0000	
interact	-0.0938	1.0000

Table 3: Year in undergraduate educational institution and social isolation indicators among student veterans

	1 st year	2 nd year	3 rd year	4 th year	5 th + year	Graduate
Ability to identify with fellow students	3.6	1.5	2.4545454	2	2.4	2.6
Comfort interacting with others on campus	2	2.5	2.7272727	2.6	2.8	2.7
Percent of total	9.43	3.77	20.75	18.87	9.43	37.74

N=53

Recode 3rd year, 4th year, 5+ year and Graduate to "Uppclass"

	Lowerclassmen	Upperclassmen
Ability to identify with fellow students	3	2.413043
Comfort interacting with others on campus	2.142857	2.695652
Percent of total	13.21	86.79

N=53

Table 4: Marital status and social isolation indicators among student veterans

	Single	Divorced	Committed	Married
Ability to identify with fellow students	2.45	2.4	3	2.4348
Comfort interacting with fellow students on campus	2.5	2.8	2.6	2.6957
Percent of total	37.74	9.43	9.43	43.40

N=53

Recode of Single and Divorced to "Non-committed" and Married and Committed to "Committed"

	Committed	Non-committed
Ability to identify with fellow students	2.535714	2.44
Comfort interacting with fellow students on campus	2.678571	2.56
Average age of respondent	32.89286	28.48
Percent of total	52.83	47.17

N=53

Table 5: Parenthood and social isolation indicators among student veterans

	Yes, have children	No children
Ability to identify with fellow students	2.5	2.485714
Comfort interacting with fellow students on campus	2.666667	2.622642
Average age of respondent	35.38889	28.45714
Percent of total	33.96	66.04

N=53

Table 6: Gender, race and social isolation indicators among student veterans

	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	2+ races
Ability to identify with fellow students	2.431818	3.666667	3	3	1
Comfort interacting with others on campus	2.613636	2.666667	2.5	2	3
Percent of total	88.27	5.88	3.92	1.96	1.96

N=51

Recode of Black, Hispanic, Asian and Two or more races to "Minority"

	White	Minority	Female	Male	White females	White males	Minority females	Minority males
Ability to identify with fellow students	2.43182	2.777778	2.4444	2.5	2.125	2.5	5	2.5
Comfort interacting with others on campus	2.61364	2.666667	2.7778	2.591	2.75	2.5833	3	2.625
Percent of total	86.27	13.73	16.98	83.02	15.09	67.92	1.89	15.09

N=51

Table 7: Race and extracurricular participation among student veterans

Weekly hours of extracurricular involvement for females in survey sample					
Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
extra	9	5.666667	5.894913	0	17

Weekly hours of extracurricular involvement for males in survey sample					
Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
extra	44	5.068182	7.616988	0	34

Weekly hours of extracurricular involvement for minorities in survey sample					
Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
extra	9	6.222222	8.197222	0	20

Weekly hours of extracurricular involvement for non-minorities in survey sample					
Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
extra	44	4.954545	7.194813	0	34

Table 8: Educational level upon entering the military and social isolation among student veterans

	Before completing high school	After completing high school
Ability to identify with fellow students	2.444444	2.5
Comfort interacting with others on campus	2.666667	2.613636
Percent of total	16.98	83.02

N=53

Table 9: Social isolation indicators among student veterans

Level of ability to identify with fellow students

isolate	Freq.	Percent	Cum.

Almost no students on campus are like me and can identify with me	6	11.32	11.32
Few students on campus are like me and can identify with me	25	47.17	58.49
Some students on campus are like me and can identify with me	16	30.19	88.68
Most students on campus are like me and can identify with me	2	3.77	92.45
Almost all students on campus are like me and can identify with me	4	7.55	100.00

Total	53	100.00	

Level of comfort interacting with others on campus

interact	Freq.	Percent	Cum.

I am not at all comfortable interacting with fellow students, faculty and staff on campus	2	3.77	3.77
I am somewhat comfortable interacting with fellow students, faculty and staff on campus	16	30.19	33.96
I am very comfortable interacting with fellow students, faculty and staff on campus	35	66.04	100.00

Total	53	100.00	

Table 10: Deployment to a combat zone and social isolation indicators among student veterans

	Yes, deployed to a combat zone	No, did not deploy to a combat zone
Ability to identify with fellow students	2.428571	2.583333
Comfort interacting with fellow students on campus	2.5	2.75
Average date of last deployment to a combat zone	2004.852 (Min 1991, Max 2010)	n/a
Percent of total	53.85	46.15

N=52

Correlation of last year of deployment, ability to identify with fellow students and comfort interacting with others on campus (obs=26)

	interact	isolate	deploy year
interact	1.0000		
isolate	0.1845	1.0000	
deploy_yr	-0.1488	-0.1793	1.0000

Table 11: Year of active duty termination and social isolation indicators among student veterans

Average last year of active duty termination

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
terminate	47	2004.936	4.469239	1989	2010

Correlation of last year of active duty, ability to identify with fellow students and comfort interacting with others on campus (obs=26)

	interact	isolate	terminate
interact	1.0000		
isolate	0.1845	1.0000	
terminate	0.0176	0.0147	1.0000

Table 12: Reasons for attending specific institutions of higher education and social isolation among student veterans

Special academic program and social isolation indications among student veterans

	Yes, chosen for specific academic program	No, not chosen for specific academic program
Ability to identify with fellow students	2.76	2.25
Comfort interacting with others on campus	2.76	2.5
Percent total	47.17	52.83

N=53

Preexisting social ties with institution of higher education and social isolation indications among student veterans

	Yes, respondent has preexisting social ties with school	No, respondent has no preexisting social ties with school
Ability to identify with fellow students	2.428571	2.454545
Comfort interacting with others on campus	2.714286	2.606061
Percent total	29.79	70.21

N=47

Encouragement from family/friends/academic counselor to attend a specific institution of higher education and social isolation indications among student veterans

	Yes, chosen because of support from family/friends/ counselor	No, not chosen because of support from family/friends/ counselor
Ability to identify with fellow students	2.357143	2.538462
Comfort interacting with others on campus	2.714286	2.589744
Percent total	26.42	73.58

N=53

Ease of commute/ proximity to institution of higher education and social isolation indications among student veterans

	Yes, chosen because ease of commute/ proximity of school	No, not chosen because ease of commute/ proximity of school
Ability to identify with fellow students	2.677419	2.227273
Comfort interacting with others on campus	2.709677	2.5
Percent total	58.49	41.51

N=53

Veteran support services on campus and social isolation indications among student veterans

	Yes, chosen for support services for veterans on campus	No, not chosen for support services for veterans on campus
Ability to identify with fellow students	2.375	2.511111
Comfort interacting with others on campus	2.25	2.688889
Percent total	15.09	84.91

N=53

Table 13: Influence of ability to receive funding from the government and decision to continue education

	Percent	Cumulative Percent
No influence	13.20	13.20
Minimal influence	7.55	20.75
Moderate influence	16.98	37.73
Strong influence	62.27	100.00
Total	100.00	100.00

N=53

Table 14: Extracurricular activity participation and social isolation indicators among student veterans

Total hours per week of extracurricular activities					
	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
	53	5.169811	7.305782	0	34
Hours per week of veteran-specific extracurricular activities					
	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
	53	.6226415	1.196572	0	4

Correlation between total hours of extracurricular activities participated in per week and ability to identify with fellow students (obs=53)

	extra	isolate
extra	1.0000	
isolate	-0.1077	1.0000

Correlation between total hours of extracurricular activities participated in per week and comfort interacting with other on campus (obs=53)

	extra	interact
extra	1.0000	
interact	0.2265	1.0000

Correlation between hours of veteran-specific extracurricular activities participated in per week and ability to identify with fellow students

	ext_vet	isolate
ext_vet	1.0000	
isolate	-0.2730	1.0000

Correlation between hours of veteran-specific extracurricular activities participated in per week and comfort interacting with others on campus

	ext_vet	interact
ext_vet	1.0000	
interact	0.0701	1.0000

Correlation between hours of non-veteran-specific extracurricular activities participated in per week and ability to identify with fellow students
(obs=53)

	ext_org	isolate
ext_org	1.0000	
isolate	-0.0671	1.0000

Correlation between hours of non-veteran-specific extracurricular activities participated in per week and comfort interacting with others on campus

	ext_org	interact
ext_org	1.0000	
interact	0.2291	1.0000

Table 15: School type, extracurricular activity participation and social isolation indicators among student veterans

	Public	Private	Military Academy	Average
Number academic credits taken	11.7619	10.1667	9.5	11.40385
Number of hours worked per week (for money)	10.6905	19.8333	20.75	12.51923
Ability to identify with fellow students	2.418605	3.166667	2.25	2.4906
Comfort interacting with others on campus	2.627907	2.5	2.75	2.6226
Total hours of extracurricular activities participated in per week	5.651163	1.333333	5.75	5.1698
Total hours of veteran-specific extracurricular activities participated in per week	.5348837	.1666667	2.25	0.6226
Total hours of non-veteran-specific extracurricular activities participated in per week	5.116279	1.166667	3.5	4.5417
% respondents indicating ease of commute/ proximity of school influenced decision to attend	53.49	83.33	75.0	58.49
% respondents indicating a school's specific academic program influenced decision to attend	51.16	50.0	0.0	47.17
% respondents indicating preexisting social ties with school influenced decision to attend	48.83	66.67	25.0	29.79
% respondents indicating encouragement from family, friends or counselor influenced decision to attend	25.58	33.33	25.0	26.42
% respondents indicating support services for veterans on campus influenced decision to attend	13.95	16.67	25.0	15.09
Percent of total	81.13	11.32	7.55	

N=53