

ABSTRACT

LANDRUM, SHANNON HANEY. Difficulties Encountered by Enlisted Army and Marine Corps Veterans when Entering Community College after Separation from the Military: A Q-Methodological Study. (under the direction of Dr. James Bartlett, II).

There is very little information focused on the transition of military veterans into higher education, and even less focused on their transition into community college. This is despite the fact that a majority of military veterans will first enroll into community college after separation from the military (versus enrolling directly into a four-year college or university). No published work has been discovered through literature review that seeks to understand the veteran's viewpoints toward higher education while undergoing this transitional process. The purpose of this study was to ascertain and understand the viewpoints of enlisted Army and Marine Corps veterans toward the transitional process into higher education after entering community college, with the hope that it may be used to develop support services that are designed to aid the transition of veterans into community college. It is thought that improving support services will lead to better student success as higher student completion rates will be achieved.

Q methodology, which explores an individual's experience and reality using both quantitative and qualitative methods, was utilized to determine the viewpoints of 24 enlisted Army and Marine Corps veterans before and after transitioning into community college. A set of 47 statements was developed using literature review, interviews with military veteran students, and the personal experience of the researcher. The 24 participants sorted these statements into a forced distribution. In order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of each participant's sort, demographic and narrative information was collected from each participant. Factor analysis was applied in order to explore the unique

perspectives and determine similarities and differences in the viewpoints of the participants. Through data analysis four distinct and statistically significant factor groups emerged, and were characterized as follows: Factor 1, "*Mission-missing Infantry*", Factor 2, "*Difficulty Balancing*", Factor 3, "*Motivation impacted by disability*", and Factor 4, "*Needs and Administrative Advisor*". Commonalities among the factors were seen through the consensus statement, and through the distinguishing statements shared by more than one factor. The findings of this study bring to light the differences and similarities between these groups, thus illuminating what common pathways may be developed to ease this transitional process from the military into community college. Additionally, this study has implications for practice, policy, procedure, and further research into this topic.

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Difficulties Encountered by Enlisted Army and Marine Corps Veterans when Entering
Community College after Separation from the Military:
A Q-Methodological Study

by
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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to all military veterans, both those who have helped shape my life, and those whom I have never met. These veterans have selflessly and sacrificially served their country and my family. I can never repay that debt, but I truly hope that my research will help you in some small way. Thank you.

This work is also dedicated to my children, Aubrey and Grant. You are truly the sunshine in my life. I am so very blessed to be your mother. I hope that by watching me work for this degree, I have taught you that with hard work, the support of your family, and faith and trust in the Lord, you can do anything and become anything you want to be. I hope that by watching your father support me, you have seen what marriage can and should be. I love you both to the moon and back, and to infinity and beyond.

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Philippians 4:13

BIOGRAPHY

Marsha Shannon Haney (Landrum) was born April 16, 1971, in Charlotte, NC. Shannon grew up in Union County, NC, where she graduated from Sun Valley High School in June, 1989. She then embarked on a six-year journey toward her undergraduate degree, attending the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH), the University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNCC) and the University of West Florida (UWF). During this time period, Shannon considered several different career paths, all associated with the biological sciences, except for a brief foray into political science. Shannon graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Biology from UNCC in 1995, minoring in Political Science.

Shannon realized that an undergraduate degree in Biology did not really open the doors to a career that she was interested in pursuing. So, she enrolled at North Carolina State University (NCSU) in the Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences program, seeking her Master of Science degree. She worked as teaching assistant in the Biological Sciences and Zoology departments while attending NCSU, which fostered her desire to become a professor of biology at a college or university. Shannon's research focused on the effects of deforestation due to the Balsam wooly adelgid (*Adelges picea*) on the high-elevation spruce-fir (*Picea rubens*, *Abies fraseri*) forest at Mt. Mitchell, NC. She measured the effects of deforestation and forest recovery through monitoring breeding birds at Mt. Mitchell, continuing an ongoing study that began in 1959. Upon a successful defense of her thesis in 1998, entitled "The Effects of Spruce-Fir Forest Decline on the Breeding Birds in Mount Mitchell State Park, North Carolina", Shannon was awarded her Master of Science, with a minor in Statistics. She decided to immediately begin pursuit of a Doctorate of Philosophy in Zoology. In 1998, Shannon began teaching as an adjunct professor at Central Carolina Community

College (CCCC), at the main campus in Sanford, NC. She discovered an affinity for the community college setting, and upon acceptance of a full-time position in the department of science, became a full-time faculty member there, and discontinued her graduate work. Shannon taught most of her classes at the (then) small satellite campus in Pittsboro, NC. This allowed her to become very involved with her students, as she undertook the role of advisor, counselor, and teacher for her students.

In August 1999, right after starting her full-time position at CCCC, Shannon became involved at Carolina Tiger Rescue (formerly Carnivore Preservation Trust). Her involvement at the wildcat sanctuary grew as she moved from volunteer who specialized in feeding the big cats, to a member of the Board of Directors, to the Executive Director (ED) of the facility. She served in her ED capacity for two and one-half years, and as a Director for ten years. While serving as ED, she directed efforts to obtain licensure from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), which allowed the facility to open to tour groups, for the purpose of environmental, ecological, and wildlife education. Carolina Tiger Rescue flourishes in Pittsboro, NC today. It is currently home to tigers, lions, leopards, cougars, kinkajous, coatimundi, caracals, servals, ocelots, and bobcats. Most of these animals were rescued, and all of them will now live out their lives in security and peace.

In 2006, Shannon moved to Cullman, Alabama, and began teaching at Bevill State Community College in Sumiton, Alabama. Her move was precipitated by her involvement with Donald Landrum, who had recently separated from the United States Navy, and was moving to Alabama to work and be near to family. Shannon and Donald were married in December, 2006. In February, 2008, they welcomed their daughter, Aubrey Kenna into their family. In January 2010, they moved to Denver, NC, after Shannon accepted a full-time

teaching position at Gaston College (GC), and after Donald, choosing to use his GI Bill, was accepted into the Motorsports Management program at Rowan-Cabarrus Community College. In April, 2010, their son, Donald Grant was welcomed into their family.

Shannon had come to the realization that the community college setting was where she wanted to teach. She loved the relationships that could be developed with students, due to small class sizes and the one-on-one interaction that prevails in such a setting. Shannon started looking into degrees that would help her to become a more effective instructor, researcher, administrator, and leader in the community college system. She became interested in the Adult and Community College Education Doctoral program at NCSU, and upon discovering that an executive cohort was instructed on the local campus of UNCC, she applied to the program. Once admitted to the program, she became interested in how military veterans transition into higher education. She had experienced this transition personally when her husband, a US Navy veteran, started attending college, and she had taught many veteran students throughout her fifteen-year teaching career. After discovering the issues facing these transitioning veterans, and their lower completion rates, she decided to focus her research efforts on understanding why the transition into higher education is more challenging to our military veterans than for non-veteran students. Shannon hopes that her research will aid program development to assist military veterans with their transition into secondary education, so that they will be successful not only in higher education, but in the transition into civilian life.

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This work is an accomplishment that was achieved through a collective effort of my family, friends, colleagues, and professors.

My husband Don offered unflagging support, belief in me, and the willingness to help me undertake this course of study. His love and support make me feel invincible, and I would have never completed this work without him.

My family is always there for me, no matter what. Thank you for that. Thank you for teaching me to value education, and to believe in myself.

I am very appreciative that my friends – y’all know who you are – did not laugh when I said I was going back to school, and supported me in every way they could. They offered support, love, understanding, and patience. I’m blessed to call them friends and family. My brother of my heart is owed a great debt of gratitude. Without our sibling-like rivalry, I would have never jumped into this program. So, thanks for seeking your PhD, forcing me to seek a degree that will change my title to “Doctor”, too.

My students have shaped my life in so many ways. I have taught hundreds of students, and they have taught me as well. I have learned empathy, how to be a better teacher, and how to keep their attention. They have motivated me to be a better instructor, and to continue my education so that I can do so. I hope I have taught them much more than biology.

All of my colleagues at Gaston College have been truly supportive and encouraging. I will always be grateful to them.

Without my cohort, this work would have never been completed. Thanks for all the encouragement and support throughout this incredible journey. Katie Kandalec, I couldn't have done it without your help! Thank you!

My committee, Dr. James Bartlett, Dr. Michelle Bartlett, Dr. Chad Hoggan, and Dr. Lisa Bass, taught me so much. I am very appreciative of their efforts, of their time, and of their mentorship. Thank you.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The U. S. Census Bureau (2006) reported that 1.1 million military veterans were enrolled in higher education during the 2001-2002 school year and in 2007-2008, 4% (roughly 875,000) of all currently enrolled undergraduates were military veterans (Radford & Wun, 2009). As Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation New Dawn (OND, formerly Operation Iraqi Freedom) continue, and as planned military drawdowns take place, more troops will be eligible for G.I. Bill benefits and will be entering into higher education. The American Council of Education (ACE, 2008) states that more than two million military veterans will enter into higher education in the coming years. How to best serve these military veterans should be of great concern to administrators, faculty, and staff of higher educational institutions. These educators will benefit from information pertaining to the backgrounds, characteristics, strengths, weaknesses, and experiences of these military veteran students in order to better serve this student population (Radford, 2009). Community college educators should be greatly concerned, as military veterans are more highly concentrated at two-year colleges compared to all other institutional types (Radford, 2009; Rumann, 2010). In 2007-2008, 43% of military veterans accessing higher education choose community college (Radford & Weko, 2011).

Problem Statement

Despite the fact that military veterans make up a growing percentage of the undergraduate population, there is a lack of research concerning the transition of recent military veterans into higher education. There is research that focuses on the transition of both traditional and non-traditional students into higher education (Compton, Cox, & Lanaan, 2006; Larose, Bernier, & Tarabulskiy, 2005), but very little research is related specifically to

military veteran students (Cook & Kim, 2009; Livingston, 2009; Stalides, 2008). Even less is related to the transitional experiences of military veterans from the military into community colleges (Wheeler, 2012; Rumann, 2010). Without understanding military veteran viewpoints toward higher education it is hard to develop transitional services that best support their needs.

Military veterans meet the definition of nontraditional higher education students. Delayed entry into higher education, financial independence, full or part-time employment, being married, having dependents, part time enrollment, first-time student, first generation student, and lack of high school diploma or GED are all characteristics of nontraditional students and are often considered high risk categories for non-completion. These are characteristics commonly seen in military veteran students (ACE, 2008; Cook & Kim, 2009; Radford & Weko, 2011; Wheeler, 2012). An average of 5% of student veterans identified themselves as a disabled student in 2007-2008. Disabilities may be physical, psychological, or categorized in other ways (US Department of Education, 2012). ACE (2008) survey results show that of 723 institution of higher education surveyed, 57% provide military veteran-specific support services. Four-year and two-year institutions were more likely than private institutions to provide services (74% and 66%, respectively), and 65% of institutions indicated they have been emphasizing services for military veterans since 2001 (Cook & Kim, 2009).

Before separation from the military, mandatory attendance to transition assistance programs (TAP) is required for all military veteran students. TAP programs are designed to meet the needs of separating service members during their period of transition into civilian

life by offering tracks that lead to employment, education, or starting a business (Kamarch, 2017).

Despite these collegiate and military support services, degree attainment takes significantly longer for student veterans than for non-veteran students (US Department of Education, 2012). The six-year degree attainment rate among all first-time, beginning veteran students in 2011 was almost 52% (up from 36% in 2009) so there is evidence that support services are having an impact on retention and degree completion, but the length of time to completion has not improved (Cates, 2014; Radford, 2009). The Student Veteran's Association *Million Records Project* reported that overall completion rates for higher education programs over six years vary with branch of service; the Air Force completion rate was 67%, the Coast Guard completion rate was 54%, the Navy completion rate was 52%, the Army completion rate was 47%, and the Marines completion rate was 45% (Cates, 2014).

Despite the large number of military veteran students, and despite their obvious status as a non-traditional, special population, there is very little research focused on the transition from the military into higher education. Evidence suggests that military veterans do not transition from the military into higher education with ease, and that branch of service could impact the success of transition. Even though there are many special programs and services for veterans, both military and civilian service, degree attainment takes significantly longer for military veteran students than non-veteran students. Additionally, there are very few research studies that have explored the transition from the military to higher education, specifically into the community college setting.

Measuring the time to completion is a concern for administrators and researchers because it is a measure of how well military veterans are moving into, understanding, and

becoming part of higher education. When examining civilian and military support services, it would seem that for many veterans who choose to access higher education using the Post 9/11 G.I. Bill, the transition into higher education should be relatively easy. However, when time to completion is taken into account, another story is evident, a story that the academic literature, conversations with military veteran students, and conversations with military TAP facilitators support. In reality, the application process and support services at area colleges and universities are cumbersome, confusing, and overwhelming. Military veteran students often have difficulty navigating the institutional bureaucracy found in the academic environment (Rumann, Rivera & Hernandez, 2011). According to TAP instructors for the Army's Career and Alumni Program (ACAP), 60% of service members change educational tracks within two years of separation. Current military veteran students state that the lack of knowledge about what path is best upon separation often leads to enrollment in programs that are unsuitable for their life plan, which may lead to a change in program, which may then lead to a deficiency in G.I. Bill funding (Landrum, 2015). If completed coursework is not transferable or useful in the new degree program, precious G.I. Bill time and money has been wasted. Some military veteran students will then drop out for a lack of funding or as a result of confusion about what path to take to achieve personal goals (Landrum, 2015). Military veteran students also express a lack of preparation for higher education culture and the higher educational process, and a very limited understanding of their needs and backgrounds by faculty advisors and other students. Many express that they have had to change majors and/or schools because their first choice was inappropriate for them, either academically or culturally. Military veterans from all branches of service also express that the TAP courses required before separation were most useful to those who planned on becoming employed

immediately upon separation (Landrum, 2015). This evidence indicates that military veterans do not transition into higher education well, and that there is a problem somewhere with either the support services offered or the knowledge and expectations held by the military veterans themselves, or both. By studying the viewpoints military veterans entering community college have about higher education, evidence of where the problem lies can be discovered. This will aid in the development of insight into what types of support services would be helpful to military veterans as they transition into higher education, and through discovering how to ease the transition and facilitate shorter degree-attainment times, educators will then be able to address the social indicators that we are failing our military veterans.

Social indicators suggesting a need for higher and more rapid completion rates across all branches of the military are obvious when examining the rates of homelessness and poverty among military veterans. Veterans are overrepresented among the population of homeless and those in poverty in the United States, and are at greater risk than nonveterans for becoming homeless or poverty stricken (Fargo et al., 2012). Compared to the general homeless population, male and female veterans are twice as likely to be homeless. Male veterans are more than twice as likely as nonveterans to live in poverty, and female veterans are more than three times as likely to live in poverty. The overall risk of being homeless, or living in poverty, increases more than five times for both male and female veterans over the risk of non-veterans (Fargo et al., 2012). If retention can be increased and degree completion rates can be shortened for military veterans, the risk of homelessness may be decreased.

This study will only utilize enlisted Army and Marine Corps veterans. Enlisted ranks and military occupational specialties (MOS) do not require a college degree, so enlisted

personnel will be those most likely to have not entered into higher education prior to entering into military service. The study will focus on only Army and Marine Corps veterans because they have the lowest college completion rates among all branches of service (Cates, 2014). Therefore, these individuals may have the most difficulty transitioning out of the military and into higher education.

Purpose of the Study

This study is designed to understand military veterans' viewpoints toward the transition process when entering community college. Both military and civilian programs seek to prepare military veterans for the transitional experience from military service to higher education, but given the lack of existing literature, an understanding of veterans' perspectives is unknown. The lack of knowledge concerning these viewpoints about the transitional process into higher education makes improving the transition process difficult. This study will offer insight into the veterans' perspectives and can be used to develop better programs for facilitating the transition from the military into community college, and improve retention and graduation rates over all branches of the military.

Theoretical Framework

This study is examining the viewpoints related to transition and will use Schlossberg's Transition Theory as the primary framework for investigation. The major life event of transitioning from the military into the civilian world and into higher education is an important component of the individual perceptions held by the military veterans; how effective an individual is in coping with change will influence how they navigate through the transition (Schlossberg, 1984; Schlossberg, et al., 1995).

This study will also look to understand the military veterans' viewpoints when transitioning from the military educational model to that of higher education through the use of Self Determination Theory (SDT). Higher education is often based on a self-directed andragogy that is not part of military andragogy, and accomplishing this transition could be key to the success of military veteran students and to understanding the perceptions they form about themselves and the transitional process (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 1991, 2008).

Schlossberg's Transition Theory. Schlossberg (1984) defines transition as a life event that is either anticipated or not anticipated and that may change relationships, routines, assumptions, and/or roles. Consequently, transitions, like life events, can be either negative or positive. The individual must perceive the transition as significant. The context, or individual's relationship to the transition is an important component of the transition, as is the setting in which the transition occurs (Schlossberg, 1984; Schlossberg, Waters, & Goodman, 1995). The theory may be described as *moving in*, *moving through*, and *moving out* of a transition. These steps are closely linked and how an individual moves through the stages depends on how effectively one copes with transition. *Moving in* is the first stage and occurs when a transition experience begins. *Moving through* occurs as an individual navigates the transition and *moving out*, the last stage, completes the transitory process. Effective coping depends on the liabilities and assets an individual possesses. Liabilities and assets can be derived from the situation itself, the individual, availability of support systems (i.e., social, financial, familial), and strategies that the individual is equipped with to navigate the situation (Schlossberg, 1984; Schlossberg, Waters, & Goodman, 1995). During the *moving in* phase, the individual must identify the changes taking place, releasing old habits and developing new ones. *Moving through* requires continual adjustment to the changes and

new habits. This can be a time of confusion, but as the transition progresses individuals should feel more at ease. *Moving out* occurs as the transition ends and new habits become routine. At this point, an individual will ideally start to develop new goals (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006). Four fundamental coping factors for life events, referred to as 4S, are a vital part of Schlossberg's theory (1981). These life events may be expected or unexpected, and may be seen as *events* or *non-events*. The coping factors are characterized as *situation*, *self*, *supports*, and *strategies*. *Situation* asks what type of transition is occurring, *self* examines expectation and motivation, *support* refers to systems and/or people who provide support during transition, and *strategies* are implemented as a method of gaining control over the process (Schlossberg, 1981; Wheeler, 2012). The 4S factors are a vital part of the transitional process, and how an individual moves through each factor will be a major indicator of how they *move in*, *move through*, and *move out* of a life event.

For example, using Schlossberg's theories (1981, 1984), military service members would *move in* by joining the military, *move through* as they perform their duties and serve, and *move out* when deciding to separate from the military and make the necessary adjustments to do so (DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchell, 2008). For military veteran students, the *moving in* stage would consist of deciding to go into higher education, applying, and learning to navigate within the institution and courses they chose. *Moving through* would consist of continuing enrollment, staying motivated, and persevering while adjusting to new challenges. *Moving out* would be marked by feelings of competence and confidence in their ability to be successful in higher education, and could be marked by the development of goals for completion of their program of study, completion of their prerequisites for another program, or graduation.

A final consideration is the degree of impact of the transition (Schlossberg, 1984; Schlossberg, Waters, & Goodman, 1995). An example of a major life event and transition while enlisted in the military is deployment; relationships and routines will change in a very short period of time. Transitioning out of the military into higher education is another example of a major transition, which also may happen over a very short time period (DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchell, 2008). Schlossberg's (1981) 4S factors provide insight as to how individuals will view and cope with these transitional processes. Key considerations for the perceived success of the transition include answering the following questions:

- Were they expecting the event to occur?
- Was the experience what they imagined it to be?
- Where did they go for support during the transition?
- How will they cope?
- Upon entering community college, what if a veteran student finds out his program of study will be much longer than expected?

After *moving in* to this transition, while *moving through* the 4S factors are most apparent; the ways in which a military veteran student coped with unexpected events, such as discovering they will need to take developmental education courses, lengthening their time enrolled before graduation, would exemplify how they utilize *situation*, *self*, *support*, and *strategies*.

Schlossberg's transition theory (1984) can also be used to explain how the transition from one learning style to another creates a stressful environment, and could impact self-confidence, feelings of competence, and motivation, and thus may impede the success of a student veteran. Schlossberg's theory will be integral in the development of answers to this study's research questions because it provides insights into factors related to transition, the

individual, and the environment. All of these are factors that are likely to determine the degree of impact a given transition will have on an individual (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). Schlossberg's transition theory focuses on individual, relationship, and work transitions (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006) but can be applied to provide a framework for conceptualization of the transition process a student veteran is taking as they move from military culture/instructional design to higher education culture/instructional design. DiRamio, Ackerman, and Mitchell (2008) state that Schlossberg's transition theory provides a framework for understanding the transitional processes of college students both as a group and individually. Schlossberg et al. (1984) used Schlossberg's theory as a frame for understanding how institutions of higher education can work effectively with students considered non-traditional based upon age at enrollment, therefore this framework can easily be applied to the transitional process of student veterans. Evidence that this application can be effective may be found in DiRamio, Ackerman, and Mitchell (2008), where Schlossberg's theory was used as the framework for examining the transition of student veterans back into college following deployment to a war zone.

Self Determination Theory. Self-determination theory (STD) is a macro-theory of human motivation, personality development, and well-being. It focuses primarily on self-determined and voluntary behavior, and the influence of social interaction on promoting behavior. Motivation depends on the individual's environment, which promotes feelings of competence or effective engagement with the environment, autonomy or choice in action, and relatedness or connection with others (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Deci & Vansteenkiste, 2004). SDT hypothesizes that these are basic and universal psychological needs that must be met for the healthful functioning of a human, without regard to culture or stage of development.

When these three needs are met within a social context, people are happier, experience more self-motivation, and a greater sense of well-being (Ryan, 2009).

SDT also addresses the different types of motivation that people are subject to, namely intrinsic and extrinsic. Most available research focuses on intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is the in-born desire of humans to learn, develop, and try new things, thus it is the most self-determined (Ryan, Kuhl, & Deci, 1997). Extrinsic motivation is the need to do something because of outside influences, not because of an in-born desire to do so. Extrinsic motivation can be seen as social motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

The difference between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation has become an important concept for educators to understand and employ. It has been found that intrinsic motivation results in higher quality learning and creativity than extrinsic motivation. However, extrinsic motivation can result in an attitude of willingness to learn, but often results in resentment, disinterest, or resistance, which can result in disengagement from learning in the classroom setting (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Ahmed and Bruinsma (2006) found that there is a positive relationship between academic self-confidence and academic performance, and between motivation and academic self-concept. Yoshida et al. (2008) found that there is a relationship between lack of success and decreased motivation. It follows that if a military veteran student was unsuccessful in navigating the higher education “system” or was unsuccessful in a course, they may lose motivation to stay enrolled and complete their program.

SDT will allow development of a framework for research so that the measurement of variables, such as how military veterans see the need for persistence, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and what environments promote feelings of competence, may take place. These variables should indicate an increase in academic performance and motivation to complete

their program of study, as well as measuring if failures create a lack of motivation to stay enrolled or to complete their program of study.

Positioning the Study within the Theoretical Framework

After examining the literature pertaining to military veterans and the challenges they face upon separation from the military, it is evident that military veteran students could have difficulty adjusting to life and learning outside of the military. The transition from the military into higher education is a huge shift in culture, and this transition also results in a change of andragogical styles. Both of these transitional issues must be addressed by relevant theories in order to provide a framework for the study of the perceptions of veterans transitioning from the military into postsecondary education.

The Problem of Disparate Andragogy

Military learning is rooted in the cognitive and behaviorist learning theories, which are the basis for Instructional Systems Design (ISD), and its offshoot, the Analysis, Design, Development, Implement, Evaluate Model (ADDIE). The end products of learning using the ADDIE model are measured by student mastery of specified objectives. The ADDIE model is implemented throughout the military, beginning with the indoctrination in boot camp, service members generally move on to some type of specialty school to provide them with information and knowledge that they will need to perform the duties and jobs they have been assigned. Depending on the branch of service and the specific job, schools can last from a few weeks to a year or more. These types of instructional programs are skill-based vocational and technical instruction, generally beginning with detailed job descriptions, expected duties, and contingent responsibilities (Hannum, 2005). This leads to the development of a task analysis, which then leads to the development of instructional objectives and learning

materials. Criterion-referenced measures are used to evaluate performance (Elias & Merriam, 2005).

Even at the end of their service, military methodology is still dominant. Service members must all go through a training process when separating from the military. Each branch of service has a form of the Department of Defense's Transfer Assistance Program, or TAP course. During this week-long course, when service members are going through the steps necessary to transition out of the military, information is delivered using the ADDIE model (Kamarch, 2017; Elias & Merriam, 2005).

As a result of this program directive from the Department of Defense, each individual going through the military educational process will have the same experience. Generally speaking, this is not the case in higher education. In higher education, the end products of meaningful adult education are not uniformly specified as they are complex and individualized for each person undertaking the educational process (Glaser, 1962). Higher education can be a smorgasbord of various andragogical styles. Styles may vary at different types of institutions of higher learning, and may vary between different classes at one institution. Students might experience Instructional Systems Designed learning or self-directed learning or any style in between. Academic freedoms granted at most colleges and universities allow for different faculty members to use various andragogy which results in variable teaching methods. There is a current emphasis at institutions of higher education on humanist theory, social cognitive theory, the constructivist orientation, and self-directed learning (Elias & Merriam, 2005). All of these are components of the self-determination theory (SDT) of Deci and Ryan (1985, 1991, 2008).

It follows that military veterans have often not had any experience with meaningful adult education and entering higher education will force student veterans to adjust. They will have to learn how to learn, instead of just going through rote, behaviorist processes where facts and skills are memorized, to be used when necessary. Transitioning between the culture of learning in the military and in higher education may be stressful for the student veteran (Schlossberg, 1984). Stress creates an environment where the brain is less capable of learning and has a powerful effect on long term memory. New learning styles may threaten any student's feeling of comfort in the classroom (Adelman, & Taylor, 2006) and especially a student veteran's feeling of comfort in the classroom. This may create feelings of low confidence and low competence, thus reducing their ability to master new information and to "be" or "feel" successful in higher education. Schlossberg's transition theory (1984) stands out as a useful framework for examining this transition. Schlossberg's transition theory analyzes human adaption to transition and can provide insight into why and how military veterans form certain perceptions about education and themselves.

Accomplishing this transition from one learning style to new and different ones could be key to the motivation and success of military veteran students and to the perceptions they form about themselves and the educational process of higher education. SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 1991, 2008) and Schlossberg's (1984) transition theory provide an ideal framework for the examination of those perceptions. The primary literature is lacking in the areas of motivation and academic self-concept as it specifically relates to military veteran students.

Study Variables

There are several study variables related to each other within this theoretical frame. Research variables are related to the perceptions military veteran students have about higher education, specifically community college and are discussed in Table 1.

Table 1. Potential study variables related to the theoretical frameworks of SDT

Variable	Theoretical Frame
Intrinsic motivation	SDT, Schlossberg's Transition Theory
Extrinsic motivation	SDT, Schlossberg's Transition Theory
Feelings of competence	SDT, Schlossberg's Transition Theory
Academic self-confidence	SDT, Schlossberg's Transition Theory
Academic self-concept	SDT, Schlossberg's Transition Theory
Autonomy	SDT
Relatedness	SDT
Decision to attend community college	Schlossberg's Transition Theory
Development of new goals	Schlossberg's Transition Theory

Research Methods

Since this research seeks to understand the subjective viewpoints held by student veterans, Q methodology was used for the conduction of this study. Q methodology provides an objective means of determining an individual's subjective beliefs, allowing for the discovery of patterns of shared beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes among study participants (Maguire & Steelman, 1999; McKeown & Thomas, 1998; Stephenson, 1953; Watts & Stenner, 2012). These patterns are called factors in Q methodology (Cross, 2005; Watts & Stenner, 2012). This study uncovered factors that might influence the success or failure of

enlisted military veterans in community college and which are discussed in greater detail in the following chapters.

Military veterans who were separated from the Army or Marine Corps at an enlisted rank and who are currently or recently enrolled in community college were asked to participate in the study. 24 participants, primarily from Gaston College, participated in the process. Data was collected in two ways. Participants sorted items related to their transitional process after their entry into community college. After each Q-sorting, participants were asked to take part in a post-sort questionnaire/interview. SPSS software was used to analyze the Q-sort data through factor analysis, while the post-sort questionnaire/interviews provided quantitative demographic information, which allowed for a qualitative analysis and explanation of the factors that emerged through data analysis.

Q methodology was selected because it allows the researcher to look at each individual military veteran's subjective viewpoints, and then group them based on the viewpoints of other individuals. The study will show how individual viewpoints are related to each other, if there is a difference in viewpoints before and after enrolling in higher educational coursework, and if there are any relationships between other demographic factors. Q methodology is a unique methodology that incorporates quantitative and qualitative research methods. The method seeks to place individuals in groups and use the responses to qualitative open-ended questions to better understand the groups. By using Q methodology, an individual's subjective viewpoint may be measured and compared to that of others using quantitative methods (McKeown & Thomas, 2013).

Research Questions

The specific research questions this study addressed are as follows:

- Question 1: What are the viewpoints of enlisted Army and Marine Corps veterans toward the transition process after transitioning out of the military and into higher education at the community college?
- Question 2: What are items that distinguish the groups, and what are the items that are similar between groups?
- Question 3: Do the viewpoints of military veterans toward the transition process vary according to MOS or branch of service?

Significance of the Study

Community colleges need to be able to respond in the most effective way to the needs of our military veterans. Enlisted Army and Marine Corps veterans seem to struggle more with the transition into higher education than veterans of other branches of the service; as previously stated, the six-year degree attainment rate among all first-time, beginning veteran students in 2011 was almost 52%, but the completion rates among Marine Corps veterans was only 45%, and 47% among Army veterans. These are the lowest completion rates among all five branches of the US Military (Cates, 2014).

As previously stated, more than two million military veterans will enter into higher education in the coming years, with a higher concentration of these veterans attending community college versus other higher education alternatives (Radford, 2009; Rumann, 2010). It follows that community colleges should be leaders in how to best meet the needs of transitioning military veterans, and to do so we must gain a better understand of the needs of this student population (Radford, 2009). As stated, current research suggests that military veterans do not transition easily from the military into higher education and that their branch

of service impacts this transition, which is further supported by completion rates (Cates, 2014).

This study discerns the viewpoints of enlisted Army and Marine Corps veterans who have transitioned into community college, discovering the strengths and weaknesses of this study group, and has developed recommended best practices to assist this student population in a successful transition into community college that will result in timely degree completion. Community colleges should be able to use these recommendations to develop programs to facilitate successful transitional processes at their institution. Best practices that will aid the groups that have the most difficulty with transition (Army and Marine Corps) should be helpful to veterans of the other branches of service who do not seem to be having as much difficulty in the transitional process (Air Force, Coast Guard, and Navy). If these best practices simply reduce the stress of transitioning from the military into higher education, veteran students should see more success in the higher education classroom (Adelman & Taylor, 2006).

Several traditional, four-year universities have launched veterans' cohort programs and other services specific to those veterans transitioning into their institution. Cleveland State University developed the "Supportive Education for the Returning Veteran" (SERV) learning cohort, which includes veterans only general education courses. Arizona State University, Kent State University, Youngstown State, and the University of Akron also offer veteran-only courses, designed to help maintain the mutual sense of trust veterans often have with other veterans (O'Herrin, 2011). Professors teaching within cohorts often report more empathy with student issues and needs and tend to become more involved with students

(Jackson et al., 2013). It follows that a closer relationship with both classmates and professors would lower stress levels and increase success (Adelman & Taylor, 2006).

There are few programs designed in this fashion in community colleges in NC (Evens, Pelligrino, & Hoggan, 2015). Expanded TRIO programming is available at Central Carolina Community College, but there are no programs designed specifically for facilitating the transitional process from the military into higher education. Community colleges are seen as flexible and adaptable to the needs of their student populations; perhaps this is why military veterans choose them more often than those traditional institutions (Radford, 2009; Rumann, 2010). The unfortunate reality is that community colleges have not responded to the problems veterans face when transitioning into their institutions. With such sparse research (Rumann, 2010), this study will help build the foundation of research and best practices that will be used to build programs to aid our military veterans students in their transition, and ultimately in their success in college and civilian life.

Limitations of the Study

Data was collected from enlisted Army and Marine Corps veterans who are current or past students at Gaston College. Since external validity is not a concern in Q methodology, having a thorough concourse is the biggest challenge. The study made an effort to select an equal number of Army and Marine Corps veterans from the pool of veterans attending Gaston College and colleges in the surrounding area, but it was not possible to equally represent both branches of service.

The small sample size and the narrow geographic area from which participants were chosen is acknowledged in the findings of this study. The findings and results will be generalizable to the viewpoints of the participants, and not to the entire population of enlisted

Army and Marine Corps veterans. This can serve as a stepping point for addressing the needs of these veterans on local community college campuses.

Delimitations of the Study

Participants were narrowed to Army or Marine Corps veterans who were of enlisted ranks. No officers were considered, owing to the fact that most officers have already obtained a college degree of some type, thus the research questions would not be applicable to them. Through the literature review, personal experience attending the TAP workshops, personal communications with enlisted Army and Marine Corps veterans, and personal experience teaching enlisted Army and Marine Corps veterans, the most common viewpoints were identified and are part of the concourse items related to the transitional process into community college from the Army or Marine Corps. The study's concourse was developed using all of this information in order to accurately represent the viewpoints of which the researcher is aware and versed. Other viewpoints may be present, and while the concourse will be inclusive, it was not possible to include every person's individual viewpoints. Concourse items were developed so that they fit within the parameters of Schlossberg's theory of transition (1984), and/or the SDT of Deci and Ryan (1985, 1991, 2008). Post-sorting interviews helped identify these individual perceptions that were not included in the concourse.

Summary

This chapter began with a brief overview of the issues facing military veterans entering into community college and continued with a discussion of the impacts of those issues. This chapter then outlined the purpose of this study, provided the theoretical framework for the study, and provided a synopsis of the research methodology and the

research questions that will orient the study. The significance of the study was discussed and the study's limitations and delimitations were summarized as well.

Chapter 2 will be devoted to a comprehensive literature review of the aforementioned topics that will guide the construction of the study and give the context necessary for the study. Chapter 3 will provide insight into the process of Q methodology. Chapter 4 will present the results of the research, and Chapter 5 will undertake the conclusion and interpretation of the data analysis, discuss implications of the findings, and offer suggestions for future research and best practices for aiding military veterans in their transition from the military to community college.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Information used to determine the context of and guide the development and construction of the study will be presented in the form of a literature review in Chapter 2.

The focal point of this research study is to gain insight into the viewpoints enlisted Army and Marine Corps veterans have about the transition in to community college after separation from the military. In order to develop and position this study within the current body of knowledge, as represented by the literature, it was necessary to conduct a thorough literature review. An integrative literature review provides a method for reviewing and synthesizing representative literature pertaining to a certain topic. Integrative literature reviews are often used to address emerging topics in the literature because they allow a researcher to see what research has been done on a topic, synthesize and organize the literature that is available, and see where gaps in the literature might be. New models or frameworks may be developed through this process (Torraco, 2005). This is particularly applicable to this research, as the study of the transition of military veterans from the military into higher education is a relatively new one, and there are many gaps in the literature.

An integrative literature review can help the researcher develop new frameworks and perspectives of a topic, no matter whether it is emerging or established. As a topic develops in academia, the base of literature pertaining to that topic grows. Mature topics may also be addressed through integrative literature review in order to conceptualize all of the information available and to perhaps reframe the mature topic in novel ways (Torraco, 2005).

In order to write an integrative literature review, the author must have a broad idea of what is known about the topic, and have some type of conceptual idea or question about the topic that they want to research. This generally requires the author “to adopt a guiding

theory, a set of competing models, or a point of view about the topic” (Torraco, 2005). The author should then describe how the integrative literature review was conducted, explaining how they selected the literature and how they analyzed, synthesized and reported the literature. Pertinent literature can be found using databases or through examination of the citations from articles obtained using the database search engines. Literature should be included or excluded based upon criteria established and explained by the author. Tables, lists, and appendices, are useful to list the sources of literature reviewed. Authors may completely read articles, or may read only the abstracts first then read the articles in-depth (staged review). Main ideas should be established and described. The end result of the integrative literature review is to provide a critical analysis of the key concepts found in the literature, and to reconstruct the topic for a clearer understanding of its components. Synthesis of existing ideas and new ideas should take place as the author accumulates information from the primary literature (Torraco, 2005).

The area of interest of this study, the viewpoints that military veterans have about the transition from the military into community college, has been developed through a review of the literature concerning the retention and graduation of military veterans in higher education. This topic is relatively new, so an integrative literature review was extremely helpful for organizing and synthesizing the primary literature. Synthesis of the literature is required to refine research questions and to develop the concourse and Q set used when applying Q methodology. Also, synthesis of the current literature will show the gaps in current knowledge which will help identify methods of better aiding enlisted Army and Marine Corp veterans as they make the transition from the military into higher education.

The North Carolina State University library and various academic search engines

were used to acquire a body of literature for review. Search terms included “military veterans and retention,” “military veterans and college,” “military veterans and graduation,” “perceptions of military veterans and college,” “completions rates and military veterans,” “military veterans in higher education,” “retention and graduation rates in community college,” and “retention and graduation rates for military veterans in community college.”

The initial search of literature revealed that there is limited research pertaining to the transitional process of military veterans in higher education and only four articles pertaining specifically to military veterans transitioning into community college (Pellegrino & Hoggan, 2015; Persky & Oliver, 2010; Rumann, 2010; Wheeler, 2012). Also, when using the keywords and searching the afore mentioned data bases, additional pertinent articles could often be found by using “search related” functions and by reviewing the works cited in the articles found through the initial search. Many articles whose titles were promising actually examined other issues related to military veterans in higher education, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI), psychological issues faced by student veterans, sociological issues faced by student veterans, and other topics related to psychology. There was no research discovered pertaining to the perceptions military veterans have toward their transition into community college.

In order to best synthesize the literature that was found, Table 2 was developed to categorize the articles into broad categories that were identified during research.

Table 2. Summary of articles by category

Category	Articles
Demographics/Special Needs	Ackerman, DiRamio & Mitchell, 2009 Bailey, et al. al., 2005 Bragg, 2001 Cates, 2014 Cook & Kim, 2009 Horn & Nevill, 2006 Madaus, Martin, Allegra & , 2009 O'Herrin, 2011 Radford, 2009 Radford & Weko, 2011 Radford & Wun, 2009 U.S. Department of Education, 2008 U.S. Department of Education, 2012 Wheeler, 2012 Wurster, et al., 2012
Civilian Support Services	Ackerman, DiRamio & Mitchell, 2009 Evans, Pelligrino & Hoggan, 2015 Madaus, Martin, Allegra & Graham, 2009 Persky & Oliver, 2010
Completion	Cates, 2014 Radford, 2009 Rumann, Rivera & Hernandez, 2011 U.S. Department of Education, 2012
Social Indicators	Fargo et al., 2012
Community College	Pelligrino and Hoggan, 2015 Persky & Oliver, 2010 Rumann, 2010 Wheeler, 2012

Search terms used were military veterans and retention, military veterans and college, military veterans and graduation, completions rates and military veterans, military veterans in higher education, retention and graduation rates in community college, and retention and graduation rates for military veterans in community college.

Findings from this review of the literature allowed the identification of several categories pertaining to military veterans in higher education. Examination and synthesis of these articles aided in the development of research questions and in the development of the concourse from which the Q-set was drawn for the use of Q methodology. In the next sections, the topical issues and concerns that are pertinent to the study will be discussed. This section will also discuss the retention and graduation rates of non-military veteran community college students, to show that this is indeed a topic of concern for our military veteran students. This section will conclude with a brief summary of the integrative literature review.

Demographics and Special Needs

Military veterans are considered to be nontraditional higher education students. Traditional students undertake higher education immediately or shortly after high school, are generally not married, and generally do not have children. Thirty-three percent of military veterans who are enrolled in higher education are married and have children, 15% are married without children, and 35% are unmarried (Radford, 2009). Fourteen percent of all military veterans are single parents. By serving in the military, veterans delay entry into college until after their term of service is met. Seventy percent of student veterans are enrolled in college part-time. Approximately 85% fall into the 24-29 year age range (Radford & Weko, 2011). Currently, 73% of military veterans accessing higher education are male but with a growing percentage of females enlisting in the military, we should expect that segment of the veteran population to expand. By 2020, female veterans are expected to comprise 10% of the overall veteran population (Radford, 2009), which should increase the percentage of female veterans enrolled in higher education. Diverse racial/ethnic groups are well

represented in student veterans; the percentage of African American and Latino veterans has risen from 15% to 26% post 9/11 (O'Herrin, 2011; Radford, 2009). Some of the most common factors that put college students in high risk categories for non-completion are those that are commonly ascribed to student veterans: delayed entry, first generation college student, financial independence, full-time employment, part-time enrollment, having dependents, single parenthood, and lack of a high school diploma or GED (Cook & Kim, 2009; Wheeler, 2012; Wurster et al., 2012). In 2010, the National Survey for Student engagement found that 60% of student veterans are first-generation college or university students, and almost 2% identified as first-time beginning undergraduate students in 2003-2004 (Radford & Wun, 2009; U.S. Department of Education, 2008; Wurster et al., 2012). First generation college students, on average, are 50% more likely to withdraw from higher education after the first year. First generation college students are often lacking in study skills, academic preparedness, complete fewer credit hours, are more often minorities, and are more likely to come from lower income families. They are also less likely to engage socially in the college setting (Wurster et al., 2012). However, many military veterans may be considered by the institution as college transfer students when enrolling in higher education, instead of incoming freshmen, because many have earned credit from a college or university while in the military or receive credit through military training (O'Herrin, 2011).

An average of 5% of student veterans identified themselves as a disabled student in 2007-2008 (US Department of Education, 2012) Disabilities may be physical, psychological, or categorized in other ways (US Department of Education, 2012). Of the 2.2 million troops deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq, more than 800,000 have deployed multiple times, perhaps creating familial issues due to long periods of separation (O'Herrin, 2011). Between 14% and

19% of those military veterans who were deployed have developed symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI), and/or depression (Ackerman, DiRamio, & Mitchell, 2009; O'Herrin, 2011). Additionally, 27% of military veterans report problems with depression, 43% report problems with anger, and 24% report problems with alcohol abuse (O'Herrin, 2011). Many student veterans with disabilities are unaware of their rights and responsibilities related to their disabilities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), so they do not seek accommodations that could be helpful to them in the classroom (Madaus, Martin, Allegra & Graham, 2009).

Veterans in higher education are, and should be considered, a special population with special needs. In 2007-2008, veterans made up 4% of all undergraduate students (Radford & Weko, 2011), which is a large proportion of the 10% to 12% of the undergraduate population that identifies as special needs students (Horn & Nevill, 2006).

Community colleges are the institution of choice for military veterans. Larger numbers of military veterans will choose to transition out of the military and into a community college setting than those that choose to attend four-year public or private non-profit institutions (Radford, 2009; Rumann, 2010). Enlisted military veterans are more highly concentrated at two-year colleges compared to all other institutional types. In 2007-2008, 43% of military veterans accessing higher education chose community college, 21% chose public four-year institutions, 13% chose private non-profit four-year institutions, 12% chose for-profit institutions, and 9% were enrolled at more than one type of institution (Radford & Weko, 2011). Community colleges are diverse, and are dedicated to serving non-traditional students through open-access, flexible class offerings, and are low-cost, all of which are appealing to military veterans (Bragg, 2001).

Civilian Support Services

Currently, all institutions of higher learning meet the needs of special populations through specialized support services designed to increase the likelihood of successful program completion (Ackerman, DiRamio, & Mitchell, 2009). Student veterans can benefit greatly from support services that are tailored for their specific needs, and from interaction with other student veterans who have an understanding of military life (particularly combat operations). All student veterans have different experiences and perspectives than traditional college students and supporting these military veteran students may mean going beyond what is available to other students (Madaus, Martin, Allegra, & Graham, 2009). Support services can be offered in a variety of different ways. Institutions may offer specific contact points on campus, interdepartmental campus working groups, established student veterans groups (which may also offer faculty and staff education), veteran-specific centers, veteran specific learning communities on campus, academic advising tailored to military veterans, and more (Evans, Pellegrino, & Hoggan, 2015; O'Herrin, 2011). Veterans may be more likely to choose these institutions if they are aware of veteran-specific support.

Degree Completion Rates

Despite these collegiate and military support services, degree attainment takes significantly longer for student veterans than for non-veteran students (US Department of Education, 2012). The six-year degree attainment rate among all first-time, beginning veteran students in 2011 was almost 52%, (compared to 44% of non-veteran non-traditional students). The six-year attainment rate was only 40% in 2009, so there is evidence that support services are having an impact on degree completion, but the length of time to completion has not improved significantly (Cates, 2014; Radford, 2009). The Student

Veteran's Association *Million Records Project* reported overall completion rates for higher education programs over six years vary with branch of service: the Air Force completion rate was 70%, the Coast Guard completion rate was 54%, the Navy completion rate was 52%, the Army completion rate was 47%, and the Marine Corps completion rate was 45% (Cates, 2014). Despite civilian and military support services, the application process and support services at colleges and universities are cumbersome, confusing, and overwhelming for many veterans who choose to access higher education using the Post 9/11 GI Bill. Military veterans have difficulty navigating the institutional bureaucracy often found in the academic environment (Rumann, Rivera & Hernandez, 2011).

Social indicators

Social indicators suggesting a need for higher and more rapid completion rates across all branches of the military are obvious when examining the rate of homelessness and poverty among military veterans. Veterans are overrepresented among the population of homeless and those in poverty in the United States and are at greater risk than nonveterans for becoming homeless or poverty stricken. Veteran status, older age, and black race are significantly and independently associated with homelessness among both men and women. Compared to the general homeless population, male and female veterans are twice as likely to be homeless. Male veterans in the 45-54 year age range make up 41% of homeless veterans. Female veterans were most likely to be homeless between the ages of 18-29 with risk decreasing with age. Male veterans are more than twice as likely as nonveterans to live in poverty and female veterans are more than three times as likely to live in poverty. The overall risk of being homeless or living in poverty increases more than five times for both male and female veterans over the risk of non-veterans (Fargo et al., 2012). Hopefully, if

retention can be increased, and degree completion rates can be shortened for military veterans, they will not be at such high risk for poverty and homelessness.

Community Colleges

Pelligrino and Hoggan (2015), Wheeler (2012), Rumann (2010), and Persky and Oliver (2010) are the only articles identified that specifically addressed the transition of military veteran students into community college. Persky and Oliver (2010) focus on services and programs for military veterans, while both Pelligrino and Hoggan (2015) and Wheeler (2012) examine the transition of military veterans into community college through the frame of Schlossberg's transition theory (1984). Pelligrino and Hoggan (2015) examine the transitional process of two female military veterans in a qualitative study, focusing on Schlossberg's transition model and his 4S framework (Schlossberg, 1981). Wheeler (2012) found three themes emerging from her mixed methods study: academic experience, personal relationships, and benefit bureaucracy. Rumann (2010) focuses on the transitional experience of military student veterans returning to community college after a military deployment and how the experiences of current military veteran students can be used to shape programming and policy.

Summary of Literature Review

This literature review provides information about military veterans and non-military veteran students enrolled in higher education. The literature shows that even though there are support services in place for veteran students, initiated by both the military and civilian institutions, they need improvement. Somewhere in the system, there is a disconnect that creates problems with completion rates when veterans enroll in higher educational programs and, even more troubling, a problem that results in poverty and homelessness in our veterans.

This information supports the decision to examine viewpoints of military veteran students enrolled or enrolling in community college as there is no research pertaining to the perceptions military veterans have toward their transition into community college, a huge gap in the primary literature related to their transition into community college, and what is available is somewhat dated (DiRamio, Ackerman & Mitchell, 2008). As stated previously, much of the literature is related to psychological issues military veterans face. Policy issues are also represented in the literature. Much of the literature focuses on veterans from conflicts before Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation New Dawn (OND, formerly Operation Iraqi Freedom). Literature describing the transition process in military veteran students, or in any nontraditional student population, is lacking (Cook & Kim, 2009; Stalides, 2008). It follows that literature describing the transitional process in military veteran students is sparse, and there is almost no literature related to the transition of military veterans into community college. Most literature pertaining to military veterans who are considering attending or attending college now are related to psychological issues such as PTSD or TBI. There are lists of programs and colleges that have specialized programs for veterans (Evans, Pelligrino, & Hoggan, 2015), but data is not available relating to the continued success of these programs. As stated, literature describing the transition process in military veteran students, or in any nontraditional student population, is lacking (Cook & Kim, 2009; Stalides, 2008).

Additional Methods Used to Gather Information

For this research project, information gathered by attending classes at military installations and through discussion of the transitional process with military veteran students

was heavily relied upon. From these qualitative sources, much useful information about military support services was gathered.

Military support services. Before separation from the military, mandatory attendance to transition assistance programs (TAP) is required for each service member. TAP programs are designed to meet the needs of separating service members during their period of transition into civilian life by offering tracks that lead to employment, education, or starting a business. TAP services are created to ensure the life-long success of service members (Kamarch, 2017). All TAP courses are similar to each other, but may be tailored to meet the needs of the specific branch of service that offers them. For example, the Army's TAP course is called the Army Career and Alumni Program (ACAP). The course is one week long and is mandatory before separation from the Army. The Army recommends that the course be taken up to a year before separation from the military. The week-long portion of the course is very focused on acquiring civilian employment with only a few hours devoted to accessing higher education. Optional two-day workshops are devoted to accessing vocational training or accessing higher education. These provide excellent information for both the transition to academic and vocational higher education programs. However, attendance is often not possible due to the service member's work schedule and/or other duties assigned by their supervisors (ACAP, 2014).

Personal Interviews. When discussing ACAP with servicemen enrolled in the course, it was discovered that there was significant amount of frustration with the limited exposure to information related to accessing vocational and/or higher education programs. Sixty-four enlisted soldiers who were currently taking the ACAP course were asked whether they would take the vocational and/or higher education workshops, and even though forty

stated that they would like to take these workshops most indicated that they would not have time to do so due to time restrictions. Only six service members indicated that they were already scheduled to take the higher education workshop (Landrum, 2014).

Additionally, the same sixty-four soldiers were asked eleven other questions through a written survey in order to gather information related to accessing higher education. These questions are listed in Table 3, and the answers received were used to aid in development of the Q concourse.

Table 3. Questions asked of 64 ACAP enrollees for concourse development

Question
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you planning on seeking a degree from a college or university? If so, associates, bachelors, or graduate? • If you are not seeking a degree, are you planning on continuing your education for specific workforce training? • If you are planning on continuing your education in any way, will you work while you are in school? • Have you identified where you will attend school/take classes? • Have you contacted an admissions counselor from the school to find out the requirements for admission? • Are you familiar with your GI Bill benefits? • Have you contacted the VA representative at the school you are planning to attend? • Do you know how long your course of study will take? • If your course of study takes longer than you expected, will you continue? This could be due to the need for developmental courses, course availability, etc. • Do you feel that you understand the educational system well enough to navigate and be successful in enrolling and registering for classes? • Will you attend the “Accessing Higher Education” workshop? • What is the single most important factor that will help you get into and institution of higher education (college) and stay there?

Summary

Though there is much literature related to the transition into higher education, special populations of students, and even special needs in military veteran students, there is a lack of literature pertaining to the transitional needs of military veterans into higher education (unless the focus is on PTSD or TBI), and almost no literature relating to the transition of military veterans into community college. This is despite the fact that most military veterans choose to enroll in community college for a degree or to acquire credits for a transitional degree before enrolling in a four-year college or university.

The existing literature shows that identifying how military veterans view the transitional process has not been a focus of study, even though understanding viewpoints will allow the evaluation of the process of transition, and the support services dedicated to the transitional process. In the next chapter, Chapter 3, the development and use of the Q methodology will be discussed.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter will provide an overview of Q methodology, and will specifically address its history and application across various fields of study. A rationale for the use of this method to address the study research questions will be discussed. The administrative process of Q methodology will be described, and a definition and description of all of the components of the study will be given. The data analysis technique will be described. Ethical considerations will be addressed, as well.

In order to study the viewpoints of veterans that transitioned into the community college, a methodology will be used that allows the examination of each individual's subjective viewpoints and the comparison of those viewpoints to the viewpoints of other individuals. The study will not examine the "average" viewpoints held by a population, it will examine how individual viewpoints are related to each other and if there are any relationships between demographic factors and viewpoints. Q methodology allows for the study of these individual viewpoints and their comparisons. This chapter will begin with an over view of Q methodology and will examine its uses and applications. The research questions will be reviewed and the rationale and appropriateness for using Q methodology for this study will be discussed. The steps of the Q study will then be outlined in relation to this study. Finally, the ethical considerations that needed to be addressed over the course of the study will be discussed.

Description of Q Methodology

The purpose of using Q methodology is to discover the viewpoints of a subject's world, and to understand an individual's subjectivity about a certain topic. Q studies typically use small numbers of participants and one participant or several can be the focus of the

analysis. (McKeown & Thomas, 2013). The Q methodology is basically a simple adaptation of the statistical technique called Spearman's factor analysis. Factor analysis is, simply put, a method that highlights patterns of association between variables (Bartlett & Deweese, 2015). Spearman's factor analysis is concerned with finding patterns between variables in a given data matrix, or sampling of n persons who have been subjected to m tests. The tests may or may not be related to each other (data may have been collected using different units of measurement), so patterns of relationship are sought out. In this way, factor analysis is simply a method that highlights patterns of association between variables. To do this, correlation statistics are calculated to see if there is association between the variables. Variables are first standardized (Z scores), that is, they are calculated according to their relative position within the overall distribution of scores. The final Z score for each variable is a mathematical expression of the distance between the mean of the sample and a particular data point. Z scores are expressed as standard deviations from that mean, which allows for the comparison of variables that have been generated from data collected using different units of measurement. Associations between variables are noted using correlation, and a reduced number of underlying explanatory factors are discovered; thus is it known as factor analysis. Factor analysis is a data reduction technique, concerned with examining a population, not an individual. Standardizing scores disassociates the scores from the specific individual from whom data was collected, and as such, these scores only make sense when compared to the overall population mean (Watts & Stenner, 2012).

Conversely, Q methodology is concerned with how different individuals compare in relation to specific traits or characteristics and on reflecting the differing perspectives of specific individuals (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Q methodology is a mixed methodology that

allows qualitative research to become quantitative research, as an individual's subjective viewpoint (their thoughts, attitudes, etc.) may be measured and compared to that of another individual or a group of individuals using quantitative methods (McKeown & Thomas, 2013).

When using Q methodology, we are able to compute a factor analysis on one person to discover how their perceptions are ordered. Participants in a Q methodological study are presented with a heterogeneous set of stimulus items, called the Q set, that are actively ranked relative to one another. The Q set must refer to a single object of inquiry or to one particular subject matter. When these items are ranked, the subject produces a novel homogeneous ordering of these items. The ranking shows how the items relate to the individual in relation to their current viewpoint. The person becomes the variable, and the population is made up of the scores (rankings) of a single person. Rankings must be made within a prearranged frequency distribution provided by the researcher. This frequency distribution assumes the shape of the normal distribution. The items in the Q set are ranked and arranged into a normally distributed frequency distribution. Items are ranked from most unimportant through neutral and to most important according to the frequency distribution. Correlation statistics are applied to the rows of the matrix, and the researcher can determine the degree of agreement (correlation) between the items, and between persons who use the same Q set and frequency distribution. In this way, Q methodology can be used to identify a group of individuals who share similar perspectives, viewpoints, or attitudes about particular topics (Watts & Stenner, 2012).

Historically, Q methodology was used in the field of psychology, as it is useful to track the progress of patients by examining their subjective point of view over the course of

their treatment (McKeown & Thomas, 1988). More recently, Q methodology has been used in the fields of political science, health sciences, communications, and other social science fields (Watts & Stenner, 2012).

Uses of Q Methodology

Q methodology allows us to transform qualitative data into quantitative data, using personal experience, perceptions, and attitudes as a quantitative expression. Educators have a tremendous bias towards quantitative data when making policy decisions (McKeown & Thomas, 2013). Quantitative data is used to measure retention, graduation rates, FTE, among others, and is seemingly considered more valuable than an individual's subjective experiences (McKeown & Thomas, 2013). Q methodology allows us transform these qualitative data into the quantitative data that is considered more valuable to policy makers, executives, and leaders in the field of education (Creswell, 2013; McKeown & Thomas, 2013). So, using Q methodology allows us to examine an individual's experience, perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs, those subjective data ignored by traditional qualitative research, allowing us to do so in a qualitative, thus more accepted as valuable, fashion (Watts & Stenner, 2012). This makes Q methodology a particularly versatile study application.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to discover the viewpoints that Army and Marine Corps veterans have about the transitional process into community college after enrolling in community college. Also, the study sought to understand whether the viewpoints are similar or different between branches of military service or MOS and to discover trends among viewpoints after enrollment that might prove a barrier to a successful transitional process

and/or the successful completion of their program of study. The specific research questions addressed using Q-methodology are as follows:

- Question 1: What are the viewpoints of enlisted Army and Marine Corps veterans toward the transition process after transitioning out of the military and into higher education at the community college?
- Question 2: What are items that distinguish the groups, and what are the items that are similar between groups?
- Question 3: Do the viewpoints of military veterans toward the transition process vary according to MOS or branch of service?

Rationale for Using Q Methodology

Current literature suggests that there is some type of failure in the preparation for the transition into any area of higher education that our enlisted military veterans are receiving and there is almost no research concerning the transitional process into community college. By answering the research questions, gaps in the literature will be filled, and hopefully this will allow community college administrators to recognize the source of the failure, and adjust policy.

Implementing a Q Study

Q methodology may be used to find out about a single participant's viewpoints or it may be applied using a multiple-participant design. In order to study the viewpoints of veterans about transitioning into community college, both before and after enrollment, and then to determine if they are commonly held in defined groups, a multiple-participant model must be used (Watts & Stenner, 2012). This study will focus on the methodology used for a multiple-participant model, the steps of which are outlined in Table 4.

Table 4. Q method Summary of Steps

Step 1:	An issue (the concourse) is identified and sampled, which generates the Q-set.
Step 2:	Research participants are selected
Step 3:	Participants utilize the Q sort to express individual perceptions by sorting the Q-set items.
Step 4:	Data analysis (Q methodological factor analysis).
Step 5:	Interpretation of the results of the data analysis.

Note. Adapted from *Q Methodology 2nd edition Series: Quantitative Applications in the Social Sciences* by B. McKeown and D. Thomas, 2013, p.. Copyright by the Sage Publishing Company

First, a research question must be defined and then refined so that study participants can respond effectively to the question by sorting a set (Q set) of provided items from most agree to most disagree. The phrasing of the research question must not be ambiguous, and must only propose one question. The research question should be clear and concise and must be understandable by the study participants so that participants can easily self-categorize based on the ranking of items (Q sort). The researcher will then be able to understand the participant's association with particular groups or factors. If a comparison of two groups is sought, as with this study, the same Q set must be used for both groups and then their results may be compared to one another. Research questions should focus on representation of subject matter, understanding of subject matter, or conduct in relation to subject matter. Studies should not cross these category boundaries. Research questions focused on representation of subject matter measure participants understanding of certain topics, while research questions interested in understanding measure what a topic means to a participant, and questions relating to conduct are focused on what a participant thinks the response to a particular topic might be (Watts & Stenner, 2012). For example, if this study wanted to focus

on representation, research questions would be phrased to gather information on *how* veterans were prepared for the transition from the military to higher education. If this study focused on conduct, the question would ask how the military *should* prepare veterans for higher education after separation from the military. The research questions of this study focus on how veterans view their preparation for higher education, therefore, research questions are phrased so that participant's responses will show how the preparation they received relates to their personal experiences.

Defining the Concourse and Establishing the Q-set

After a research question is developed and refined, the steps listed in Table 4 are undertaken. First, the concourse and Q-set is developed. Q-set items are statements about a particular subject matter, perceived as possible answers to the research question by the participants (Watts & Stenner, 2012). The Q-set items are drawn from the concourse of communication. The concourse is volume of discussion about a particular topic and includes any and all possible responses to the research question. The concourse may be developed in several ways. Q methodology is focused on the shared and divergent viewpoints of study participants, their individual perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes about the topic that is the focus of the study (Bartlett & Deweese, 2015; Brown, 1980, 1996; Stephenson, 1952; Watts & Stenner, 2012). Therefore, developing the concourse naturally will begin by discussing the topic with those individuals well-versed in the topic being studied, or in a relevant field of inquiry (Cross, 2005). The concourse may be developed using these discussions alone, or the concourse may be developed through these discussions in conjunction with a review of pertinent literature (Cross 2005; Watts & Stenner, 2012). Once developed, the concourse will be comprised of the statements, ideas, and knowledge concerning the research topic and it

should be a true representative of all existing facts, beliefs, and opinions concerning that topic (Brown, 1993; Van Exel & de Graaf, 2005). The concourse should be balanced, consisting of all possible attitudes, beliefs, and perspectives currently held about the research topic (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Because of this, the complexity of the topic will lead the researcher in developing the number of items when defining the concourse (Brown, 1980, 1993; Cross, 2005; van Excel & de Graaf, 2005, Watts & Stenner, 2012).

To develop the concourse for this research study, a thorough literature review was conducted, personal communication took place as the transitional process was discussed with Army and Marine Corps veterans who were currently enrolled in community college, and a survey was developed and administered to enlisted individuals enrolled in the TAP course at Ft. Bragg in anticipation of their separation from the Army. The number of concourse items was finalized at 50 items using review from a focus group interview with military veterans and community college experts.

Developing the Q-set

The items in the Q-set are drawn from the concourse after it is fully defined and developed (McKeown & Thomas, 2013). The Q-set is a subset of statements, ideas, and or opinions drawn from the initial concourse (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Q-set items should be written in the first person perspective so that study participants can rank them as such. The development of the Q-set takes a significant amount of time because it must provide good coverage for the research question. It should be a broad representation of the differing opinions held by the population from which participants will be drawn, in other words, as with the initial concourse, it should be balanced. A balanced Q-set will cover as many relevant opinions, ideas, etc., as possible answers to the research question so that participants

will find items to be relevant to their perspective. Care must also be taken to avoid bias toward a particular viewpoint or opinion. Participants should be able to complete the Q sort and feel that they have been able to successfully express their viewpoints (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Watts and Stenner (2012) state that a well-developed Q-set should be broadly representative of all of the possible opinions study participants may hold.

Q-sets may be structured or unstructured. Structured Q-sets are developed as the researcher examines relevant subject matter and divides it into themes or issues, either through a previously developed theory (deductive application), or by observation and research into the subject matter (inductive application). The themes that are discovered become the basis for development of what topics the Q-set must cover. This approach “feels” quantitative. Development of unstructured Q-sets begins in the same fashion, but after the development of key themes the Q-set is developed from the subject matter as a whole, instead of from the different themes. This is a more qualitative approach. Q-sets are often developed as the researcher undertakes a literature review of the relevant academic literature. As the literature review takes place, the key themes relevant to the subject matter will become apparent, and the Q-set will begin to take shape (McKeown & Thomas, 2013; Watts & Stenner, 2012).

The combination of the literature review, the personal communications with currently enrolled enlisted veteran students, and the survey answers allowed for the inductive development of the Q-set for this study. Items were developed using the information garnered from these sources, according to the theoretical frameworks of Schlossburg (1984) and Deci and Ryan (2008) that were discussed in Chapter 1. The Q-set for this study is comprised of 47 items drawn from the concourse.

There are no specific rules for the number of items a Q-set should contain. Generally, a researcher should develop a Q-set of between forty and eighty items (Brown, 1996; Watts & Stenner, 2012), as too many items can be confusing to participants and too few items can limit a participant's expression of their viewpoint. The researcher should take care to not repeat items or word item in too similar a fashion. Q-sets with fewer items often have broader items, while those with more items often have more specific items. No matter how specific the items, researchers should not use language or terminology that will be hard for the participant to understand (Watts & Stenner, 2012).

Establishing the P-Set

The participant group should be made up of individuals who have a defined viewpoint to express about the subject matter/research question, and whose viewpoint is relevant to the research question (Watts & Stenner, 2012). The research questions of this study pertain to military veterans who have completed TAP courses and who have enrolled in higher education. Therefore, the study participant pool should not include individuals currently enlisted who have not completed TAP courses, or military veterans who did not choose to enter into higher education. Participants who have relevant points of view do not have to be chosen randomly; if a researcher feels that a potential participant has a particularly interesting or polarized point of view, they can be selected to participate, especially if they have considerable insight or their viewpoints are pivotal (van Exel & de Graaf, 2005; Watts & Stenner, 2012). Because Q-methodology is focused on the individual and participants need not be randomly chosen, it is important that the participants also not be homogenous, so that prevailing attitudes, beliefs, and opinions may be evaluated (Brown, 1980; Cross, 2005; Watts & Stenner, 2012). The key issue is the selection of a balanced participant pool and this

is dependent on selection by the researcher (Watts & Stenner, 2012).

The number of participants can be quite small, as Q-methodology only requires enough participants to establish the existence of a viewpoint, and to compare them. Large numbers of participants are not necessary, and a general rule of thumb is to have a smaller number of participants than items in your Q-set. Simply establishing the existence of a viewpoint can be a powerful tool for understand subject matter, especially if it is contradictive our counter-intuitive to established ideas about particular subject matter (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Watts and Stenner (2012) suggest a number of participants that is less than the number of items found in the Q-set. Ultimately, the number of participants is determined by the researcher. Using this literature as my guide, twenty-four participants were recruited for this study. All participants will be Army or Marine Corps veterans who were of enlisted ranks and who are currently enrolled or have recently been enrolled in community college. By asking these participants to identify how they viewed the transitional process before and after entering community college, any change in viewpoints will be noted and the correlation of individual, subjective viewpoints will be evaluated. Additionally, by evaluating how demographic characteristics contribute to relatedness of those viewpoints, conclusions will be formulated that reflect how demographics influence those correlations.

Data Collection

Collection of data through ordering of the Q-set is called Q sorting. Q sorting allows the participant to model their perceptions by distributing the Q-sort items into a normal distribution. Q sorting is a synthesizing operation, as every item ranking must be made relative to the ranking of another item. This establishes functional relationships between the Q-set items (McKeown & Thomas, 2013). Q sorting may be done in person or remotely via

mail or online. No matter the method of administration, demographic data is generally collected from participants before beginning the sorting process. Doing so gives the researcher insight into information about the participant that may influence their point of view (Watts & Stenner, 2012).

If data collection is done in person, individual cards each with one item from the Q-set should be produced. Wording or phrasing, length, and complexity should be standardized. A card that generally has the dimensions of 2x5 cm usually works well. The cards should be heavier than regular paper and should be uniform in color and use of font. The items should be numbered in a random fashion. Participants receive oral, written, or both oral and written instructions as to how to complete the Q-sort according to the protocol established by the researcher (Brown, 1980; Watts & Stenner, 2012). A sorting distribution, one that generally resembles a normal distribution, is provided. The sorting distribution shows spaces for placement of the Q-set items. For Q-sorts with 40 items or less, a nine-point (-4 to +4) distribution is recommended, for those with 40 to 60 items an eleven-point (-5 to +5) distribution is recommended, and for more than 60 items, a thirteen-point (-6 to +6) distribution is recommended. Using these guidelines enables the researcher to avoid kurtosis of the distribution. The Q-sort diagram allows participants to place the q-set items in the appropriate position relative to their viewpoint. At the end of the Q-sort, there should be a symmetrical distribution with equal numbers of positive and negative values, so the collective mean of all values in the Q-sort equals 0 (Watts & Stenner, 2012). A sample Q-sort matrix used by Bartlett and Deweese (2015), is pictured in Figure 1.

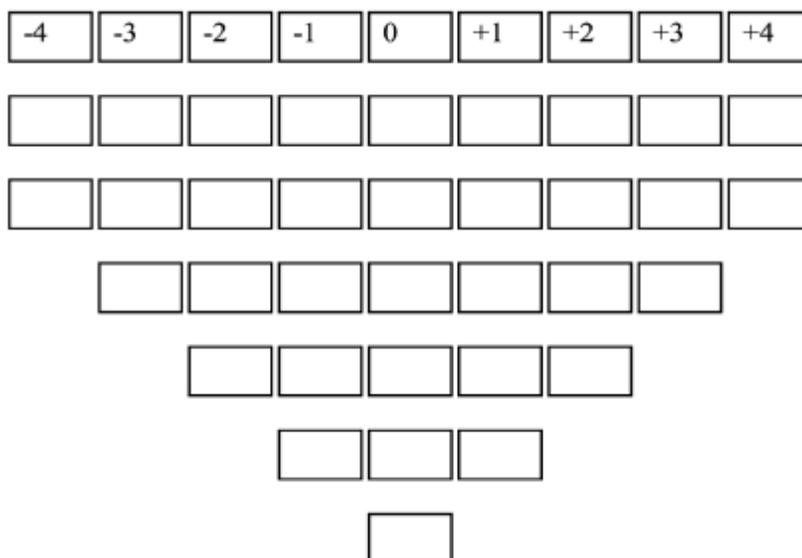


Figure 1. Conceptual Q-sort Grid

Before administration of the Q-sort, participants are given instructions that they are asked to read. Once they understand the instructions and the process, they begin the sorting process where they will rank Q-set items (Bartlett & Deweese, 2015). Individuals are asked to read all items in the Q-set, and to begin by sorting them into three groups – one that indicates they agree with the statements, one which represents non-agreement, and a final grouping containing statements about which they feel neutral or indifferent. It is important to instruct participants to rank the Q-set items related to each other, not as to whether they agree or disagree with a certain item (Watts & Stenner, 2012). While grouping items, participants may move items from group to group, but upon establishing final groupings, they are then asked to rank the items in the group, thus producing the rankings in the Q-sort (Brown, 1993; Watts & Stenner, 2012). Participants will go through the Q-sort items and distribute them onto the Q-sort diagram provided by the researcher. After the process is complete, the researcher records the positions of the Q-sort cards on the diagram and administers any

follow-up questions necessary (McKeown & Thomas, 2013; Watts & Stenner, 2012).

As previously stated, this process can take place using mail or online but a very detailed set of instructions must be available for undertaking the Q-sort process, reporting data, and for responding to any post-sort follow-up questions. Additionally, in-person administration of the Q-sort allows for personal explanation of the process and for a personalized follow-up after completion of the Q-sort (McKeown & Thomas, 2013; Watts & Stenner, 2012).

The post-sort interview may be helpful when analyzing data, as a qualitative follow-up allows for a richer and more detailed understanding of each participant's choices when Q sorting. Interviews should focus on what the items mean to the participant, not why items were sorted in a specific manner. In-person interviews allow for evaluation of a participant's mannerisms, overall demeanor, and more. In-person administration is often recommended, as the researcher can make sure that the participant understands the Q-sort process and can offer the participant guidance on the methodology to use when sorting items so that they will not become overwhelmed by the process (McKeown & Thomas, 2013; Watts & Stenner, 2012).

This study will utilize in-person sorting and follow up interviews. Administration will be uniform but follow-up interviews may be tailored according to participants Q-sort responses.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Analysis of data is done through Q methodological factor analysis. This is a relatively complicated process that produces a number of different ways to answer research questions. Ultimately, the researcher must decide what the best answers are for their research questions, based upon the aims and purposes of their study. Brown (1980) provides the statistical

methodology necessary for analyzing a Q methodological factor analysis by hand, but that is not necessary due to the availability of software that will analyze data for the researcher. PQMethod, R analysis, and SPSS software, among others, can all be used. During analysis, data will be divided into factors either inductively or deductively. Deductive division of factors relies on some preconceived division data, while inductive analysis relies on the trends seen in the data. A correlation matrix is generated using all of the Q sorts completed by participants and factors are extracted based upon common variance between items in the Q sorts. By doing this, we will see which sorts are similar, and which are dissimilar. The basic function of the factor analysis is to account for as much study variance as possible by identifying common or shared meaning between items; these become our factors. There are fewer factors than items and Q sorts, so factor analysis is a data reduction technique. The factor that accounts for the largest amount of variance will be extracted first, and become Factor 1. Factors are expressed as correlation coefficients, and are extracted in order of shared variance. Because factors represent common variance, they represent what the Q sorts hold in common, and Factor 1 should identify the largest proportion of shared of viewpoints. Communality is also measured; communality is the measure of how much a particular Q sort holds in common with other Q sorts in the study group. High communality suggests that a Q sort is typical and highly representative of all of the Q sorts, while low communality suggests that a Q sort is atypical. Eigenvalues are calculated to show the strength of each factor, and to determine if all factors are explanatory (this is the Kaiser-Guttman criterion; a scree test may also be used for this determination). Factors may then be rotated using a by-hand or varimax approach. Factor rotation is used to account for the maximum amount of study variance, and thus commonality in Q sorts. Factor rotation cannot be used to create artificial relationships,

because if a factor has very little common variance, factor rotation will not change that; factor loadings and factor eigenvalues change after rotation, but communality of the Q sorts does not. Factor rotation does allow the researcher to see data and subject matter with more focus. Z, or standard, scores may be calculated for cross-factor comparisons. Z scores will tell which items a factor has ranked in a significantly different way as compared to other factors (Bartlett & Deweese, 2012; McKeown & Thomas, 2013; Watts & Stenner, 2012).

When interpreting the results of a Q methodological factor analysis, the approach depends on the research question. Both cross-factor comparison and the entire item configuration can be captured; to truly understand viewpoints of participants the interrelationship among all factors must be considered. Watts and Stenner (2012) call this methodological holism, and find it to be the ultimate goal of undertaking Q methodology.

Consensus Items. The consensus items are included in the study and will be discussed. Consensus items are statements that do not distinguish between any pair of factors. These statements are valuable because they indicate factors that were ranked by respondents in a similar fashion (Watts & Stenner, 2012). For the purposes of this study, clearly indicating consensus statements establishes what the respondents have in common in terms of difficulties they face, which can serve as a starting point for consideration of best practices to mediate these difficulties at an institutional level.

Distinguishing statements. The concourse items emerging as distinguishing for each factor will be itemized and discussed. It is not only important to identify the highest and lowest ranked statements from the concourse for each factor group, but to also consider their relationship to other items, as they will aid in the development of a more holistic point of view for the respondents. This holistic point of view is the focus of Q methodology, which is

why this method is very appropriate for the focus of this study (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Not only will this method give a holistic view of difficulties that military veterans face in community college, but the very fact that it is a holistic view will allow for the development of programs to address multiple facets of these issues.

Critiques and Benefits of Q-methodology

Q methodology may be used to study a single individual, or multiple individuals. Multiple-participant designs can be carried out in relation to a wide range of topics and applications (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Due to the acceptable small participant size, Q methodology will allow for rigorous methods to be used when funding is limited (McKeown & Thomas, 2013). Also, if two groups are being compared, by focusing on one group and then the other, you may have not one, but two, publishable studies. The comparison may then generate a third (Watts & Stenner, 2012).

Academics frequently criticize Q studies when there is a misunderstanding of Q methodological principles. Probably the most common misconception is that participant size is too low, because Q methodology returns good results with low sample sizes. Several other critiques are very commonly seen when studies using Q methodology are reviewed. First, items with a zero score are often overlooked in their significance to the perceptions of the participant, as they do not carry the emotional “weight” of items found at the most negative and most positive ends of the distribution. The middle score of zero is not an average score, but is a point where Q-set items have no psychological significance to the participant. These items are often overlooked or misunderstood. Secondly, the forced choice of the normal distribution format is often criticized for not allowing for true subjectivity on the part of the participant. In reality, the forced choice may cause participants to enhance deliberation about

items, and then make finer distinctions between items. Finally, some researchers argue that the Q-sorting process is beyond the cognitive ability of many people, which will result in a skewed response. This is simply not true, as has been shown in hundreds, if not thousands, of studies (McKeown & Thomas, 2013).

Q methodology is a good way to answer this study's research questions, since they focus on individual, subjective viewpoints and how those viewpoints compare to those of other individuals. The Q methodology will answer these research questions, plus the mixed qualitative and quantitative information will allow for a more complete picture of how the participants viewpoints relate.

Ethical Considerations/Subjectivity Statement

When conducting research involving human participants, an Institutional Review Board (IRB) must review and approve research projects (IRB, n.d.). Before proceeding with this research study, approval was obtained from the North Carolina State University (NCSU) IRB, and from the Gaston College IRB, the institution most study participants were attending or had attended.

As an instructor and as a researcher, personal communication with military veteran students has fostered the formation of definite opinions about the research topic, as have close, personal relationships with veterans who have attended community college. Because of these relationships, it was critical that no trace of bias was present in the Q-set, and all data were examined objectively. Conclusions are drawn only from data, and not from pre-conceptions. Because of vested interest in the topic, and experience working with veteran students, the researcher has faith in the ability to remain objective and to allow any conclusions to be data-driven.

Recruitment of study participants took place in two ways. Former veteran students were asked to participate and the VA representative at Gaston College provided contacts for Army and Marine Corps veterans currently enrolled at Gaston College who were willing to participate in the study. These methods ensured a balanced and unbiased P-set, as required by Watts and Stenner (2012). Collected data was securely stored, and entered into the statistical program. Confidentiality of participants was and will be protected, as computer files are password protected.

Research Plan

The entirety of the research plan was carried out between October 2017 and July 2018. This included the development of the Q-set, recruitment of the P-set, administration of the Q-sort to participants, analysis of data, and interpretation of findings.

Summary

This chapter began with an overview of Q methodology, specifically discussing the history and applications in various disciplines. The study's research questions were reviewed, and a rationale for the use of Q methodology in this research study was given. The step-by-step process of administering a Q methodological study was discussed, defining and describing the development of all components; establishing the concourse, developing the Q-set, defining the P-set, and administering the Q-sort. Data collection and analysis using statistical software was discussed. Ethical considerations that were addressed over the course of the study were discussed last.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

This chapter explains the findings of the Q sort that was administered to Army and Marine Corps veterans who had transitioned from the military and into community college. In doing so, this chapter will address and answer the research questions put forth in Chapter One.

Twenty-four participants who were currently or previously enrolled in community college responded to the study. Most of the participants were students at Gaston College, the others were personal acquaintances of the researcher. These participants were asked to sort forty-seven concourse items related to the transitional process from the military into community college. As previously stated, these concourse items were drawn from the body of literature on this topic, personal communications with currently enrolled enlisted veteran students, and information gathered while attending transitional courses at Ft. Bragg. Per the recommendation of Bartlett and DeWeese (2015), these participants are familiar with the topic being studied, and have an opinion on this subject matter. The methodology described in Chapter 3 was followed in order to complete this research project.

The goal of this Q study was to address the following research questions:

- Question 1: What are the viewpoints of enlisted Army and Marine Corps veterans toward the transition process after transitioning out of the military and into higher education at the community college?
- Question 2: What are items that distinguish the groups, and what are the items that are similar between groups?
- Question 3: Do the viewpoints of military veterans toward the transition process vary according to MOS or branch of service?

The participants received an invitation to participate via email after the researcher received approval from both the NCSU Institutional Review Board, and the Gaston College Institutional Review Board. Those participants who did not attend Gaston College were contacted personally by the researcher. The data collected addresses the research question as completely as is possible.

Data Collection and Analysis

The participants ranked the forty-seven concourse items in relation to their own experiences transitioning into community college. According to Watts and Stenner (2012), these participants imposed their own personal meaning or psychological significance on to the concourse items and ranked them in relationship to that personal meaning. Once the sorting process was complete, the Q sorts were collected and compared to one another using factor analysis. Factor analysis produces groups, called factors, that characterize the perspectives and mindsets of the participant group as a whole (Hughes, 2016). Participants were forced to rank all of the items in relationship to one another, which is considered to be the most convenient method of facilitating the ranking process (Watts & Stenner, 2012).

Participants submitted their completed Q sorts in person or via email. Once submitted, they were scanned into files and stored in a secure folder. The hard copies were kept in a secure file cabinet.

Participants used rankings from +5 to -5 scale, which indicated that the participant most identified with the statement, or least identified with the statement. There were twenty-four participants; this number is acceptable, as it is generally required to have fewer participants than items in your Q set, and that you need approximately half the number of participants as items in your Q set (Bartlett & DeWeese, 2015; Watts & Stenner, 2012).

P set Demographics

There were a total of twenty-four participants in this study. Of the respondents, 24% represented the Marine Corps ($n = 7$), and 64% represented the Army ($n = 17$). There were twenty-two male participants (88%), and two female participants (8%). The age range of participants at time of discharge was from twenty to forty years, and age at the time of the study was twenty to fifty years, with 50% of participants ranging from twenty to thirty years old. At the time of transition from the military into community college, thirteen participants were unmarried, eleven were married, sixteen had no children, and eight did have children. 83% of participants self-identified as Caucasian ($n = 20$), 12.5% identified as African American ($n = 3$), and 4.5% identified as Hispanic ($n = 1$). Table 5 provides a more detailed breakdown of the demographics of the participants in the study:

Table 5. Participant Personal Demographics

	Overall	
	f	%
Branch of Service		
Army	17	64.0%
Marine Corps	7	24.0%
Gender		
Male	22	88.0%
Female	2	8.0%
Ethnicity		
African American	3	12.5%
Caucasian	20	83.0%
Hispanic/Latino	1	4.5%
Age at time of entry into community college		
20-30 years old	12	48%
31-40 years old	8	32%
41-50 years old	3	12%
51-60 years old	1	4%
Marital status at time of discharge/entry into community college		
Unmarried	13	54.2%
Married	11	44%
Children at time of discharge/entry into community college		
No children	16	64.0%
Children	8	32.0%

Rank at discharge from the military varied from E-3 to E-7, with all participants but one ranking at E-5 or below. 76.5% of participants ($n = 14$) entered community college within three years of discharge from military service. The mean time between discharge and entry into community college was 3.12 years ($s = 5.904$). Table 6 provides more complete information concerning rank at discharge and time between discharge and entry into community college:

Table 6. Rank at Discharge and Time Elapsed Between Discharge and Enrollment

Rank at Discharge	Overall	
	f	%
E3	1	4.0%
E4	8	32.0%
E5	3	12.0%
E6	0	0.0%
E7	1	4.0%
	Total =13	
Time between discharge and entry into community college		
0	7	28.0
1	3	12.0
2	1	4.0
3	2	8.0
4	1	4.0
5	1	4.0
9	1	4.0
	Total = 16	

Participants were asked to rank, on a scale of 1-10, how difficult they felt their transition was into community college. The mean was 6, ($s = 2.824$). Table 7 provides detailed information concerning difficulty of transition into community college:

Table 7. Scale of Difficulty of Transition

Ranking (scale of 1-10)	Overall	
	f	%
1	2	8.0%
2	1	4.0%
3	4	16.0%
4	1	4.0%
5	1	4.0%
6	2	8.0%
7	3	12.0%
8	6	24.0%
9	2	8.0%
10	2	8.0%

Data Collection, Factor Analysis, and Eigenvalues

SPSS and R statistical software were used to analyze the data. Factor analysis is a data reduction technique; it is a way of taking the completed Q sorts and characterizing them thematically so that the differences between the perceptions of the groups become apparent (Watts & Stenner, 2015). Determination of the appropriate number of factors is not a statistically exact science, the researcher must use discernment to determine the number of factors that best interprets the completed sorts (Watts & Stenner, 2015), and in this instance, satisfy the criteria suggested by Brown (2004) and Watts and Stenner (2015). These criteria state that factor groups should have eigenvalues (EV) higher than 1.00, while containing at least two significantly loading participant sorts. This value is derived by summing the squared loadings of all of the Q sorts on a factor, which helps determine the appropriate factor solution (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Q methodology examines this factor group data as opposed to individual opinion statements. Factor groups are characterized and labeled after the statistical characteristics are combined with the qualitative information given by participants at the conclusion of their sorts (Watts & Stenner, 2005, 2012). Factor solutions

were first run for three, four, five, six and seven factors. Table 8 shows a summary of the factor solutions:

Table 8. Eigen Values, Number of Participants that loaded on Each Factor, and Variance Explained for 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 Factor Solutions

	Eigen Values	Number of Participants	Explained Variance	Number of Participants
3 Factors	4.17	9	40.79%	23 out of 24 (95.83%)
	3.16	7		
	2.47	7		
		23 total		
4 Factors	3.92	8	48.67%	22 out of 24 (91.60%)
	3.32	5		
	2.35	4		
	2.09	5		
	22 total			
5 Factors	4.01	6	55.94%	20 out of 24 (83.33%)
	3.31	5		
	2.34	4		
	1.91	3		
	1.86	2		
	20 total			
6 Factors	3.80	4	61.95%	18 out of 24 (75%)
	3.22	4		
	2.09	3		
	2.00	2		
	1.92	3		
	1.84	2		
	18 total			
7 Factors	3.45	5	67.47%	19 out of 24 (79.16%)
	3.09	4		
	2.07	3		
	2.02	2		
	2.00	2		
	1.81	2		
	1.77	1		
	19 total			

As noted in Table 8, factor solutions all produced eigenvalues greater than 1, so the determination of which solution to use became a question of how many participants loaded into each factor solution, and how much variance was explained by each factor solution. As demonstrated, the 5-factor, 6-factor and 7-factor solutions account for the most variance (55.94%, 61.95% and 79.16%, respectively), but only load between 18 and 20 participants, and each has at least one factor group with only two participants loading, and the 7-factor has one group with only one participant loading. The 4-factor group has very high eigenvalues (3.92, 3.32, 2.35 and 2.09), loads 22 out of the 24 participants, and explains almost 50% of the variance (48.67%). Upon further analysis, this group also has one consensus statement. Therefore, it was determined that the 4-factor solution represented the best approach to data analysis.

The eigenvalues for each of the groups in the 4-factor solution are shown in Table 9. It should be noted that the values range from 2.09 to 3.92. A reliability score is also demonstrated; according to Sweet and Martin (1999), an acceptable reliability score is higher than 0.70 on a 1.00 scale. Reliability scores range from 0.92 to 0.97.

Table 9. Factor Characteristics in Four Factor Solution

	Average Reliability Coefficient	Number of Loading Q-sorts	Eigen Values	Variance Explained	Reliability	Standard Error of Factor Scores
Factor 1	0.80	8.00	3.92	16.35	0.97	0.17
Factor 2	0.80	5.00	3.32	13.83	0.95	0.22
Factor 3	0.80	4.00	2.35	9.79	0.94	0.24
Factor 4	0.80	5.00	2.09	8.70	0.95	0.22

Total Explained Variance = 48.67

Another method for determining the number of factor groups is the examination of a scree plot in conjunction with the raw data. Using the scree plot, the raw data, and the correlation matrix allow the researcher to distinguish patterns of similarities in the Q sorts, thus distinguishing patterns of viewpoints of participants (Watts & Stenner, 2012). Upon examination of the scree plot calculated for this data, the bend in the plot shows that a 3-factor analysis would be acceptable, but when combined with the factor solutions generated, the 4-factor solution is still determined to be the best approach for these data.

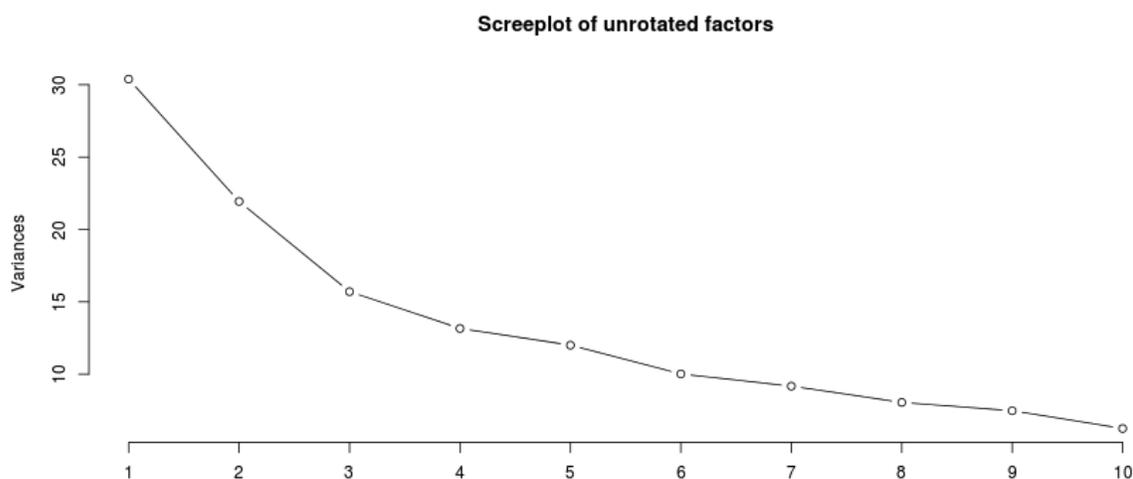


Figure 2. Scree plot representation of appropriate factor solution

Factor Correlation Matrix

The factor correlation matrix demonstrates the similarities between the groups. It is more useful than the determination of correlation between the sorts, as we want to see how the groups relate to one another. Correlation matrices show correlation coefficients that range from +1.00 to -1.00, where +1.00 indicates that one group's response is in agreement with another group's response, and -1.00 indicates that the groups are in disagreement with one

another (Bartlett & DeWeese, 2015; Mertler & Vannatta, 2010). Table 10 shows the correlation matrix for the 4-factor solution:

Table 10. Correlation Between Factor Z-scores

	Factor1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
Factor 1	1.00	0.09	0.05	0.15
Factor 2	0.09	1.00	-0.12	-0.01
Factor 3	0.05	-0.12	1.00	-0.18
Factor 4	0.15	-0.01	-0.18	1.00

It may be noted that the highest level of correlation is between Factors 1 and 4 (0.15), while the lowest level of correlation is exhibited between Factors 3 and 4 (-0.18).

Factor Loadings

Factor analysis determines the relationships between the individual sorters, and allows for the placement of individuals into the factor groups. Those participants with similar sorts will have high correlation, and this information will aid in the determination of how many different sorts are present (Bartlett & DeWeese, 2012). When analyzed, factor loadings are determined for each individual participant's Q sort, which illuminate the extent to which each Q sort is associated with each factor (van Exel & de Graaf, 2005). R statistical software flags the factor loadings; variables generally load on all factors, but only load highly on one factor, which is the group that is best fit for that particular individual sort (Mertler & Vannatta, 2010; Watts & Stenner, 2012). Table 11 shows the factor loadings as determined by these criteria:

Table 11. Flagged Factor Loadings

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
P1 (N)	False	False	True	False
P2 (KS)	False	False	True	False
P3 (TB)	False	False	True	False
P4 (NJ)	False	False	True	False
P5 (GM)	False	True	False	False
P6 (ZD)	False	False	False	True
P7 (DS)	True	False	False	False
P8 (LB)	True	False	False	False
P9 (JD)	False	False	False	True
P10 (DB)	False	True	False	False
P11 (JB)	False	False	False	True
P12 (TB 12)	False	False	False	True
P13 (KS 1)	True	False	False	False
P14 (BL1)	False	False	False	False
P15 (BL 2)	True	False	False	False
P16 (BK)	False	False	False	False
P17 (G)	False	True	False	False
P18 (AA)	True	False	False	False
P19 (GG)	True	False	False	False
P20 (TW)	False	False	False	True
P21(TN)	False	True	False	False
P22(DS1)	True	False	False	False
P23 (DP)	True	False	False	False
P24 (AO)	False	True	False	False

The factor loadings for each individual are reported in Table 12. Eight flagged individuals are found in Factor 1, and their factor loadings range from 0.32 to 0.72. Factor 2

had five individuals with factor loadings ranging from 0.42 to 0.71. Factor 3 had four individuals with factor loadings ranging from -0.44 to 0.72, and Factor 4 had five individuals with factor loadings ranging from 0.44 to 0.66.

Table 12. Factor Loadings by Participant

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
P1 (N)	0.107	0.0626	0.6178	-0.0800
P2 (KS)	0.415	0.2905	-0.5200	0.1017
P3 (TB)	-0.024	0.1603	-0.4351	0.2682
P4 (NJ)	0.178	0.0754	0.7170	0.0817
P5 (GM)	0.177	0.6994	0.0295	-0.1367
P6 (ZD)	0.293	-0.0074	-0.2388	0.4442
P7 (DS)	0.504	0.0258	-0.4030	-0.1651
P8 (LB)	0.322	0.2683	0.0195	-0.0548
P9 (JD)	0.110	-0.4404	0.1474	0.6037
P10 (DB)	0.109	0.7053	0.1696	0.2003
P11 (JB)	-0.040	0.0774	-0.1862	0.6569
P12 (TB 12)	-0.078	-.2403	0.2701	0.4379
P13 (KS 1)	0.608	-0.2545	0.0033	0.0175
P14 (BL1)*	0.423	0.2843	0.1163	0.4965
P15 (BL 2)	0.545	0.0771	0.1344	0.2060
P16 (BK)*	0.471	0.4859	0.2878	-0.1466
P17 (G)	0.274	0.6830	-0.3038	-0.0558
P18 (AA)	0.724	0.0445	-0.0842	0.0937
P19 (GG)	0.696	0.1779	0.2147	0.1206
P20 (TW)	0.028	0.4235	-0.3735	0.5729
P21(TN)	-0.284	0.7011	-0.2004	-0.0016
P22(DS1)	0.629	-0.2499	-0.2162	-0.1416
P23 (DP)	0.716	0.0719	0.3601	0.1402
P24 (AO)	-0.250	0.5061	0.0057	0.1126

Z-scores

Z-scores are used to measure the standard deviation between an item in the Q set and the mean. If an item is a specified number of standard deviations above the mean, this produces a positive z score. If an item is a specified number of standard deviations below the mean, this produces a negative z score. The closer a z score is to zero, the closer it is to the mean (Sweet & Grace-Martin, 1999). When undertaking Q methodology, z-scores are used to determine how significant a specific Q set statement is to the factor on which it loaded. When analyzing Q data, the closer a z-score gets to +3.00, the higher the level of agreement that the item should be placed on the extreme positive end of the Q sort. Conversely, a z score close to -3.00 would indicate an item should be placed on the extreme negative end of the sort (Spurgeon, Humphreys, James, & Sackley, 2012). By examining these scores, the researcher can assess where each item would be sorted within each factor group. Z-scores for each of the Q set items are shown in Table 13.

Table 13. Z-scores by Q-set Statement

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
Q1	-0.913	-0.321	-0.010	-2.288
Q2	-0.668	-0.252	2.335	-2.455
Q3	0.736	0.165	2.378	-1.920
Q4	-0.512	0.831	0.097	0.324
Q5	-1.161	-0.672	-0.646	-0.386
Q6	-0.669	0.365	-0.399	0.849
Q7	1.259	-1.646	0.320	-1.473
Q8	0.272	-1.766	0.320	-1.473
Q9	0.793	-1.467	-1.359	-1.033
Q10	0.579	-1.109	1.770	0.970
Q11	1.982	-0.435	0.512	0.613
Q12	-0.432	1.072	-0.159	-1.309
Q13	0.077	-0.122	-0.300	-1.228
Q14	0.244	.0777	-0.064	-0.374
Q15	0.272	0.958	1.346	-0.947
Q16	-0.394	1.874	1.013	-0.555
Q17	2.294	0.680	0.304	0.534
Q18	-0.314	1.070	-1.185	0.989
Q19	-0.047	1.018	-1.043	-0.226
Q20	0.452	0.045	-0.359	0.437
Q21	1.668	-0.059	1.225	-0.103
Q22	0.965	2.186	-1.126	0.291
Q23	-1.288	-1.241	-0.730	-0.435
Q24	-0.136	1.820	-0.331	-0.345
Q25	-0.755	-1.538	0.733	0.814
Q26	-0.442	-0.565	1.301	1.696
Q27	-0.529	1.677	0.513	0.161
Q28	-1.596	-1.673	-0.838	-0.345
Q29	-0.760	-0.236	-1.027	0.066
Q30	0.764	0.244	0.416	-0.852
Q31	-1.142	0.754	-1.075	-0.111
Q32	1.567	1.346	-0.420	1.972
Q33	1.602	-0.040	-2.278	0.919
Q34	-0.732	0.542	-1.475	-0.361
Q35	-0.397	-0.324	-1.120	1.603
Q36	-1.141	-0.295	-0.343	-0.150
Q37	-0.597	-0.055	0.102	-0.144
Q38	-1.618	-0.985	0.696	2.058
Q39	-0.649	-0.526	1.621	0.934
Q40	-0.354	0.704	-0.135	-0.238
Q41	0.063	-1.193	0.056	0.556
Q42	2.088	-0.265	-1.002	0.837
Q43	0.510	-1.392	0.192	0.098
Q44	0.426	0.069	-0.064	0.537
Q45	-0.876	-0.051	0.119	-0.353
Q46	-1.206	0.326	-0.671	-0.167
Q47	0.714	-0.293	0.792	0.696

Factor Arrays

Factor arrays are used to combine all of the individual sort data found within one factor, and present it in a simplified fashion. Using this method, the researcher may compare and contrast both factors, and Q set items within factors, to each other. This Q study forced participants to rank items in the Q set across a +5 to -5 distribution, which revealed the participant's viewpoint on the difficulty of their transition into community college after discharge from the military. By examining the factor array, the researcher can see where each participant in each factor placed items, on average. For example, when examining Statement Q1: *The grading system for my class was hard to understand*, you can see that Factors 1 and 4 ranked it on the negative end of the sort (-3 and -5, respectively), while Factors 2 and 3 ranked it in a more neutral position (-1 and 0). This factor array can also distinguish consensus and distinguishing statements across the factors, and show you where these commonalities were ranked, on average, during the sorting process. These statements will be discussed following the display of the factor arrays in Table 14.

Table 14. Factor Array

		F1	F2	F3	F4
Q01	The grading system for my classes was hard to understand	-3	-1	0	-5
Q02	I could not maintain motivation to attend class	-2	-1	5	-5
Q03	I could not maintain motivation to study	2	1	5	-4
Q04	I had trouble connecting with an advisor	-1	2	0	1
Q05	I did not understand my GI bill	-4	-2	-2	-2
Q06	Tutors were not available when I needed them	-2	1	-1	3
Q07	I had difficulty establishing trust with my classmates	3	-4	1	0
Q08	I had difficulty establishing trust with my instructors/advisor	1	-5	1	-4
Q09	I had a hard time controlling my emotions in the classroom	3	-4	-4	-3
Q10	I have a disability	2	-3	4	3
Q11	I felt military background/values weren't compatible with the college environment	4	-2	2	2
Q12	I didn't know how to made decisions about my course of study	-1	3	0	-4
Q13	I didn't understand the "mission" of college	1	0	-1	-3
Q14	I had a hard time estimating the study time needed for each class	1	2	0	-2
Q15	I had a hard time initiating study for each class	1	3	4	-3
Q16	I had poor study habits	0	5	3	-2
Q17	I felt like I was out of school (high school/prior college) for too long	5	1	1	1
Q18	I did not understand financial aid	0	3	-4	4
Q19	Finding the right course for my degree that fit my schedule was difficult	0	3	-3	-1

Table 14 (continued)

Q20	My professors could not relate to my military background	1	0	-1	1
Q21	My classmates could not relate to my military background	4	0	3	0
Q22	Balancing school/work/family was difficult	3	5	-4	1
Q23	I couldn't find my way around campus	-4	-3	-2	-2
Q24	Taking care of my family was difficult while in college	0	4	-1	1
Q25	I had no support from my family when I decided to attend college	-2	-4	2	2
Q26	I had no stable income while in college	-1	-2	3	4
Q27	I needed a flexible class schedule so that I could work	-1	4	2	1
Q28	I did not feel secure on campus	-5	-5	-2	-1
Q29	Communication with the school was difficult	-2	0	-3	0
Q30	I wasn't sure what was the right degree path for me	2	1	1	-3
Q31	I had a hard time finding a degree that I could complete in a timely manner	-3	2	-3	0
Q32	I was older than normal freshmen	3	4	-1	5
Q33	I had to take developmental courses (ex. Developmental math)	4	0	-5	3
Q34	I had difficulty with child care	-2	1	-5	-2
Q35	My family thought I should get a job	0	-1	-3	4
Q36	I had trouble connecting with VA rep	-3	-1	-1	0
Q37	I had trouble receiving VA benefits	-1	0	1	0
Q38	My GI bill did not cover all course materials (out of pocket expenses too high)	-5	-2	2	5
Q39	My instructors did not understand my disability/need to miss class for VA appointments	-1	-2	4	3
Q40	I wasn't sure when I needed a tutor	0	2	0	-1

Table 14 (continued)

Q41	The way my instructors communicated with me was difficult for me	0	-3	0	1
Q42	The behavior of non-military veteran students in the classroom was difficult for me	5	-1	-2	2
Q43	I was asked too many intrusive personal questions about my military service	1	-3	1	0
Q44	I had difficulty with how information was delivered in the classroom	1	1	0	1
Q45	I didn't understand the learning objectives for my course/the syllabus was unclear	-3	0	1	-1
Q46	I didn't know how I was performing in the course because of lack of feedback	-4	1	-2	-1
Q47	I had difficulty finding friends that I could relate to	2	-1	3	2

Consensus Statements

When comparing items by factor groups, consensus statements are identified as statements that have no significant difference between any of the factors when comparing z-scores, due to their lack of variance. Identifying these statements adds value to the factor analysis as it allows the researcher to see which statements all factor groups relate to similarly (Klooster et al., 2008). In this study, one statement emerged as a consensus statement, Q44: *I had difficulty with how information was delivered in the classroom*. Factors 1, 2 and 4 ranked this statement a +1, while Factor 3 ranked it at 0. This is a fairly neutral ranking, which suggests that respondents do not feel strongly about this statement. This ranking indicates that even though respondents do not rank this as a very difficult part of

their transitional process, it is still somewhat difficult, and should be considered by the researcher when recommendations are made in Chapter 5 of this discourse.

Distinguishing Statements

Comparisons of z-scores was also used to indicate distinguishing statements. Bartlett and DeWeese (2015) explain that these statements are identified due to the difference in how they are rated between the factor groups. These statements are determined when factors have significantly different z-values ($p < 0.05$), and can be used to identify inconsistencies among the groups (van Excel & de Graaf, 2005). These inconsistencies provide insight into how the factors differ from one another. These statements may also be used to aid in the definition and description of the characteristics of each factor. This analysis resulted in five statements that distinguished all of the factors, and sixteen statements that distinguished two of the groups. The statements that distinguished all factors were Q03 *I could not maintain motivation to study*, Q22 *Balancing school, work, family was difficult*, Q33 *I had to take developmental courses (ex. Developmental math)*, Q38 *My GI bill did not cover all course materials (out of pocket expenses too high)*, and Q42 *The behavior of non-military veteran students in the classroom was difficult for me*. There were four items that distinguished Factor 1 only, five items that distinguished Factor 2 only, one item that distinguished Factor 3 only, and two items that distinguished Factor 4 only. The distinguishing statements will be discussed below within the description of each Factor group. Table 15 shows these distinguishing statements, and tables showing distinguishing factors for each individual Factor group follow in the next sections.

Table 15. Distinguishing Statements

		F1	F2	F3	F4
Q01	The grading system for my classes was hard to understand	-3	-1	0	-5
Q02	I could not maintain motivation to attend class	-2	-1	5	-5
Q03*	I could not maintain motivation to study	2	1	5	-4
Q04	I had trouble connecting with an advisor	-1	2	0	1
Q07	I had difficulty establishing trust with my classmates	3	-4	1	0
Q09	I had a hard time controlling my emotions in the classroom	3	-4	-4	-3
Q10	I have a disability	2	-3	4	3
Q11	I felt military background/values weren't compatible with the college environment	4	-2	2	2
Q12	I didn't know how to made decisions about my course of study	-1	3	0	-4
Q13	I didn't understand the "mission" of college	1	0	-1	-3
Q15	I had a hard time initiating study for each class	1	3	4	-3
Q16	I had poor study habits	0	5	3	-2
Q17	I felt like I was out of school (high school/prior college) for too long	5	1	1	1
Q18	I did not understand financial aid	0	3	-4	4
Q19	Finding the right course for my degree that fit my schedule was difficult	0	3	-3	-1
Q22*	Balancing school/work/family was difficult	3	5	-4	1
Q24	Taking care of my family was difficult while in college	0	4	-1	1
Q25	I had no support from my family when I decided to attend college	-2	-4	2	2
Q27	I needed a flexible class schedule so that I could work	-1	4	2	1
Q30	I wasn't sure what was the right degree path for me	2	1	1	-3

Table 15 (continued)

Q31	I had a hard time finding a degree that I could complete in a timely manner	-3	2	-3	0
Q32	I was older than normal freshmen	3	4	-1	5
Q33*	I had to take developmental courses (ex. Developmental math)	4	0	-5	3
Q34	I had difficulty with child care	-2	1	-5	-2
Q35	My family thought I should get a job	0	-1	-3	4
Q36	I had trouble connecting with VA rep	-3	-1	-1	0
Q38*	My GI bill did not cover all course materials (out of pocket expenses too high)	-5	-2	2	5
Q39	My instructors did not understand my disability/need to miss class for VA appointments	-1	-2	4	3
Q40	I wasn't sure when I needed a tutor	0	2	0	-1
Q41	The way my instructors communicated with me was difficult for me	0	-3	0	1
Q42*	The behavior of non-military veteran students in the classroom was difficult for me	5	-1	-2	2
Q43	I was asked too many intrusive personal questions about my military service	1	-3	1	0
Q47	I had difficulty finding friends that I could relate to	2	-1	3	2

Note: * indicates items that distinguish all factor groups; highlighted rankings indicate which factor group was distinguished by the item.

Factor Groups

The Factor Groups were similar demographically in several ways. There was no obvious factoring due to how difficult individuals ranked their transition into community college on a 1-10 scale in relation to their enlisted rank at time of discharge from the military, ethnicity, sex, marital status at the time of discharge and entry into community college, or in

regards to how much time occurred between their discharge and entry into community college. As noted below, MOS, branch of service, and whether or not participants had children at the time of entry into community college may have played a part in the factor groupings. The four groups that were identified and the titles that characterize them are Factor Group 1, “Mission-missing infantry”, Factor Group 2, “Difficulty finding balance”, Factor Group 3, “Motivation impacted by disability”, and Factor Group 4, “Needs an administrative advisor”. These factor groups will be described below.

Factor Group 1: Mission-missing Infantry (The “Why” Group)

Factor 1 had eight members, which accounts for 37.5% of the loading participants, and 16.35% of the variance that loaded into the factor. Factor 1 was deemed Mission-missing Infantry, because seven of the eight members of the group belonged to the Army or Marine Corps Infantry. Seven Marine Corps veterans participated in this study, and five factored into this group, along with four Army Infantry veterans. Seven members were male, and one was female. The female member was the only member that was non-infantry. Four members of the group were married, and four members had children at the time of their discharge and entry into college. When ranking difficulty of transition out of the military and into community college, Factor 1 averaged 6 on a scale of 10. However, when looking at the individual rankings, six members of this group ranked their difficulty of transition at a 6 or higher (6,7,7,7, 8, and 10), and two ranked the difficulty of transition at 3. One Marine Corps veteran and one Army veteran gave these lower rankings.

Upon review of the highest and lowest ranked items and the distinguishing statements for this group, along with their narrative comments written and expressed orally in the post-sort questionnaire and discussion process, this group was found to be the most

“stereotypical” military veteran student group. They were uncomfortable in the classroom that provides a very non-military environment, those classrooms described as having a lack of discipline and/or “mission” focus. They were mission-focused, but often felt that the mission of college was not that important compared to their past missions while enlisted in the military. These were the veteran students who were not well equipped to accept that failure is a part of college and life. They were well versed and comfortable with the administrative components of attending college, such as using their GI Bill and understanding financial aid.

Table 16 shows that Factor 1 ranked four statements that were related to feeling out of place in a college setting highly, including statement Q17: *The behavior of non-military veteran students in the classroom was difficult for me* and Q42: *I felt like I was out of school (high school/prior college) for too long* which were the highest ranked at +5, and statements Q11: *I felt military background/values weren't compatible with the college environment* and Q21: *My classmates could not relate to my military background* were ranked at +4. Additionally, the last +4 ranked statement, Q33: *I had to take developmental courses (ex. Developmental Math)* could be seen as related to both institutional issues, or feelings of being out of school for too long. The lowest ranked statements suggested that there are no feelings of unease due to problems with their GI bill (Q05 and Q38), feedback from professors (Q46), or feeling comfortable on campus (Q28 and Q23).

Table 16. Highest and Lowest Ranked Items for Factor 1: Infantry

Ranking		
Highest	Q Item	Corresponding Statement
5	Q17	The behavior of non-military veteran students in the classroom was difficult for me
5	Q42	I felt like I was out of school (high school/prior college) for too long
4	Q11	I felt my military background/values weren't compatible with the college environment
4	Q21	My classmates could not relate to my military background
4	Q33	I had to take developmental courses (ex. Developmental math)
Lowest		
-5	Q28	I did not feel secure on campus
-5	Q38	My GI bill did not cover all course materials (out of pocket expensed too high)
-4	Q05	I did not understand my GI bill
-4	Q23	I couldn't find my way around campus
-4	Q46	I didn't know how I was performing in the course because of lack of feedback

The distinguishing statements for this group supported the idea that this Factor group found difficulty “fitting in” to the college environment, and that they had difficulty in the college/civilian environment and with the college/civilian mindset. The distinguishing statements for this group were: Q01 *The grading system for my class was hard to understand* (-3), Q03 *I could not maintain motivation to study* (+2), Q04 *I had trouble connecting with an advisor* (-1), Q07 *I had difficulty establishing trust with my classmates* (3), Q09 *I had a hard time controlling my emotions in the classroom* (3), Q11 *I felt my military background/values weren't compatible with the college environment* (4), Q15 *I had a hard time initiating study for each class* (1), Q17 *I felt like I was out of school (high school, prior college) for too long* (5), Q18 *I did not understand financial aid* (0), Q22 *Balancing school/work/family was difficulty* (3), Q25 *I had not support from my family when I decided*

to attend college (-2), Q27 I needed a flexible schedule so that I could work (-5), Q33 I had to take developmental classes (ex. Developmental math) (4), Q36 I had trouble connecting with my VA rep (-3), Q38 My GI bill did not cover all course materials (out of pocket expenses too high) (-5), and Q42 The behavior of non-military veteran students was difficult for me (5). Statements Q11 and Q42 support this difficulty fitting into the college environment and culture. Statements Q04, Q09, Q17, and Q36, which distinguished only this group, continue to characterize this group as one that had difficulty with the transition from military culture to civilian culture and felt out of place in the college environment, but did not find difficulty in the everyday workings of the community college. Distinguishing statements for this group are listed in Table 17.

Table 17. Distinguishing statements for Factor 1

		F1	F2	F3	F4
Q01	The grading system for my classes was hard to understand	-3	-1	0	-5
Q03	I could not maintain motivation to study	2	1	5	-4
Q04*	I had trouble connecting with an advisor	-1	2	0	1
Q07	I had difficulty establishing trust with my classmates	3	-4	1	0
Q09*	I had a hard time controlling my emotions in the classroom	3	-4	-4	-3
Q11	I felt military background/values weren't compatible with the college environment	4	-2	2	2
Q15	I had a hard time initiating study for each class	1	3	4	-3
Q17*	I felt like I was out of school (high school/prior college) for too long	5	1	1	1
Q18	I did not understand financial aid	0	3	-4	4
Q22	Balancing school/work/family was difficult	3	5	-4	1
Q25	I had no support from my family when I decided to attend college	-2	-4	2	2
Q27	I needed a flexible class schedule so that I could work	-1	4	2	1
Q33	I had to take developmental courses (ex. Developmental math)	4	0	-5	3
Q36*	I had trouble connecting with VA rep	-3	-1	-1	0
Q38	My GI bill did not cover all course materials (out of pocket expenses too high)	-5	-2	2	5
Q42	The behavior of non-military veteran students in the classroom was difficult for me	5	-1	-2	2

Note: * indicates items that distinguish only Factor 1

Figure 3 demonstrates a model Q sort for this factor. While this model aids in the perception of this group, supporting the information gathered through the high and low items

and distinguishing factors, the open ended-questions added a tremendous wealth of information pertaining to what these participants view as difficult about their transitional process.

Least difficult		Neutral						Most Difficult		
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5
I did not feel secure on campus	I did not understand my GI bill	The grading system for my classes was hard to understand	I could not maintain motivation to attend class	I had trouble connecting with an advisor	I had poor study habits	I had difficulty establishing trust with my instructors /advisor	I could not maintain motivation to study	I had difficulty establishing trust with my classmates	I felt military background/values weren't compatible with the college environment	The behavior of non-military veteran students in the classroom was difficult for me
My GI bill did not cover all course materials (out of pocket expenses too high)	I couldn't find my way around campus	I had a hard time finding a degree that I could complete in a timely manner	Tutors were not available when I needed them	I didn't know how to make decisions about my course of study	I did not understand financial aid	I didn't understand the "mission" of college	I have a disability	I had a hard time controlling my emotions in the classroom	My classmates could not relate to my military background	I felt like I was out of school (high school/prior college) for too long
	I didn't know how I was performing in the course because of lack of feedback	I had trouble connecting with VA rep	I had no support from my family when I decided to attend college	I had no stable income while in college	Finding the right course for my degree that fit my schedule was difficult	I had a hard time estimating the study time needed for each class	I wasn't sure what was the right degree path for me	Balancing school/work/family was difficult	I had to take developmental courses (ex. Developmental math)	
		I didn't understand the learning objectives for my course/the syllabus was unclear	Communication with the school was difficult	I needed a flexible class schedule so that I could work	Taking care of my family was difficult while in college	I had a hard time initiating study for each class	I had difficulty finding friends that I could relate to	I was older than normal freshmen		
			I had difficulty with child care	I had trouble receiving VA benefits	My family thought I should get a job	My professors could not relate to my military background	I wasn't sure what was the right degree path for me			
				My instructors did not understand my disability/need to miss class for VA appointments	I wasn't sure when I needed a tutor	I was asked too many intrusive personal questions about my military service				
				The way my instructors communicated with me was difficult for me	I had difficulty with how information was delivered in the classroom					

Figure 3. Model sort for Factor Group 1

Note: Distinguishing items are highlighted in red, consensus items are highlighted in green.

When the narrative comments were considered, a picture of a group of veterans very much out of place in the “mission-less” environment of college continued to emerge. Participants were asked open-ended questions related to what was difficult, easy, and unexpected about their transitional process. Participants were also asked why they ranked items in the +5 or -5 spot, and if there were any items that they felt should have been included in the sort, but were not.

Several participants commented that having no connections with other veterans was difficult, “...*(not) being able to find another veteran to go through the journey and transition, it makes it difficult to do something in a new place. Being able to connect with another (veteran) helps to lower the stress level of the whole journey and process.*” The lack of discipline in the classroom was difficult for every participant to cope with. One participant stated that “*Teachers that don’t have control of their class was the worst! During one class where an instructor had little control I had an outburst to shut down a kid who just wouldn’t shut up talking!*” Another stated that “*...what was difficult was the atmosphere in the rooms, if that makes any sense. I would sit in the back of every class and found it was hard to adjust and bring myself along with my guard down.*” Several commented that it was hard for them to adjust to the fact that most students aren’t professionally mannered, are apathetic towards learning, and do not have a mission-mindset. One participant felt that the military veteran personality “*...doesn’t mix well with young civilians.*” All of the participants expressed feeling “behind” intellectually due to being out of the classroom for so long and several commented on the financial difficulties of leaving the security of the military and having to work as a civilian where their MOS did not apply. All of the members of Factor 1 expressed the next two statements in some way, but two individuals expressed these ideas very

succinctly, stating *“Most students have been in school the entirety of their lives. Once in the military, it’s almost (like) everything you have ever learned is erased, and replaced with what they (the military) want. Then, when you are discharged, you are expected to know how to be a civilian immediately,”* and *“I think once you come home from a war where your job was to protect your friends, motivation to get a degree for a job is not as vital...”*

There were aspects that Factor 1 found easy: they all stated that the focus and discipline the military instilled in them was very helpful, that they had a good work ethic, and were able to pay attention to detail. Several mentioned that their VA representative at their college was a huge help in understanding their GI Bill and the *“ins and outs”* of registration, transferring credits, and other *“housekeeping”* tasks.

When discussing unexpected barriers, most participants in Factor 1 expressed that they did not foresee their personal life impacting their success in school as much as it did. Several participants discussed the mission mindset of the military, and how they were taught that failure is not an option. One stated *“The Marine Corps instills in us failure is not an option. The problem with civilian life is there are going to be failures, regardless of preparations made. Veterans need to understand and exercise self-control once failure has occurred.”* He went on to state in conversation that he felt veteran students needed to develop tenacity, and because they were not used to failing, this may lead to the abuse of alcohol, drugs, and the high suicide rates in military veterans. Another participant reiterated this in a way by stating that military veterans needed to lose unhealthy behaviors and gain socially acceptable and healthy ones, such as understanding how to cope with failure.

When asked what items they would have liked to see in the Q sort, many suggested more items about how family life impacted their success in college. Several suggested items

related to how civilians viewed their military service, such as how professors and other students viewed them, and whether or not they ever felt judged for their service. Those individuals suggesting these items noted that they felt that they were judged “poorly” by other students and some professors for their service.

When reviewing Factor 1, it emerged that this group’s difficulties lie in a lack of connection with other veterans who can help navigate civilian culture and communicate what to expect in the classroom environment. Coping strategies for civilian behavior, and for overcoming feelings of inadequacy due to length of time out of the school, should be communicated.

Factor Group 2: Difficulty finding balance (The “When” Group)

Factor 2 had five members, which accounts for 22.7% of the loading participants, and 13.83% of the variance that loaded into the factor. Factor 2 was named “Difficulty finding balance.” This group is made up of four Army and one Marine Corps veterans with two known MOS: two firefighters, two combat medics, and one non-disclosed. Two members of the group were married and three had children at the time of discharge and entry into community college. All members were male. When ranking difficulty of transition on a 1-10 scale, Factor 2 averaged 7 (individual ranks of 3, 6, 8, 9, 9).

Upon review of the highest and lowest ranked items, the distinguishing statements, and the narrative comments expressed in the post-sort questionnaire and discussion, this group was more typical of non-traditional community college students who have to balance work, family, and school. The fact that these group members were military veterans did not impact their college experience greatly. They did not have problems relating to non-veteran

students and they did not have problems assimilating to civilian culture after immersion in that of the military.

Table 18 shows that Factor 2 ranked statements concerning performance in the classroom, and balancing work, family and school as the most difficult during the transitional process, with Q16: *I had poor study habits* and Q22: *Balancing school/work/family was difficult* ranked at +5. The items at +4 (Q24, Q27, and Q32) relate to balancing work, family, and school, and also address the feeling of being out of place in college due to age. The concourse items ranked at -5 were Q08: *I had difficulty establishing trust with my instructors/advisor* and Q28: *I did not feel secure on campus*, along with the items ranked at -4 (Q07, Q09, Q25), which indicated that the participants were comfortable in the classroom, with other students, and on campus.

Table 18. Highest and lowest ranked items for Factor 2

Ranking		
Highest	Q Item	Corresponding Statement
5	Q16	I had poor study habits
5	Q22	Balancing school/work/family was difficult
4	Q24	Taking care of my family was difficult while in college
4	Q27	I needed a flexible class schedule so that I could work
4	Q32	I was older than normal freshmen
Lowest		
-5	Q08	I had difficulty establishing trust with my instructors/advisors
-5	Q28	I did not feel secure on campus
-4	Q07	I had difficulty establishing trust with my classmates
-4	Q09	I had a hard time controlling my emotions in the classroom
-4	Q25	I had no support from my family when I decided to attend college

The distinguishing statements for this group were: Q03 *I could not maintain motivation to study* (+1), Q07 *I had difficulty establishing trust with my classmates* (-4), Q10

I have a disability (-3), Q11 I felt my military background/values weren't compatible with the college environment (-2), Q12 I didn't know how to make decisions about my course of study (+3), Q16 I had poor study habits (+5), Q19 Finding the right course for my degree that fit my schedule was difficult (+3), Q22 Balancing school/work/family was difficult (+5), Q24 Taking care of my family was difficult while in college (+4), Q25 I had no support from my family when I decided to attend college (-4), Q27 I needed a flexible schedule so that I could work (+4), Q31 I had a hard time finding a degree that I could complete in a timely manner (+1), Q33 I had to take developmental classes (ex. Developmental math) (0), Q34 I had difficulty with child care (+1), Q38 My GI bill did not cover all course materials (out of pocket expenses too high) (-2), Q40 I wasn't sure when I needed a tutor (+2), Q41 The way my instructors communicated with me was difficult for me (-3), Q42 The behavior of non-military veteran students was difficult for me (-1), Q43 I was asked too many intrusive personal questions about my military service (-3), and Q47 I had difficulty finding friends I could relate to (-1). These statements also supported the idea that this Factor group found balancing school with work and family difficult. Their rankings of statements that indicated difficulty making the transition from military to civilian culture (Q07, Q11, Q43) were opposite of those rankings by Factor 1, showing that the cultural and social changes were not what this group found difficult about the transitional process. Distinguishing statements unique to this factor group were Q24, Q40, Q41, and Q43. Q24: *Taking care of my family was difficult while in college* and Q40: *I wasn't sure when I needed a tutor* were again related to balancing work with school and family, while Q41: *The way my instructors communicated with me was difficult for me* and Q43: *I was asked too many intrusive personal questions about my military service* reiterated that these military veterans did not find difficulty in

transition due to the cultural and social shift from military to civilian life. The distinguishing statements for Factor 2 are listed in Table 19.

Table 19. Distinguishing Statements for Factor 2

		F1	F2	F3	F4
Q03	I could not maintain motivation to study	2	1	5	-4
Q07	I had difficulty establishing trust with my classmates	3	-4	1	0
Q10	I have a disability	2	-3	4	3
Q11	I felt military background/values weren't compatible with the college environment	4	-2	2	2
Q12	I didn't know how to made decisions about my course of study	-1	3	0	-4
Q16	I had poor study habits	0	5	3	-2
Q19	Finding the right course for my degree that fit my schedule was difficult	0	3	-3	-1
Q22	Balancing school/work/family was difficult	3	5	-4	1
Q24*	Taking care of my family was difficult while in college	0	4	-1	1
Q25	I had no support from my family when I decided to attend college	-2	-4	2	2
Q27	I needed a flexible class schedule so that I could work	-1	4	2	1
Q31	I had a hard time finding a degree that I could complete in a timely manner	-3	2	-3	0
Q33	I had to take developmental courses (ex. Developmental math)	4	0	-5	3
Q34	I had difficulty with child care	-2	1	-5	-2
Q38	My GI bill did not cover all course materials (out of pocket expenses too high)	-5	-2	2	5
Q40*	I wasn't sure when I needed a tutor	0	2	0	-1
Q41*	The way my instructors communicated with me was difficult for me	0	-3	0	1
Q42	The behavior of non-military veteran students in the classroom was difficult for me	5	-1	-2	2
Q43*	I was asked too many intrusive personal questions about my military service	1	-3	1	0
Q47	I had difficulty finding friends that I could relate to	2	-1	3	2

Note: * indicates items that distinguish only Factor 2.

Figure 5 demonstrates a model Q sort for this factor. This model gives us insight into the perceptions of this group, and the open-ended questions support the information given by this sort. Both support the information discovered through both the high and low rankings and the distinguishing statements for this Factor.

Least Difficult

Neutral

Most Difficult

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5
I had difficulty establishing trust with my instructors/advisor	I had difficulty establishing trust with my classmates	I have a disability	I did not understand my GI bill	The grading system for my classes was hard to understand	I didn't understand the "mission" of college	I could not maintain motivation to study	I had trouble connecting with an advisor	I didn't know how to make decisions about my course of study	Taking care of my family was difficult while in college	I had poor study habits
I did not feel secure on campus	I had a hard time controlling my emotions in the classroom	I couldn't find my way around campus	I felt military background/values weren't compatible with the college environment	I could not maintain motivation to attend class	My professors could not relate to my military background	Tutors were not available when I needed them	I had a hard time estimating the study time needed for each class	I had a hard time initiating study for each class	I needed a flexible class schedule so that I could work	Balancing school/work/family was difficult
	I had no support from my family when I decided to attend college	The way my instructors communicated with me was difficult for me	I had no stable income while in college	My family thought I should get a job	My classmates could not relate to my military background	I felt like I was out of school (high school/prior college) for too long	I had a hard time finding a degree that could complete in a timely manner	I did not understand financial aid	I was older than normal freshmen	
		I was asked too many intrusive personal questions about my military service	My GI bill did not cover all course materials (out of pocket expenses too high)	I had trouble connecting with VA rep	Communication with the school was difficult	I wasn't sure what was the right degree path for me	I wasn't sure when I needed a tutor	I was older than normal freshmen		
			My instructors did not understand my disability/need to miss class for VA appointments	The behavior of non-military veteran students in the classroom was difficult for me	Finding the right course for my degree that fit my schedule was difficult	I had difficulty with child care	I wasn't sure what was the right degree path for me			
				I had difficulty finding friends that could relate to	I had to take developmental courses (ex. Developmental math)	I had difficulty with how information was delivered in the classroom				

Figure 4. Model sort for Factor Group 2

Note: Distinguishing items are highlighted in red, consensus items are highlighted in green.

When addressing the open-ended questions, these participants continue to construct the viewpoint that the balancing act of work, school, and family are most difficulty. All respondents stated this in some fashion, *“Balancing work, family, school and personal life (was most difficult),” “...trying to support my son alone has been difficult,”* and *“Managing time to study and work as well as taking care of a family.”* Participants also expressed frustration with taking classes at night, due to fewer support services available on campus at that time. Several expressed difficulty in *“understanding the process”* of using the GI Bill, enrolling in classes, and finding tutors if needed. This group also commented on the impact of their mental health on finding the right balance. Even though Factor 2 ranked Q10: *I have a disability* as a -3, some comments suggested that this might have some impact on their difficulty of transition, stating *“I have terrible study habits, I always have from high school. Finding the motivation and struggling with depression can be incredibly difficult...”* and *“I struggle with anxiety and depression. Sometimes it’s hard to even get up in the morning and (get to) class on time. Only missing a couple of days a semester can be really challenging, it’s not the schools fault but (it is) a real challenge maintaining my mental health through it all.”* This Factor also mentioned the TAP course required before discharge from the military several times. The TAP course was viewed negatively, as not *“preparing us for how difficult it (the transitional process) can be.”*

When commenting on what was easiest about their transition, members of Factor 2, like those of Factor 1, commented on their self-discipline, motivation, and tenacity, expressing *“The military teaches to get the job done no matter the circumstances, without complaining to your superiors.”* Having an experienced, well-versed VA representative was mentioned as one of the factors that had the most impact on easing the transition into

community college. Two members of the group mentioned personal choice as a factor that eased the transitional process.

Unexpected difficulties all centered on balancing work, school, and family, and the unexpected result of these issues. Two members of Factor 2 commented on the difficulty of completing a degree in a timely manner because they had to attend night classes due to working during the day, another commented on the struggle to find child care while they were in class, and one commented on the lack of traditional classes offered at night, while two commented that the lack of traditional classes “...made it hard to find courses that the GI bill would pay for 100%.”

When asked what items they would like to see in the Q sort, suggested items related to a lack of traditional courses offered at non-traditional times and the explanation of GI bill benefits. Three respondents simply replied that they had no suggestions.

When reviewing Factor 2, it can be seen that this group’s difficulties lie not in bridging a cultural shift but in finding a balance between work, school, and family. Whether a parent or not, married or not, this group found it necessary to work while attending school. Factor 2 is more typical of a non-traditional college student, facing issues related to being a student, not specifically to being a military veteran. Their difficulties could be mitigated with programming focused on strategies for balancing work, family, and school, and with better advising as to what courses to take that will allow them to graduate in a timely fashion.

Factor Group 3: Motivation impacted by disability (The “What” Group)

Factor 3 had four members, which accounts for 18.2% of the loading participants, and 9.79% of the variance. All members of this group were male, three were married and none had children at the time of transition into community college. All were veterans of the Army.

Each had a different MOS: one combat medic, one military police officer, one geospatial engineer, and one artillery specialist. The mean difficulty ranking on a score of 1-10 was 6.25 but the individual rankings were quite different at 2, 5, 8 and 10.

As with the other Factors, the highest and lowest ranked items, along with the distinguishing statements and participant narratives were reviewed. Upon this review, this group was found to have difficulty with good study habits, and expressed that their disability made self-motivation and the development of good study habits difficult. Because of this, Factor 3 was characterized as “Motivation impacted by disability.”

Table 18 shows the high and low rankings of the Q sort items. The concourse items ranked at +5 (Q02 and Q030) were related to a lack of motivation with respect to college courses (*I could not maintain motivation to attend class* and *I could not maintain motivation to study*). One item ranked at +4, Q15: *I had a hard time initiating study for each class*, reinforced that lack of motivation was the biggest difficulty faced, but the other two items ranked at +4 concerned the participants’ diagnosis of a disability. Q10 states *I have a disability*, and Q39 states *My instructors did not understand my disability/need to miss class for VA appointments*. The lowest ranked items were in opposition to the previous factors; this group expresses no difficulty in balancing work, school and family (Q22: *Balancing school/work/family was difficult*) or in bridging military to civilian culture (Q09: *I had a hard time controlling my emotions in the classroom* and Q33: *I had to take Developmental courses (ex. Developmental math)*), or in administrative tasks (Q18: *I did not understand financial aid*).

Table 20. Highest and Lowest Ranked Items for Factor 3

Ranking		
Highest	Q Item	Corresponding Statement
5	Q02	I could not maintain motivation to attend class
5	Q03	I could not maintain motivation to study
4	Q10	I have a disability
4	Q15	I had a hard time initiating study for each class
4	Q39	My instructors did not understand my disability/need to miss class for VA appointments
Lowest		
-5	Q33	I had to take developmental courses (ex. Developmental math)
-5	Q34	I had difficulty with child care
-4	Q09	I had a hard time controlling my emotions in the classroom
-4	Q18	I did not understand financial aid
-4	Q22	Balancing school/work/family was difficult

The distinguishing statements for Factor 3 are listed in Table 21. These statements are as follows: Q02 *I could not maintain motivation to attend class* (+5), Q03 *I could not maintain motivation to study* (+5), Q10 *I have a disability* (+4), Q11 *I felt my military background/values weren't compatible with the college environment* (+2), Q16 *I had poor study habits* (+3), Q19 *Finding the right course for my degree that fit my schedule was difficult* (-3), Q22 *Balancing school/work/family was difficult* (-4), Q32 *I was older than normal freshmen* (-1), Q33 *I had to take developmental classes (ex. Developmental math)* (-5), Q34 *I had difficulty with child care* (-5), Q38 *My GI bill did not cover all course materials (out of pocket expenses too high)* (+2), Q39 *My instructors did not understand my disability/need to miss class for VA appointments* (+4), and Q42 *The behavior of non-military veteran students was difficult for me* (-2). Only one statement (Q32) distinguished Factor 3 only (*I was older than normal freshmen*, ranked at -1). Taken into consideration with the other distinguishing statements, the characteristics of this group emerge more fully. This

group is distinguished by a lack of motivation to study and attend class, poor study habits, and their disabilities and the problems those disabilities bring in the classroom. This group does not seem to have difficulty in transitioning from military to civilian culture, and even though motivation to perform in coursework is difficult to maintain, they have a good understanding of the administrative tasks (GI Bill, financial aid, finding the right courses that fit their schedule) associated with being a student. Factor 3 expresses no difficulty with balancing school, work and family; in fact, this group ranks Q22: *Balancing school/work/family was difficult* as a -4, which is the lowest ranking of any Factor.

Table 21. Distinguishing Statements for Factor 3

		F1	F2	F3	F4
Q02	I could not maintain motivation to attend class	-2	-1	5	-5
Q03	I could not maintain motivation to study	2	1	5	-4
Q10	I have a disability	2	-3	4	3
Q16	I had poor study habits	0	5	3	-2
Q18	I did not understand financial aid	0	3	-4	4
Q19	Finding the right course for my degree that fit my schedule was difficult	0	3	-3	-1
Q22	Balancing school/work/family was difficult	3	5	-4	1
Q32*	I was older than normal freshmen	3	4	-1	5
Q33	I had to take developmental courses (ex. Developmental math)	4	0	-5	3
Q34	I had difficulty with child care	-2	1	-5	-2
Q35	My family thought I should get a job	0	-1	-3	4
Q38	My GI bill did not cover all course materials (out of pocket expenses too high)	-5	-2	2	5
Q39	My instructors did not understand my disability/need to miss class for VA appointments	-1	-2	4	3
Q42	The behavior of non-military veteran students in the classroom was difficult for me	5	-1	-2	2

Note: * indicates items that distinguish only Factor 3.

Figure 5 demonstrates a model Q sort for this factor. This model gives us insight into the perceptions of this group, and the open-ended questions support the information given by this sort. Both of these support the information discovered through both the high and low rankings the distinguishing statements for this Factor.

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5
I had to take developmental courses (ex. Developmental math)	I had a hard time controlling my emotions in the classroom	Finding the right course for my degree that fit my schedule was difficult	I did not understand my GI bill	Tutors were not available when I needed them	The grading system for my classes was hard to understand	I had difficulty establishing trust with my classmates	I felt military background/ values weren't compatible with the college environment	I had poor study habits	I have a disability	I could not maintain motivation to attend class
I had difficulty with child care	I did not understand financial aid	Communication with the school was difficult	I couldn't find my way around campus	I didn't understand the "mission" of college	I had trouble connecting with an advisor	I had difficulty establishing trust with my instructors/ advisor	I had no support from my family when I decided to attend college	My classmates could not relate to my military background	I had a hard time initiating study for each class	I could not maintain motivation to study
	Balancing school/work/family was difficult	I had a hard time finding a degree that I could complete in a timely manner	I did not feel secure on campus	My professors could not relate to my military background	I didn't know how to made decisions about my course of study	I felt like I was out of school (high school/prior college) for too long	I needed a flexible class schedule so that I could work	I had no stable income while in college	My instructors did not understand my disability/need to miss class for VA appointments	
		My family thought I should get a job	The behavior of non-military veteran students in the classroom was difficult for me	Taking care of my family was difficult while in college	I had a hard time estimating the study time needed for each class	I wasn't sure what was the right degree path for me	My GI bill did not cover all course materials (out of pocket expenses too high)	I had difficulty finding friends that I could relate to		
			I didn't know how I was performing in the course because of lack of feedback	I was older than normal freshmen	I wasn't sure when I needed a tutor	I had trouble receiving VA benefits				
				I had trouble connecting with VA rep	The way my instructors communicated with me was difficult for me	I was asked too many intrusive personal questions about my military service				
					I had difficulty with how information was delivered in the classroom	I didn't understand the learning objectives for my course/the syllabus was unclear				

Figure 5. Model sort for Factor Group 3

Note: Distinguishing items are highlighted in red, consensus items are highlighted in green.

When the written and oral comments given through the post-sort questionnaire and interview were considered, a more complete description of this Factor developed. When asked what was most difficult about the transitional process into community college, several comments related to how a disability impacted college performance. One participant stated, *“I have disabilities such as anxiety and depression which have affected me in every aspect of my life. I barely know how to function anymore, and I’m trying to be serious about college but I have no idea what I am doing”* and *“I have PTSD, but wasn’t diagnosed at the time (of transitioning into community college).”* Even though balancing work with school wasn’t highly ranked as difficult, respondents in Factor 3 commented on the fact that it was hard to work and attend classes, and that it was difficult when your MOS did not transfer well into the civilian world: *“The most difficult part (with respect to transitioning) was finding out exactly what I wanted to do for a career. Why? I chose a MOS in the military that was difficult...to transfer to the civilian world. I eventually found that computer networking was good fit for me. There are not many fields that artillery can cross into.”* Several members of Factor 3 commented on the fact that they had no direction, no advising as to what career path to take, and no preparation for choosing a civilian career while enlisted in the military. *“There is no direction (in the military, for civilian life). I am good and believe I could excel in multiple areas/careers but I have no idea what I want to do. I think that if the military actually gave us time to experience things and possible careers it would help.”* There were also comments related to feeling out of place due to being older than other students and several commented on the fact that they had to relearn information from high school and relearn study habits because they had been out of school for so long. The lack of motivation to study was mentioned in multiple comments.

The easiest aspects of the transitional process were not expanded upon as much as difficult aspects. A good VA representative was mentioned as being valuable in making the transitional process easier. Others stated that it was easy to keep up with the expectations of professors, *“The easiest part would have to be keeping up with the standards and structure that the professors had (in place) for their class, even though some were tough and hard to balance with all of the other courses...if that is the expectation, then I needed to meet it”* and *“Classes were the easiest part. Get a syllabus, do work, show up prepared. It was a cake-walk.”*

Unexpected difficulties revolved around “adulthood”, or knowing how to survive on your own. One respondent stated, *“In some ways the average soldier is very sheltered/spoiled. I was single while enlisted, so I was probably more sheltered from responsibility than most. I had nine months to work on getting up to speed, before I went into college.”* Other respondents reiterated this point of view, stating that when they were enlisted, they were sheltered from the responsibility of being an adult. A lack of peer support and difficulty meeting other veterans was mentioned in the comments, as well as a lack of confidence in the civilian world, due to the internalization in the military that *“no failure is accepted”*.

When asked what items they would have liked to see in the Q sort, suggestions focused on items relating to supporting oneself while in college, and on a statement addressing the fact that veterans were “cliquish” with regard to non-veteran students. Additional comments were made about the Q sort, *“ I personally couldn’t have added any more statements to the list. I feel like it truly brought out some good issues that apply to most veterans in school”* and *“...actually seeing all of the issues down in statements that I never*

actually thought about, and realized how these things actually did apply to me and my experience at community college.”

The narrative helped to expand the understanding the point of view of Factor 3. With the statements concerning work, and those about learning to take care of oneself outside of the military, the description of this Factor becomes more robust. Motivation and disabilities are still the defining concepts of this group, but it can be seen that there are other issues important to this participants, such as determining career choice. These difficulties might be best addressed through programming that teaches good study habits, and methods of dealing with different types of disabilities, as well as comprehensive advising.

Factor Group 4: Needs an Administrative Advisor (The “How” Group)

Factor 4 had five members, four males and one female. One member of the group was a veteran of the Marine Corps, and four were veterans of the Army. Three were married, and one had children at the time of transition from the military into community college. On a scale of 1-10, the mean ranking of difficulty of the transitional process was 4.2 (individual rankings were 1, 1, 3, 8, and 8). MOS for the group varied, with two members prior infantry, two prior specialists (this was all the information given), and one bulk fuel specialist.

After examining the high and low item rankings, the distinguishing factors, and the individual narratives, this group was deemed “Needs an Administrative Advisor.” This Factor also ranked statements related to the change from military to civilian culture more like Factor 1, but with less agreement. So, this group is similar to Factor 1 with respect to having difficulty with civilian culture, but the statements were not ranked as highly as those in Factor 1. This group had more frustration with administrative items such as using financial aid and the GI Bill. They also expressed difficulty with balancing school, work, and family,

and with financial issues such as money management. This group also commented and ranked +3 on the Factor 4 Q sort that having a disability made their transition difficult. This Factor expressed the need to “have someone” in their narrative statements to counsel them on the GI Bill and other financial issues, thus their characterization.

Table 22 shows that Factor 4 ranked Q32: *I was older than normal freshmen* and Q38: *My GI bill did not cover all course materials (out of pocket expensed too high)* at +5, and also ranked Q18, Q26, and Q35 highly. These statements all reiterate that this Factor found finances and using the GI bill difficult. Q32 may also be interpreted to mean that this group is uncomfortable, or aware, of the fact that they are not “typical” community college students. In order to gain more insight into what makes this Factor unique, the idealized factor sort was examined, and is presented in Figure 6. Items related to difficulty in transitioning from military culture to the college culture were ranked somewhat highly, such as Q21: *My classmates could not relate to my military background*, Q47: *I had difficulty finding friends I could relate to*, and Q42: *The behavior of non-military veteran students in the classroom was difficult for me* all ranked at +2. Q10: *I have a disability* was ranked at +3, indicating that this was a difficult aspect of the transitional process. These medium-rank items suggest that this group had difficulty in the transitional process from the military culture into community college culture, and that disabilities impacted that transition.

The concourse items ranked at least difficult, at -5 were Q01 and Q02 (*The grading system for my class was hard to understand* and *I could not maintain motivation to attend class*). Items ranked at -4, Q03, Q08, and Q12, along with the other highly negative items, showed that this group does not have problems with maintaining motivation in the classroom, and does not find difficulty in developing relationships with advisors or in determining what

is best for their course of study. All of these items indicated that Factor 4 was comfortable with the actual class work associated with attending community college.

Table 22. Highest and Lowest Ranked Items for Factor 4

Ranking		
Highest		Corresponding Statement
5	Q32	I was older than normal freshmen
5	Q38	My GI bill did not cover all course materials (out of pocket expenses too high)
4	Q18	I did not understand financial aid
4	Q26	I had no stable income while in college
4	Q35	My family thought I should get a job
Lowest		
-5	Q01	The grading system for my classes was hard to understand
-5	Q02	I could not maintain motivation to attend class
-4	Q03	I could not maintain motivation to study
-4	Q08	I had difficulty establishing trust with my instructors/advisors
-4	Q12	I didn't know how to make decisions about my course of study

The distinguishing factors for Factor 4 are found in Table 23. The distinguishing statements for this group were: Q01 *The grading system for my classes was hard to understand* (-5), Q02 *I could not maintain motivation to attend class* (-5), Q03 *I could not maintain motivation to study* (-4), Q12 *I didn't know how to make decisions about my course of study* (-4), Q16 *I had poor study habits* (-2), Q13 *I didn't understand the "mission" of college* (-3), Q 15 *I had a hard time initiating study for each class* (-3), Q22 *Balancing school/work/family was difficult* (1), Q30 *I wasn't sure what was the right degree path for me* (-3), Q31 *I had a hard time finding a degree that I could complete in a timely manner* (0), Q33 *I had to take developmental classes* (+3), Q35 *My family thought I should get a job* (+4),

Q38 *My GI bill did not cover all course materials (out of pocket expenses too high) (+5),*
Q39 *My instructors did not understand my disability/need to miss class for VA appointments*
*(+3), and Q42 *The behavior of non-military veteran students was difficult for me (+2).* These*

statements supported the idea that this Factor found difficulty in using the GI Bill, in having a disability, and with their finances. They had some difficulty with the transition from military culture into the civilian culture, but generally had no difficulty with understanding and meeting the requirements of the classes in which they were enrolled, were motivated to succeed in their coursework, and were adept at determining what course of study to undertake.

Table 23. Distinguishing Statements for Factor 4

		F1	F2	F3	F4
Q01	The grading system for my classes was hard to understand	-3	-1	0	-5
Q02	I could not maintain motivation to attend class	-2	-1	5	-5
Q03	I could not maintain motivation to study	2	1	5	-4
Q12	I didn't know how to made decisions about my course of study	-1	3	0	-4
Q13*	I didn't understand the "mission" of college	1	0	-1	-3
Q15	I had a hard time initiating study for each class	1	3	4	-3
Q22	Balancing school/work/family was difficult	3	5	-4	1
Q30*	I wasn't sure what was the right degree path for me	2	1	1	-3
Q31	I had a hard time finding a degree that I could complete in a timely manner	-3	2	-3	0
Q33	I had to take developmental courses (ex. Developmental math)	4	0	-5	3
Q35	My family thought I should get a job	0	-1	-3	4
Q38	My GI bill did not cover all course materials (out of pocket expenses too high)	-5	-2	2	5
Q39	My instructors did not understand my disability/need to miss class for VA appointments	-1	-2	4	3
Q42	The behavior of non-military veteran students in the classroom was difficult for me	5	-1	-2	2

Note: * indicates items that distinguish only Factor 4.

Figure 7 shows a model Q sort for this factor. Like those for the other factors, this model provides insight into the perceptions of this group. This model, along with the open-ended questions, the high and low item rankings, and the distinguishing statements, aided in the characterization of Factor 4.

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5
the grading system for my classes was hard to understand	could not maintain motivation to study	I had a hard time controlling my emotions in the classroom	I did not understand my GI bill	Finding the right course for my degree that fit my schedule was difficult	I had difficulty establishing trust with my classmates	I had trouble connecting with an advisor	I felt military background/values weren't compatible with the college environment	Tutors were not available when I needed them	I did not understand financial aid	I was older than normal freshmen
could not maintain motivation to attend class	I had difficulty establishing trust with my instructors/ advisor	didn't understand the "mission" of college	I had a hard time estimating the study time needed for each class	Taking care of my family was difficult while in college	My classmates could not relate to my military background	I felt like I was out of school (high school/prior college) for too long	I had no support from my family when I decided to attend college	I have a disability	I had no stable income while in college	My GI bill did not cover all course materials out of pocket expenses too high
	didn't know how to make decisions about my course of study	had a hard time initiating study for each class	I had poor study habits	I did not feel secure on campus	Communication with the school was difficult	My professors could not relate to my military background	the behavior of non-military veteran students in the classroom was difficult for me	had to take developmental courses (ex. Developmental math)	My family thought should get a job	
		wasn't sure what was the right degree path for me	I couldn't find my way around campus	I wasn't sure when I needed a tutor	had a hard time finding a degree that could complete in a timely manner	Balancing school/work/family was difficult	I had difficulty finding friends that I could relate to	My instructors did not understand my disability, need to miss class for VA appointments		
			I had difficulty with child care	I didn't understand the learning objectives for my course/the syllabus was unclear	I had trouble connecting with VA rep	I needed a flexible class schedule so that I could work				
				I didn't know how I was performing in the course because of lack of feedback	I had trouble receiving VA benefits	The way my instructors communicated with me was difficult for me				
					I was asked too many intrusive personal questions about my military service	had difficulty with how information was delivered in the classroom				

Figure 6. Model Sort for Factor Group 4

Note: Distinguishing items are highlighted in red, consensus items are highlighted in green.

The open-ended questions were very useful in the characterization of this factor and determining what was found to be most difficult during their transition into community college. When asked about the most difficult aspect of the transitional process, two participants replied that the Army ACAP course prepared them for the transition so there was no “real” difficulty. The other participants in Factor 4 felt differently, stating that learning to use the GI Bill, the culture shift, and learning to manage their finances was very difficult for them. *“The change in environment (was most difficult). Those of us who have not taken the time to develop independency from the former unit will encounter huge problems maintaining our status in school. We do not fit in or belong here, so individuals who have not adapted to being alone will have a lot of trouble. You are taking someone who had a huge family, incurring significant loss, enduring a lot of violence, and once having a purpose, to stripping them of everything and having them start over in a place where nothing they did matters.”* Another respondent stated that the most difficult aspect of the transitional process was *“Getting the GI Bill started, trying to transfer in military credits to the school. Money available to live.”* In regards to difficulty, one respondent indicated that their disability created the most difficulty by stating that *“Being around new people. I am anxiety ridden and very quiet.”*

When discussing the easiest aspect about the transitional process, participants stated that ACAP prepared them and that their self-discipline allowed them to do well in class. Several stated that the coursework was the easiest aspect of the transitional process and one participant stated that they *“only had to worry about going to school”* because they were 100% disabled, thus had a monthly stipend, so finances were not a burden.

When asked to describe unexpected barriers they faced during their transition into community college, problems with the GI Bill, learning differently due to a disability, and

not understanding how to manage finances were mentioned: *“I had the Montgomery GI Bill and I didn’t have the money to pay for classes up front. My VA rep pulled some strings and helped me out,”* *“Financial issues, balancing work, bills, and school.”* One Army veteran, in post-sort conversation, commented that many soldiers did not understand how to manage their finances so, upon discharge, they were faced with financial decisions they did not know how to make. He went on to state that he felt this contributed to the loss of homes and veterans leaving school to work full time. Participants had no recommendations for additional items in the Q sort.

Common Themes Among All Factors

It should be noted that there were similarities among the factor groups. Common themes discovered pertained to difficulty with the transition from military to civilian/classroom culture, balancing school with work and family, learning how to use financial aid and the GI Bill, and how to cope with learning with a disability. All participants, in all factor groups, stated either in the written narrative or in conversation that the feelings of isolation were difficult, and that they felt that if they had peers with whom to go through the transitional process, or a mentor who had been through the process, their transition would have been less difficult.

Summary

In Chapter 4, data collected from twenty-four military veterans currently or previously enrolled in community college was analyzed. The data was collected through the use of Q sorts completed by the participants, along with a post-sort open-ended questionnaire and discussion. Statistical data were gathered through the implementation of factor analysis. Demographic information and narrative data were also examined. Four Factor Groups emerged as a result of this analysis.

Factor 1: “Mission-missing Infantry” was found to be the most “stereotypical” military veteran student group. They are uncomfortable in classrooms with a lack of discipline and/or “mission” focus. They personally are mission-focused but often feel that the mission of college is not that important compared to their past missions while enlisted in the military. These are the veteran students who are not well equipped to accept that failure is a part of college and life. They are well versed in how to use their GI Bill, they are comfortable with the administrative components of the GI Bill and financial aid. They are comfortable with course work and with college campus environment.

Factor 2: “Difficulty Balancing” was characterized by difficulties that are typical of non-traditional community college students who have to balance work, family, and school. Veteran status does not impact their college experience greatly, as they did not find the transitional process from military culture into college culture, or related to civilians, as difficult.

Factor 3: “Motivation impacted by disability” was found to have difficulty with good study habits and expressed that their disability made self-motivation and the development of good study habits difficult. This group did not find the transition from military to civilian culture difficult, and they were confident in their understanding of the GI Bill, financial aid, and the administrative tasks associated with being a student. Factor 3 expressed no difficulty with balancing school, work, and family.

Factor 4: “Needs an Administrative Advisor” was frustrated with the implementation of the GI Bill and financial aid. They expressed difficulty balancing school with work and family and with learning with a disability. This Factor also has difficulty with the transition from military to civilian culture.

Commonalities among the factors are seen through the consensus statement, and through the distinguishing statements that are shared by more than one factor.

These findings bring to light the difference between these groups, but also illuminate what pathways may be taken to ease this transitional process from the military into community college. These implications, as well as recommendations for future research, will be discussed in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter will examine the implications for theory, current and future programming and practice, and future research that were illuminated by this work.

This study sought to examine the difficulties faced by enlisted Army and Marine Corps veterans as they transitioned from the military into community college. To date, the researcher is not aware of another study designed to sample military veterans transitioning into community college. Other studies have focused on the transitional process into universities, but not into community college. Considering that, this gap in the literature and the immediate application potential for this study made the subject relevant to the current educational climate. This research is an attempt to understand how to best serve those military veterans who enroll in community college. The researcher hopes that by understanding what types of needs these veterans have, programming may be developed focused on meeting those needs, thus creating a college climate conducive to their success.

This investigation of the viewpoints of military veterans sought to answer the following research questions:

- Question 1: What are the viewpoints of enlisted Army and Marine Corps veterans toward the transitional process after transitioning out of the military and into higher education at the community college?
- Question 2: What are items that distinguish the groups, and what are the items that are similar between groups?
- Question 3: Do the viewpoints of military veterans toward the transition process vary according to MOS or branch of service?

The results of this research may be used in developing programs focusing on making the transitional process less difficult for military veterans, and community colleges that currently have programming focused on military veteran students can use the results of this research to evaluate their programming.

The study began with a review of literature relevant to this topic and with the researcher attempting to learn as much as possible about the preparation for transition military veterans go through before separating from the military. The researcher gathered information from military veteran students and attended the weeklong ACAP course at Ft. Bragg. While attending the ACAP course, the researcher was able to gather information from ACAP attendees through a survey.

Q methodology was used for this research. Q methodology is designed to measure the perceptions, viewpoints, and attitudes of a selected population. A Q-set comprised of 47 items was developed, and 24 Army and Marine Corps veterans who were currently or formerly enrolled in community college (most from Gaston College) were asked to rank these statements using a scale of +5 (most agree) to -5 (least agree) using a Q-sort grid. The goal of this ranking process was to discern what was difficult in the transitional process from the military into community college. Chapter 3 of this discourse explained the methodology, justification for the use of the Q methodology, the research design, the data collection processes, and the analysis and interpretation of the data.

Chapter 4 described the results of the data analysis, and included correlation data, the factor scores, consensus statements, and distinguishing statements that resulted from the data analysis. Categorized by the similarities in their Q-sorts, four factors emerged and were recognized. These were “*Mission-minded Infantry,*” “*Difficulty finding balance,*” “*Motivation impacted by disability,*” and “*Needs an administrative advisor.*”

This final chapter explores the implications for current practice and program design based on the emergent characteristics of the Factors. Suggestions for future research are also presented.

Conclusions

From this study, there were a number of conclusions that were drawn from the analysis of both the qualitative and quantitative data collected in order to address the research questions.

First, this study found that there were four viewpoints of enlisted Army and Marine Corps veterans toward the transitional process from the military into community college. These viewpoints and the statements that distinguished each group were recognized and described in Chapter 4, during the discussion of the characteristics of the four Factor groups. This analysis serves to answer the first two research questions, “*What are the viewpoints of enlisted Army and Marine Corps veterans toward the transitional process after transitioning out of the military and into higher education at the community college?*” and “*What are items that distinguish the groups, and what are the items that are similar between groups?*”

The third research question, “*Do the viewpoints of military veterans toward the transition process vary according to MOS or branch of service?*” was not addressed in the findings. After review of the qualitative and quantitative data, it may be recognized that branch of service and MOS may play a part in the viewpoints of the participants. There were seven Marine Corps veterans that participated in the study. Five of those seven participants factored into Factor 1, “*Mission-missing infantry*”. The other two Marine Corps veterans factored into Factor 2 and Factor 4. The fact that most of the Marine Corps veterans factored into one group suggests that Marine Corps veterans hold similar viewpoints as related to the

transitional process. Army veterans factored more evenly into all four factor groups.

Consideration must be given to the fact that only seven Marine Corps veterans participated in the study, perhaps if a more even distribution of Army and Marine Corps veterans was sampled, this may not be the case.

Consideration of MOS as related to viewpoints indicates that MOS most certainly is related to the viewpoints participants hold. Factor 1 was characterized “*Mission-missing Infantry*” because all of the participants but one, who did not choose to report their MOS, were infantry. The other Factors were made of individuals with MOS other than infantry, except for one exception, in Factor 4. Factor 4 was the most similar factor to Factor 1. Upon recognition of this fact, and examination of the training process infantry go through as compared to other MOS, it can be seen that often more military education is required of those specialties that are not infantry. Infantry generally requires the least amount of training beyond the basic training required of all individuals that join the military. MOS beyond infantry often require attendance to one or two specialty schools, where information is delivered based on the ADDIE model (Hannum, 2005). Factor 1 was found to have the most difficulty with the transition into the culture of college, and felt the most out of place in the college environment. These viewpoints were ranked more highly than those related to study habits or motivation to study, indicating that their feelings of unease were not related to the tasks associated with college, but the environment itself. Not only was this group shifting culture, they were also shifting into an environment that was very different from their military experience.

Infantry generally are ground troops, first deployed, and first to participate in ground exercises that may result in experiencing combat. Combat experience was not a survey question, but through qualitative discussion with these participants, it was found that the

seven participants in this group that were known to be infantry had all deployed to foreign nations, and participated in combat situations. This could directly relate to the high rankings of statements associated with feeling out of place, with not having peers in the college classroom, and with the feeling that their military background and values were not compatible with the college environment.

The other factor groups had variable MOS, and found less difficulty with the environment and culture of college, and more difficulty with issues that are common in many non-traditional college students, such as balancing school with work and family. Perhaps this is due to the fact that their MOS required more training in a classroom environment, so they were more comfortable with that aspect of the transitional process.

Once the research questions were considered, and conclusions drawn based on the qualitative and quantitative analysis of data, other topics were considered. How the findings relate to theory was considered, and then implications for program development, practice, the veteran student, labor market outcomes and andragogy were determined. These items will be discussed individually.

Discussion of Theory

The lack of assets, as defined by Schlossberg's Transition Theory and Self-Determination Theory, in the military veterans that participated in the current study follows a common theme: all factor groups would benefit with the development of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, feelings of competence as related to non-academia, and feelings of competence and confidence as related to academia.

Schlossberg's Transition Theory and Self-Determination Theory were used as the theoretical frameworks for this study. In Chapter 1, Table 1 shows potential study variables

related to these theoretical frameworks. The results of this study show that these study variables were in evident when interpreting the responses of the Factor groups.

Schlossberg's Transition Theory (1984) defines transition as a life event that is either anticipated or not, and that may change relationships, routines, assumptions, and/or roles. Consequently, transitions can be either negative or positive experiences and the individual's relationship to the transition is as important as the setting in which the transition occurs (Schlossberg, 1984; Schlossberg, Waters, & Goodman, 1995). This theory describes a transitional process of *moving in*, *moving through*, and *moving out*. How an individual moves through the stages is dependent on how effectively one copes with transition. Effective coping depends on the liabilities and assets and individual possesses, and these are derived through the situation, individually, or through support systems (Schlossberg, 1984; Schlossberg, Waters, & Goodman, 1995). The transitional process from the military into community college is major life event and transition, which occurs over a short period of time (DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchell, 2008). Schlossberg's (1981) 4S factors, *situation*, *self*, *support*, and *strategies* may be utilized during these major transitions to effectively cope. If these factors are lacking in an individual, a successful transition is more difficult (DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchell, 2008). When applying this theory, military veteran students are *moving in* when choosing to attend college, *moving through* while attending college, and *moving out* when completing their course of study. However, graduation rates of military veteran students suggest that they are getting mired in the *moving through phase*, which would indicate a lack of assets to aid them in the process (Schlossberg, 1984; Schlossberg, Waters, & Goodman, 1995). With this in mind, the results of this study show that programming designed to help military veterans develop coping strategies (the 4S

factors) for the difficulties they face should help them *move through* and then *move out* of their transitional process.

This study showed us, through the viewpoints of the veterans themselves, where they are lacking in assets to help them *move through* and *move out*. Factor 1: “Mission-missing infantry” lacked feelings of competence related to the transition into community college. This is exemplified by their discomfort with the idea of failure, with the non-military environment of the community college classroom, and with non-veteran students. They were intrinsically motivated to enter community college, but lacking extrinsic motivation, which was evident in their discomfort with a lack of “mission” in the college environment. They exemplified feelings of competence as related to the administrative tasks associated with the GI Bill.

Factor 2: “Difficulty with balance” was lacking in assets related to feelings of academic competence and confidence as related to difficulty in balancing work, school, and family, but possessed assets in these same areas as they related to their self-realization concerning poor study habits, and as they related to the transition between military and civilian culture. One area of academic competence was noted: the self-realization that they possessed poor study habits.

Factor 3: “Motivation impacted by disability” was missing assets related to academic competence and confidence. This group expressed that their disability prevented the acquisition of assets related to motivation, thus they were missing assets related to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

Factor 4: “Needs an administrative advisor” lacks assets related to feelings of competence, both academically as related to the balance of school and work, and in general

as related to administrative concepts, their transition into college culture, and with financial issues.

The lack of assets follows a common theme: all factor groups would benefit with the development of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, feelings of competence as related to non-academia, and feelings of competence and confidence as related to academia. These are the assets programming should focus on developing, which should result in more veteran students *moving out* and completing programs in a timely fashion.

Self-determination theory (SDT) focuses primarily on self-determined and voluntary behavior, and on the influence of social interaction at promoting behavior. SDT hypothesizes that motivation depends on an individual's environment, and promotes feelings of competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Deci & Vansteenkiste, 2004). When these needs are met within a social context, people are happier, experience more self-motivation, and a greater sense of well-being (Ryan, 2009). SDT addresses the concept of intrinsic motivation, the in-born desire of humans to learn, develop, and try new things (Ryan, Kuhl, & Deci, 1997), and extrinsic motivation, how external influences motivate individuals (Ryan & Deci, 2000). SDT was used to develop a framework for this study, allowing for the expressed viewpoints of the participants to show if military veterans recognize a need for persistence, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, feelings of competence, and what environment promoted those feelings. Recognition of these variables should indicate an increase in academic performance and motivation to complete their program of study, as well as measuring if failure in recognizing the need for these variables creates a lack of motivation to stay enrolled or to complete their program of study.

Participants in this study stated over and over that had a hard time connecting with peers, and that they felt that if they did have those connections, the transitional process would

not be as difficult. Ahmed and Bruinsma (2006) found that there is a positive relationship between motivation and academic self-concept, and between academic self-confidence and academic performance. It follows that if programs were designed to develop peer relationships among veteran students (ex. Mentoring programs), military veterans would develop more motivation to succeed in their coursework or program, and this increased motivation would lead to higher academic success. When reviewing Factor 1, it seemed quite obvious that this group's difficulties lie in a lack of connection with other veterans who can help navigate civilian culture, and communicate what to expect in the classroom environment. Coping strategies for civilian behavior, and for overcoming feelings of inadequacy due to length of time out of the school, should be communicated. Factor 2 maintained both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for success in the classroom, yet lacked feelings of competence due to the environment of college. Mentorship or peer groups could offer an environment where strategies for learning to balance all aspects of life could be communicated and where these veterans could realize that this is a commonality shared by most non-traditional students. Factor 3 is defined by a lack of motivation, and the lack of academic self-confidence and competence. The possession of disabilities by members of this group seemed to influence the lack of motivation; thus mentorship, especially by other veterans with disabilities, would be helpful. Participants that loaded in Factor 4 had difficulty with administrative tasks, such as managing their GI Bill and financial aid. Several members of this group specifically stated that they would benefit from someone they could talk with that had been through the transitional process.

It should be noted that extrinsic motivation can result in an attitude of willingness to learn, but may result in disengagement from learning in the classroom setting (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Thus it would be best for this type of motivation to come through a mentoring

program that would only foster positive interactions, which would lead to increased motivation, not decreased motivation.

Program Development

The results of this research can initiate a discussion at the community college level as to how to develop comprehensive programming that will mitigate the factors military veterans find difficult when transitioning into community college. As of 2009, 65% of universities and community colleges have been emphasizing services for military veterans (Cook & Kim, 2009). Despite this focus, degree attainment takes significantly longer for veteran students than for non-veteran students (US Department of Education, 2012). Based on that information, and the results of this study, one questions the focus of the current programming. This research suggests that community colleges should develop or amend current college wide programs that aim to provide a sense of community and place for veteran students. Veteran student unions, veteran centered advising, veteran centered financial workshops, veteran centered mental health workshops, and veteran centered workshops focused on finding a balance between school and other obligations could be put into practice. Even though TAP and ACAP attempt to explain how to use the GI Bill and/or financial aid, a workshop geared toward navigating these programs would be useful. Mentorship programs should be developed. Almost every participant stated in some way that they were desperate for peers with whom to navigate this transitional process. As the principal researcher, when developing new support service programs for military veteran students, the focus on connections between veteran students on campus, both socially and through mentorship programs would become the main focus of the program. Once these personal connections are made, according to the information conveyed by this study, support

services addressing advising, career counseling, balancing school, work and family, using the GI bill, etc., would be more successful.

Practice

Dr. W. Dallas Herring, chair of the State Board of Education from 1955 to 1977, and instrumental in the creation of the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) once stated, *“We must take people where they are and carry them as far as they can go...If their needs are for cultural achievement, intellectual growth or civic understanding, then we will make available the wisdom of the ages and the enlightenment of our times to help them to maturity.”* This is a founding principle of the NCCCS, and should be a guiding principle for all of its instructors. Military veteran students provide an opportunity for instructors to fulfill this philosophy by meeting their needs in the classroom, and by helping them to achieve the cultural growth and transformation in order to fully transition from the military culture to the community college culture. Training for instructors as to how to meet the needs of military veterans in their classrooms, and how to aid in their cultural transition, should be developed and initiated. The consensus statement in this research, *“I had difficulty with how information was delivered in the classroom,”* was not ranked highly by factor groups, but was ranked either very negatively or positively by individual participants. This ranking appeared to coincide with which type of program in which the participant was enrolled, either academic or vocational, with those enrolled in academic programs expressing the most difficulty. This information suggests that instructors teaching military veterans, especially in academic programs, should be taught how to initiate veteran-friendly strategies in their classrooms. Instructors should be aware of the potential difficulty military veteran students face, academically and culturally, and should be prepared to mitigate those difficulties, while helping initiate the change in mindset the military veteran students need in order to be more

successful in the academic classroom. For example, two of the Factors expressed difficulty dealing with non-veteran students and the lack of discipline in the classroom. Instructors could be taught classroom management skills to mitigate a classroom environment totally lacking in discipline, but could also address the fact that a college classroom/culture is very different than a military classroom/culture. Simple statements in their syllabus related to expected classroom behavior would be extremely helpful in aiding the military veteran students' understanding of expectations of a college classroom.

The consensus statement, *"I had difficulty with how information was delivered in the classroom,"* and its relationship to the problem of disparate andragogy will be addressed further in the "Implications for Andragogy" section below.

Implications for Veteran Students

If military veteran students were aware of the commonalities of viewpoints, it would aid in their transitional process. Knowing that others face the same difficulties in the transitional process, realizing that they are not alone in what they face, and understanding that it is a process that can be worked through, would increase military veteran student success.

Implications for Labor Market Outcomes

The concern for a successful transition into community college, and in turn, graduating from a program of study, may be related directly to labor market outcomes.

It is generally accepted that having training in the field in which you choose to work, whether through a vocational/technical degree, or an academic degree, will increase success in realizing employment and will increase earnings. This is especially important for military veterans, who are overrepresented among the population of homeless and those in poverty in the United States, and are at greater risk than nonveterans for becoming homeless or poverty

stricken (Fargo et al., 2012). Compared to the general homeless population, male and female veterans are twice as likely to be homeless. Male veterans are more than twice as likely as nonveterans to live in poverty, and female veterans are more than three times as likely to live in poverty. Thus, the overall risk of being homeless or living in poverty increases more than five times for both male and female veterans over the risk of non-veterans (Fargo et al., 2012). If the difficulties military veterans face can be addressed through programming and practice, they will be able to become a successful part of the workforce, with higher earnings than if they did not complete their program of study, and therefore they will not be at such high risk for poverty and homelessness.

Implications for Andragogy

As stated in Chapter 1, military learning is rooted in the cognitive and behaviorist learning theories, which are the basis for Instructional Systems Design (ISD), and its offshoot, the Analysis, Design, Development, Implement, Evaluate Model (ADDIE), which measures student mastery of specific objectives through criterion-referenced measures that evaluate performance (Elias & Merriam, 2005). The ADDIE model is implemented throughout the military, from boot camp, through the specialty schools, and continues with the TAP or ACAP courses (Hannum, 2005). These types of instructional programs are skill-based vocational and technical instruction, generally beginning with detailed job descriptions, expected duties, and contingent responsibilities (Hannum, 2005). Thus, each individual going through the military educational process will have the same experience. In higher education, this is not usually the case, as the end products of meaningful adult education are individualized and complex, so they are not uniformly specified (Glaser, 1962). Andragogical styles are variable in community college classrooms, which results in variable teaching methods.

This study resulted in one consensus statement, Q44: *I had difficulty with how information was delivered in the classroom*. Factors 1, 2 and 4 ranked this statement a +1, while Factor 3 ranked it at 0. This fairly neutral ranking, suggesting that respondents do not feel strongly about this statement, yet most rank it on the positive side of neutral, indicating it as a more difficult part of their transition. Participant narratives suggested that these fairly neutral rankings were misleading, as several participants commented that the way material was delivered in the classroom was difficult for them. The researcher felt that an examination of the participant Q sorts was warranted, in order to determine why there was a disconnect between the factor Q-sort rankings and the narratives. Table 24 shows the data from the individual participant Q-sorts, divided by Factor.

Table 24. Individual rankings of Q44 by Factor

Factor	Rankings of Q44
Factor 1	3, 0, 0, -3, 2, 0, -1, 3
Factor 2	-1, 1, -1, 1, 1
Factor 3	2, -1, 0, -2
Factor 4	-4, 2, 3, 2, -1

The factor sorts suggested that disparate andragogy is not an issue during the transitional process, but the raw data showed that it is a difficulty some military veterans face when transitioning into the classroom, shown by the higher individual rankings of Q44. The dichotomy seen in individual rankings suggested that if there was difficulty associated with the andragogy of higher learning, it was important to the individual. Conversely, the lower rankings show that andragogical style was not a difficult transition for many of the veteran

students. Even though program of study was not part of the questionnaire, the researcher learned the program of study of many of the participants through the written or oral narrative components. Six participants were known to be enrolled in vocational programs (Basic Law Enforcement Training, Fire Control, and Welding), and five were known to be enrolled in academic programs (Associate in Art, Associate in Science and Nursing). When examining rank of item Q44 in relation to program of study, it was found that those students known to be enrolled in vocational programs ranked the statement negatively or neutrally (-4, -4, -3, -2, 0, 1), and those known to be enrolled in academic programs ranked the statement positively (+1, +2, +2, +3, +3). Upon further investigation, the researcher discovered that at Gaston College, those vocational programs follow the ISD/ADDIE model, which may account for the negative rankings and lack of difficulty associated with Q44 for those veteran students. Conversely, those students enrolled in academic courses may have been exposed to different andragogical styles, which led to their rankings of Q44 as a more difficult part of their transitional process. Adjustments to new andragogical styles may cause stress (Schlossberg, 1984), which may affect learning, memory, and feelings of ease and safety in the classroom environment (Adelman & Taylor, 2006). It may be noted in Table 14 that the most positive rankings of Q22 were in Factors 1 and 3. Both of these groups were characterized as feeling out of place and uneasy in the classroom and both groups had difficulty with the transition from military culture to the college culture. Acknowledging and addressing the issue of disparate andragogy may not be a key component for reducing difficulty for all military veteran students, but this study suggests that for those that do have difficulty with this change in style, addressing this issue may be quite helpful in reducing stress and stress-related difficulties. It might be useful for colleges to identify those

instructors in academic programs who have a more “traditional” or behaviorist teaching style, and to recommend those instructors for military veteran students.

Recommendations for Further Study

The difficulty military veterans face has been emphasized in recent literature. Not only do they face difficulty in retention and graduation from college, they face more socioeconomic problems, such as joblessness and homelessness (Fargo et al., 2012), than other sectors of society. They have high suicide rates, 41-61% higher than the general US population (Kang et al., 2015), which many military veterans believe to be a result of these perceived failures (Landrum, 2015). Aiding the transition of military veterans into community college, teaching them not only topical information related to their course of study, but also teaching them coping skills for the transition into civilian life and helping them to become healthy, functional, members of civilian society should be of utmost importance to all members of American society. By determining the best ways to develop programming to meet this agenda at the community college level, where most veterans will first access higher education (Radford & Weko, 2011), we can hopefully eliminate these issues in an expedient fashion.

The current study measured the viewpoints of enlisted military veterans toward the transitional process into community college. The study focused on veterans who currently or previously attended Gaston College. As a result, even though the outcomes may be applicable to other community colleges with the same type of programming as Gaston College, the outcomes may not be generalized to the experience had by all military veterans at all community colleges. Replicating this study with a larger P-set, derived from a larger sample of community colleges, may produce results with more diverse themes or larger factor loadings.

The distinguishing statements that resulted from this study overall and from each factor group could be used in a survey to determine if those items impacted success or satisfaction in the transitional process from the military into community college. The statements that relate to the TAP/ACAP could be used to determine satisfaction with those programs.

This study focused only on enlisted Army and Marine Corps veterans because they have the lowest graduation and retention rates, as determined by Cates (2014). Expansion of this study to include the other branches of service could provide a more comprehensive viewpoint of whether programming should be branch of service focused or generally focused on all branches of the military. This researcher recommends focusing a study on enlisted veterans of the Navy, then on the Coast Guard and Air Force.

This study found that almost all participants belonging to infantry units, both Army and Marine Corps, factored into one group. It would be useful to focus a study only on veterans of infantry units, to discover if these difficulties are unique only to this MOS.

The participant pool should be widened to include more military veterans attending diverse community colleges. A replication of this study, focused only on Army and Marine Corps veterans, would prove useful in eradicating the participant pool limitations previously discussed in this chapter.

As previously stated, difference in andragogical style proved to be difficult for some military veteran students, but not for other military veteran students. It would be useful to determine if those military veterans enrolled in academic programs professed more difficulty with this transition of style than those of their counterparts enrolled in vocational programs.

Summary

This study examined the viewpoints Army and Marine Corps veterans hold toward the difficulties they faced when transitioning from the military into community college. Twenty-four veterans completed the study, and twenty-two were used in the data analysis. Participants ranked forty-seven items according to their personal viewpoint, and then participated in a post-sort narrative that included both written and oral responses. Four factor groupings emerged upon statistical analysis, and were characterized by the titles “*Mission-minded Infantry,*” “*Difficulty finding balance,*” “*Motivation impacted by disability,*” and “*Needs an administrative advisor.*” Each Factor had distinguishing statements that emphasized their similarities and differences, and there was one consensus statement that emphasized a commonality between all Factors.

This study has implications for the development of programming to aid military veterans, not only in the transition into community college, but also in the transition from the military to the civilian world.

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