

# **Considering a Unique Framework for Understanding Student Veterans: Research and Implications**

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- Background and Literature Review
- Connecting with the Literature
- Departing from Tinto and Schlossberg
- Reviewing the Issues of Student Veterans
- A Fresh Perspective and New Conceptual Model
- Review of Ongoing Research and the Model
- Conclusion
- Your Questions and a Conversation

# Agenda

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- Student veterans enroll more; may earn degrees less
  - ❖ Significantly less degree attainment (Holder, 2009)
- Bulk of all research on visible and invisible injuries (e.g. Tanielian & Jaycox, 2009; National Academy of Sciences, 2012)
  - ❖ Most student veterans do not have physical and psychological injuries (Vacchi, 2012a)
- Student veteran research in its infancy
  - ❖ Focused almost exclusively on the transition to higher education only
  - ❖ Quality and implications of this research is in question (e.g. Cook & Kim, 2009; DiRamio, et al, 2008; DiRamio & Jarvis, 2011; Rumann & Hamrick, 2010)
  - ❖ **May be difficult to derive practical suggestions from this body of work – we should view this body of work with skepticism (Vacchi, 2012b)**

# Background

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- Student Veterans are non-traditional students (DiRamio & Jarvis, 2011)
  - Agreed, but not demonstrated with research or scholarly work
- Tinto's Student Departure Theory (1975/1993)
  - Tinto attributes student departure to not adjusting socially or academically to a campus culture
  - Tinto may not be applicable for non-traditional students (Berger & Braxton, 1998; Metz 2004)
    - Deficit modeling for Non-Traditional Students (including veterans)

# Recent Research

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- Schlossberg's 4S Model and Theory of Adult Transition (1981;1985)
  - Widely applicable to any population of adults
  - Are all student veterans adults?
  - Universal lack of appeal among student veteran scholars
  - Can we develop something specific for veterans?
- Marcia Baxter-Magolda - veterans may bring a greater capacity to manage dissonance than the average student (DiRamio & Jarvis, 2012, p.91)
- **We should be appropriately critical of these early efforts**

# Recent Research

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## Non-traditional Students

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- Bean & Metzner (1985) – non-traditional students differ from traditional
- Smart, J. and Pascarella, E. (1987) - motivations for returning students are different from traditional students
- Weidman (1989) – Frequency and intimacy of faculty interactions affect retention

## Participatory Theories

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- Paulo Friere (1970) – conceptualizes deficit model and faulty thinking of Modernization - Praxis
- Beltran (1980) - Involve others to jointly construct reality
- Kennedy (1984); Midgley (1986); Nair & White (1994) - Involve beneficiaries
- Servaes (1985, 1986, 1989) Multiplicity Theory - Grass roots approach for sustainability

Socially  
Adjust?

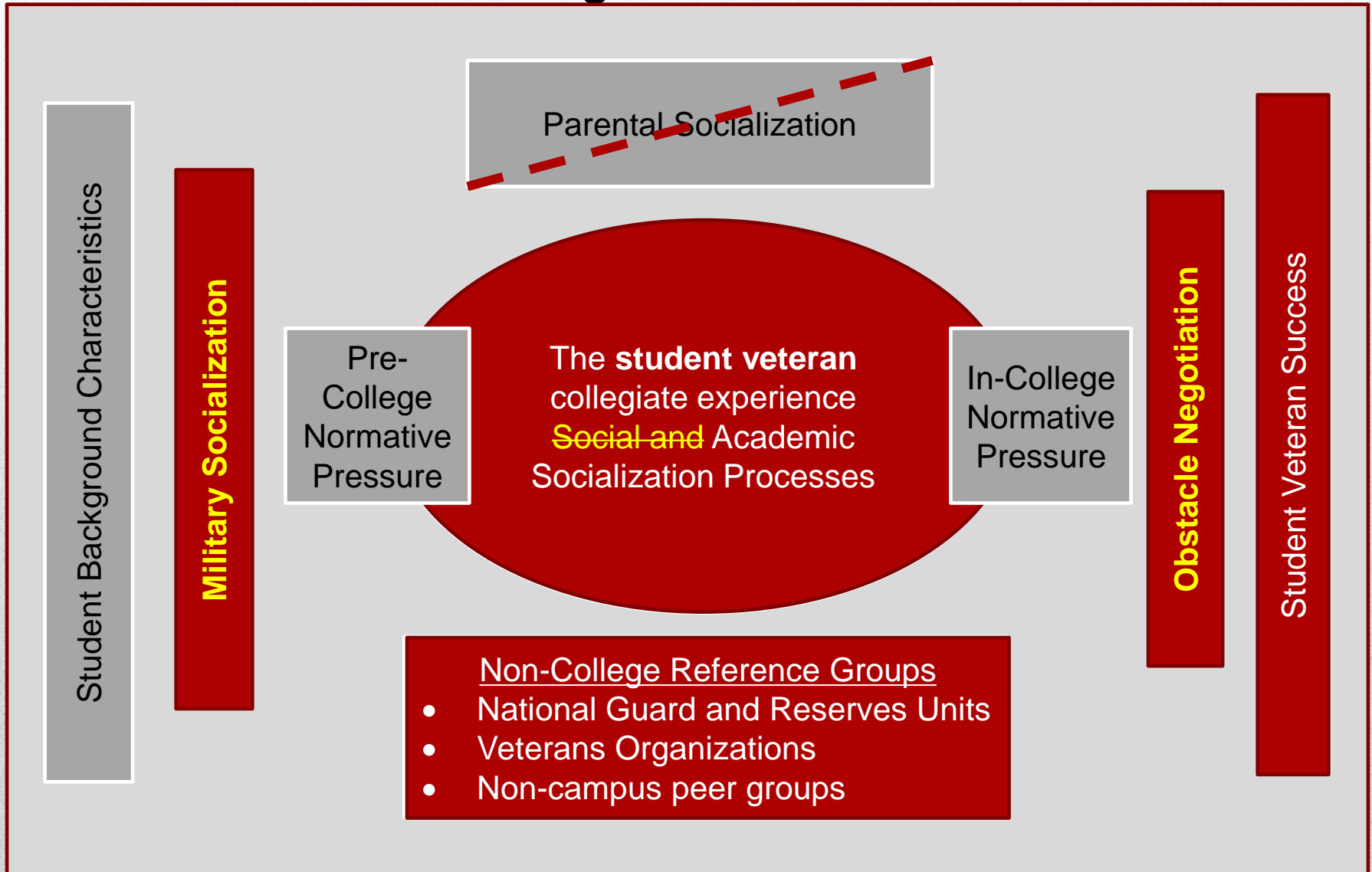
Motivation  
for Degree

Faculty  
Impact

# Connecting to the literature

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# Adaptation of Weidman's (1989) Conceptual Model of Student Veteran Undergraduate Socialization

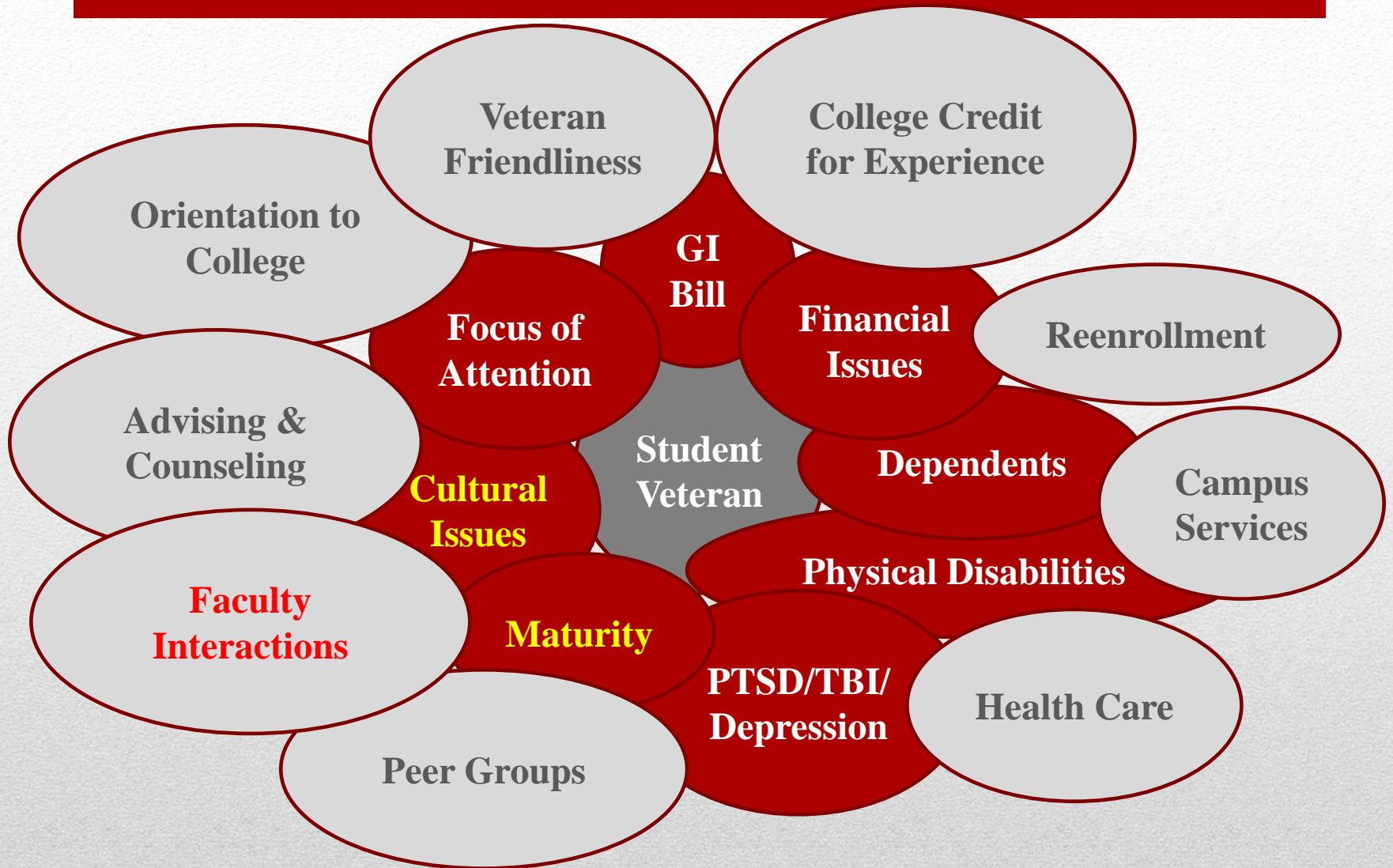


- Weidman (1989) – Undergraduate Socialization Theory
  - Accounts for non-traditional students (veterans)
  - Social integration not critical for non-traditional students
  - Parents and “non-college reference groups”
- Friere (1973) – Assistentialism highlights flawed thinking of diffusion models
  - Treating symptoms, not ills of local cultures
    - Create a student veteran lounge...
    - Provide GI Bill benefits...

# Connecting the Two Fields

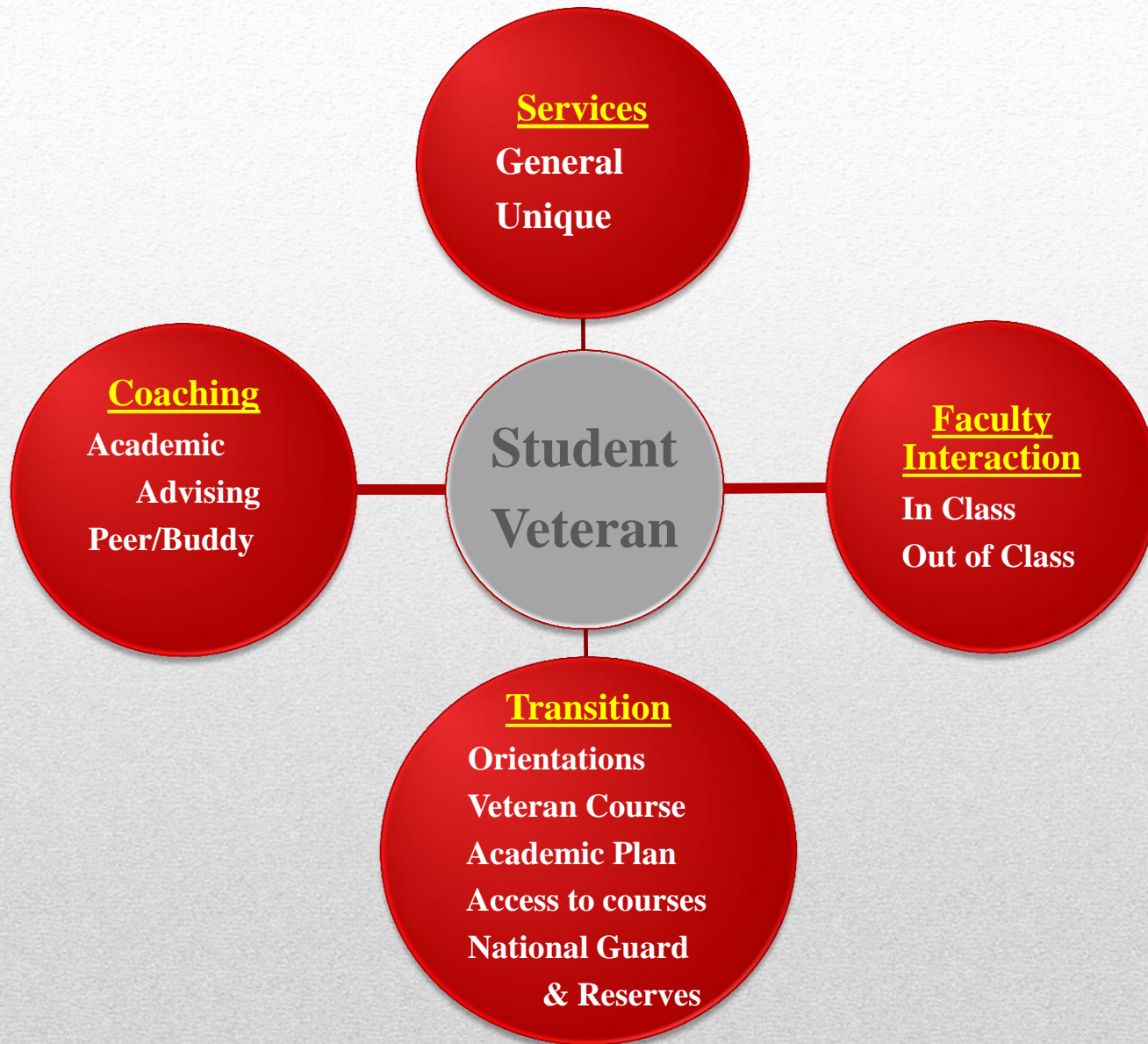
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# **Student Veteran Challenges**

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# Model of Student Veteran Support

- Presumption that transition is a problem (DiRamio, et al 2008; Rumann & Hamrick, 2010)
  - How transition happens is the challenge
  - Veterans manage dissonance well (Baxter-Magolda)
- Some general services should lead to...
  - Some unique individual assistance
  - “Showing veterans how” → sustainability
- Services must follow the general/individual pattern
  - **Quality** of Services
  - **Timeliness** of Services

# Transitions to Services

## Transitions

- Orientations
- Veteran Course
- Academic Plan
- Access to courses
- National Guard  
& Reserves

## Services

- General
- Unique

- Advisors
  - Transition and first year on campus
  - Regular follow up
- Peers
  - No cookie cutter solution
- Faculty are the most important for student veteran success! (Weidman, 1989)
  - The **face** of the university (most regular contact)
  - Greatest impact on success or **failure** of students

### Coaching

- Academic Advising
  - Intimacy
  - Frequency
- Peer
  - Intimacy
  - Frequency

# How Much Contact is Enough?

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### Faculty Interactions

- In Class
  - Intimacy
  - Frequency
- Out of Class
  - Intimacy
  - Frequency

- Research suggests colleges need to change in order to promote retention (Berger, 2000; Rendón, 1993)
  - Increasing non-traditional student populations...
  - Colleges provide education (development)
    - For non-traditional students – **minimal social impacts**
- Faculty, Staff, and Administration can help student veterans succeed by:
  - Better understanding veterans
    - Better understanding **veterans as students**
  - Better understanding non-traditional students?
  - The campus may need to be more accommodating of student veterans (or veteran friendly)

# Who Really Needs to Develop?

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1. Combat veterans have changes
2. Changes occurred while we were gone
3. 6-9 months to “new normal”
4. Wait at least six months before school
5. Take 12 credits (or the full time minimum) for 2 semesters
6. Veteran friendly campuses can be easy on the budget
7. Treat veterans as individuals
8. be honest with a veteran, they can take it
9. Intentionally involve faculty and staff, particularly your veterans
10. Your veterans will tell you what veteran friendliness should look like on your campus

# Tips on Student Veterans

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