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
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)
• **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)
• 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**
Non-traditional Students

- 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

- 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

Connecting to the literature

Socially Adjust?

Motivation for Degree

Faculty Impact
Adaptation of Weidman’s (1989) Conceptual Model of Student Veteran Undergraduate Socialization

The student veteran collegiate experience
Social and Academic Socialization Processes

Student Background Characteristics

Military Socialization

Parental Socialization

Pre-College Normative Pressure

In-College Normative Pressure

Obstacle Negotiation

Student Veteran Success

Non-College Reference Groups
- National Guard and Reserves Units
- Veterans Organizations
- Non-campus peer groups
• 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
Student Veteran Challenges

- GI Bill
- Financial Issues
- Physical Disabilities
- PTSD/TBI/Depression
- Dependents
- Health Care
- Reenrollment
- Campus Services
- Maturity
- Cultural Issues
- Peer Groups
- Faculty Interactions
- Advising & Counseling
- Orientation to College
- Veteran Friendliness
- College Credit for Experience
- Focus of Attention
- Student Veteran

Student Veteran Challenges
Model of Student Veteran Support

Coaching
- Academic
- Advising
- Peer/Buddy

Services
- General
- Unique

Faculty Interaction
- In Class
- Out of Class

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

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**Transitions to Services**

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

**Services**
- General
- Unique
How Much Contact is Enough?

- **Advisors**
  - Transition and first year on campus
  - Regular follow up
- **Peers**
  - No cookie cutter solution
- **Faculty**
  - 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
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?
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
References


