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*East Tennessee State University*

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Experiences and Expectations of an African American Male Veteran Student in Higher  
Education

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A dissertation

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

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by

Gladys S. Cole-Morton

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Keywords: Experiences and Expectations, African American male, veteran student,

higher education, Post-9/11 wars, GI Bill

## ABSTRACT

### Experiences and Expectations of an African American Male Veteran Student in Higher Education

by

Gladys S. Cole-Morton

Since the Post-9/11 GI Bill an increasing number of veterans and military students are seeking to complete degrees online and through enrollment at campuses across the nation (Brown 2011).

The increased number of military students in postsecondary education settings presents challenges and opportunities for both the veteran student and institution of higher education.

Military students also referred to as veteran students are choosing to pursue postsecondary education for occupational and employment opportunities, personal growth and enrichment, and to use their Post-9/11 GI education benefits. It is expected that military personnel with past military service in Afghanistan and Iraq will become a growing student population enrolled in U.S postsecondary education. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the experiences and expectations of an African American male veteran student at an institution of higher education.

This qualitative research study included an in-depth interview with an African American male veteran student. Through interviewing the participant, I listened to the experiences and expectations from an African American male veteran student from Iraq War who attended a state assisted predominantly Caucasian university. The collection and analysis of his stories gave me an understanding of his diverse needs, experiences, and expectations.

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## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to:

My deceased father Leroy H. Cole, who was a U.S. Marines Veteran and served in the  
Vietnam War.

Gone but not Forgotten

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to an all-knowing God for making all things possible.

Thanks to my husband for believing in me when I didn't believe in myself and loving me.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	2
DEDICATION.....	4
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	5
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION .....	11
Background of the Study .....	14
Defining Military Veteran Student .....	16
Institution of Higher Education .....	16
Statement of the Problem.....	17
Research Questions.....	18
Significance of the Study.....	19
Definitions of Terms.....	21
Delimitations and Limitations.....	25
Overview.....	25
2. LITERATURE REVIEW .....	27
History of American Higher Education .....	28
Curriculum .....	32
Morrill Acts.....	34
Age of University.....	35
Higher Education in 21st Century.....	37
Military Friendly U.S. Colleges and Universities.....	40

Identifying veteran students .....	41
Defining veteran students .....	42
Understanding veteran students .....	43
Higher Education Services and Offices for Veteran Military Students .....	43
Financial Services .....	44
Advisement .....	44
Psychological and Career Services .....	45
Veteran’s Office.....	46
Administrative and Strategic Planning .....	46
African Americans and Higher Education.....	48
Traditional and Nontraditional Students.....	49
Traditional Students’ Experiences and Expectations.....	49
Learning motivations and positive affect of traditional students...50	
Achievement goal orientations for traditional students .....	52
Nontraditional Students’ Experiences and Expectations .....	53
Learning motivations and positive affect of nontraditional	
students .....	55
Achievement goal orientations for nontraditional students .....	56
History of the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act.....	56
First Servicemen’s Readjustment Act Passed.....	57
Veteran’s Readjustment Act of 1952, 1955, and 1966 .....	59
Montgomery GI Bill Established in 1984.....	60
Servicemen’s Readjustment Act Prior to Post-9/11 GI Bill .....	60



Post-9/11 GI Bill .....	60
Yellow Ribbon Program .....	62
VA Impact on Higher Education .....	62
GI Bill of Rights during Segregation .....	64
GI Bill of Rights a defeat or turning point for African Americans .....	65
African American veterans and GI Bill education opportunities...	68
Experiences and Expectations of Veteran Students .....	69
Transitions and Adjustments.....	70
Social transition adjustments .....	71
Academic transition adjustments .....	71
Academic Preparations .....	72
Perspectives of African American Male Students .....	72
African American Male Students Enrolled in Predominantly White Institutions.....	76
3. METHODOLOGY .....	79
Disclaimer .....	79
Purpose.....	79
Research Design.....	80
Critical Race Theory and Critical Theory.....	81
Research Questions .....	82
Interview Questions .....	83
Instrumentation .....	84

Selection Process .....	86
Data Collection .....	86
Validity and Reliability.....	86
Limitations and Delimitations.....	89
Chapter Summary .....	92
4. ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW .....	93
Disclaimer .....	93
Identifying African American Male Veterans .....	93
Two Directors of Veteran Service Offices.....	94
Student Information Systems and Filing.....	94
Contact Methods Using Email, Telephone, and Other Campus Offices .....	96
Contacting Dissertation Committee Chairperson for Guidance .....	98
Meeting Participant for In-Depth Interview .....	98
Background of Participant .....	99
Research Question #1 .....	100
Application Process for Admission and Academic Preparation .....	101
Higher Education Services and Offices for Veteran Students .....	101
Advisement .....	102
Registration and Financial Services.....	103
Academics.....	103
Research Question #2 .....	104
Peers and Socialization .....	105
Nontraditional Student .....	105

Transitions and Adjustments.....	106
Research Question #3 .....	106
Mentor.....	106
African American Male Veteran Student .....	107
More Veterans Hired to Assist Veteran Students .....	107
Psychological and Counseling Services.....	108
Veteran Student Cohort.....	108
5. FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	110
Conclusions from Research Question #1 .....	110
Conclusions from Research Question #2.....	112
Conclusions from Research Question #3.....	113
Findings Related to Theories .....	115
Recommendations to Improve Research Study .....	116
Recommendations for Future Research .....	116
Recommendations for Future Practice.....	117
Final Conclusion .....	118
REFERENCES .....	119
APPENDICES .....	126
Appendix A: Tuition and Fee Reimbursements.....	126
Appendix B: Interview Questions.....	127
VITA.....	128

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The American education system including elementary, secondary and post-secondary schools placed most power in the hands of prosperous, white male leaders born in the U.S. who tended to assume the correctness of their own culture and policies leaving unequivocal education experiences to minorities, the economically disadvantaged, immigrants, females, and individuals with disabilities. (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p. 22)

Higher education in the United States began as a privilege only accessible to elite Caucasian males. As decades past, African Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and individuals with disabilities began to challenge the United States education system. “Another group for whom opportunities for higher education expanded in the period after the Civil War was women” (Webb, 2006, p.184). The struggle to desegregate and make changes for equality was very difficult (Webb, 2006). Decades of protests and endorsements of laws such as *Brown vs. Board of Education*, the Truman Commission on Higher Education, Higher Education Act of 1965, and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 impacted higher education for changes to represent an inclusive and diverse student population.

In 1954 the *Brown vs. Board of Education* ruling addressed the inequalities and desegregation in public schools and was a catalyst to integrate institutions of higher education in southern states (Webb, 2006). When Lyndon Johnson became U.S. president the federal government prioritized the issue of poverty and implemented the War on Poverty program that included education initiatives. A few years later, the Higher Education Act of 1965 provided financial support for student scholarships known as Equal Opportunity Grants. The Equal Opportunity Grants were low interest federally insured loans provided to qualifying students. Congress began passing numerous laws affecting education through federal involvement and increased funding for all education including colleges and universities.

During the 1960s and 1970s, as Congress waged its war on poverty through education initiatives, minorities in America waged their war through the Civil Rights Movement and Students' rights (Webb, 2006). Many college campuses became demonstration sites for civil rights and antiwar protests to force equal education rights for diverse groups. Throughout the nation African Americans, Asians, Caucasians, and Mexican Americans students pursued their rights through protests and riots; both passive and violent strategies were used.

The civil rights' and students' rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s helped bring major improvements and changes in governance of protected freedom of speech and demonstrations equality in curricular requirements, and an increase of minority enrollment at institutions of higher education. Attaining equality and rights in the U.S. education system presented many opportunities for American citizens who were not elite Caucasian males.

At colleges and universities various techniques were employed: mass protest demonstrations, sit-ins in administration offices and other direct-confrontation tactics- usually accompanied by emotional rhetoric and sometimes attacks on university property. Some faculty members joined the students in demands. (Meier & Ribera, 1993, p. 220)

After World War II, Congress passed the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, known as the GI Bill of Rights. The 1944 GI Bill was the first legislative act to provide allowances to veterans for living expenses, education tuition, and home purchases. The GI Bill of Rights was controversial because it impacted the U.S. socially, economically, and politically (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, 2012a). Many veterans took advantage of the first GI Bill. The War Department and the Veterans Administration estimated that 700,000 veterans would use the GI Bill for education and training. Greatly surpassing their approximation, the reality of 7.8 million or 50.5 % of World War II veterans applied their GI Bill education benefits to enroll in U.S. colleges and universities, vocational schools, and on-the-job or farm training. In 1947 veterans were 49% of all students enrolled in college (Banner, 2006).

The first GI Bill provided educational opportunities to young African American male veterans to attend vocational training schools or higher education institutions. Due to segregation practices, most black veterans in the South attended vocational training schools or historically black colleges; while African American veterans in northern states attended integrated schools but competed with Jews and other minorities for limited admission opportunities (Humes, 2006). As years passed, African American enrollment increased at predominantly white colleges in the north, midwest, and west of the U.S. “The bill greatly expanded the population of African Americans attending college and graduate school” (Roach, 1997, p. 26).

Currently military veterans are increasing as a student population within institutions of higher education. Military students also referred to as veteran students are choosing to pursue postsecondary education for occupational and employment opportunities, personal growth, and enrichment, and to use their Post-9/11 GI Bill education benefits. During 2013 the growth of military personnel enrolled in postsecondary organizations is expected to be nearly 5% of students enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities and most will have military experience having served in Afghanistan and Iraq.

One of the top three reasons that many service members join the military is for the opportunity to obtain a college education through educational benefits that cover the expenses of higher education (Snead & Baridon, 2012). In 2012 veterans who enlisted specifically for the Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits received their first year of eligibility to use their educational benefits for postsecondary education (Vacchi, 2012).

Due to the ending of the war in Iraq, near ending Afghanistan war, and Department of Defense budget cuts, as much as 20% of the total military active force will likely be downsized, causing the generosity of the Post-9/11 GI Bill to attract veterans to higher education.

The significant rise of veterans on college campuses requires higher education faculty, staff, and administrators to develop services that meet the needs of military students (Vacchi, 2012).

Military veteran student populations have diverse needs, experiences, and expectations that they bring to college campuses.

This qualitative study contains the story from an African American male veteran student who attended a state assisted predominantly Caucasian university. The stories provided necessary information about the needs and experiences of an African American male veteran student. The collection and analysis of his stories should increase understanding of the needs and experiences that might lead to improved services and successful experiences.

#### *Background of the Study*

The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, GI Bill, granted full tuition support and stipends to the generation of Second World War veterans. "World War II veterans accessed a grand total of \$7 billion in education provision by 1952" (Banner, 2006, p.40). In 1952 the \$7 billion that the GI Bill paid to eligible veterans to attend postsecondary institutions amounted to 1.3% of federal expenditures. Enrollment counts increased nearly 21% in 1950-1960 and nearly 167% during 1960 until 1970 (Reed, 2001). Some contribute the high rise in college attendees to the Vietnam War as some male students applied to college to avoid the conscription (Reed, 2001). According to Reed (2001) the direct beneficiaries of the GI Bill presented broad ramifications for the country as a whole.

The dynamics set in motion by the GI Bill had broad, positive ramifications for the country as a whole, extending far beyond the direct beneficiaries. Not only did the latter benefit from increased income, occupational and employment opportunities, and personal growth and enrichment; these benefits extended intergenerationally, making for greater opportunities for their children and families, which contributed to a general expansion in college enrollments through the 1970s, far outstripping population growth (Reed, 2001, p. 53)

In 1988 a congressional subcommittee on education reported that approximately 40% of the veterans who attended college because of the GI Bill would not have done so if not for the opportunity presented by the GI Bill. The subcommittee also found that each dollar spent educating the 40% produced a return of more than \$267 billion in the dollar value of 1994 due to the extra education and increased federal tax revenues from the extra income the beneficiaries earned (Reed, 2001). Approximately 450,000 engineers, 240,000 educators, 91,000 scientists, 90,000 medical professionals, 17,000 writers, as well as thousands of clergy and other professionals were produced from this national investment (Banner, 2006). “These educated veterans lifted the standard of living of the nation and raised the educational expectations of their children and future generations” (Banner, 2006, p. 40).

Since the Post-9/11 GI Bill an increasing number of veterans and military students are seeking to complete degrees online and through enrollment at campuses across the nation (Brown, 2011). Postsecondary education becomes priority for increasing numbers of Americans including veterans due to its necessity for effective labor participation in order to obtain a secure, decent job (Reed, 2001). The increased number of veteran students in postsecondary education settings presents challenges and opportunities for both the veteran student and institution of higher education. The reciprocal relationship between institutions of higher education and military students influences the academic and student services in postsecondary education.

Post-9/11 GI Bill funding is influencing institutions of higher education to evaluate their recruitment strategies, philosophy, and vision in order to become military friendly campus meeting the needs of the academic and social needs of military students (Brown, 2011).



### *Defining Military Veteran Student*

When considering veteran students Vacchi (2012) states that an inclusive term should be used to correctly identify this student population. The background and experiences of veteran students must be considered to understand them as a diverse subpopulation of students in postsecondary education. Understanding veteran students positively impacts their college experiences such as learning experiences and social interactions (Vacchi, 2012).

Legal, historical, and perceptive challenges have made it difficult to agree on a common and inclusive term for veteran students. Institutions of higher education use various terms to refer to military students they serve (Vacchi, 2012). “The result of using different labels and including different populations depending on the campus creates a problem in accurately referring to student veterans” (Vacchi, 2012, p. 16). Most commonly used labels to refer to students with military experience are student veterans, military students, and veteran students.

According to Vacchi (2012) student veterans are wartime and nonwartime veterans of active duty, the Reserves, and the National Guard, as well as current service members on active duty studying on college campuses and likely experience culture differences between higher education and military branches. Understanding current student veterans requires understanding the military culture (Vacchi, 2012). Trainings and development for service members include leadership and initiative with an importance placed on discipline and teamwork. Military students may experience a difficult transition from highly structured, team based environment of the military to a highly flexible, self-interest environment of higher education.

### *Institution of Higher Education*

The institution of higher education for this study began as a Normal School and is a state-assisted, comprehensive, and regional university governed by the state with a doctoral research-

intensive classification; offering undergraduate and graduate programs and advanced specialized preparation that meet the needs of the student population while facilitating the development of the region. The postsecondary education institution is located in an area considered both rural and metropolitan; however, the surrounding communities are rural in terms of geography, socioeconomic status, and homogeneous ethnicity. The higher education institution has two offices that directly serve veteran students. The goal of the two offices is to serve the educational and training needs of prospective and/or enrolled service members, veterans, their dependents or survivors, and other persons eligible to receive education benefits under the various Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) programs. The Veterans Affairs' Coordinator provides benefit and education counseling, program information, referral to various agencies, and certifies eligible students to receive education benefits under various state and federal programs while maintaining a congenial working relationship with the Veterans Administration and other agencies serving veterans. It is a goal and honor for these offices to assist veterans as they use their G.I. Bill benefits to pursue educational success in higher education. The university personnel is well aware of the difficulties that can be associated with transitioning from combat to the classroom and hope to make the transition as smooth and convenient as possible.

#### *Statement of the Problem*

According to Brown (2011) successful management of military students requires institutional responses that many consider transformational. Transformational responses involve institutions of higher education becoming the driving forces supporting military education as well as transforming practices, services, and processes associated with the success of military students which in return benefit all students (Brown, 2011).

Failure to understand and meet the needs of military students is likely to result in an unsuccessful experience for the veteran and the institution of higher education (Brown, 2011). Institutions of higher education are challenged to meet the diverse educational needs of students serving in the military (Ford, Northrup, & Wiley, 2009). New legislature and education initiatives promoting financial funding for institutions of higher education based on graduation rates has changed the focus of institutions of higher education to retention and graduation rates. Institutions of higher education should focus on managing the challenges of adjustments and meeting the needs and expectations of African American military students.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the experiences and expectations of an African American male veteran military student at an institution of higher education. The study should help to understand the reciprocal relationship between an African American male veteran student and higher education based on meeting the needs of an African American male veteran student through services, policies, and practices of postsecondary education settings. The reciprocal relationship between an African American male veteran military student and an institution of higher education can be a reflection of met and unmet needs that may produce different outcomes.

#### *Research Questions*

1. What are the experiences and expectations of an African American male veteran student in higher education?
2. How does an African American male veteran student perceive his role at a higher education institution?
3. How does an African American male veteran student perceive the services and programs available at a higher education institution?

### *Significance of the Study*

Initially military students were not welcome on campuses of higher education for various reasons. Conflicts of interest existed because some universities personnel and students were supporters of antiwar. Colleges and universities were historically elite institutions, and some believed admitting primarily working-class veterans to attend was outrageous (Banner, 2006). During the mid-1940s, University of Chicago President Robert M. Hutchins believed the GI Bill proposal was an unworkable threat that would demoralize education and defraud the veterans to hobo jungles. Some U.S. colleges and universities presidents discussed plans to segregate veterans from other students once the 1944 GI Bill passed, but these plans never occurred (Banner, 2006).

Prior to World War II, many colleges expelled students who married, but after the war 50% of college students were married and 25% were parents (Banner, 2006). It became usual for college campuses to have housing for married couples with sightings of baby carriages on campus grounds. Military veterans were typically older, serious students who tremendously impacted the culture of higher education. Professors and other college faculty began to recognize that veterans were incredibly dedicated students. Veterans attending Stanford were sometimes referred to as 'DARs'- Damn Average Raisers because they contributed to record high grade point averages and record low absenteeism and drop-out rates (Banner, 2006). Veteran students who graduated from an institution of higher education on the GI Bill experienced a personal transformation with a profound impact: they helped to create the modern middle class (Sander, 2012b). It was not until the Vietnam veterans attended college that higher education recognized that veterans were a unique and special student population (DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchell, 2008).

Schlossberg (2008) reports the transition from military service to civilian life as one of the most challenging transitions for an individual, but he does not delineate the timeframe for this transition. Some military personnel describe the transition experience as difficult, frustrating, and disappointing. For military students the transitions and adjustments affect and alter their needs causing military veterans to be a student population with special needs and require support (Ackerman, DiRamio, & Mitchell, 2009). Three basic factors of postsecondary policies include satisfying students' needs, effective strategic planning processes, and building positive interpersonal and group dynamics. Colleges and universities attempt to meet the academic and personal demands and needs (Lake & Pushchak, 2007). The reciprocal relationship between institutions of higher education and military students influences the academic and student services in postsecondary education. Institutions of higher education provide military students with opportunities to integrate social and academic development.

The significance of this study may provide colleges and universities with a better understanding of the experiences and expectations of African American military veteran male students. College enrollment for blacks increased because of the GI Bill but gains were not huge compared to Caucasian veterans (Humes, 2006).

Nineteen percent of Caucasian WWII veterans earned a college degree and only 6% of African American veterans were baccalaureate program graduates (Banner, 2006). Recent research is scarce on findings of African American military veterans attending postsecondary institutions. This research study findings may provide information regarding whether services and practices are addressing the needs of African American male veteran students. The stories gathered from students may influence the institution site for this study to develop initiatives to

assist African American male veteran students to have successful experiences in higher education and program improvements.

### *Definitions of Terms*

1. **Afghanistan War:** After terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, United States of America troops were sent as retaliation to attack al-Qaeda (Rockmore, 2006). This war has not ended and is also referred to as the Operation Enduring Freedom.
2. **African American:** An individual who is identified as an American of African descent and may also be referred to as Black.
3. **American Council on Education:** The American Council on Education (ACE) is the major coordinating body for all of the nation's higher education institutions. ACE seeks to provide leadership and a unifying voice on key higher education issues and influence public policy through advocacy, research, and program initiatives. ACE aims to foster greater collaboration and new partnerships within and outside the higher education community to help colleges and universities anticipate and address the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and contribute to a stronger nation and a better world (American Council on Education, 2010, p.1).
4. **Higher (postsecondary) Education:** Education, training, or certification that is provided to learners who have completed secondary education.
5. **Iraq War or Operation Iraqi Freedom:** During 2003 until 2011, the United States attacked Iraq. According to National security, this war was a pre-emptive response to an imminent attack (Rockmore, 2006).
6. **Military Friendly:** GI Jobs Magazine designates colleges and universities as military friendly for their efforts to retain and recruit military and veteran students through

services and policies such as VA approval to accept the GI Bill, Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges consortium membership, accepting and evaluating academic credit using ACE guidelines, flexible learning programs, and outreach dedicated to military students (*G.I. Jobs Military Friendly Schools Methodology*, 2013)

7. **Military or Veteran Students:** Any higher education student who is a current or former member of the active duty military, the National Guard, or Reserves regardless of deployment status, combat experience, legal veteran status, or GI Bill use (Vacchi, 2012, p.17).
8. **Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB):** The MGIB program provides up to 36 months of education benefits. This benefit may be used for degree and certificate programs, flight training, apprenticeship or on-the-job training, and correspondence courses. Remedial, deficiency, and refresher courses may be approved under certain circumstances. Generally, benefits are payable for 10 years following your release from active duty. This program is also commonly known as Chapter 30 (U. S. Department of Veteran Affairs, 2013).
9. **Nontraditional Students:** Students attending postsecondary education who are 25 years old or older. Nontraditional students delay postsecondary education enrollment or return to college after 2 or more years of employment, family duties, or other activities (Lake & Pushchak, 2007).
10. **Post-911/ GI Bill or Chapter 33 GI Bill:** The Post-9/11 GI Bill provides financial support for education and housing to individuals with at least 90 days of aggregate service after September 10, 2001, or individuals discharged with a service-connected disability after 30 days. You must have received an honorable discharge to be eligible for

the Post-9/11 GI Bill. This benefit provides up to 36 months of education benefits, generally benefits are payable for 15 years following release from active duty. The Post-9/11 GI Bill also offers some service members the opportunity to transfer their GI Bill benefits for education to dependents (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, 2012b).

During the summer of 2008, the bill was signed into law.

11. **Predominantly White Institution (PWI):** An institution of higher education with the majority of students self-identified as White/Caucasian (Spurgeon, 2009).
12. **Service member:** An individual who enlisted to serve in a U.S. military branch including Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Coast Guard.
13. **Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges:** A Department of Defense program that was created to provide access to educational opportunities for service members and their families who, because they frequently move from place to place, had trouble completing college degrees. Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC), established in 1972, helps coordinate voluntary postsecondary educational opportunities for service members by helping the higher education community understand and respond to special needs of service members; advocating for the flexibility needed to improve access to and availability of educational programs for service members; and strengthening liaison and working relationships among military and higher education representatives (Snead & Baridon, 2012).
14. **Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944:** The first GI Bill developed to give servicemen and women the opportunity of resuming their education or technical training after discharge, or of taking a refresher or retrainer course, not only without tuition charge up to \$500 per school year but with the right to receive a monthly living



allowance while pursuing their studies. The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 also made provision for the guarantee by the Federal Government of not to exceed 50% of certain loans made to veterans for the purchase or construction of homes, farms, and business properties. It provided for reasonable unemployment allowances payable each week up to a maximum period of 1 year to those veterans who are unable to find a job. It established improved effective job counseling and searches for veterans. It strengthens the authority of the Veterans Administration to enable it to discharge its existing and added responsibilities with promptness and efficiency (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, 2012a).

15. **Traditional Students:** Traditional students are defined as those aged 21 and younger who have followed an unbroken linear path attending college a few months after high school graduation and belong to an age group for whom attending school is a relatively normative experience (Bye, Pushkar, & Conway, 2007).
16. **Transition:** Events and nonevents that alter an individual's roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions. Four major factors that influence an individual's ability to cope with transitions involve situation, self, support, and strategies (Schlossberg, 2011).
17. **Veteran Affairs:** A U.S. government office responsible for overseeing and providing services and benefits to U.S. service members and veterans.
18. **Yellow Ribbon Schools:** The VA Yellow Ribbon Program allows institutions to choose how much they will contribute toward eligible Post-9/11 GI Bill recipients' cost over and above the statutory in-state tuition and fee costs paid by VA. VA funding then matches the amount the institution chooses to contribute. This option is designed to allow veterans and eligible benefit transferees the opportunity to attend higher cost institutions

not entirely paid for by the base level of Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits (American Council on Education, American Association of State Colleges and Universities, NASPA: Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, National Association of Veteran's Program Administrators, 2012).

### *Delimitations and Limitations*

I am an African American female employed by an institution of higher education. My previous experiences with African American males who were enlisted in the U.S. Armed Forces may influence my perspective of African American male veteran students. The research study involved one veteran student who served military duty in Iraq and identifies as African American male who completed undergraduate studies at a predominantly Caucasian institution of higher education. The qualitative study cannot be generalized because it does not include participants outside of the university site for this study.

### *Overview*

This qualitative study includes five chapters. Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the study with background history of military veterans entering higher education using the first GI Bill and the impact of the Post-9/11 GI Bill education benefits for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. Chapter 1 includes a statement of the problem, significance of the study, definitions for relevant terms of the study, research study questions, and delimitations and limitations of the researcher and conducted study.

Chapter 2 includes reviews of literature on the topics of the history of American higher education, nontraditional higher education students, history of the GI Bill, expectations and experiences of veteran students including African Americans, needs of students, veteran/military friendly colleges, and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Chapter 3 includes a disclaimer and details the qualitative research methodology of procedures and descriptions of research participants.

Chapter 4 includes a disclaimer and describes and evaluates the analyzed interviews.

Chapter 5 presents study findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is an examination of the experiences of an African American military veteran student who served in Operation Iraqi Freedom and completed undergraduate studies at a predominantly White institution of higher education. In this chapter you will find discussions regarding the history of American higher education, the differences between traditional and nontraditional college students, Servicemen's Readjustment Act modifications, experiences and expectations of military veteran students, and African American male students in postsecondary education.

Discussions include the history of higher education including the basis and motivation for earlier institutions of higher education in America. Transformations in postsecondary education are discussed including the influence of events such as the Morrill Acts, the Age of University, and Brown vs. Board of Education which all transformed the curriculum, administration, and student body of higher education. An overview of U.S. higher education system in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is contained within this section. Some colleges and universities are designated "military friendly" by GI Jobs magazine. The suggested practices and services at military friendly schools are reviewed. New programs and initiatives for veteran students are examined such as the Green Zone, which is a program at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) developed to support veteran students in postsecondary education. The program involves faculty and staff at VCU schools, colleges, and administrative units to offer assistance to military students. One of the discussions in Chapter 2 highlights the criteria for identifying military friendly schools and identifying, defining, and understanding military veteran students.

Descriptions of traditional and nontraditional students and their differences in experiences and expectations that affect their learning motivation and achievement goals are included in this literature review. Veteran students are recognized as a subpopulation of nontraditional students. The purpose and development of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act also referred to as the GI Bill of Rights is explained with its many modifications including a discussion of the Yellow Ribbon program and the impact of policies enforced by Veteran Affairs. Also, an emphasis on opportunities for African Americans using the G.I. Bill benefits during segregation is referenced.

The effect of social adjustments and academic transition on expectations and experiences of military veteran students is addressed in this chapter. The chapter concludes with research findings regarding African American male students attending predominantly White institutions.

#### *History of American Higher Education*

The first recorded and recognized American college was established in 1636, originally known as "New College or the College of New Towne" located in Cambridge, Massachusetts. On March 13, 1639, New College was renamed Harvard College. Harvard College was established as an institution of higher education for males only in early New England colonies. It was developed from the library and estate belonging to Rev. John Harvard and was supplemented by the General Court of Massachusetts. The first American colonists had a great interest in higher education. In the population of first settlers 1 of every 30 was a graduate of Cambridge University located in England and others were graduates of Oxford or other English Universities (Webb, 2006).

According to the Harvard Charter of 1650, the college was established for “The advancement and education of youth in all manner of good literature, Artes and Sciences” (Webb, 2006, p. 78). Colonists encouraged the establishment of Harvard College because they were afraid that the first ministers who traveled from England to America would cease to exist and the remaining generation would be an illiterate ministry.

The motivation for Harvard’s establishment was religious, the first American institution of higher education was not intended to be a seminary but for 60 years it was little more than a training school for ministers and managed as a theological seminary with religion as its basis and chief objective (Boone, 1971; Webb, 2006). Although the college was funded by revenue from the Newton (Charlestown) and Boston ferry, taxes, and pecks of corn from every family in the colony, only a small number of attendants were admitted based on social status because of exclusivity and tuition.

Harvard patterned the education curriculum of English universities with modifications suiting the New World. Scholars have noted that English universities were governed by academic self-governing guilds. In American colonies, a few intellectual men who were college graduates and community representatives such as magistrates and ministers controlled colonial colleges (Webb, 2006). “Because no such guilds existed in the colonies, for the simple reason that there was no sizable body of learned men, control of the colonial colleges fell to representatives of community” (Webb, 2006, p. 79). The administration included a president who was likely a minister, three or fewer tutors who were men studying for ministry, and instructors or professors who were older, mature, and knowledgeable of their subject. Unlike Oxford and Cambridge in England located distances from their commercial and political centers, colonial colleges were developed in the center of colonial affairs for the connection of learning

and civic duty. Typically, Harvard mandated students to speak and master Latin before entrance. Textbooks, lecture, and discourse used Latin (Webb, 2006). Students studied the Bible and attended prayer and devotion (Boone, 1971). The curriculum consisted of Trivium (grammar, rhetoric, and logic), Quadrivium without musical studies (arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy or cosmology), the Three Philosophies (metaphysics, ethics, and natural science), Greek, Hebrew, and the chronology of ancient history (Webb, 2006).

The course included two years of logic, and something of physics; two of ethics and politics; two of mathematics (including, however only arithmetic and geometry), the equivalent of four years of Greek, and one year each of Hebrew, Chaldee, and Syriac. (Boone, 1971, p. 24-25)

In order to graduate Harvard students were required to read the Old and New Testament in Latin, resolve scriptures logically, exemplify a Godly life and conversation, and receive the approval from the overseers and master of the college (Boone, 1971). In 1642 Harvard commenced its first graduating class of nine. Due to the minute size of the eligible population, for 50 years Harvard's enrollment remained small and it continued to graduate fewer than 10 students per year. After the Civil War, Harvard finally graduated a class of 100 students. In 1701 New England established its second institution of higher education which was Yale in Connecticut. The matriculates from Yale were children from prestigious families much like Harvard graduates (Webb, 2006).

During 1693 in the southern colonies, the College of William and Mary located in Williamsburg Virginia was found to edify Native Americans. The College of William and Mary is known as the second-oldest college in America (Webb, 2006). Previous years of massacres, diseases, defeats, and disappointments caused several failed attempts to establish the college but after the promising charter signed by King William III and Queen Mary II of England proposed to teach Christianity and convert Native Americans, the college was successfully established.

The tax on all tobacco exported from Virginia and Maryland, the fees and profits of the Surveyor-General's office, and a generous aid from the King and Queen of England financially supported College of William and Mary (Boone, 1971). In three months with its royal foundation, generous endowment, and liberal patronage the College of William and Mary received more financial support than Harvard was given during its first fifty years (Boone, 1971).

In its starting years the College of William and Mary offered the traditional, prescribed classical curriculum. The courses covered 3 years including Greek, Latin, mathematics, moral philosophy, and divinity (Boone, 1971). "It is recorded that for a hundred years the speaking of Latin in original composition was required twice a month" (p.36). The average annual enrollment was fewer than 75 students (Boone, 1971). Cohen (1974) argues that by 1779 the College of William and Mary was possibly the most advanced U.S. institution of higher education (Webb, 2006). William and Mary was the first college to offer a selection system for students to choose their own course of study. The college emphasized law and politics earlier than any other college in the country, as well as encouraged the study of history, mathematics, and modern language (Webb, 2006).

For several years, Harvard, Yale, and William and Mary were the only three colleges existing in the American colonies. During the Great Awakening of the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, religious groups began to establish their own institutions of higher education in New England. Religion remained the basis and motivation for establishing colonial colleges (Webb, 2006). Princeton was found by New-Side Presbyterians, Rutgers found by Dutch Reformed revivalists, Brown found by Baptist, and Kings College, better known as Columbia College, and College of



Pennsylvania were both found by the cooperation of Anglicans and Presbyterians. The colonial colleges greatly resembled English universities (Webb, 2006).

### *Curriculum*

The graduating classes from the colonial colleges were too miniscule to represent a particular denomination. Therefore, many of the undergraduate student bodies were interdenominational. Over time the curriculum at the colonial colleges became secularized because of the influence of the secular growth in society (Webb, 2006). By 1722 Harvard offered professorship in mathematics and natural philosophy. By 1760 scientific subjects made up 20% of the curriculum. Although theology remained the most popular career, secularism changed the curriculum of higher education and graduates began to pursue careers in law, medicine, trade, and commerce (Webb, 2006).

Following the Revolutionary War, higher education in the southern states experienced the rise of public state institutions of higher education. State supported institutions were governed by state policies. During the years beginning in 1785 until 1801, the University of Georgia, University of North Carolina, University of Tennessee, and University of South Carolina were opened as state colleges (Webb, 2006). State colleges in the midwest opened beginning with Indiana University in 1820, the University of Michigan in 1837, and University of Wisconsin in 1848 (Webb, 2006). As public institutions developed, many of the private institutions declined and failed primarily because of insufficient funding. The private colleges that survived continued to have very small graduating classes (Webb, 2006).

The classical curriculum was dominant in the public and private colleges, but public colleges were very liberal (Webb, 2006). Public colleges used lecture and recitation for instruction with strict discipline.

Public institutions tended to emphasize sciences and modern languages and faced much objection for their attempts to differ from the traditional, classical curriculum (Webb, 2006).

To remain relevant to the progressions in the United States, higher education was pressured to change curriculum in the areas of commerce, industry, and agriculture. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century some citizens believed classical curriculum was irrelevant and unnecessary to prepare generations for building and developing America. These higher education critics believed college students should obtain knowledge and skills to construct turnpikes and railroads, dig canals, build bridges across rivers, turn woods and plains into granaries and pastures, and subdue mountains (Webb, 2006).

In response to the concerns about classical curriculum remaining in higher education, Judge Noyes Darling, who was a Yale graduate, Connecticut Senator, and member of the college corporation, requested a response to the criticism. Yale scholars produced the Yale Report of 1828 to address the critics. In their report Yale scholars declared continuing with the study of classics in higher education was important as the basis for the foundation of the literature for every Western nation, the classics developed mental discipline and proper character in students, and the classics were the best preparation for professional study. The scholars disagreed with the idea of specialization and believed that without classical curriculum a degree would devalue (Webb, 2006). Due to the United States new progression movement, education leaders began to discuss the curriculum of higher education. Higher education leaders were concerned with providing an appropriate college curriculum of continued inclusion of liberal arts or specialization for a growing industrial nation (Web, 2006). As the population grew and land development expanded westward, farmers and laborers realized the importance of education to improve economic conditions. Critics of higher education were not only disputing the classical

curriculum but they were concerned that only the children of the upper class of society were admitted into institutions of higher education. “Moreover, the critics complained, the colleges were unwilling to admit the sons and daughters of farmers and workingmen; rather, all they did was to promote the snobbishness of the upper class” (Webb, 2006, p. 124).

### *Morrill Act*

Farmers and laborers wanted a change from the irrelevant college curriculum that existed in the majority of colleges. Farmers sought practical education that related to their needs. Senator Justin Morrill of Vermont wrote an Act to represent the curriculum and higher education opportunities desired by farmers and laborers. In 1862 the first Morrill Act was passed by Congress and signed by President Lincoln to address the higher education concerns of American farmers and laborers. The Morrill Act of 1862 granted 30,000 acres of public land to each state based on each senator and representative in Congress that was determined by the 1860 census. The land granted to each state could be used to support at least one college that would teach agriculture and mechanical arts subject or to establish agricultural and mechanical schools at existing colleges, add support to existing programs, or establish a new college (Webb, 2006). According to Webb the first land grant colleges recorded were the universities of Maine (1865), West Virginia and Illinois (1867), California (1868), Nebraska and Purdue (1869), Ohio State (1870), and Arkansas and Texas A&M (1871).

Over a 10-year period after the 1862 Morrill Act became effective; 24 land grant colleges enrolled 13% of the total higher education student population (Williams, 2003). As land grant colleges established, more students sought engineering related programs instead of agriculture (Williams, 2003). The Morrill Act of 1862 was re-evaluated because agriculture stations were

deemed inadequate. In 1887 the Hatch Act was implemented with the purpose to fund the establishment or replacement of agricultural stations at land grant colleges (Williams, 2003).

Three years after the Hatch Act was passed, a second Morrill Act passed in 1890, provided direct annual grants to each state in order to support educational programs at the land grant colleges. Also, the Morrill Act of 1890 mandated that no funds were to be disseminated to any state for its land grant college that denies admission to any person because of race without providing a separate but equal institution of higher education (Webb, 2006). The Morrill Act of 1890 began the existence of colleges for African Americans especially in southern states (Webb, 2006). The Morrill Acts influenced the change from classical curriculum studies to an applied curriculum and was the financial stabilizer for land grant colleges with state support promotions (Webb, 2006; Williams, 2003). Currently, more than 100 land grant colleges and universities exist in America and its associated territories because of the Morrill Acts (United States Department of Agriculture National Institute of Food and Agriculture, 2012).

### *Age of University*

Some historians identify the end of the Civil War and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as the Age of the University because over 200 new institutions of higher education were chartered in the United States (Webb, 2006). The Age of the University greatly impacted the country and new developments in higher education were influenced by technology, industry, and commerce. Many new and old institutions of higher education began to make reference to the terms *university* and *electives* (Webb, 2006). Junior colleges began to rise and develop in the country and the College Entrance Board organized a testing requirement to systemize college entry (College Board Review, 2001).

Until the Age of the University, it was difficult to decipher the differences between an American university and college. Johns Hopkins University established in 1876 was one institution that identified the difference between colleges and universities (Webb, 2006). Johns Hopkins University modeled its curriculum much like German universities with great emphasis towards graduate studies and research (Webb, 2006). Other colleges noticed the differentiation of Johns Hopkins University and began to adjust their curriculum to resemble the university by offering graduate studies and research.

During the Age of the University, Harvard President Eliot introduced the idea to offer elective courses. After President Eliot faced much opposition about his elective coursework idea, eventually colleges and universities began to incorporate his idea within their curriculum. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the American university included undergraduate studies with elective courses, graduate college, and professional college (Webb, 2006). Some college leaders disagreed with the advancements in higher education and believed higher education institutions should not be greatly involved with graduate studies and research. Therefore, during the Age of the University, some leaders and groups of institutions developed junior colleges (Webb, 2006).

Individual colleges had various requirements for admission and the need for agreement on college admission requirements was necessary. Many secondary school educators were extremely dissatisfied with the educational status quo, but the need for standard admissions was not universally supported (College Board Review, 2001). On December 2, 1899, in Trenton New Jersey the Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools of the Middle States and Maryland adopted the establishment of the “Uniform College” admission requirements with a joint board of examiners (College Board Review, 2001). During the next year, approximately 240,000

students attended college and the College Entrance Examination Board was organized (College Board Review, 2001).

The College Entrance Examination Board was formally announced on November 17, 1900, in the trustee room of Columbia University, New York. Its purpose was to address the issue of postsecondary inconsistent diverse entrance requirements and adopt a resolution (College Board Review, 2001). The College Entrance Examination Board helped to systemize college entrance and testing. The College Board administered its first examination to 973 students in 1901 (College Board Review, 2001). The first examinations included essay tests in English, French, German, Latin, Greek, history, mathematics, chemistry, and physics (College Board Review, 2001).

### *Higher Education in 21st Century*

Institutions of higher education have restructured and reinvented themselves over a long period of time. Change has been an extraordinary constant influence for higher education (Shapiro, 2002). During earlier years institutions of higher education were identified as public or private. According to the United States Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences (2011), institutions of higher education can be categorized as public 2-year; public 4-year; private not-for-profit 2 year; private not-for-profit 4 year; private for-profit 2-year; or private for-profit 4 year institutions. While societies have supported universities, the transformation of higher education reflects the changing environment of society. New challenges impact the role and meaning of higher education. These challenges include demography, new forms of communication, technology, as well as political and cultural fragmentation (Shapiro, 2002).

New formations considered as institutions of higher education are certain to continue evolving. Higher education transformations include sustaining the economy and social growth by highly training students in broad areas with skills to critically think and solve problems (Shapiro, 2002). In February 2009 the United States enacted \$787 billion stimulus package to help steady the economy and support education spending (Gewertz, Dorko, & Cain, 2009). According to Shapiro (2002) the role of universities, their curricula and academic programs should be designed to serve some civic purpose for social improvements and responsibilities. Institutions of higher education differentiate with attempts to maintain their mission and values as well as remain relevant.

A demand for higher education has caused colleges and universities to offer varied delivery systems and multiple sites for learning, certifications, and degrees (Green, 1999). Information technology has changed the content, delivery of information, and infrastructure of higher education (Green, 1999). Institutions of higher education have expanded from the traditional classroom of four physical walls to virtual or online classrooms. Colleges offering online degree programs are competitors to traditional postsecondary institutions in higher education. During 1999-2000 to 2009-2010 a large percentage of graduates increased for all levels of degrees conferred by private for-profit institutions than degrees conferred at public institutions and private nonprofit institutions (U.S. DOE, NCES, 2012). According to the U.S. Department of Education and the National Center for Education Statistics, the University of Phoenix Online had the highest enrollment of 307,965 in Fall 2010 with Kaplan University ranked second with 77,966 students (2012). During the past few years, many traditional colleges and universities added hybrid courses and online courses to offer flexible scheduling for students pursuing a degree (Shapiro, 2002).

Online learning provides education to large, globally distributed constituents and the learning environments are becoming more complex and challenging. New technologies are the main component for scholarship and teaching causing variety and rapid growth in learning environments (Shapiro, 2002). Green (1999) identifies accessibility, lifelong learning, and information technology as the three converging key issues of higher education. A new form of online teaching referred to as MOOCs an acronym for Massive Open Online Courses has begun to appear in higher education. MOOCs are taught to a large number of students with minimal involvement by professors. MOOCs are free courses using video lectures, machines or students to grade assignments, and may involve cooperate sponsors, but it has not been established at this time the source of funding for MOOCs.

While companies are demanding knowledge workers, universities are continuing the growth and sophistication of knowledge work (Shapiro, 2002). Glastra, Hake, and Schedler (2004) found that lifelong learning is a necessary condition to survive the 21<sup>st</sup> century. “Individuals and employers alike have come to recognize that a bachelor’s degree is not the end of the educational journey but just another milestone” (Green, 1999, p.11). Lifelong learning has many adults, who may or may not have a college degree, attending college and other postsecondary institutions for new education and certification.

The United States government hopes to claim its place in global education with the highest proportion of college graduates by 2020 (Gewertz, Dorko, & Cain, 2009). “Between 2000 and 2010, undergraduate enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions increased by 37 percent, from 13.2 to 18.1 million students” (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2012, para. 1). It is expected that undergraduate enrollment will continue to increase over the next decade.



In the beginning, U.S. colleges and universities were historically elitist institutions, but decades of protests and endorsements of laws, court decisions, and education policies such as Brown vs. Board of Education, the Truman Commission on Higher Education, Higher Education Act of 1965, and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 changed higher education to represent an inclusive and diverse student population.

### *Military Friendly U.S. Colleges and Universities*

Numerous definitions for the term military friendly or veteran friendly are being used to describe institutions of higher education that embrace practices and develop policies addressing the unique needs and characteristics of military students (Brown & Gross, 2011).

The American Council on Education identifies that the definition of veteran friendly is as diverse as the campus culture, academics, student body size and composition, location, available resources, accessible services, and effective programs within the communities of higher education (American Council on Education, Kresge Foundation, 2012). The American Council on Education and membership in Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges are frameworks for managing veteran students. Brown and Gross (2011), use the following as key criteria to define a military friendly institution:

- offering priority registration for veteran students
- a simplified and expedited application process
- flexible enrollment deadlines
- academic and counseling services targeted to military students
- special web page information specifically for veterans
- support groups, transfer credit policies that minimize loss of credit and avoid duplication of coursework

- limited academic residency requirement of 25% of undergraduate degree programs on campus and 30% for fully online programs
- acceptance of ACE credit recommendations for learning experiences and training in military branch
- awarding credit for college level learning validated through testing such as CLEP-college level examination program, DANTES-defense activity for non-traditional education services exam, and ECE-Excelsior College Testing
- deferred tuition payment plans
- veterans lounges and centers
- research focus on meeting the needs of military students

*Identifying veteran students.* The characterization of Post -9/11 veterans is difficult and unlike the World War II veteran college students. Veterans in higher education have many different faces, some old and young, officers and enlisted men and women, reservists and National Guard soldiers, veterans and new recruits. All veterans do not view their service or the people they served beside in the same way; some veterans did not experience combat or serve in Iraq or Afghanistan (Sander, 2012b). According to the 2010 United States Census Bureau, there are a total of 21.8 million veterans in the United States with 20.2 million males and 1.6 million females (United States Census Bureau, 2012). The count of service members of different races include 17.5 million White alone (not Hispanic or Latino) veterans, 2.4 million Black veterans, 1.2 million Hispanic or Latino veterans, 265,000 Asian veterans, 157,000 American Indian or Alaskan Natives, and native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander total 28,000 (United States Census Bureau, 2012).

*Defining veteran students.* “Student veterans are a diverse subpopulation on campus, and we should not expect universal comprehension of, or blanket policies for these students” (Vacchi, 2012, p. 15). Identifying and agreeing on an inclusive definition and term for military students is necessary to serve and understand this student population of individuals with diverse backgrounds and experiences (Vacchi, 2012).

Higher education lacks a common term used to define this student population. “A common and inclusive definition for student veteran has been elusive, due to legal, historical, and perception challenges” (Vacchi, 2012, p.16). Some colleges and universities use the term military-affiliated students. This term includes active duty, National Guard, Reserves, and dependents as members of the population. Military students, another widely used term, refer to enlisted personnel, veterans, and dependents using GI Bill education benefits. Veteran students and military undergraduates are other terms used, but student veterans is the most commonly used term in higher education (Vacchi, 2012). According to Vacchi (2012) the labels used may be inappropriate for identifying and describing students associated with military branches. Vacchi (2012) argues that using the label military student is contradictory because some military students may not consider themselves affiliated with the military, and using the term military undergraduates is inappropriate because not all student veterans are undergraduates. He reports that a veteran student may be an individual who earns sequential degrees and never leave a college campus (Vacchi, 2012).

The definition used by Vacchi for veteran students is “A student veteran is any student who is a current or former member of the active duty military, the National Guard, or Reserves regardless of deployment status, combat experience, legal veteran stature, or GI Bill use” (2012, p. 17). Vacchi (2012) identifies veteran students as more than a student population using the GI

Bill but individuals experiencing the friction between military and campus cultures including wartime and nonwartime service members of active duty, the Reserves, the National Guard, and currently serving on active duty while studying on campus.

Vacchi (2012) states using an inclusive and consistent term in national discussions will allow educators to clarify the identity of student veterans in order to develop policies and services. He states that some veterans may require more help than others. “Educators should keep in mind that veteran friendly policies and practices do not require specific awareness of each student’s veteran status and will benefit student veterans whether a student self-identifies or not” (Vacchi, 2012, p. 17).

*Understanding veteran students.* Due to previous involvement with military service, discipline and teamwork are very familiar to veteran students. College campus cultures compared to military culture are not a highly structured, team-based environment and veterans who decide to attend college unlike traditional aged students make an intentional effort for greater performance in the classroom, higher retention rates, and more successful transfer rates from community colleges to 4-year institutions. Failure is not an option for this student body and they do not want to be viewed as a weak link or burden to college community members. The most difficult task for veterans is to overcome the difficulty of seeking help and realizing that it is acceptable to ask for help (Vacchi, 2012).

#### *Higher Education Services and Offices for Veteran Military Students*

Campus administrators and policymakers have an important role to make data-driven decisions about issues facing military students on college campuses. According to a 2011 publication by the American Council on Education as cited in Cook and Kim (2009), six factors of focus were highlighted for institutional policymakers and stakeholders to consider. The six

factors are financial matters, advisement, psychological counseling, career services, campus veteran's office, and administrative and strategic planning (Cook & Kim, 2009). As the service members for Iraq and Afghanistan wars are released from duty, many will return to the United States and attend college. To develop a military friendly campus, it is imperative institutions begin the necessary planning of veteran programs and hiring staff to best serve the anticipated rise in military student enrollments (DiRamio & Jarvis, 2011).

#### *Financial Services*

Some colleges and universities harass military students when acquisition of education benefits from the GI Bill is delayed (Vacchi, 2012). To avoid harassing military veteran students, Vacchi (2012) suggests colleges develop a special policy that allows early enrollment of student veterans for classes and as late into the semester as possible delay the purging process for veterans. College Bursars and office staff should be flexible with the federal government's fiscal year and accommodate student veterans who use the GI Bill by not expecting payment until late in the fall semester because the payment has a 100% assurance of being paid (Vacchi, 2012).

#### *Advisement*

Although military service members participate in the Tuition Assistance Program to register for college, concerns with articulation and credit issues continue to occur.

Military students can have numerous transcripts from military training, military schools, or previously attended colleges, but only the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC) consortium affiliated colleges are required to practice fair and equitable treatment of the nontraditional education credit for student veterans; other colleges are not required to consider applying the credits toward degree credits. A disconnect between higher education and the

military creates issues for awarding college credit for military service (Vacchi, 2012). Advisors should receive training and resources from the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges and American Council on Education guidelines to understand and best evaluate transcripts (Vacchi, 2012).

Some colleges and universities are accepting military experience as course credit hours and developing courses only for military veterans. The University of Arizona, West Virginia University, and the University of California, Berkeley offer military students more than the traditional orientation curriculum (Baxter Magolda, 2011). The nontraditional course for credit offered to military students include learning objectives about the purpose of higher education and showcasing essential campus services, resources, and organizations. These classes provide information for academic success, achievement, and opportunities for military veteran students to write about their experiences and struggles with active duty and transition.

#### *Psychological and Career Services*

After completing active duty, some veterans may encounter a physical or mental disability and college campuses with support staff, who are trained to assist veterans with disabilities, can improve the experience for veterans. Some of the disabilities may include posttraumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, depression, substance abuse, hearing and vision related injuries, substantial mobility limitations, or disfiguring burns and debilitating burns (DiRamio & Jarvis, 2011). Some campus counseling services for combat veterans provide vocational testing, career and academic counseling, psychological counseling, and readjustment counseling services to help support veterans attending college. Opportunities for military students to fill VA work study positions, traditional student work study, on-campus employment, and off-campus employment can help student veterans with career and

readjustment transitions as well as become involved on the institution's campus (DiRamio & Jarvis, 2011).

### *Veteran's Office*

According to DiRamio et al. (2008) a military friendly college should have a veteran's office on campus to serve as a resource for student veterans. The office can be a place for military students to connect with other individuals or other military veterans or colleagues. The veteran's office on a college campus can serve as a one-stop center.

### *Administrative and Strategic Planning*

A factor of military friendliness involves the faculty and administrators on college campuses to offer reasonable options to veteran military students (Vacchi, 2012). On a veteran friendly campus potential obstacles to student success are identified and effort to eliminate these obstacles causes focus on developing policies and services for better entrance procedures, financial GI payment processes, and informative, professional advisement. The contact and attitude of postsecondary education personnel impacts the campus environment to establish a military friendly school. DiRamio et al. (2008) found that veteran students who participated in their study consistently sent the message that they hoped faculty members would acknowledge their veteran status and attempt to understand them as a student population.

During July 2010, Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) began the planning and development of a program to support military students on its campus. The program is known as "The Green Zone" (Nichols-Casebolt, 2012). The Green Zone was modeled from the "Safe Zone" program for lesbians, gays, bi-sexual, and transgender students on college campuses (Nichols-Casebolt, 2012). The purpose of the "Green Zone or GZ" program was to develop a network of faculty and staff in all schools/colleges and administrative units available to offer

assistance to military students. The Green Zone program is to provide knowledgeable and supportive contacts throughout VCU to create a veteran friendly campus that will have a positive affect on military students attending the college.

Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) identified and implemented many administrative strategies that provided support and understanding of military veteran students. VCU Green Zone participants were required to have a willingness to work with and assist military students, attend a training session, and agree to publicly acknowledge they are military student friendly. The training sessions provided information and basic knowledge regarding the concerns and issues facing military students and the resources available to assist them (Nichols-Casebolt, 2012). A recent VCU veteran student graduate, who was well acquainted with the transition adjustments from combat to college and active with Student Veteran's Association, communicated with student veterans on campus to select the name for the program and design logo for GZ. Green Zone volunteers were required to place the logo in visible locations as identification to military students the office or area is a safe place for discussing issues with military students. Volunteers were trained by consultants with special expertise in working with combat veterans (Nichols-Casebolt, 2012). Training consisted of a 2-hour interactive session of presentations on topics such as the military experience, emotional cycle of deployment, transitioning issues from base to campus, strategies for easing the transition, available resources, and special needs of student veterans with disabilities. GZ volunteers are not expected to be experts but sympathetic and eager to help veteran students solve their own problems (Nichols-Casebolt, 2012).



After implementing services the Green Zone program conducted an anonymous web based survey to veteran students attending VCU. Findings from the survey revealed 48% were aware of the Green Zone program on campus, 70% knew a GZ individual on the campus to speak with if they had an issue. Twenty-five percent of individuals said they were very satisfied and almost 65% responded that they were very or moderately satisfied with their transition from the military to VCU but 11% were moderately or very dissatisfied with many issues involving credit transfer (Nichols-Casebolt, 2012). Based on survey findings, VCU has focused on improving transfer credit issues and program outreach. The survey revealed some veteran students heard of the Green Zone program but didn't understand its purpose (Nichols-Casebolt, 2012). The Green Zone program has been nationally recognized as a model for the importance of administrative and strategic planning to accommodate the future increase of veteran students in higher education.

### *African Americans and Higher Education*

The American education system including elementary, secondary and post-secondary schools placed most power in the hands of prosperous, white male leaders born in the U.S. who tended to assume the correctness of their own culture and policies leaving unequivocal education experiences to minorities, the economically disadvantaged, immigrants, females, and individuals with disabilities. (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p. 22)

The Brown vs. Board of Education (1954) ruling addressed the inequalities and desegregation in public schools and was a catalyst to integrate institutions of higher education in southern states. The struggle to desegregate and make changes for equality was very difficult (Webb, 2006). During the years of 1962 and 1963 federal troops were used to enforce integration at the University of Mississippi and University of Alabama. James Meredith, a 9-year Air Force veteran, applied to the University of Mississippi, but the Supreme Court had to intervene and order that Meredith receive his letter of acceptance (Webb, 2006).

Governor Ross Barnett, some town citizens, university students, and staff greatly opposed Meredith attending the University of Mississippi. Federal marshals escorted Meredith four times onto the campus encountering violent confrontations that prevented his registration. After a national televised speech by President Kennedy to encourage students to remain calm and obey the law, the death of a French commentator and Oxford spectator, injuries of 166 marshals and 16 guardsmen, and 40 army soldiers hit with missiles and shotgun blasts, on October 1, 1962, at the University of Mississippi James Meredith finally registered for classes (Webb, 2006). The civil rights and students' rights movements helped bring major improvements and changes in governance of protected freedom of speech and demonstrations, equality in curricular requirements, and an increase of minority enrollment at institutions of higher education.

#### *Traditional and Nontraditional Students*

Students in higher education are usually classified as traditional or nontraditional students and many descriptors can be used to define traditional and nontraditional students. Higher education classrooms are mixtures of different lifestyles, ages, and transitions of human development between older and younger students (Bye et al., 2007). In postsecondary education, the intergenerational students differ in their needs, personal backgrounds, experiences and expectations, attitudes and beliefs about college work, career goals, motivational profiles, interests, academic achievement, and milieu upon graduation (Strage, 2008). In order to improve retention and graduation rates, higher education administrators, faculty, advisors, and counselors should be aware of the differences between traditional and nontraditional students (Strage, 2008).

#### *Traditional Students' Experiences and Expectations*

Normally, traditional students are considered as aged 21 and younger who have followed an unbroken linear path attending college a few months after high school graduation and belong

to an age group for whom attending school is a relatively normative experience (Bye et al., 2007). Most traditional students do not have multiple roles or career experiences (Dill & Henley, 1998).

Prior to entering college, the expectations and experience for traditional students are influenced by their academic preparation, career goals, and “anticipatory socialization” received from parents, peers, and others. Traditional students are more involved with “anticipatory socialization” such as participation in peer events, social activities, attend parties, and belong to social organizations. Traditional students expect to interact primarily with peers and in peer-related activities as well as spend time relaxing with friends unlike nontraditional students (Strage, 2008). Also, they experience significantly fewer time constraints and role conflicts than their nontraditional classmates (Dill & Henley, 1998). There is an expectancy of the college experience to be an extension of their high school environment with courses to offer engaging, fun, and active instructional strategies taught by funny and enthusiastic professors (Strage, 2008).

*Learning motivations and positive affect of traditional students.* Intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation appear to be determining influences of a student’s persistence to succeed in higher education. Intrinsic motivation for higher education students is participatory learning for reasons such as a challenge, curiosity, and mastery; the motivation of the student is an end in itself (Bye et al., 2007). Postsecondary students who are extrinsically motivated seek external approval or worth and are more likely to ask procedural questions than content enhancing questions (Bye et al., 2007). “Literature suggests a meaningful relationship between type of motivation and student persistence, achievement, autonomy, and age” (Bye et al., 2007, p. 144).

Research studies focusing on the extrinsic and intrinsic motivational styles of postsecondary students have found behavioral differences between nontraditional and traditional students. Most researchers concur that the engagement and quality of learning experience for traditional and nontraditional college students are codetermined by extrinsic and intrinsic motivation and grade achievement goals remain the focus for most undergraduates (Bye et al., 2007).

Interest has been described as the most basic and ubiquitous of universal emotions for humans (Izard, 1993). When completing tasks for activities that require a long-term commitment, an individual must experience interest. Interest is linked to continuing education and possibly the primary substance for engagement. Individual and situational interests are forces behind motivation. Individual interest is considered the force behind intrinsic motivation. Situational interest levels are associated with extrinsic motivation (Bye et al., 2007).

Traditional students require more extrinsic motivation than nontraditional students (Jacobson & Harris, 2008). Jacobson and Harris (2008) found traditional students had a higher extrinsic motivation orientation and focused on their educational outcomes rather than the process of education. Traditional students attend classes more regularly than nontraditional students but viewed homework as undesirable (Dill & Henley, 1998). Traditional students were more concerned about their academic achievement and experience more anxiety related to tests and school performance than nontraditional students (Dill & Henley, 1998).

Traditional students did not report the same degree of need to enjoy the educational process in order to persist within the system of higher education. For traditional, younger students the relationship between positive affect and intrinsic motivation is significantly weaker than for nontraditional students (Bye et al., 2007). “The traditional student is more likely to be

influenced by family goals and desires that are based on a lack of life experience” (Jacobson & Harris, 2008, p. 413).

Traditional students feel more pressured from parents to succeed in college possibly because traditional students are not fully independent of their parents and parents are typically paying for the expenses of their college education (Dill & Henley, 1998). Traditional students are more focused on the outcome of their education instead of the process of education; requiring more extrinsic motivation for the traditional student than the nontraditional student (Jacobson & Harris, 2008). Situational interest and extrinsic motivation are outcome oriented, lasting for as long as the external stimuli or reward outside the activity itself motivates engagement with that activity (Bye et al., 2007). For the traditional student, academic self-motivation initially develops from parental goal expectations but ultimately develops from acquired academic standards, perceived self-efficacy, and internalized goal setting (Jacobson & Harris, 2008).

*Achievement goal orientations for traditional students.* Traditional and nontraditional undergraduate students have distinct behavior patterns in their achievement goal orientation (Morris, Brooks, & May, 2003). A postsecondary student may use a learning or performance goal orientation response for achievement. Learning goal orientations are considered the positive approach generally to increase competence and continual self-improvement. Performance goal orientation is applied by an individual desiring to avoid negative feedback that leads to increased anxiety and an inability to proceed through difficult situations (Morris et al., 2003). Research studies on learning and performance goals report that an equal balance of the two types of achievement goals yields the most favorable and advantageous for students (Morris et al., 2003). Morris et al. (2003) found that traditional and nontraditional college students differ in achievement goal orientation.

Morris et al. (2003) results support that traditional students more often support performance goal orientation, but these findings were not statistically significant.

“Despite the fact that traditional college students more frequently endorsed performance goals, nontraditional college students also occasionally employed performance goals” (Morris et al., 2003, p.7). Although one study conducted in 1999 by Burley, Turner, and Vitulli found that younger students pursued performance goals more than older students, most research results are not significant to support that traditional students apply performance orientation goals more than nontraditional students. Study findings replicate that young, traditional students do not pursue learning orientation goals as often as older nontraditional students (Hoyert & O’Dell, 2009).

#### *Nontraditional Students’ Experiences and Expectations*

Lake and Pushchak (2007) define nontraditional students as typically 25 and older individuals, who delay enrollment in postsecondary education, may not have a traditional high school diploma, are underemployed, wish to enhance their employment marketability, return to college after 2 or more years of employment, homemaking, parenting or other activity. Most nontraditional American college students are independent from their parents, have spouses, children and jobs, and possibly were former members of the military (Bye et al., 2007).

In North America the fastest increasing group of students enrolling in undergraduate degree programs is adult learners who are beyond 25 years old. Nontraditional students make up 30% to 50% of undergraduate student population (Bye et al., 2007).

In recent years, the percentage increase in the number of students age 25 and over has been larger than the percentage increase in the number of younger students, and this pattern is expected to continue. Between 2000 and 2010, the enrollment of students under age 25 increased by 34 percent. Enrollment of students 25 and over rose 42 percent during the same period. From 2010 to 2020, NCES projects a rise of 11 percent in enrollments of students under 25, and a rise of 20 percent in enrollments of students 25 and over. (U.S.DOE, NCES, 2012)

Most nontraditional students are returning to college because of job losses, underemployment, job changes, and to enhance their employment marketability (Lake & Pushchak, 2007).

Nontraditional students have different needs than their traditional student classmates, and this affects their experiences and expectations of higher education (Lake & Pushchak, 2007). Nontraditional and traditional college students experience diverse success as a function of their age and background as well as their plan to pursue higher education (Strage, 2008). Sometimes there is a misperception of the expectations of college and the requirements for succeeding in college. Strage (2008) found that older nontraditional students expect to secure adequate education and preparation for success in life after attending college.

Most nontraditional students are obligated to family responsibilities and a full-time or part-time job while attending an institution of higher education. Older students are less involved in campus activities and are likely to spend time caring for family (Bye et al., 2007). Jacobi (1987) supports from his study that nontraditional college students had more role conflicts than traditional college students, but nontraditional students were more satisfied with their academic experiences and experienced lower levels of academic stress.

Based on the study findings of Carney-Crompton and Tan (2002), despite having more life stressors and family responsibilities, nontraditional students are high academic achievers in comparison to traditional students. Nontraditional students want a well-organized course and prefer a professor to be organized and flexible (Bye et al., 2007). Although nontraditional students work while attending college, their academic performance doesn't seem to be negatively affected, but they may find it difficult to designate a study time and are likely to request time extensions to meet program completion requirements (Sales, Drolet, & Bonneau, 2001).

*Learning motivations and positive affect of nontraditional students.* Nontraditional students seem to be more intrinsically motivated than younger students; age may be the source of higher motivation levels and persistence towards degree attainment (Bye et al., 2007). According to Jacobson and Harris (2008) nontraditional students' intrinsic motivation may result from life experience and compensate for the initial lack of confidence and personal ability. According to Knowles (1984) adult learners approach learning by the connection of broad based knowledge to a life application context. Older nontraditional students integrate new learning in more of a multidimensional schema in comparison to younger students (Bye et al., 2007). Dill and Henley (1998) report nontraditional college students had a greater desire to learn by evidence of completing homework more often than their traditional student colleagues. Vansteenkiste et al. (2004) concluded from their study that students with intrinsic motivation deeply processed reading material, achieved higher grades, and were more persistent compared to extrinsically motivated students. Students who were highly intrinsically motivated for academic achievement become involved with the satisfaction feedback loop of learning and were less likely to drop out of postsecondary institutions (Bye et al., 2007; Vallerand & Bissonnette, 1992). Nontraditional students are perceived to maintain a higher threshold of intrinsic motivation to learn with an accompanying increase in positive affect (Bye et al., 2007).

The study conducted by Bye, Pushkar, and Conway (2007) replicated findings of similar studies that nontraditional undergraduate students have higher levels of intrinsic motivation for learning which predict that their intrinsic motivation to learn produces a positive affect. The positive affect for nontraditional students seems to correlate with intrinsic motivation because with intrinsic goals for learning they experience enjoyment from focusing on their interest without expecting an immediate return, recognition, or support.



Individual interest and intrinsic motivation are separate constructs, but both predict outcomes of creating and sustaining a deep involvement over time (Bye et al., 2007).

*Achievement goal orientations for nontraditional students.* Morris et al. (2003) achievement goal study found nontraditional students preferred a learning goal orientation significantly more than traditional college students. Nontraditional, older students more often adopted a learning goal orientation and were committed to applying learning goals than younger traditional college students.

The researchers noticed a positive correlation as age increased the use of learning goals increased (Morris et al., 2003). Morris et al. (2003) supported research that nontraditional college students more often endorsed a learning goal orientation and seek mastery goals in academic settings to value learning and the process of education. They seek challenging assignments and put forth more effort to learn the material than performance goal-oriented students (Jacobson & Harris, 2008).

#### *History of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act*

Veterans became identified as a group of nontraditional students on postsecondary campuses because of the GI Bill. It was not until the Vietnam military veterans attended college that higher education recognized veterans as a unique and special student population (DiRamio et al., 2008). In 1947 veterans were 49% of all students enrolled in college (Banner, 2006). Veteran military students were typically older, serious students who tremendously impacted the culture of higher education. Prior to World War II, many colleges expelled students who married, but after the war 50% of college students were married and 25% were parents (Banner, 2006).

Veterans who used their GI Bill education benefits to attend institutions of higher education were able to meet their needs of academic and economic advancement. Veteran military students who graduated from an institution of higher education on the GI Bill experienced a personal transformation with a profound impact: they helped to create the modern middle class (Sander, 2012b). The GI Bill helped many veterans to advance in their careers and social status. People attempt to fulfill their needs through organizations and organizations attempt to fulfill needs through people (Bolman & Deal, 2008). “The human needs frame centers on what organizations and people do to and for one another” (Bolman & Deal, 2008, p.117). When needs of the universities and veteran students are unmet, the relationship is unsatisfactory (Bolman & Deal, 2008). A beneficial relationship allows universities to satisfactorily meet the needs, experiences, and expectations of veteran military students.

#### *First Servicemen's Readjustment Act Passed*

After World War II, some veterans returned to the United States of America to face the challenges of adjusting to civilian life, unemployment, and homelessness. During June of 1942 Congress members in the United States of America House and Senate discussed and agreed that the country should intervene to help veterans transition from combat to civilian life (Banner, 2006). Congress did not want to repeat the unsuccessful outcome of the World War Adjusted Act of 1924 known as the Bonus Act.

The Bonus Act was a law enacted for World War I veterans to receive payment based on the number of days served in war; unfortunately, many veterans were not paid and this caused military veterans to resent the U.S. government. After failure of the Bonus Act, Congress realized the importance of supporting World War II veterans. In order to avoid repetition of the Depression Era and another generation of veterans with resentment, Congress passed the

Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, known as the GI Bill of Rights and abbreviated GI Bill (Banner, 2006). After much debate and revisions, on June 22, 1944, the House and Senate passed the legislature and the bill was signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, 2012a).

Many feared that President Roosevelt would not sign the bill because he had a record of opposing assistance benefits for veterans. In 1935, a few years prior to the proposed GI Bill, Roosevelt vetoed a bill legislating bonuses for veterans (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, 2012a). Roosevelt vetoed the bill because he believed wearing a uniform did not permit citizen special treatment, but years later President Roosevelt hoped for re-election and realized the potential voting power of veterans. Therefore, he requested a variety of government and private agencies to prepare postwar planning recommendations to Congress (Banner, 2006).

The provisions of The Wisconsin Educational Bonus Law of 1919 were used as a potential model of the post-WWII assistance along with other recommendations. By early 1942 Congress failed to vote on approximately 640 veterans' assistance bills and the American Legion stepped in and began to lobby (Banner, 2006). By 1943 in a Washington, DC hotel room, Legionnaire Harry Colmery, the American Legion representative, composed in longhand a drafted legislation titled "A Bill of Rights for G.I. Joe and G.I. Jane" (Banner, 2006).

After much debate and disagreements between Congressmen, Senate sponsors of the GI Bill including Bennett Clark, a conservative Missouri Democrat, and John Rankin, a segregationist Democrat from Mississippi, challenged the difficult issues and concerns of other Congressmen. Eventually, the final legislation included education benefits as well as unemployment allowances, hospital services, career counseling, and mortgage loans (Banner, 2006). U.S. congressmen came to the agreement to set the education benefit cap at \$500 per year

for up to 4 years with a living allowance of \$50 to \$75 per month and offered the same unemployment compensation to African American and Caucasian veterans. Unlike the Bonus Act, Congress ensured the implementation of the GI Bill by designating the Veterans Administration to oversee it. The purpose of the 1944 GI Bill was to provide allowances to veterans for living expenses, education tuition, and home purchases. The Veterans Administration guided veterans through the procedures to receive money and services for education and training, loan guaranty for homes, farms, or businesses, and unemployment pay (Humes, 2006). “The GI Bill of Rights was controversial because it impacted the U.S. socially, economically, and politically” (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, 2012a).

#### *Veteran’s Readjustment Act of 1952, 1955, and 1966*

During 1952 the G.I. Bill of 1944 was modified and became the Veteran’s Readjustment Act of 1952 which was passed to assist Korean War veterans. The 1952 Act provided veterans \$110 per month for 36 months to cover costs of education expenses (Banner, 2006). During 1955 the Veteran’s Readjustment Act of 1952 was modified to provide additional retroactive benefits to veterans of post-Korean conflict and Vietnam War. Veterans who entered the military on or before January 31, 1955, were eligible for full benefits, but veterans entering after this date were ineligible for education benefits (Stanley, 2003). Between 1950 to 1960 enrollment in U.S. colleges and universities increased almost 21% because nearly 44% of Korean War veterans applied their benefits towards higher education costs (Banner, 2006). During June of 1966, the 1955 GI Bill was modified and retroactively made all post-Korean veterans eligible for new education benefits (Stanley, 2003). A significance of the 1966 GI Bill modification was military participants were permitted access to their GI Bill benefits while classified as active duty (Banner, 2006).

### *Montgomery GI Bill Established in 1984*

Congressman Gillespie V. Montgomery composed the “Montgomery GI Bill” to continue the home loan guaranty and education programs for combat veterans. In 1984 the Montgomery GI Bill encouraged service members during their first year of enlistment to pay \$100 monthly into a plan that would return \$400 monthly for 36 months toward education expenses used within 10 years from their date of military discharge (Banner, 2006). During revisions of the Montgomery GI Bill in 1992, benefits were increased by 17% due to the Persian Gulf conflict. In 1992 eligibility expanded to 14 years for past service members date of separation instead of 10 years. Effective on October 1, 2005, veterans who paid \$1,200 into the Montgomery Plan received \$1,034 monthly for up to 36 months (Banner, 2006).

### *Servicemen’s Readjustment Act Prior to Post-9/11 GI Bill*

The initial 1944 Servicemen’s Readjustment Act has been modified several times since it was signed into law. Many adjustments in eligibility, monthly allowances, educational financial support, and housing loans have occurred. Prior to the Post-9/11 GI Bill, military servicemen were awarded the Chapter 30 Montgomery GI Bill from 1984 until 2008 (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, 2013).

### *Post-9/11 GI Bill*

In 2008 the GI Bill educational benefits were revised to give veterans with active duty service on or after, September 11, 2001, more educational expenses, living allowance, book allowances, and the option to transfer unused benefits to postsecondary education tuition costs of their spouse or children (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, 2012a). The 2008 revised GI Bill is referred to as the Post-9/11 GI Bill, Chapter 33 benefits, GI Bill 2.0, and GI Bill for the 21st Century.

The Post-9/11 GI Bill offers financial assistance to veterans who received honorable discharge and served after September 10, 2001, for at least 90 days of aggregate service or were discharged with a service related injury or illness after 30 days. The Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits may be applied to all training programs approved for GI Bill benefits, housing allowance, and books and supplies stipend (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, 2012b).

Education benefits can be applied to training programs such as graduate and undergraduate degrees, vocational or technical training, on-the-job training, flight training, correspondence training, licensing, and national testing programs, entrepreneurship training, and tutorial assistance. The Post-9/11 GI Bill education benefits covers up to 36 months and generally payable for 15 years after honorable discharge from active duty. The amount of Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits applied and received by a veteran is dispersed in 40% to 100% tiers which are determined based on the time served by the service member (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, 2012b), (See Appendix A1).

The GI Bill has its firm supporters and critics. The Montgomery GI Bill was a recruitment tool but now seems to emphasize postservice benefits over enlistment bonuses which make it difficult to encourage re-enlistment (Banner, 2006). The GI Bill has become an incentive for U.S. citizens to enlist as well as an incentive for service members to leave the military once benefits are earned (See Appendix A2). Stable finances and addressed health concerns are important physiological needs of veteran students (Astin, 2011). When finances are stable and physical and psychological health concerns are addressed, military students are able to focus on learning. The GI Bill addresses the need for financial support to attend college and has become a primary motivator for some military service members. The promise of educational benefits is a deciding factor for some people to enlist in the military (Ackerman et al., 2009).

### *Yellow Ribbon Program*

All veterans will not be eligible for full tuition coverage and not all tuitions are fully covered by the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Therefore, schools can sign an agreement with the VA to join the Yellow Ribbon GI Education Enhancement Program (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, 2012c). The Yellow Ribbon Program, established by the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008, allows institutions of higher learning (such as colleges, universities, and other degree-granting schools) in the United States to voluntarily enter into an agreement with the VA to fund tuition and fee expenses that exceed the highest public in-state undergraduate tuition and fee rate in their state (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, 2012c).

The institution can contribute up to 50% specified dollar amount of those expenses and the VA will match the contribution in an amount not to exceed 50% of the difference. Other existing education benefits offered by the VA and the Department of Defense includes vocational rehabilitation, the Reserve Education Assistance Program, tuition assistance, and benefits for spouses or other dependents. Many states offer in-state tuition and additional financial aid to some eligible service members and veterans, as well as private scholarships available to veterans and service members.

### *VA Impact on Higher Education*

The Department of Veterans Affairs is responsible for governing the services and benefits for veterans including the GI Bill. The GI Bill of Rights is celebrated as one of the most important public policy innovations that democratized higher education and home ownership to move millions of working class Americans into the middle class (Canaday, 2003).

Since the passing of the 2008 Post-9/11 GI Bill Veterans Benefits Program, a great interest has occurred in college recruitment of veterans and broadening access (Brown & Gross, 2011). In 2012 reports showed colleges collected more than \$4.4 billion from more than 550,000 veterans who used Post-9/11 GI benefits to enroll in higher education institutions (Sander, 2012d). Congress was fretting over the prospect of proprietary institutions cashing in on the education benefits of military veterans (Sander, 2012d). Veterans are vulnerable in a higher education marketplace with some purveyors, particularly for-profits, recruiting aggressively (Sander, 2012d). There is a great concern that without proper guidance veterans might squander their benefits on dead-end degree programs or attend institutions that lack the support services that likely will result in an unsuccessful experience and outcome for the veteran. Therefore, President Obama, Senator Jim Webb of Virginia, lawmakers, and advocacy groups have focused attention on legislation that will give veterans more guidance on finding an institution and making more informed educational decisions (Sander, 2012d). Financial and academic advisement is necessary for veterans who are ignorant of their GI Bill benefits. To understand and determine available programs that best fit postsecondary education goals for individual veteran military students, confusion may occur for both higher education personnel and student veterans. With the current rise in veterans' enrollment at institutions across the country, having someone on staff to act as a GI Bill/financial aid navigator could prove to be very beneficial (American Council on Education, American Association of State Colleges and Universities, NASPA: Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, National Association of Veteran's Program Administrators, 2012). The GI Bill finances the cost for most veterans to attend college full-time including costs of living expenses. In 15 years it is expected that the total expenses of the GI Bill will be \$90 billion (Sander, 2012d).



The graduation rate of veterans attending and paying for college through the GI Bill has become a recent focus for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the National Student Clearinghouse, and Student Veterans of America. In April 2012 President Obama endorsed an executive order directing the Veterans Affairs, Department of Defense and the Department of Education to begin tracking the graduation rates of veterans using the Post-9/11 GI Bill (Sander, 2012a).

SVA, working with VA and the National Student Clearinghouse, will lead an effort to research the completion rates of Veterans and their dependents using the Post-9/11 GI Bill. This is an unprecedented effort, and rarely has a government program been studied for efficacy during its execution. (Dakduk, 2013, np.)

Institutions of higher education are political arenas in which power and politics are key components for changes and conflict. Power and politics can cause good conflict when it is used to solve organizational problems, focus on issues from the perspective of all affected, promote change, and ease the process of decision making (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). Power and politics have influenced the decisions of policies in higher education involving veteran and active duty students. Postsecondary institutions have used the power and politics of administration, politicians, and coalitions to help develop policies and programs to support military students. During past decades, the Servicemen's Adjustment Act has been challenged and modified and it is a continuous debate for federal legislation to provide educational benefits to veterans; therefore, additional changes are likely to occur.

### *GI Bill of Rights during Segregation*

When President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the 1944 GI Bill into law, it was a celebration for African Americans because it did not have any distinctions on the basis of race.

The GI Bill offered unprecedented opportunities for African Americans and other ethnic minorities in an era in which the government and society still practiced racial discrimination so breathtakingly blatant that those who did not live through the times have trouble comprehending just how awful they truly were – or how hard it could be to turn even genuine opportunity into meaningful gains. In celebrating the G.I. Bill as the first explicitly race-neutral piece of social legislation, it is often forgotten that this was the only race-neutral social program at the time. It operated, literally, in a vacuum. (Humes, 2006, p.93)

During the time of the 1944 GI Bill of Rights the military itself was practicing discrimination and racism; black soldiers traveling on military buses were expected to give up their seats for white soldiers. Two weeks after the signing of the 1944 GI Bill of Rights, a young, African American Army lieutenant, John Roosevelt Robinson, faced court-martial and a long wartime prison sentence in Texas for refusing to give up his seat on a military bus to a Caucasian soldier. Later the charges were dropped because discrimination on military buses and recreation facilities had been outlawed, making Robinson's arrest and court-martial illegal from the start. Lieutenant Robinson later became the first African American major league baseball player famously known as Jackie Robinson (Humes, 2006). Some Caucasian soldiers referred to African American soldiers as Mrs. Roosevelt's Niggers. In 1946 two years after the passing of the GI Bill of Rights, the VA hospital continued to segregate its veterans (Humes, 2006). It is perceived that passing the nondiscriminatory GI Bill of Rights altered America's racial equation.

*GI Bill of Rights a defeat or turning point for African Americans.* "The GI Bill was race neutral on its face, but the vast majority of veterans who benefited from the bill were white" (Humes, 2006, p. 92). Based on the facts from a 1950 Veterans Affairs survey from the National Archives, 1.3 million black veterans participated in at least one aspect of the GI Bill provisions. Although there are a higher percentage of African American veterans who participated in the GI Bill program, the numbers do not tell the story about the quality of service and benefits received by ethnic minority veterans.

Unfortunately, participation in the G.I. Bill program is not the whole story, as it says nothing about whether black, (or Asian American, Native American, or Hispanic) veterans received the same quality of benefits with the same life-altering power as the largesse enjoyed by white G.I.s. (Humes, 2006, p. 94)

The war occurred many years ago, but research and debate continues to question the turning point potential of the GI Bill to launch a civil rights revolution. “How much of that potential was realized, and how much defeated by the larger societal forces of prejudice and discrimination, remains a matter of research and debate for more than 60 years after the war” (Humes, 2006, p.94). Humes (2006) refers to the quote of Ira Katznelson, “There was no greater instrument for widening an already huge racial gap in postwar America than the GI Bill” (p.94). Reginald Wilson (1994) views the GI Bill as a provision of opportunities and benefits inclusive to African American veterans during a time when no other nondiscriminatory law or program existed.

Humes (2006) states there were many unintended consequences of the GI Bill and determining the impact and effect of the law is too complex and complicated to separate from the fact that America was a country that oppressed African Americans during the GI Bill of 1944. Although the GI Bill was considered the color-blind law, many black veterans and their families were denied their share of the multigenerational, enriching impact of home ownership and economic security that the GI Bill bestowed to the majority of white veterans, their children, and their grandchildren (Humes, 2006). It is perceived the GI Bill benefits denied to black veterans were deliberate and well planned by the southern segregationists in Congress.

The deliberate sabotage of America’s first color-blind social program caused some black veterans to be stymied to some degree. Caucasian veterans were offered coveted jobs at the phone company, while African American veterans were offered positions as Pullman porters to serve Caucasian train passengers and only allowed inside as servants usually working 12-hour

days, 6 days a week with no room for advancement. A survey conducted in 1946 by VA found that 86 % of professional skilled and semiskilled jobs were offered to Caucasian veterans and 92% of nonskilled and service jobs were filled by African American veterans (Humes, 2006). In 1947 three thousand V.A. home loans were issued to veterans in Mississippi and only two of those loans were received by African American veterans. Home ownership among Caucasian families was two out of three, and eventually reached three out of four. During postwar housing boom years, home ownership for African American and Hispanic families was at or below 40% (Humes, 2006).

Wilson (1994) reports that the GI Bill expanded access for African Americans to pursue higher education, receive nondiscriminatory unemployment benefits, become homeowners, and mobilize socially to middle class status. The GI Bill gave African Americans more access to higher education with expenses paid for by the federal government. Prior to the GI Bill, most African Americans attended Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) in the southern states, but the GI Bill gave Blacks access to White colleges and universities in northern states. Due to the Lanham Act of 1946, Historically Black College and Universities received allowances for necessary repair and construction of new buildings to address the unexpected increase of African American veteran students. In order to address the acute shortages of facilities for the increase of veteran students attending colleges and universities, the Lanham Act required colleges and universities to accommodate persons pursuing higher education under the Title II of the 1944 Servicemen's Readjustment Act. HBCU benefited from this law because prior to the GI Bill these colleges did not receive adequate state funding in comparison to state funding received by predominately Caucasian institutions (Wilson, 2004).

The GI Bill allowed unemployed African American veterans to receive an equal unemployment subsidy as Caucasian veterans of \$20 for 52 weeks during a time when African Americans residing in Southern states were paid less than Caucasians (Wilson, 2004). Most African American veterans faced racial barriers when attempting to use their GI benefits, but the GI Bill helped to create opportunities for the social mobility of African Americans to attain middle class status, job opportunities, homeownership, and postsecondary education (Wilson, 2004).

*African American veterans and GI Bill education opportunities.* The GI Bill was a color-blind law in a segregated society, but unfortunately some counselors employed by Veteran Affairs and others in power positions tried to discourage African American and other minority ethnic veterans from pursuing higher education (Humes, 2006). African American veterans used the GI Bill for financing vocational training and education. By 1950 records show that 49% of African American veterans and 43% of Caucasian veterans used the GI Bill (Humes, 2006). “Blacks, in most cases, were funneled into industrial and vocational schools” (Humes, 2006, p. 92). College enrollment for African American increased because of the GI Bill but not huge gains compared to white veterans. Twelve percent of African American veterans attended college on the GI Bill compared to 28% of whites (Humes, 2006). Nineteen percent of Caucasian WWII veterans earned a college degree and only 6% of African American veterans were baccalaureate program graduates (Banner, 2006).

Most African American veterans in the South attended vocational training schools or HBCU. African American veterans in northern states attended integrated schools but were limited based on quotas competing with Jews and other minorities (Humes, 2006). “Apart from quotas, segregation, and over-full historically black campuses, many African-American veterans

had another good reason to forgo their GI Bill college benefits: insufficient academic preparation” (Humes, 2006, p. 97). The American high and elementary schools for most African Americans were inadequate and failed to provide equal education for black youth. African American military recruits had higher levels of illiteracy rates than white recruits (Humes, 2006). Therefore, many of the black veterans pursued vocational education. “Vocational training seemed a good bet for black veterans who wanted a better life and who could not go to college; the G.I. Bill still seemed to hold huge promise for them” (Humes, 2006, p.97).

### *Experiences and Expectations of Veteran Students*

When military students arrive to college campuses, little is known about the expectations and experiences that they bring with them to campus (DiRamio et al., 2008). As veterans hang up their uniforms and pick up textbooks and syllabi, their experiences, who they are, their paths traveled to campus, as well as their aspirations, struggles, and triumphs are considered by higher education personnel (Sander, 2012b). Service members are migrating from the military to college campuses.

Many men and women enlist in the military for education and economic reasons. Some hope to escape bleak employment prospects and military services is a way up and out of difficult economic situations. Some join for the intent of earning money for college (Tinto, 2011). Sander (2012b) reports that in 2011 more than half a million veterans who served after September 11, 2001 attended college under the Post-9/11 GI Bill. The number of veterans enrolled in higher education is expected to increase as veterans return to the U.S. from Iraq and Afghanistan (Sander, 2012b).

DiRamio et al. (2008) found it difficult to generalize the experiences of veteran students but categorized three themes that emerged: transition, returning home, and academic preparation. It is common for veterans attending higher education to complain about the slow process of educational benefits or delay due to bureaucracy and red tape (Schlossberg, 2011).

### *Transitions and Adjustments*

Transitioning from military life to civilian life is difficult enough, but trying to fit in on a college campus “is a culture shock that’s hard to adjust to,” said Michael Dakduk, the deputy executive director of Student Veterans of America. (Astin, 2011, p. 21)

A military student experiencing transition from military service to college involves the individual, close family members, friends, and the college community (Schlossberg, 2011). The transition from military to college differently affects individual veterans. Immediately after discharge, some military veterans begin college and determine the immediate transition fostered a new found appreciation and motivation for their freedom to learn and attend school. Some veteran students realized that a personal waiting period may have helped them transition and become more focused before beginning school too soon (DiRamio et al., 2008). Schlossberg’s theory known as, *The Moving In, Moving Through, Moving Out*, is often used to study the transitions of military students as they cope with factors influencing their civilian and academic life. The ability to interact with individuals who are considered different and not feel threatened by their difference is important for veteran students to develop a fully integrated identity. Military veterans are familiar with predetermined relationships that exist in a strict hierarchical environment while college campuses are a less programmed civilian world. In the college environment self-regulation is necessary for success; the military system of decision making is based on following rules supported by outside forces. These changes in the new environment can be challenging if the environmental support is left unmet (Braxton, 2011).

Schlossberg (2011) classifies transitions into three types: anticipated, unanticipated, and nonevent. Military veterans who decide to attend college after military discharge is considered an anticipated transition. An unanticipated transition occurs when a veteran experiences an unexpected delay or setback to begin postsecondary education. Some veterans have experienced nonevent transitions, which are events that a person expects to occur, but the events do not happen. Some of the nonevents of transition considered by military students are expecting to receive guidance and assistance from campus personnel when beginning college, but assistance is not given or expecting to have veteran activities or offices and these offices do not exist (Schlossberg, 2011). The transition for military personnel to a student-civilian role causes many adjustment issues. Schlossberg identifies four major factors that influence an individual's ability to cope with transition experiences. The issues involve social, academic, vocational, and personal adjustments (Schlossberg, 2011).

*Social transition adjustments.* Veteran students tend to have disconnected with society that causes the students to experience adjustments in their personal, social, academic, and vocational areas of life (Schlossberg, 2011). Some student veterans report feeling awkward and isolated from younger classmates who are unfamiliar with military culture. The question most resented by military students asked by many of their younger classmates is "Did you kill anyone?" (Sander, 2012b). Some veteran students actively seek out companionship of fellow veteran military students while others, especially women, prefer not to acknowledge or mention their military status (Sander, 2012b).

*Academic transition adjustments.* Due to years of military service and lapse in time between high school and previous college attendance, military veterans reported that they felt unprepared academically in mathematics and study skills (DiRamio et al., 2008). "Advising



services, tutoring programs, and courses in reading and study skills were developed to meet the needs of veterans pursuing higher education. Heightened awareness of the importance of developmental education programs became increasingly apparent after WWII ended” (Banner, 2006, p. 38). The increased number of military veterans flooding the campuses of colleges and universities influenced and benefited from the access to expanding developmental education programs.

### *Academic Preparations*

Veteran students acquire skills and abilities through their military service that allows them to engage in the college core curriculum from a globally aware and culturally adept perspective. These attributes tend to positively affect the intentions, goals, maturity, and commitments to remain dedicated and persist through higher education, but if military students perceive that their military experience and transcripts are not evaluated in good faith, they may become discouraged (Tinto, 2011). “Problems associated with evaluation of academic transcripts and assessment of military experience have been identified in the literature as barriers to a successful transition” (p. 40). Some military students expressed experiencing frustrations because of vague and confusing procedures for determining college credits from military experiences. Some colleges apply military training and certificates as credits towards program requirements but consistency is lacking.

### *Perspectives of African American Male Students*

The history of denigrations to their manhood such as deportation from Africa, American slavery, physical beatings, lynching, and educational tracking has caused African American males to experience unpleasant stressors of racism and oppression (Bridges, 2011).

Racial discrimination is present in many aspects of African American life. Racism may be categorized as individual, institutional, and cultural. Individual racism is the experience of personal discrimination such as a campus security targeting an African American male and following him as he walks across a college campus (Bridges, 2011). Institutional racism is the experience of social and institutional policies that exclude African Americans from full participation in American society; for example the criminal laws that relate to the possession of illegal drugs (Bridges, 2011). Cultural racism is placing preference on the cultural practices of the dominant group as being superior to the culture of the subordinate group such as disregarding the contributions of minority groups in American history. All forms of racism are stressful and have a harmful psychological and somatic consequence for African Americans particularly males (Bridges, 2011).

“African American males must live and adapt to a unique social and cultural environment” (Bridges, 2011, p. 154). Many socio-cultural and academic challenges, as well as negative dilemmas, cause stressful experiences and identity conflicts for African American males. “While stress has been defined in many ways, all of the definitions involve an environmental demand to which the person must react and where stress is perceived as at least potentially exceeding the person’s ability or resources to meet the challenges” (Bridges, 2011, p.155-156). Coping is the process when an individual uses cognitive and behavioral attempts to manage external or internal demands that exceed his or her resources (Bridges, 2011). Two primary issues or conflicts that involve African American males are prejudicial attitudes from society and adopting two differing sets of cultural values.

Sometimes African American males are marginalized in political, economic, and social arenas with media and literature projecting Eurocentric power and dominance (Spurgeon, 2009).

The media portrayal and experiences in education settings has influenced the feeling of pessimism towards the future for African American males (Bridges, 2011). African American males should realize that prejudicial stereotypes will negatively affect their identity development if they accept and believe stereotypes (Bridges, 2011).

The differing culture values experienced by African American males include one from the dominant American culture and the other from their own culture (Bridges, 2011). In their environments, African American males cope with stressful experiences such as racism, the need to adapt to White institutions and culture, remaining situated in the African American community, and coping with limited social and political power (Bridges, 2011). Stressful situations typically demand a coping strategy (Bridges, 2011). African American males use different coping strategies to minimize their stressful experiences at predominately White institutions.

Research studies have shown that education in the U.S. have been less responsive and supportive of minority groups including African Americans. Some research has asserted that African American males experience the poorest educational outcomes compared to other major demographic groups in the U.S. (Palmer, Davis, Moore, & Hilton, 2010). “In academic settings, African American males are placed in remedial and special education classes at a greater rate than European Americans or African American females” (Bridges, 2011, p.152). Beginning in elementary education, African American male students have a history of problematic experiences that continue to deepen into higher education settings. Many African American males are under-prepared academically in elementary school and require remedial education to strengthen their academic skills for success in elementary and secondary school settings; therefore, most African

American male high school students are not enrolled in college preparatory courses to increase their preparedness for college or STEM fields (Palmer et al., 2010). The majority of African American males reside in low socioeconomic status neighborhoods and attend schools that are high poverty and ethnic minority concentrated. Sometimes these schools lack qualified, experienced teachers and receive less in adjusted state and local revenue per pupil compared to districts with less minorities and higher socioeconomic status students (Palmer et al., 2010).

Improving teacher quality, increasing enrollment of African American males in college-prep courses, and eliminating the disparity in school funding will greatly improve the preparedness and completion rate of African American males in postsecondary education (Palmer et al., 2010). Identifying strategies to improve academic achievement, postsecondary participation, and degree attainment for African American males will benefit the U.S. domestically and improve the country's position in the global society (Palmer et al., 2010). If the U.S. hopes to maintain and enhance its global competitiveness, implementations to promote access and success for underrepresented minority students, such as African American males, should become top priority.

Some academic problems begin to emerge for African American males during early childhood education and continue to higher education. Many theories and philosophies attempt explanations to understand the disengagement of African American males (Palmer et al., 2010). African American males disengage from society because they feel that they are not valued by society. The feeling of not being valued causes African American males to develop a complex of behavioral and cognitive skills that are misunderstood or misinterpreted by others (Spurgeon, 2009).

### *African American Male Students Enrolled in Predominantly White Institutions*

Many African American men do not feel valued by society and disengage from it by developing a complex pattern of behavioral and cognitive skills that are often misunderstood or misinterpreted by others. This nontraditional mentality manifests itself with African American male college students, who often believe that college attendance is a success, as opposed to time spent in prison or on parole (Spurgeon, 2009, p. 38).

“Previous researchers have found that African American students may experience unique challenges when adjusting to PWIs” (Spurgeon, 2009, p. 33). Spurgeon (2009) refers to predominantly White institutions as PWIs. While adjusting to academic curriculum, African American students are faced with feelings of aloneness and racism. “Among the challenges African American male college students sometimes face at PWIs are exclusion from social activities, unwelcoming residence hall environments, less friendly peers, and racial problems undetected by their Caucasian counterparts. Additionally, African American students attending PWIs often perceive faculty members, academic supports, and developmental services as uninviting and inaccessible” (Spurgeon, 2009, p.34). The challenges encountered by African American students enrolled at PWIs may interfere with academic, social, and personal-emotional adjustments (Spurgeon, 2009).

Feelings of exclusion from society are a concern for African American males; many times they must choose between being African and American (Bridges, 2011). African American males must struggle with adopting two divergent value systems, one African American and one European American. African American males attending PWIs may struggle with establishing their racial identity (Spurgeon, 2009). They may actively explore a resolution resulting in achieved ethnic identity or actively ignore issues resulting in identity diffusion. “Total rejection of either reality can restrict their choices, personal growth, social interactions, and economic opportunities” (Bridges, 2011, p. 153).

To cope with identity issues, some African American male college students on a predominantly Caucasian campus may physically or psychologically distance themselves from Caucasians (Bridges, 2011). An African American male who exclusively identify with Eurocentric values may be isolated from his African American community and alienated psychologically from his African descent (Spurgeon, 2009). African American males must balance existing in an individualistic and competitive culture positively embracing their African American culture includes communal, emotional awareness, shared power, and interdependence (Bridges, 2011).

“While most African American males live, have families, friends, and attend churches in the African American community, they must adjust to Caucasian managed institutions, workplaces, and military settings” (Bridges, 2011, p.154). To adjust to the Caucasian culture, African American males may adapt to different values, behavioral styles, and aspirations causing them to be bicultural to function in both cultures (Bridges, 2011). As they adapt to White American institutions and culture, many African American males remain connected to the African American community and culture. A sense of self-worth is important for African American males at a predominately Caucasian institution for developing positive social relationships and establishing social support networks (Spurgeon, 2009). To relax and escape from the pressures of academic life, African American male students may retreat to environments such as the local gym or community center (Spurgeon, 2009).

Institutions of higher education should consider how racism can affect African American male students and their journey towards degree attainment. University and college programs that nurture and support African American male students help to increase the graduation rate for African American male students at predominantly Caucasian institutions (Bridges, 2011; Spurgeon, 2009).

Universities and colleges may attempt to decrease some stressors for African American male college students, but a common barrier to accessing or completing postsecondary education is unaffordable costs. “Ethnic minority college students are more likely to encounter problems completing their degree because of a large share of unmet financial aid. The bottom line seems to be that cost and access work together in preventing African American males from persisting to graduate” (Palmer et al., 2010, p.113). Mentorship programs, student-centered retention programs, multicultural affairs, student-centered advising, and hiring tenure track and subsequent promotion of African American faculty are examples of efforts to provide nurturing and supportive programs developed to improve graduation rates and experiences for African American male students at PWIs (Bridges, 2011; Spurgeon, 2009).

Wallace, Abel, and Ropers-Huilman (2000) studied African American male veteran students and the effect of mentoring provided information about African American male veterans’ perspectives regarding mentor relationships in higher education. Due to feelings of an inability to succeed in college, some African American male veterans were reluctant to attend college and believe postsecondary education was not an option. For these veterans formal and informal mentoring facilitated initial decisions to attend college, especially for veterans who were unaware of the processes and procedures of higher education and its culture. Some African American male veterans identified formal mentoring programs such as Veterans Upward Bound, that provide veterans with access and knowledge for college guidance and preparation, as a positive impact in their academic career and life. Mentors who are caring and supportive have helped African American male veterans feel connected to others and the college campus and succeed in their course work (Wallace et al., 2000).

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### *Disclaimer*

This research is based on the participation of one African American male veteran student who graduated from a predominantly Caucasian institution of higher education. Initially, I planned to involve many participants for this study but after I encountered unexpected limitations to identify a sample of qualified participants the study involved one participant. Chapter 4 explains the selection process that resulted in one participant.

#### *Purpose*

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the experiences and expectations of an African American male veteran student of the war in Iraq who attended a predominantly Caucasian institution of higher education. The study should evaluate the reciprocal relationship between the African American veteran male student and higher education based on meeting the needs and expectations of an African American male veteran student through services, programs, and practices in a postsecondary education setting. Military veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars are an increasing student subpopulation within higher education institutions. The reciprocal relationship between African American veteran male students and institutions of higher education is a reflection of met and unmet needs that may produce different outcomes (Astin, 2011). U.S. colleges and universities find themselves lacking the understanding and services necessary to support the unique needs and experiences of veteran students. Only by learning the strengths, needs, and challenges of African American male veteran students enrolled in higher education will higher education institutions adequately assist and facilitate the personal and academic achievements of veteran students (Ryan, Carlstrom, Hughey, & Harris, 2011).



For this study, experiences and expectations of an African American male veteran student includes areas of social, academic, and financial needs. Awareness of the expectations and experiences of an African American male veteran student may provide findings that can lead to improved services and successfully meeting the needs of this student population.

### *Research Design*

Research is a thought process we use to solve problems, a method of inquiry that strengthens our knowledge (Friedman, 1998). Qualitative research in the social sciences is not a unified set of techniques or philosophies. Qualitative research allows researchers to explore a wide array of dimensions within the social world including everyday life, the understandings, experiences, and imaginings of their research participants, as well as, the ways that social processes, intuitions, discourses or relationships work, and the significance of the generated meanings (Mason, 2002). Qualitative research methodologies help to acquire and celebrate the richness, depth, nuance, context, multi-dimensionality, and complexity of our understanding and explanations of the social world (Mason, 2002).

The main qualitative research approach used to understand the meanings of experiences and expectations for an African American veteran male student of the Iraq war is narrative analysis. “Stories are how we make sense of our experiences, how we communicate with others, and through which we understand the world around us” (Merriam, 2009, p. 32). Narratives are stories used as data sources in qualitative research to understand the meaning of the human experience (Merriam, 2009). Narrative inquiry is a qualitative research methodology that seeks to understand and represent experiences through the stories lived and told by individuals (Lemley & Mitchell, 2012). Researchers primarily depend on face-to-face data collection such as in-depth interviews to obtain information using qualitative narrative inquiry (Schensul, 2012).

Narrative analysis is used for first-person accounts in the form of semistructured interviewing. Semistructured interviews use predetermined questions, but during the interview the interviewer may ask for clarification (Griffiee, 2005). To understand the themes developed from the interview, I, the researcher, applied interpretivism. As the main qualitative paradigmatic, interpretive is driven by the views of participants in the study (Schensul, 2012). Interpretivism is an ethical commitment in the form of respect for and fidelity to the participant's world.

In other words, interpretivists argue that it is possible to understand the subjective meaning of action (grasping the actor's beliefs, desires, and so on) yet do so in an objective manner. The meaning that the interpreter reproduces or reconstructs is considered the original meaning of the action. (Schwandt, 2000, p. 193)

Interpretive approaches use people and their interpretations, perceptions, meanings, and understandings as the primary data sources. Interpretivism does not rely on total immersion in a setting and may use interview methods to support research that explores people's individual and collective understandings, reasoning processes, social norms, and so on. The text of the story forms the data set for analyzing with an interpretive approach (Mason, 2002). In one sense interpretivism epistemologies can be characterized as hermeneutics because the inquirer must understand the part such as sentence or actions in order to interpret the meaning (Schwandt, 2000).

### *Critical Race Theory and Critical Theory*

During the last decade culturally responsive evaluation (CRE) has burgeoned as a key methodological approach to address critical concerns of the interpretation and use of results for marginalized groups that have historically been perceived as inconsequential within the context of research. It is necessary to have a certain level of cultural competence to conduct research with an African American participant. Considerations of the differences between the constructs race and culture are pertinent.

Culture is identified as any idea, belief, habit, or practice acquired from others or a particular group of individuals who experience a shared context of existence (Frazier, Hood, & Hopson, 2012).

Critical Race Theory and Critical Theory are incorporated in the study to address double consciousness, individualism, and collectivism. Critical Race Theory enacts an ethnic epistemology that shape the participants' standpoint or position in the world. Critical Theory leads to practical, pragmatic knowledge that is cultural and structural judged by its degree of historical situatedness and its ability to produce action (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

In this study the cultures of masculinity, African American, and military produce the various levels of acculturation in the participant. These cultural characteristics will influence his ability to code-switch as a critical strategy for survival. In order to transition as an African American male veteran military student, code-switching involves alternating between language, behaviors, and roles to meet the social demands of his environments. Race has been defined as people belonging to a group or category based on the connection of common origin or shared physical features and behavioral patterns, but some argue that race is defined as a socially contrived construct rather than a biological one in the United States. Researchers and practitioners use the term "race" as a means of grouping people (Frazier et al., 2012). For this study, African American is used as a race for grouping veteran servicemen who are students in higher education institutions.

### *Research Questions*

Below are the three main research questions for this study:

1. What are the experiences and expectations of an African American male veteran student in higher education?

2. How does an African American male veteran student perceive his role in a higher education institution?
3. How does an African American male veteran student perceive the services and programs available at a higher education institution?

### *Interview Questions*

“Interviewing requires high level questioning skills and an active interpretation” (Griffiee, 2005, p.36). During an interview, the questions asked should have purpose (Griffiee, 2005).

Although interviewing is one of the most common and powerful ways used as an interaction to understand human beings, asking questions and receiving answers may seem difficult at first because of the ambiguity residue of written or spoken word (Fontana & Frey, 2000). According to Mason (2002) all interview processes entail interactional exchange of dialogue, a relatively informal style, a topic-centered, thematic, narrative or biographical approach, and operates from the perspective that knowledge is situated and contextual. A weakness of interviewing is the assumption that interviewing results in true and accurate pictures of the participants’ lives and selves, but sometimes participants may not be willing to disclose their “selves or may purposefully present information that is not true (Fontana & Frey, 2000). Participants may advertently or inadvertently report information or give contradictory responses and be subjective.

Types of interview questions used in the study are suggested by Patton (2002):

1. Experience and behavior questions
2. Opinion and values questions
3. Feeling questions
4. Knowledge questions
5. Background and demographic questions relevant to research study

An informal interview was conducted with the participant at the local public library. Interview questions include an in-depth understanding of the participant's experiences, expectations, perceptions, opinions, thoughts, and feelings (See Appendix B). When necessary, questions were adapted according to emerging discoveries from the responses of the participant.

### *Instrumentation*

“The credibility of qualitative inquiry is especially dependent on the credibility of the researcher because the researcher is the instrument of data collection and the center of the analytic process” (Patton, 1990, p. 461). Humans are both a strength and weakness of valid research because of the influence of biases, interpretations, and experiences (Fontana & Frey, 2000).

I acknowledge my assumptions, biases, and questions regarding the research because the interview data are not only the literal words from the participant but my interpretations. It is my bias that military veterans are proactive heroes. Also I assume most veterans do not incur costs for postsecondary education because of the benefits that are received through the GI Bill. From my previous experiences working in higher education with veteran students and African American male students, it is my perception that special services are required and influence the retention and graduation rate of this subpopulation of students. As I interviewed the research participant, awareness of my race and gender as an African American female is important because gender and race filter knowledge. I constantly listened to the interview for understanding and to interpret emerging themes. I did not impose my personal preconceived ideas on the data but rather let the findings develop by avoiding leading questions and interrogation. Categories are grounded in the data, meaning categories emerge from and reflect on the data (Griffiee, 2005).

To decrease the impact of my biases, I reflected on my thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. As a researcher, critical reflections of my conscious self to influence the research were considered. Reflexivity is the process of reflecting critically on the self as the researcher and realize my choice of research problem and engaging in the research process with the participant represents a fluid of selves that include research based self, brought self, and situationally created self (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). As an interpreter of the research study, it is important that I attempted to understand the experiences of the participant in an objective manner by employing an awareness method that allowed me to step outside of my historical frames of reference (Schwandt, 2000). “Interpretivist epistemologies can in one sense be characterized as hermeneutic because they emphasize that one must grasp the situation in which human actions make (or acquiring) meaning in order to say one has an understanding of the particular action” (Schwandt, 2000, p.193).

As an interviewer, it is important that I understand the language and culture of the participant, gain and maintain the trust of the participant, and establish rapport with the participant (Fontana & Frey, 2000). During an interview within the cultural boundaries of a paternalistic social system, the sex of the interviewer and that of the respondent makes a difference between masculine and feminine identities (Fontana & Frey, 2000). “Female interviewers at times face the added burden of sexual overtures or covert sexual hassle” (Fontana & Frey, p. 658, 2000). If this would have occurred, the research participant would have been reminded of the responsibility of ethics and codes of conduct. Gender, sexuality, race, class, hierarchy, status, and age cannot be isolated or ignored because they are all complex elements that shape conducting the interview, if a participant requests that the interview stops.

### *Selection Process*

Convenient sampling was used to identify an African American male veteran student who served in the Iraq war and attended the institution of higher education. The participant graduated with an undergraduate degree from the institution of higher education. Purposive sampling is selecting research study participants based on a preselected criterion relevant to research study (Mack & Woodson, 2005). Recruitment for identifying and enrolling individual participants involved the offices serving veterans on campus. Emails were sent to African American male veteran students. The decision to select one participant was based on research study modifications, unexpected limitations, willingness of the participant to volunteer, how well the participant understood the purpose of the study, what was expected of the participant, and the respect of his privacy. Informed consent was obtained from the participant.

### *Data Collection*

The interview was audio recorded with permission from the participant. When informal and formal conversations occurred, I listened and immediately wrote notes after the conversation. When the participant requested that I stop audio recording, the recorder was turned off. The participant had the right to withdraw from the research, refuse to participate, or request that his statements be excluded. A pseudonym was used to protect the identity, privacy, and confidentiality of the participant.

### *Validity and Reliability*

The growing popularity of narrative as a means of accessing human action and experience has been accompanied by discussions as to how to best tell people's stories, the role of the researcher in the process, and how trustworthy these narratives are in terms of validity and reliability (Merriam, 2009, p. 34).

The terms validity and reliability are both difficult to categorize and define. Validity for narrative inquiry refers to the narrative providing information for future studies and contributions

to social change by empowering participants. Reliability in narrative research concerns with dependability and trustworthiness of data (Lemley & Mitchell, 2012). Valid measurements make valid data, but validity itself depends on collective opinions of researchers (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). According to Smith and Deemer (2000) Hammersley identifies two key elements of validity: credibility and plausibility. Hammersley supports when a claim lacks plausibility or credibility evidence is required. The evidence itself must be plausible and credible which are social judgments that can lead to entangles in an infinite regress (Smith & Deemer, 2000).

Credible findings are particular findings of the study judged by criteria. There have been numerous suggestions for defining criteria to distinguish the difference between good and bad qualitative research such as the traditional social science criteria (validity, reliability, objectivity) and authenticity criteria (fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity, and tactical authenticity) (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Flick, 2007). These suggestions do not provide defined borders between good and bad research and have not led to any sort of consensus as to which criteria might be the adequate ones for qualitative research or for specific areas in qualitative research (Flick, 2007). In qualitative research, whether a story can be accepted is not whether it abides by the convention of the orthodox canon, but whether the validity I am claiming for it can be justified (Lemley & Mitchell, 2012).

The credibility criteria for this study include the constructs confirmability, transferability, and dependability. Confirmability addresses that findings can be confirmed or validated by others and is not a creation of the researcher's biases or prejudices (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Transferability concludes findings are applicable and consistent to another setting or group of people (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).



Dependability in qualitative research accounts for replicated findings if the study was conducted with the same participants in the same context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A researcher analyzing data must determine his or her confidence in the credibility of his or her findings.

“An issue of validity is the conflation between method and interpretation” (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p.178). Validation requires the researcher to consider the weak points of the research method. Interpretive validity and trustworthiness are strategies used to address internal validity arguments. Interpretive validity is considering data interpretation and conclusion as accurate reflections of the subjects’ “reality”. The four dimensions of interpretive validity are usefulness, contextual completeness, research positioning, and reporting styles (Hale & Astolfi, 2007). The greater the degree of acceptance by research colleagues, the more valid the interpretations reported by the researcher (Hale & Astolfi, 2007). A number of strategies for promoting the quality of qualitative research make a considerable contribution to improving the quality of qualitative research and affects the design of a concrete study (Flick, 2007).

Strategies for promoting validity and reliability are triangulation, reinterviewing, reflexivity, and rich thick descriptions (Griffee, 2005; Merriam, 2009). Triangulation is comparing at least two sources of data to confirm emerging findings such as conducting multiple interviews with the same person and asking some of the same questions each time (Griffee, 2005). If interviews involve multiple participants answering duplicate questions then similar answers can be used to strengthen the validity of the interpretation (Griffee, 2005). Three strategies can be used for reinterviewing; one strategy is member checking. Member checking is presenting data and tentative interpretations to the participants from whom the data was derived as asking if the data are plausible (Merriam, 2009). In order to constitute meaningful validity, a researcher must be knowledgeable about the participants to recognize what is critical and what is

peripheral to the stories that participants are relaying. Narrative research emphasizes understanding of the inquirer to analyze the stories of the research participants and present the findings by “restorying” them to accurately convey the participants’ meaning. A good representation and understanding of their experiences must be conceptualized in a framework not only by the researcher but the participant (Lemley & Mitchell, 2012). After completing a summary and interpretation, participants should be given an opportunity to review interpretations for clarification that the researcher is not reporting his or her opinion. If participants disagree with the researcher’s interpretation, the data should be reanalyzed to include the respondents’ insights (Griffie, 2005). It is essential that qualitative research designs include full descriptions of research participants, data collection devices and procedures, and sites. Rich, thick, descriptions provide readers with enough descriptions and contextualized findings in order to determine the extent to which their situations match the research context and is transferable (Merriam, 2009). The validity of narrative inquiry lies in the researcher’s ability to provide information for future studies and opportunities for social change (Lemley & Mitchell, 2012).

#### *Limitations and Delimitations*

Qualitative research allows the researcher to provide complex, textual descriptions of peoples’ experiences of a research issue. Qualitative research informs us about programs and interventions; ways to improve services, formulate interventions, and examine the effects of policies on individuals, communities, and educational settings. Qualitative research has significant evaluative and intervention-oriented benefits for researchers, participants, and communities (Schensul, 2012). Qualitative research may provide insights into why people behave certain ways, what influences their thoughts, values, and behaviors. The inexperience or experience of the researcher can possibly be a limitation or delimitation for the study.

Experienced qualitative researchers may rely on advanced technologies and add sophisticated components to their study. As a beginning qualitative researcher, I am limited on my own data collection and analysis capabilities using a small sample size to practice my skills and gain experience. The relationship of language to the world it describes presents difficulties to the validity of qualitative research. Some researchers argue there is no means of correctly matching a word to the world, while others argue language can adequately map a person's experience through narratives (Smith & Deemer, 2000). In-depth interviewing provides optimal data collection on individual perspectives and experiences (Mack & Woodsong, 2005). Although participants may be willing to share their stories, interviewing has limitations. Some respondents may not be able to verbally express their thoughts, may not have an opinion, or may not be able to clearly state their opinion. Sometimes individuals interviewed may be unwilling to share what they know or do not have desired information (Griffee, 2005).

Qualitative research permits flexibility in some aspects of the study that allows spontaneity and adaptations of the interactions between the researcher and study participants. For example using open ended questions, the wording used for interview questions, and the sequence of questions may change due to the participants' responses or narrative inquiry may produce stories and emotions that are unexpected, unplanned, and uncontrolled (Lemley & Mitchell, 2012; Mack & Woodsong, 2005).

“Narrative inquiry or “storytelling” is the oldest and first form of inquiry” (Lemley & Mitchell, 2012, p. 215). Narrative inquiry gives researchers the space to write stories with expressed intent of capturing and engaging in the experiences of their participants for a more complete and democratic manner than objectivist approaches to research. Narrative inquiry is equally important for dominant and marginalized communities to empower social, political,

cultural, and economic identities. It involves multiple epistemologies (ways of knowing), ontologies (ways of being), and axiologies (ways of valuing and judging) that account for the complexity of human experience but has significant limitations.

The labels associated with being the researcher or participant, the knower or known in narrative methodology are problematic because the labels raise questions about what is being conveyed. Researchers using narrative analysis seek to understand and represent the experiences through the stories participants live and tell. A narrative researcher must be able to determine if critical events are important events recounted the research participant and deserve focus for learning from the participant or story itself. A researcher's ability or inability to determine if an event is critical or peripheral may influence the relationship between the researcher and the participant (Lemley & Mitchell, 2012). Researchers encounter the challenges of how to present or represent the information as accurately and completely as possible. Participants play a greater role in justifying the validity of the narratives that researchers construct. "Placing the participant as the primary teller allows the readers to interpret the participants' story instead of a researcher's interpretation the participant's voice is central to the telling" (Lemley & Mitchell, 2012, p.222). During the research process narrative inquiry actively involves the participants and detailing the participant's quotes is more powerful than interpretations (Lemley & Mitchell, 2012).

Interpretations for qualitative research has limitations because "research must be conducted in a manner that recognizes regardless how detailed an account, the distance between the research participants and the researcher will never be completely bridged because there is no unmediated access to the research participants' thoughts and actions" (Lemley & Mitchell, 2012, p. 233). In narrative inquiry, opposed to being a researcher and a participant, costorytellers

negotiate the spoken and unspoken landscape, events, understandings, and insights of which a given story consists (Lemley & Mitchell, 2012).

### *Chapter Summary*

Chapter 3 details the qualitative research design, research questions, interview questions, instrumentation, selection process and data collection used to understand the experiences and expectations of an African American male veteran of the Post-9/11 war in Iraq who attended and graduated from a predominantly Caucasian postsecondary institution. This chapter includes the Critical Race Theory and Critical Theory, validity and reliability, and delimitations and limitations to address responsive evaluation and research practices.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW

#### *Disclaimer*

This research is based on the participation of one African American male veteran student who graduated from a predominantly Caucasian institution of higher education. Initially, I planned to involve many participants for this study but after I encountered unexpected limitations to identify a sample of qualified participants the study involved one participant. Chapter 4 explains the selection process that resulted in one participant.

#### *Identifying African American Male Veterans*

The data analysis for this qualitative research study involved narrative inquiry from an in-depth semistructured face-to-face interview. Identifying African American male veteran students of Iraq or Afghanistan Wars at the selected higher education institution was very difficult. To identify eligible research participants, directors for the university offices serving veteran students and families assisted with recruiting prospective participants. When I began to search for eligible prospective participants, a few unexpected limitations occurred.

The first difficulty encountered was identifying African American male veteran students attending the selected predominantly white university. I begin to search for African American male veteran student participants by contacting the Vice Provost of Enrollment Services for approval to involve directors of university offices that serve veteran students and military family members. After e-mail correspondence, the Vice Provost approved that I contact the directors for assistance and informed me to follow-up with the directors of the offices serving veterans. When the Vice Provost sent the e-mail of approval, the directors were copied.

Therefore, when I followed-up with the directors, they were aware of the approval that I received from the Vice Provost. To protect the identification of the university and directors' programs, I will not reveal the name of the directors or the programs. I will refer to the two directors who helped me with finding potential participants as Director A and Director B.

#### *Two Directors of Veteran Service Offices*

My initial contact directly with the directors was a telephone conversation. I called each director to introduce myself and discuss the purpose of my study. I informed each director that I was seeking African American male veteran students classified as a junior or senior and that I would need their assistance to find participants. When I talked to the directors about their involvement and assistance with identifying prospective participants, I asked for their help with providing the contact information for African American male veteran students. Both directors stated that they would be able to help but they were completing projects for their programs and would follow-up with me. The two directors were able to assist me and provided a good start and resource to identify prospective participants. I believed these offices would be my best resource to find participants. After a few weeks of waiting to hear from the directors, I began to feel anxious because I did not know if the directors were too busy working on program projects to begin identifying prospective participants or if the directors forgot about my request. In order to determine the progress made with gathering a list of prospective participants, I decided to call the directors.

#### *Student Information Systems and Filing*

I was able to contact one of the directors to inquire about the status of identifying African American male veterans enrolled at the university. During this conversation, Director A explained the process to identify the specific group of veteran students for my study.

I became knowledgeable about a process that I assumed would be an easy use of a student information system, but after listening to Director A, I realized the process would involve a lot of time and effort. As a previous employee of K-12 education, I assumed the university offices would have a database much like PowerSchool. PowerSchool is a student information system that I used for specific filter searches within my school and district. It was my personal assumptions and thoughts that the institution of higher education had a database that would be much like PowerSchool for the directors to use quickly and identify African American male veteran students. The directors did not have a computer system or database to identify veteran students based on their gender, race, or combat experience, but these directors worked diligently to help me with their accessible resources and information. I truly appreciate their time and assistance.

After speaking with Director A, I became aware that these offices do not have a student information system supported by an information technology system through the university or an IT corporation. The office of information technology at the university has not developed computer databases with the capability to filter specific search criteria filters for the offices serving veterans. I learned how the files of veterans' information are maintained and developed. The offices serving veterans use electronic files such as excel spreadsheets that contain the contact information for veteran students. These offices also use filing cabinets to store hardcopies of information for each veteran's file. The lack of efficient student information and filing systems caused a month delay in compiling a list of African American male veteran students. The directors had to review all their office files in order to identify African American male veteran students. The office directors and personnel are directly involved with providing services to veteran students. Their direct contact allows the office personnel to know many of



the veterans enrolled at the university by face and name recognition and this personal interaction helped them to identify which files belonged to African American male veterans who have visited their offices. I was surprised to learn about the process that the directors used to assist me. After understanding the process, I became more appreciative of the directors' time and effort to help me. I am grateful for their assistance and time aggregating contact information for potential study participants.

The directors gathered contact information such as email, telephone numbers, and mailing addresses from the files. Director B sent e-mails to African American male veteran students to inform and recruit participants for my study. I received a list of thirteen African American male veterans including addresses and telephone numbers from Director A. Although the number of African American male veteran students identified was very small, I realized the directors helped to the best of their ability with identifying veteran students, who were eligible participants for my study. Unfortunately, within the small number of identified African American male veteran students, it was unknown if they had military experience in Afghanistan or Iraq.

#### *Contact Methods Using Email, Telephone, and Other Campus Offices*

Director B and I sent e-mails to potential participants. Using e-mails as a recruiting method resulted in one reply from a veteran student informing me that he would be willing to participate in my study but he did not have combat experience in Iraq or Afghanistan wars. After a few weeks of no e-mail responses, I became concerned that I would not find many participants. My next attempt to find more participants was the use of the telephone numbers I received to contact veteran students. On the first attempt of dialing numbers on my list, when I found five numbers that were not in service or not used by the veteran, I marked through the number.

I dialed one number that issued a voice message to callers that the phone service is set-up for only out-going-calls and cannot receive incoming calls. Telephone numbers that were incorrect or not in service interfered with my opportunity to contact the veteran. When I dialed working numbers with voicemails, I repeatedly would leave voicemail messages. I attempted calling during different times of the day to reach some veterans. I left voicemail messages for some veterans. Eventually, I discussed my research study with the veterans for whom I previously left voicemail messages. When I was able to contact identified African American veteran students, the responses were that they were no longer enrolled and did not have duty in Iraq or Afghanistan, enrolled and did not have duty in Iraq or Afghanistan, and no longer enrolled but had experience in Kuwait and Iraq. As I spoke with veterans, I hoped for a snowball sampling by asking did they happen to know of any veterans who met the criteria for my study, but none of the veterans could refer anyone for my study. Four African American male veteran students I continued to call did not return my call and I never was able to contact. I became frustrated and hopeless because I did not have any identified African American male veteran students who were currently enrolled and from Iraq or Afghanistan war. I was baffled for a few days but decided to contact other campus offices. Although, I believed my best option was the offices that I initially contacted on the campus that were specifically for veteran and veterans' families, I decided to try the ROTC department and an office for minority students. I called these offices and talked with administrative assistants seeking any possible contacts to assist me with finding more participants. The offices were unable to assist me.

Due to the need of identifying participants for my study, I considered mailing letters to the identified African American male student veterans I could not reach. After feedback from directors, I chose not to mail letters because veterans are a student population that often changes

their mailing addresses and telephone numbers, which can cause difficulty to maintain updated contact information. I did not mail letters using mailing addresses that I was provided because it would likely be an impractical cost. Also, I didn't have a return mailing address that I would have liked to use.

#### *Contacting Dissertation Committee Chairperson for Guidance*

After limited resources and information, as well as the lack of eligible participants, I decided to contact the chairperson for my dissertation to discuss my dilemma. After discussing my problems and the many attempts to find prospective participants, it was decided that I should adjust my study to interview the one participant, who met the main criteria for my study but was a recent graduate from the university.

After speaking with the dissertation committee chairperson and receiving her recommendation and approval, I contacted the African American male veteran student graduate with duty in Iraq. When I contacted the prospective participant, it was difficult to schedule a time to interview him because he was out of town on vacation for a few weeks.

#### *Meeting Participant for In-Depth Interview*

Once he returned, we planned to meet at the Johnson City Public Library for the initial interview. On the day we scheduled to meet, I arrived at the library approximately 15 minutes early to secure a room for the interview. After 10 minutes past the time that we were scheduled to meet, I called the participant and he did not answer his phone. I left a voicemail stating that I was at the library in a room upstairs waiting for his arrival. I remained at the library for 1 hour 15 minutes, hoping that he would show up. I was so disappointed and worried that he did not come to the interview. I did not know what I was going to do because he was the only participant identified to meet the main criterion for my study. When I left the library, I texted him to inform

him that I was leaving but I would like to meet with him at his earliest convenience and I was willing to meet with him later that same day if he had time. I did not hear from my participant until late that night after the library was closed. He informed me that he was not feeling well but was willing to meet with me the next day. I was glad that he called but I was not optimistic that he would come to the interview scheduled for the next day.

On the next day, I went to the library hoping he would be there but did not feel very confident. I did not show up early as before to secure a room but I was on time. As I was walking from my car to the library, he called to inform me that he was at the main entrance waiting for me. I was happy to receive his call and told him I was walking toward the entrance. He noticed me and introduced himself. He wore casual shorts, t-shirt, and sneakers. He was groomed and seemed happy that he could meet me on the second day. We walked up the library steps to the second floor and casually talked about how we both were glad that he was feeling better. We settled in a study room and began the interview.

#### *Background of Participant*

A brief description of the participant is presented that includes a background of his education and military experience. The pseudonym, Bryan, was used to protect the personal identification of the participant.

Bryan is an African American male Air Force veteran who served in Kuwait and Iraq wars. He grew up in a two-parent household. His father is an Army veteran and college graduate. Bryan began his first years of education as the only African American at a predominantly Caucasian elementary school. When he began junior high school, he attended a school that was racially and ethnically diverse. After junior high, he was promoted to a predominantly Caucasian high school and was the first African American male to graduate.

When Bryan turned 13 years old, his father began to stress to him that at the age of 18 years old, he would have to move out of his family's home. Around the age of 16, Bryan and his mother met with Army recruiters. Bryan's attempt to enlist in the Army was unsuccessful because his mother told recruiters that he had asthma. After his failed plans to enlist in the Army, Bryan's uncle recommended that he enlist in the Air Force. When Bryan turned 17, his uncle took him to meet with Air Force recruiters. Bryan enlisted in the Air Force and after a 9-month delay he was sent to San Antonio, Texas for training.

During Bryan's first years in the Air Force, he completed tech school in Colorado to become a supply technician. He graduated from tech school and returned to Texas to work as a supply technician for SAC (Strategic Air Command). Later, he was assigned to a duty at Pacific Air Command in a supply section. He participated in combat training and mobility status training. He worked off base while in the military in record maintenance, inventory management, and housing control. Bryan had several duties, assignments, and trainings while enlisted and serving our country in war. During the late 1990s, Bryan began to pursue his degree and took several years to graduate. Bryan was very eager to share his story; he was friendly and talkative. During the start of our interview, he began to talk so loudly that a librarian asked that he lower his voice.

#### *Research Question #1*

“What are the experiences and expectations of African American male veteran students in higher education?”

Bryan decided to attend college expecting a new direction. He acknowledged that his mother's encouragement, his interest in computers, and expectations of a lucrative career were reasons that led him to pursue higher education:

Trying to find a new direction... Came home, got two jobs making money because my momma, you know you gonna work. Living with my momma, working two jobs, killing it. Then she's the one suggested I go to school. I liked computers, that was the main reason cause I wanted to be into the computers. I always been messing with computers all my life; in the military we did a lot of data entry... computers have always been on my mind. I wanted to finagle with computers and know more about it. That's one of the reasons I went. I thought it would be a lucrative career in these area and it's not or somewhere else; but that's how life is the market changed.

#### *Application Process for Admission and Academic Preparation*

According to Bryan, the application for admissions was easy. He was required to request his high school transcript. Also, he submitted transcripts from the colleges that he attended while in the Air Force. Prior to enrolling in general education courses, Bryan enrolled in at least five developmental noncredit courses:

I remember it was pretty much easy, I just filled it out. They asked me who my family was. They wanted to see my transcripts from any other facilities that I went to college. I did some college courses when I was in the Air Force, so they wanted to look at that and then they wanted to see my high school stuff and everything. It was pretty good... I had to take those administration classes that you don't get credit for because I didn't have the smarts like they said. So I took those administration/ beginner classes; I took about 4 or 5 of them throughout that year before I got into any real classes before I could get any credit and I did good in those classes.

#### *Higher Education Services and Offices for Veteran Students*

I asked Bryan did he receive assistance from university personnel with processes for registration. Bryan informed me that he learned a lot about the admissions process through his own research. He felt that he received incorrect information many times by people working within the same department. Some individuals were knowledgeable and willing to help but most were not helpful:

I learned a lot of stuff on my own. I had a few people along the way that really gave me the real deal on what's going down and information. It's a lot of misinformation that they give you at that school... I've been there ten years. Then I go talk to someone else and they tell me completely the opposite of what the other person said in the same department. And also help me, give me stuff that can help me. So I say why she tell me this and you tell me that and you can help me while the other person saying they can't

help me. I had a few people along the way but I had to go through by myself just to find somebody.

Bryan remembered two individuals who were very helpful to him. One individual was a financial aid counselor and the other individual was a computer professor. According to Bryan, the financial aid counselor was a great help. If he had a problem, Bryan would go to the financial aid counselor, who is referred to as Ms. B, because she would solve it:

Ms. B, she was a great help for me...she made sure if I had a problem I'd come to her and she'd handle it. She'd tell me a lot of stuff that other people wouldn't tell me. She worked in the financial aid department and that's where I had a lot problems with the school. She helped me a whole lot.

Bryan believes a professor in the computer department was very helpful. Bryan attributes his success in the course to his caring professor. He explained that the professor required graduate assistants to help him:

...He was a great help. When I was going through a hard time, he would have his grad students come over and assist me. If it wasn't for him, I probably wouldn't have passed that class.

#### *Advisement*

While in the military, veterans receive training and education benefits. I asked Bryan to share his expectations and experiences with applying his previous military course work towards his degree requirements. Sitting in his chair with both feet on the ground with one knee bouncing up and down, with an expression of disappointment he replied:

A lot of that stuff they put on there they didn't even count it. They just didn't count a lot of stuff, they counted a little bit but most of it didn't. No. Which I think it was unfair. I learned a whole lot. I'm a very intelligent, articulate, person. And the military helped me to be more like that and I don't see the civilian world dismisses everything that we do in the military. They don't treat us right. They say they going to but they lie. They say they going to treat us with respect. I've tried. I've been out here for years trying to get a proper job. Making proper money all around. I tell them that I have military status and we are suppose to have preference, man no, that's what they do and at least that's what they do to me and a whole lot of vets cause I talk to vets. This society is full of "s".

### *Registration and Financial Services*

I asked Bryan to share his experiences with applying his GI Bill benefits and flexibility for payment deadlines and dropped courses. He told me about his experience but included the assistance he received from Ms. B, the financial aid counselor:

It was a lot of loans and stuff. You've got grants for extra money. I'd talk to one person and they say they don't have any grant money for me. Then I'd go talk to Ms. B and she'd go check on stuff for me and say "yes there is some extra money for you or I can do this for you." She helped a whole lot. For the GI Bill I had to go to the military section; they had a little branch that I could go talk to they handled some stuff but I don't think they did as much as they could for me. But Ms. B as for as the extra money I could get for being in school; she'd make sure I got it...cause when other people said no, then they say, "well you can't take these courses cause you have this and that you have to pay." And I'm like Ms. B, I ain't got no money ... She really did research. She just didn't say, "No, I can't help you". She put effort into it; a lot of people there didn't put effort into it.

When I inquired about flexibility and preference to veterans, Bryan began to expand on his experience in academics. As a veteran student, Bryan explained that he did not receive flexibility or special privileges with academics. He was diagnosed with medical conditions that led to disability status. Bryan informed me that he diagnosed with the medical conditions of ADHD, post traumatic stress, irritable bowel syndrome, osteoarthritis, neurological ailments, and degenerative disc back injuries. Sometimes he felt that he was unfairly treated:

Nope, no special nothing towards veterans. No, no, none... They didn't give me no preference. I use to argue with one of my professors all the time. I'd tell him I'm a veteran and I have disabilities. He didn't give a; I'd bring him doctors' notes to him...and he would cut my grades anyway...even with medical excuses they still would punish me.

### *Academics*

Bryan's academic experiences cause him to believe the university mistreats its students:

I don't think they treat African Americans fair. Plain and simple. That's how I feel about that establishment. And it's not just African Americans. I think they don't treat their students fair; it's money oriented. It's like a factory. They just trying to push you through; you're a product. That's what it is like; it should not be like that. They push it on you too quick. Too much information. Too much knowledge, that they want you to



absorb in a short amount of time. And they want you to be perfect at it. They put a lot of pressure on people. A lot of stress and a lot of people break under that stuff.

He elaborated on an academic situations that he viewed as unfair treatment:

...we had a class during summer time...at summer time they crash stuff together. I had this teacher that was suppose to work with me but we ended up with two teachers and joined the classes. The other teacher was female; me and her had problems about stuff because I had classes with her when I was a senior because I'd go back and take freshman classes to pull up my g.p.a...and she kept on sweating me about this class because sometimes I didn't come. I had senior projects were more important to work on; she'd get mad because she said her class was more important and I'm like lady I have passed this class once before. I'm only taking this class to pull up my gpa, you should understand senior projects are more important than something like this....She didn't like that; she was like a control freak....She ended up grading my tests which she was not suppose to do in this class...she was not suppose to touch none of my stuff...I put three answers on a test; one was application and something else that started with an "A". She marked all three of my answers wrong talking about "I didn't know what that was and you need to write your "A's" like this." I had an anxiety attack because I got so mad it was like something stabbed me in the back of my back....cause every class we had she do stuff like that to me and try to cut my grade. Then I have to argue with her about "why are you doing this to me?"

Bryan revealed that he believed sometimes he was treated unfair and experienced problems in financial payment and academic courses that he believes could have been avoided if more university personnel was knowledgeable, caring, and would put forth an effort to help him.

### *Research Question #2*

"How do African American male veteran students perceive their role at a higher education institution?"

While interviewing Bryan, it was apparent that he views himself as resilient, proud, determined, detail-oriented, and confident. He is a life-long learner. When I asked him about his own perception as an African American male veteran student, he elaborated:

I am very articulate. I am very anal retentive. I'm willing to learn. I will put everything I got into trying to achieve, even if I don't know. I feel that I can achieve anything if I have the proper material, proper data, and people that will have time to help teach and instruct me in layman's terms to get me to that technical aspect. I'm a smart person, I'm not a dummy, and I love to learn and I'm not going to stop learning.

### *Peers and Socialization*

After we discussed, Bryan's perception of himself. He shared his thoughts of how his colleagues may have perceived him:

I had some good classmates but a lot of classmates didn't like me because I was not as smart as they was. These are real geeks. They live, eat, and drink computers. I do not live, eat, and drink computers. It's too much. I want to have fun. I want to live my life. I got a woman. They don't have a woman. They sit there sip on coke and eat chips and play video games and then do programs. I'm telling you, these are a different type of people. I am an alien to them...I had few peers that helped me out.

Bryan socialized with a few peers with whom he developed a friendship. He realized that some of his colleagues were nice and he enjoyed spending time with them:

We would work on homework together. Then after we worked on homework together, we would go work out, then go eat lunch. Then on the weekends we probably go out and get some drinks and stuff. It was pretty cool. Then we would talk about business plans...we had a good friendship for a while.

### *Nontraditional Student*

Bryan was a nontraditional student. He lived off campus. He was a full-time student and working a full-time job. Bryan was much older than most of his classmates and it took him longer to complete his degree because of stress and illnesses. He talked about the stressors of being a veteran and college student:

I stayed off campus. I had my own apartment; paying rent. That's another thing struggling, no money, got to pay rent. I had two jobs at one time but like I said I had to give up one because it was too much. I'm going to school full-time and I'm working full-time. I'm an old man coming from the military; post-traumatic stress...I had to take breaks, man, because I have medical issues...I got neurological problems in my back. I got degenerative discs in my back.

My spinal cord curves the opposite direction in my back because the muscles are doing it. I have muscle tears and scars in my back from the military.....Stress will make you sick.

### *Transitions and Adjustments*

Bryan believes the stress coming from the military caused many of his medical issues:

...it was stress coming from the military because I had a career, I had a life, I had a direction, I had a team...now I'm in the real world, I ain't got no team. No one wants to really hire me making no decent money; the income I had I don't have..... I ain't got a good family structure background I can depend on because my parents ain't been there as for as mentally to talk to handle this stuff that I'm going through. I'm going through all kinds of transitions. I want that career back, I want that steady income, I want that nice job that I had. I want to do what I want to do with the money I have....It was very stressful.

Bryan perceived his role as stressful. As a veteran student in higher education, he viewed this time as a struggle and fight to pursue his education and receive veteran benefits from the military.

### *Research Question #3*

“How do African American male veteran students perceive the services and programs available at a higher education institution?”

I asked Bryan did he find that more benefits were available Post-9/11. He did not find that more benefits were available after 9/11. Bryan credits the completion of his degree to the assistance of a university employee who works with veterans.

No, no they weren't trying to do crap for me. I had to fight, I had to fight real hard to get mine. They got one dude up there, named Mr. A, a V.A. representative...He came out and he the one that helped me get through the last stages at University A. They were trying to put more b.s. on me but he was like, “no, we aren't going to do this.....” He cut all the crap out of the way because they kept trying to do it. Thank God for him.

### *Mentor*

As Bryan spoke of Mr. A with high regards, the tone of the conversation became at ease and peaceful. Bryan seemed really thankful for Mr. A.

This was my last stretch; last stretch of four or five classes...This was last year. He talked to professors, he talked to people at the financial, he talked to people at the graduation. He walked down there personally with me; and made sure they weren't trying to b.s. me

and didn't put more on me. And if anything came up. ...he looked through personally, I swear to God ain't nobody ever; He personally went through all my transcripts and looked at everything. He was like, "Man, what you doing here this long, you should've been graduated?" I was like, "I've been doing everything they been telling me; I don't know."

*African American Male Veteran Student*

Bryan entered college with the goal to graduate with a degree in computer science but he decided one of his last classes was too hard. Bryan was tired of the class and felt it was going to drive him insane. Therefore, he withdrew from the class and graduated with a degree in interdisciplinary studies with a concentration in computer science. I asked Bryan to inform me of the advantages and disadvantages as an African American male veteran student:

The advantages (pause) that I had Mr. A, he would put his hands to it, personally. Personally, he took his time. He went out, he did his job. He did his job excellent. He represented me because one, I was a vet and he was a vet. He saw I was an older man...he made sure there was no more b.s. so I could get my paper. And Ms. B, if it wasn't for Ms. B as for as handling the financial stuff making sure that I got treated right like I should (pause) I wouldn't have been able to get through school and pay for school. And Dr. P, he helped me a whole lot when I was in that computer class...he told me, "Don't stop. Don't care how long it take you."

Next, I asked Bryan about the disadvantages as an African American male veteran student:

The professors that don't want to see a black man in their class; and there are (hurtful laugh)...don't care. Cause it's suppose to be a white boy's world in this computer science...

*More Veterans Hired to Assist Veteran Students*

To improve the services for African American veterans enrolled in higher education, Bryan was not reticent with sharing his suggestions. As he gave his suggestions, he would tap the table with his pointer finger:

One, they need a veteran there. Someone that has been through it. Don't need a civilian, who don't have an idea of what we're going through because they don't care and they don't have an idea, they don't need to be there.

We need veterans to assist veterans every step of the way in specific not just general because that's what they do; they generalize what you should do but they don't break it down in specifics. They can help you cut through all that wasted time and b.s...and that's what they need.

Bryan explained specific duties for university veterans hired to assist veteran students:

One talk to them about what they want to do in life, thoroughly. Make sure that they want to do what they want to do. Instead of just taking classes and then they want to change. Give them information about how they can go about doing it..as for as income, how much income you want to make? You got to go off stuff like that. Plus, going through each college. They need to know thoroughly the information what it takes to get through that college....the protocols that they have set for each section. They need to understand that and explain that to that person. And cut through the confusion and let them know. Just cut through all the high jargon get to the simplicity of it. And give them more insight....Be there for that person during the whole duration of college or if he can't be there have an assistant that's there qualified to do the same thing. And I mean there, through the whole time not just there for one second, one week, and that's just it because that is b.s.

### *Psychological and Counseling Services*

In addition to his suggestion of the university hiring veterans to assist veterans, he recommended counseling services for veterans:

They need to have some type of counseling sessions for veterans...When we get stressed out, we want to act a certain way...we need someone there that understands the stress issue and help us through the stress issue. Help us calm down...because college will make you trip out. I wish I had someone to talk to during the time I was going through all this stuff. I was going through a lot of stuff outside, personal. And then college didn't help with the stress.

### *Veteran Student Cohort*

Bryan's last suggestion was the development of a program that would organize a team of veterans:

They need to make sure when veterans come to that college they need to try to do something where they can organize them as a team. Just like when we were in the military. Make sure that each person, if they have the same classes or whatever, stuff like that...That they work together as a team. And they keep it like that because that's the way military people are. We are structured to be in a team. And when we get out, our team is gone. We wondering; we looking for our team. That's the mindset. That's we they need; effort as for as putting military structure for an active duty or prior active duty

veterans to put and help them be a team. Put them together.....It would help a whole cause I hear a lot I talk to vets. We all feel loss without our team. We were structured; we had a team. We had a purpose. We all had the same goal and we made sure we worked together to make sure we get that goal done.

## CHAPTER 5

### FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of the research was to collect and analyze the story of African American male veteran students attending a predominantly White institution Post-9/11 wars. The interview presented in Chapter 4 provided information about the experiences and needs of an African American male veteran student. I interviewed an African American male veteran student who attended college after 9/11 and recently graduated. Findings from the study are congruent with those that were reported in literature. This chapter includes the findings, conclusions, and recommendations from this qualitative research study.

#### *Conclusions from Research Question #1*

The first research question was, “What are the experiences and expectations of African American male veteran students in higher education?”

Based on the responses from Bryan, we discussed his experiences and expectations with college admissions, tuition payments, and university employees. Bryan was a nontraditional student and decided to pursue higher education with the goal to pursue a career in computers, which he hoped would be lucrative. Lake and Pushchak (2007) found that most nontraditional students return to college because of underemployment, job changes, and to enhance their employment marketability. Bryan experienced ease with the application process for admissions, but he was required to request transcripts from previously attended institutions. As a veteran who completed college courses while in the Air Force, he had several transcripts sent from other colleges. Some of the courses and training that Bryan completed prior to attending the university were used towards his credit hours. Bryan felt that it was unfair that the university did not use the majority of his previous military training and education towards his degree requirements.

Vacchi (2012) reported that military students can have numerous transcripts from military training, military schools, or previously attended colleges. Only colleges affiliated with the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC) consortium are required to practice equitable and fair treatment of nontraditional education credit for student veterans (Vacchi, 2012). According to Tinto (2011) veteran students may become discouraged if they perceive that their military experience and transcripts are not evaluated in good faith. Advisors should receive training from SOC to better understand and evaluate transcripts to eliminate the issues of not awarding college credit for military service (Vacchi, 2012). When Bryan began attending college, he completed four to five developmental classes before he could register for degree credit courses at the university. After World War II, developmental courses expanded to meet the needs of veterans in higher education (Banner, 2006). Several decades later, many veteran students continue to register for developmental courses because they feel academically unprepared (DiRamio et al., 2008). DiRamio et al. (2008) identified many veteran students who experienced a major aspect of adjusting to college course work was relearning study skills after being away from school and formal classroom instruction for a period of time.

Bryan stated that he experienced the most problems with financial aid and encountered issues with course registration because of financial matters. Literature suggests that financial matters are a concern for veteran students. Schlossberg (2011) found it common for veteran students to complain about the delays or slow process of educational benefits due to bureaucracy and red tape. Although many veterans have the GI Bill education benefits, more are reporting that they experience financial problems because of delays in processing federal benefits. One in five veterans takes out additional loans to cover the costs of education (Sander, 2012b).



Vacchi (2012) stated some colleges and universities harass veteran students when tuition payment is delayed and colleges should have a policy that allows veterans flexibility to delay purging their schedule.

Bryan had some challenges at the university because of university employees who were not willing to assist him. He elaborated on experiences that he viewed as unfair treatment because of university employees who would not put forth an effort to help him and told him incorrect information.

Although Bryan had more situations with individuals who did not help him and provided him with incorrect information, he is grateful for the few employees who were sincerely concerned, knowledgeable, and able to help him. Military friendliness involves the faculty and administrators on college campuses to offer reasonable options to veteran students. The contact and attitude of postsecondary education personnel impacts the campus environment to establish a military friendly school (Vacchi, 2012). DiRamio et al. (2008) concluded from their research study that veteran students hoped faculty members would acknowledge their veteran status and attempt to understand them as a student population.

#### *Conclusions from Research Question #2*

“How do African American male veteran students perceive their role at a higher education institution?”

Bryan’s self-description includes being an articulate, detailed-oriented, and intelligent life-long learner. If he has the proper guidance and material, he believes he can achieve anything. He felt that some of his professors did not want him in their class because he was an African American male and his chosen major for “a White man’s world.” Cultural racism is placing preference on the cultural practices of the dominant group as being superior to the culture of the subordinate group (Bridges, 2011).

Bryan talked about taking some classes twice to improve his grade point average (G.P.A.). For veteran students, failure is not an option and they do not want to be viewed as a weak link or burden to college community members (Vacchi, 2012). Bryan mentioned that many of his colleagues probably did not view him as smart and he did not have much in common with some of his classmates. Bryan had very few peers that he meet in class and liked. Bryan and his friendly classmates would complete homework, eat lunch, and exercise together; on the weekends they occasionally decide to gather and order a few drinks. Differences in needs, lifestyles, experiences and expectations, motivation, and attitudes and beliefs about college work exist between traditional and nontraditional students (Strage, 2008). Transitioning from the military to student-civilian role causes many issues involving social, academic, vocational, and personal adjustments (Schlossberg, 2011).

Bryan said transitioning from the military, attending college, and other personal issues were stressful. As a nontraditional student, Bryan had many other roles and responsibilities. He was working full-time, attending college full-time, and coping with medical illnesses. Bryan believed he was constantly having to battle with the systems of higher education and Veteran Affairs to receive military benefits. Most nontraditional students have family responsibilities and full-time or part-time job while attending college. Older students are less involved in campus activities (Bye et al., 2007). Despite having more life stressors, nontraditional students are high academic achievers in comparison to traditional students (Carney-Crompton & Tan, 2002).

### *Conclusions from Research Question #3*

“How do African American male veteran students perceive the services and programs available at a higher education institution?”

Bryan did not experience any special services or programs available to him at the university. He felt that he learned a lot of the processes and procedures in higher education on his own. He was fortunate to meet a few individuals such as the financial aid counselor and computer professor who made special efforts to personally help him with some of his problems in finances and academics. During his last year enrolled at the university, Bryan met a veteran representative who he acknowledges helped him to graduate. I refer to the veteran representative as Mr. A. Bryan thanks God for Mr. A's help. Mr. A personally took the time and effort to help Bryan finish his degree requirements. Mr. A went with Bryan to meet with university personnel such as professors, financial aid counselors, and registrar specialist. Mr. A was a mentor to help Bryan navigate through the systems in higher education. Wallace et al. (2000) studied African American male veteran students and found that formal mentoring programs such as Veterans Upward Bound that provide access and knowledge for college guidance and preparation had a positive impact on the academic life and career of veterans. Caring and supportive mentors helped African American male veterans succeed in the course work (Wallace et al., 2000).

Bryan suggested that the university develop veterans-assisting-veterans services, counseling services, and structured veteran team programs. Bryan would like the university to hire more veterans to help veterans. He feels that hired veterans will be more knowledgeable, familiar, and relate to the experiences and expectations of veteran students. Bryan envisions the hired veterans providing information to veteran students about careers, courses and degrees, and other processes as the veteran student continues to pursue higher education. Bryan suggested counseling services specifically for veterans because he feels that veterans are stressed with the challenges of transitioning from military to civilian roles, new responsibilities, adjusting to academics, and the loss of teamwork.

According to Bryan, counseling services will allow veteran students to talk with someone who can understand and help them manage their stress. The services and programs that Bryan believes should be made available to help veterans aligned with the five factors of focus for institutions highlighted in an American Council on Education publication.

The American Council on Education highlighted five factors of focus for institutions: financial matters, advisement, psychological counseling, career services, campus veteran's office, and administrative and strategic planning (Cook & Kim, 2009). DiRamio and Jarvis (2011) suggest it is imperative that institutions of higher education began to hire staff and plan veteran programs that will best serve the anticipated increase in enrollment of veteran students. Military veterans are accustomed to a culture of discipline and teamwork, but college campus cultures are not highly structured or team-based. Michael Dakduk, the director of Student Veterans of America, stated that transitioning from the military to civilian life is difficult but adjusting to a college campus is a culture shock (Astin, 2011).

#### *Findings Related to Theories*

Culturally responsive evaluation is an approach to address critical concerns of interpretations and use of results for groups that have historically been perceived as inconsequential. During the in-depth interview, the Critical Race Theory and Critical Theory were applicable as I listened to responses. These theories were important as Bryan revealed his standpoint not only as an African American male but also as a veteran student. As a researcher using these theories as a lens, I acknowledged the presence of Bryan's ethnic and military cultures that contributed to his roles, behaviors, and language that influenced his stories of experiences and expectations as a student in higher education.

### *Recommendations to Improve Research Study*

The following can enhance and improve the research study involving African American male veteran students in higher education:

- Add more African American male veteran students from other institutions to increase sample size- It was difficult to identify participants who met the criteria for this study at the university site.
- Add African American female veteran students- Compare and contrast the experiences and expectations of African American female veteran students to African American male veteran students.
- Add more diverse participants- Include diverse individuals for diverse experiences and expectations of veteran students.
- Interview university personnel- Include university employees (faculty, staff, and administrators) for their perspective of experiences and expectations with veteran students.

### *Recommendations for Future Research*

For future research studies involving African American male veteran students:

- Use Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to develop an annual needs assessment to improve student handbook policies for veteran students
- Evaluate the educational relationship between higher education institutions and African American male veteran students to determine the factors influencing retention and graduation rates of veteran students.
- Conduct a study on cultural competence-Train faculty and staff to better serve, understand, and become sensitive to veteran students.

- Experiences and expectations of colleagues- Conduct a research study with traditional and nontraditional students sharing their perspective of veteran students returning from Afghanistan and Iraq Wars.
- Experiences and expectations of African American male veteran students attending a HBCU.

*Recommendations for Future Practice*

The research study includes the experiences and expectations of only one individual. The findings from the study cannot be generalized, but it provides insight for possible improvements in programs and services:

- Train personnel to support and understand veteran students. Provide continuous training with pertinent information for specific offices or departments to improve the interpersonal and communication skills of employees assisting veteran students in admissions, financial services, and academics.
- Create Veteran Team Program whereby develop cohorts of veteran students as they matriculate.
- To inform and help veteran students adjust to the culture of higher education, continuous workshops that specifically address their social, academic, and financial needs should be provided.
- Create counseling center that offers stress management group counseling to veterans.
- Develop a veteran students advisory board that can meet and provide suggestions or feedback to administrators.

### *Final Conclusions*

I truly enjoyed interviewing the study participant. Despite the challenges of having the stories of only one participant, it was rewarding to design a qualitative research study. The military culture teaches veterans to work as a team to accomplish goals.

As veteran students attend postsecondary institutions, the success of their experiences and goal attainment to graduate depends on the support of a cohesive higher education team made of supportive administrators, faculty, staff, and peers.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A

#### Tuition and Fee Reimbursements

Table 1

*Maximum Tuition & Fee Reimbursement per Academic Year*

Type of School	Maximum Reimbursement
Public School	All Tuition & Fee Payments for an in-State Student
Private or Foreign School	Up to \$18,077.50 per academic year National Maximum (see Table 2 for Exception)

Retrieved from [http://gibill.va.gov/resources/benefits\\_resources/rates/CH33/Ch33rates080112.html](http://gibill.va.gov/resources/benefits_resources/rates/CH33/Ch33rates080112.html)

Table 2

*Maximum Tuition & Fee Reimbursement per Academic Year for Students Who Are Attending a Private IHL in Selected States and Have Been Enrolled in the Same Program Since January 4, 2011*

State	Maximum Charge Per Credit Hour	Maximum Total Fees Per Term
Arizona	\$725.00	\$15,000.00
Michigan	\$1,001.00	\$19,374.50
New Hampshire	\$1,003.75	\$5,197.00
New York	\$1,010.00	\$12,293.00
Pennsylvania	\$934.00	\$6,110.00
South Carolina	\$829.00	\$2,798.00
Texas	\$1,549.00	\$12,130.00

If you are attending a public IHL as a non-resident student or a private IHL that is more expensive than the \$18,077.50 cap you may be eligible for extra payment under the Yellow Ribbon program.

You may also be eligible to receive:

- a monthly housing allowance sent to you
- a books and supplies stipend sent to you
- a one-time rural benefit for certain veterans

Retrieved from [http://gibill.va.gov/resources/benefits\\_resources/rates/CH33/Ch33rates080112.html](http://gibill.va.gov/resources/benefits_resources/rates/CH33/Ch33rates080112.html)

## Appendix B

### Interview Questions

1. What were the top three reasons that you decided to attend this university?
2. Describe the application process for admissions?
3. Did the admissions office offer direct services or Veterans Affairs contacts to offer additional assistance?
4. How was your military experience or courses from other schools applied towards your degree requirements?
5. Describe your experience with applying GI Benefits or payments for your education?
6. If necessary, does the university permit flexibility in enrollment deadlines for military veteran students? Please explain your experience?
7. How do you perceive yourself as an African American veteran student?
8. How do you believe others perceive you as an African American veteran student?
9. In comparison to nonmilitary students, how do you believe your role as a student is similar or dissimilar to nonmilitary students?
10. As an African American male veteran student, what are personal challenges that you encounter in higher education?
11. As an African American male veteran student, what are academic challenges that you encounter in higher education?
12. Describe your academic experiences in higher education.
13. Describe your social experiences in higher education.
14. What advantages have you noticed from being an African American veteran student?
15. What disadvantages have you noticed from being an African American veteran student?
16. How do you incorporate your military experience in your academics?
17. Has the institution of postsecondary education met your expectations? Why or why not?
18. What suggestions would you offer for improvement to assist African American male veterans enrolled at a higher education institution?



VITA

GLADYS S. COLE-MORTON

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B.A. Psychology  
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Winthrop University, Rock Hill, SC  
M.Ed. School Counseling  
2008

East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN  
Ed.D. Educational Leadership  
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Professional Experience: STEM Administrative Coordinator, College of Science, Technology, Engineering, & Mathematics  
Benedict College, Columbia, SC  
2003-2005

Coordinator of Admissions & Student Services  
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Winthrop University, Rock Hill, SC  
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School Counselor, Dutchman Creek Middle School  
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