

FOR THIS WE'LL DEFEND: MILITARY CONNECTED COMPETENCY
TRAINING AND UNIVERSITY FACULTY EXPERIENCES
TEACHING STUDENT VETERANS

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Council of
Texas State University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
with a Major in Adult, Professional, and Community Education
December 2020

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, thank you to my dissertation chair, Dr. Clarena Larrotta. You have supported me through the toughest aspects of this dissertation and through my doctoral journey. Your patience and persistence to ensure your students' success is something that I can only hope to have one day. You have held me to expectations that I never knew I could fulfill, and I am honored that you saw that in me when I did not believe it myself. I would also like to thank my committee members who were willing to support my work and join me in this journey: Dr. Joellen Coryell, Dr. Miguel Guajardo, and Dr. James Koschoreck. You have all been incredible during this process.

To my mother, Lisa, father, Tim, and brother, Gray. You all are my rock, my biggest support system. I would not know how I would walk this earth without you all. Mom, you are my fiercest protector, and have been the most amazing example of what a strong and powerful woman, mother, and businesswoman should be. My ultimate best friend, I am so glad that I am your daughter and you are my mother. Dad, you have been such an influential human being when it came to understanding what commitment and passion is for causes that I believe in. I appreciate your willingness to allow me to experience the world on my own but being close enough to help me when I fall. Gray, you were the inspiration for this dissertation and will continue to be my biggest inspiration for my future work. You have brought me some of the happiest moments of my life, and I cannot wait to see what you do during your service.

Miles, thank you for being my constant companion, making sure that I laugh every day, and feel supported during the tough times. You are my best friend and have patiently supported me through the past three years of this process. Your love for me and belief in my ability to finish this massive project is what helped me get through this process. Carolyn and Keith, I have the deepest appreciation for you being such a great support system, the kindness and graciousness that you have shown me during this process will forever be interwoven in this dissertation. Carl, thank you for making sure that I kept this work in perspective of my dreams.

To my tribe outside of academia, Ellen, Caitlin F., Emma, Jacqueline, AJ, Morgan, Chelsea, Ashli, Caitlin O., Carly, Madi, Kat, and Millie, you all are the reason that I kept going. You have brought me some of the happiest, funniest moments in my life. I am so honored to have you as my closest friends. To my academic tribe, Brittany, Amy, Reba, Rose, Malikah, Misty, Alex, Kim, Amanda, Peggy, HeeJae, Dr. Robert Reardon, Dr. Cassandre Alvarado, and Dr. Charles Lu. Thank you for always encouraging me, the constant affirmations, the late-night phone calls and texts, and helping me figure out my purpose in this world. Last, but certainly not least, I would like to send my deepest gratitude to my study participants who, during a worldwide pandemic, were willing to participate in this important study. Thank you for your time and devotion to this project.

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ABSTRACT

This two-article dissertation presents findings for two related studies regarding military connected competency training and faculty perspectives teaching student veterans. Data sources included observations, two Q-sort administrations, conversational interviews, and the research journal. Building on Veteran Critical Theory (VCT), best practices for training adult learners, and constructionism, the research questions guiding the dissertation include:

1. How are MCC trainings being designed and offered to university faculty?
2. What are the current characteristics of MCC trainings available to university faculty?
3. What are the best practices designing and delivering MCC training to university faculty?
4. What are university faculty perspectives teaching student veterans?
5. What are university faculty experiences in light of participating in an MCC training?

Findings for two independent but related qualitative studies are presented in chapters 2 and 3. *Chapter 2* describes a multilayer case study examining four nationally recognized military connected competency trainings for university faculty. The goal was to identify best practices and prevalent characteristics of MCC trainings. *Chapter 3* is an instrumental case study conducted with 10 faculty participants from four different universities across the nation. This chapter examines faculty experiences and perspectives teaching student veterans. This study is a first of its kind examining national MCC trainings and diving into faculty perspectives in light of veteran critical theory.

I. INTRODUCTION AND STUDY DESIGN

Student veterans struggle to adjust to the college environment. From my point of view, they are less tolerant of others.

He was very argumentative in class. I know it is supposedly a good thing that they stand for themselves, but it can get tiring for the professor to deal with it.

I don't know if student veterans are flagged by the G.I. Bill or not. I would assume so, because why wouldn't they?

These opening vignettes by three tenured university faculty members illustrate the different points of view faculty hold towards student veterans and a gap in knowledge regarding issues related to this student population. As the landscape of higher education continues to remold itself, it is important to note that the characteristics of the *traditional college student*, beginning college immediately after high school, enrolling full time, 18-23 years old, White and middle class (Deil-Amen, 2011; Runnberg-Valadez, 2017) is no longer the norm. In fact, the number of nontraditional students (returning adult learners) is growing at a steady rate. As Gross and Clark (2018) determined that the percentage of returning student veterans and dependents within postsecondary institutions is one of the largest growing populations.

Queen et al., (2014) found that 98% of institutions have reported enrolling military service members, veterans, or dependents with 89% of those institutions being able to identify these veterans or dependents through their use of educational benefits. Of the 98% of institutions enrolling veterans or dependents, 21% reported offering some type of faculty training related to military connected competency training (Queen et al., 2014). With the student veteran population growing, there must be dedicated resources devoted to this community of students to ensure persistence towards a degree. As Vacchi (2015) stated, resources such as a military connected competency (MCC) training can

help to ready faculty to support student veterans in their journey towards degree attainment.

While there is a growing trend of student veterans enrolling in postsecondary institutions, the literature studying this population is scarce. Ackerman et al., (2009) emphasized that the “literature studying student veterans is slim and dated calling for an [overhaul] of updated literature for the current cohort of student veterans,” (p.75). Narrowing the research scope to faculty perspectives of student veterans, Banard-Brak et al., (2011) stated there are only three previous pieces of literature that focuses on the faculty perspective of student veterans (see Appendix A for relevant terms). This qualitative study proposes to identify the characteristics of effective MCC training for faculty, and to document the perspectives of university faculty teaching student veterans as well as their experiences participating in an MCC training.

Statement of the Problem

The Post 9/11 G.I Bill, “a military benefit that covers tuition and expenses at institutions of higher education for honorably discharged veterans, their spouses, and children” (Gonzales & Elliott, 2016, p. 35) is one of the most widely implemented military benefits in the country. With 18.2 million veterans, 73% of this population reported they planned on using their educational benefits in the future, with approximately 1.4 million student veterans attending a degree program as of 2013 (Hart & Thompson, 2013; Student Veterans of America, 2013; Molina, 2015).

Student veteran graduation rates are astonishingly low, as Marcus (2017) found the odds of a student veteran graduating at an institution is one student veteran to every one hundred student veterans that are enrolled. Marcus (2017) further examined different

four- and two-year institutions throughout the nation that were enrolling student veterans (that are using their Post 9/11 G.I Bill benefits) and found of the 20 different institutions, 16 of them had <8% graduation rate for student veterans, and the remaining four had a <20% graduation rate (Marcus, 2017).

These graduation barriers reinforced Student Veterans of America (2011) perspective that today's veterans face tremendous obstacles in their path to attain a college degree. These challenges range from a missing sense of camaraderie to a lack of understanding by university faculty and peers. When coupled with the visible and invisible barriers veterans face, a college degree seems to be an elusive goal for men and women returning from military services. While there is a continuous increase of student veteran enrollment, less than half of universities and colleges offer any type of MCC training for faculty to prepare them to work with student veterans (O'Herrin, 2011). This dearth of training leaves faculty lacking the necessary support tools (Sander, 2012) and negatively impacts their perspective of this community of students.

Beyond the issue of undertrained faculty and limited MCC training opportunities offered by universities, there is a gap in research documenting faculty perspective on teaching student veterans as well as a gap examining existing MCC training programs in higher education. These gaps in research impact student veteran and faculty relationships within learning environments. For example, research suggests that faculty members "are unfamiliar with the actual challenges faced by student veterans, and view veterans as wounded shells of people who were struggling to pick up pieces of their lives" (Doe, 2016, para. 3). Due to this negative perspective, student veterans in return may view faculty as "...liberal elites who needed to be carefully screened by vets so as to avoid

classes, which were likely to undermine student veteran experiences...further suggesting many faculty are inclined to “bait” student veterans into defending their military services....” (Doe, 2013, para. 3). These findings highlight the cyclical issue of negative classroom interactions between faculty and student veterans.

Another need to be addressed relates to better preparing faculty to serve student veterans through participating in an MCC training. Faculty development programming is implemented to forestall obsolescence and enhance faculty knowledge to fulfill the mission of higher education institutions (Camblin & Steger, 2000). As Bilal et al., (2017) suggested, the impact and effectiveness of faculty development in fostering knowledge, skills, and traits is significant and necessary to improve the job competency of faculty. These authors further posit that with implemented faculty development programs, the outcome is faculty enrichment of learning, knowledge, and skills. In spite of a limited number of universities implementing an MCC training, faculty development programs are beneficial (Bilal et al., 2017).

In summary, it is imperative that higher education institutions begin incorporating MCC training into their faculty development agenda. Student veterans are a continuously growing population bringing with them as much as 40 billion dollars from the Post 9/11 G.I. Bill (Wagner et al., 2014). It is in higher education institutions’ best interest to attract and retain this student community in terms of both monetary gains and student success. In order to do this, institutions of higher education must be proactive in training faculty on how to better serve this growing population.

Research Questions

1. How are MCC trainings being designed and offered to university faculty?

2. What are the characteristics of current MCC training available to university faculty?
3. What are the best practices designing and delivering MCC training to university faculty?
4. What are university faculty perspectives teaching student veterans?
5. What are university faculty experiences in light of participating in an MCC training?

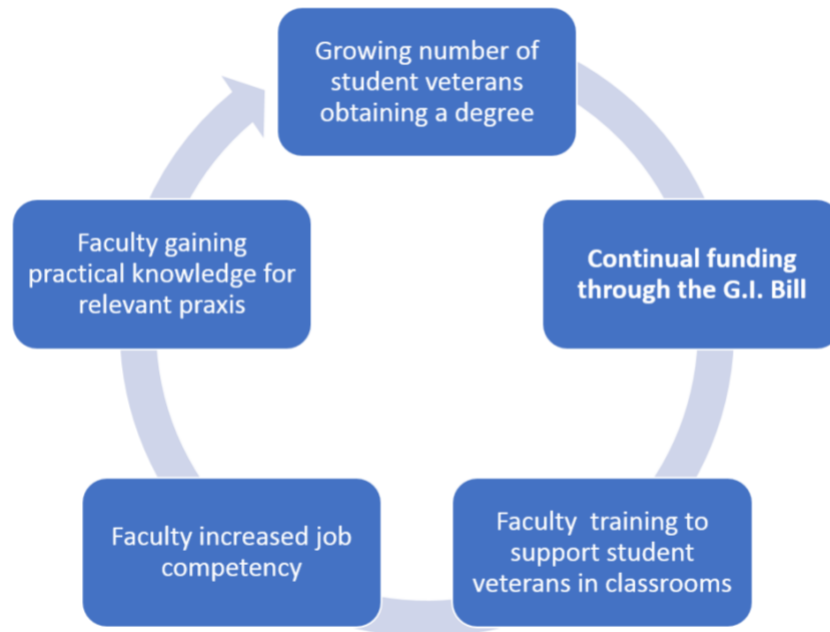


Figure 1. Dissertation Significance

The gap in the research addressed through this dissertation affects higher education institutions as a whole as it pertains to serving student veterans (see Figure 1). As previously stated, the Post 9/11 G.I. Bill is an educational benefit that many student veterans use, and many veterans are planning to use for either themselves or their dependents. For this bill to continue to provide support to future veterans, current student veterans' persistence to degree completion is imperative.

Wagner et al., (2014) identified MCC training as a key component to ensure continuous funding for the Post 9/11 G.I Bill. It is vital for future student veterans and dependents to have this type of faculty development program implemented within their institution.

The American Council on Education (2011) identified student veterans seeking positive faculty relationships as a key component to degree attainment. Undertrained faculty are not able to effectively reach and support student veterans in their classrooms. This gap in faculty job competency and informed perspective affects student veteran persistence and retention, as well as inhibiting faculty ability to meet learning objectives and support students for degree attainment.

Theoretical Framework

Figure 2 provides a visual representation of the theoretical framework for the study. The dissertation research is supported by veteran critical theory (Phillips & Lincoln, 2017) and constructionism (Crotty, 2005). Veteran critical theory (VCT) points to the need of putting the student veteran at the center of military connected competency trainings and envisioning them as assets for the classroom environment. Through a constructionism lens, it is possible to examine people's shifts in perspectives based on external influences such as a military connected competency training for faculty.

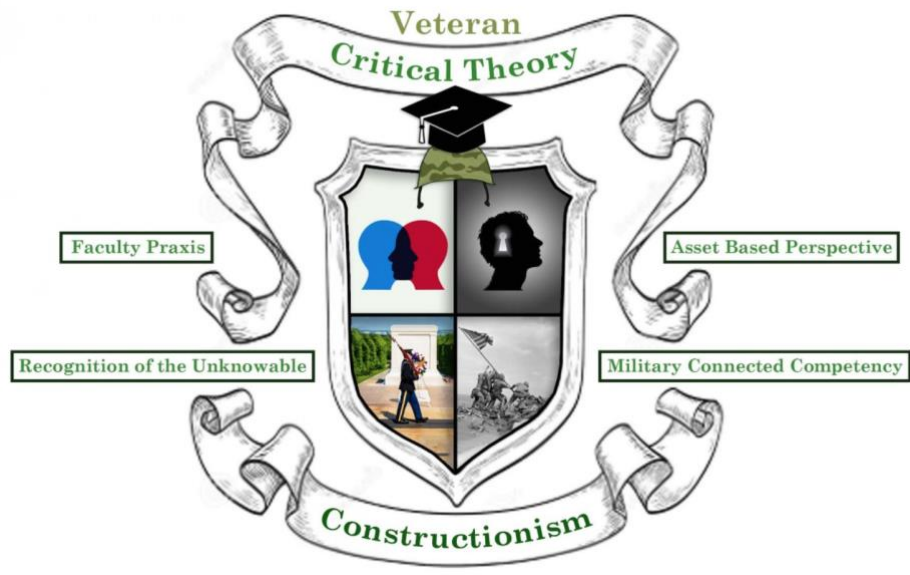


Figure 2. Illustration of Theoretical Framework

This theoretical framework supports my beliefs as an emergent researcher and future university professor that:

1. Current higher education systems champion some students and fail others (e.g., non-traditional learners).
2. Faculty create their teaching perspectives based on their lived experiences; therefore, achieving better informed perspectives call for lifelong learning practices. Participating in faculty professional development can make this possible.
3. The need to offer higher quality military connected competency training for university faculty is evident.
4. The study has potential for creating ripple effects to better serve the national student veteran community returning to school and other nontraditional students.

This visual theoretical framework (see Figure 2) demonstrates how my above stated beliefs, VCT, and constructionism all are interwoven to support my dissertation. The entire shield symbolizes the shields that different military branches use to represent their service. The top two pictures and the coinciding labels relate to faculty perspectives on teaching student veterans, as in action reflection and action to affect change, and faculty holding an asset-based perspective of student veterans. The bottom two pictures and coinciding labels represent the student veteran, in terms of culture, honor and respect such as the Tomb of the Unknowns and the Raising of the Flag on Iwo Jima. The faculty cap and military helmet signifies a harmonious relationship between faculty and student veterans inside the classroom as a hopeful outcome upon completion of this dissertation.

Veteran Critical Theory

A critical theory approach “regards theory as intimately related to praxis” (Schwandt, 2007, p. 55); research has a purpose and an immediate application. Praxis refers to the combination of reflection and action to affect change (Freire, 1970). This type of theory also takes steps towards emancipation, seeking immediate and significant actions for positive change (Phillip & Lincoln, 2017). “Critical theory aims to dig beneath the surface of social life and uncovers the assumptions that keep us from a full and true understanding of how the world works” (Crossman, 2019, para. 1). In other words, an examination of faculty ideologies and beliefs becomes an urgent matter.

Situating critical theory in adult education, Brookfield (2005) argued that adult learners need “to be able to reason, assess evidence, make predictions, judge arguments, recognize causality, and decide on actions where no clear choice is evident...” (p. 56). Similarly, VCT is grounded in the critical theory context. According to Phillips and

Lincoln (2017), VCT describes relevant ways of gaining knowledge about the circumstances and characteristics of student veterans. In light of VCT, researchers, faculty, and student affairs professionals should be able to broaden the scope of research on student veterans, gain sensitivity and awareness of the student veteran experience and identity, and plan for adequate support services and professional development training. In their framework, Phillips and Lincoln (2017) identified eleven tenets to describe VCT.

Phillips and Lincoln (2017, p. 660-663) determined the following. First, there must be recognition of civilian privilege in higher education, to recognize higher education itself is a civilian structure. Second, microaggressions such the assumption of helplessness and student veteran are in constant need of help or assistance is evident. Third, deficit perspectives where student veterans are more likely at fault of the civilian-oriented and privileged structure of higher education institutions is a constant barrier student veterans face. Fourth, student veterans often occupy a third, often under supported, space, in which these students are pushed to adhere to different cultures in effort to gain power, privilege, or prestige associated with each culture. Fifth, student veteran counternarratives and narratives alike must be valued, as student veterans fully integrated into the civilian world often quietly suffer. Sixth, student veterans must be recognized as a member of multiple group identities, including race, sexuality, class, age, gender and service experience. Seventh, media narratives of veterans are often written in a deviant light that vilifies them. Eighth, veterans must be positioned to help inform aspects of policies and practices that regard their own community. Ninth, services that are advertised to serve veterans are ultimately serving civilian best interest, such as creating living spaces for veteran only individuals, for the purpose of civilian student comfort.

Tenth, student veterans must be recognized as an individual, meaning they cannot be essentialized with blanket policies. Eleventh, student veteran culture is built on specific values, respect, honor, and trust, these aspects need to be kept in mind when creating policies and procedures.

This framework encompasses all aspects related to the student veteran community and the different perspectives of the stakeholders interacting with them. VCT tenets guided the analysis once the faculty narratives and the data from observations are collected. This theory was used to help examine the content, delivery, and practices embedded in the different military connected competency training settings.

Constructionism

Schwandt (2003) considers the interactions between individuals within a society to be central to constructionism. In other words, this approach examines multiple realities constructed by people and the implications of those constructions in their lives and interactions with others. Shadish (1995) explained that social constructionism relates to constructing knowledge about reality not constructing reality itself (p. 67). From this point of view, reality does not have one truth; each individual has their own description of reality based on their lived experiences.

In addition, examining the human world is far different from contemplating the natural or physical world; the first is socially constructed and the second is less subjective (Guba & Lincoln, 1990). To this end, Crotty (2005) stated, “knowledge is not discovered but constructed – meaning does not inhere in the object, merely waiting for someone to come upon it” (p. 42). Learning is a never-ending process and individuals create their own meaning based on their realities. As Hammersley (1992) believed, reality is a social

construct, but at the same time it can be impacted by the subjective experiences of each individual.

Regarding this dissertation examining the perspective of university faculty, it would be expected that they have had different experiences teaching student veterans and hold different perspectives towards this population and their learning needs. Developing military connected job competency skills would allow faculty to become aware of the perspectives they hold and examine them in light of the characteristics and circumstances of the student veterans in their classrooms.

The Student Veteran

The student veteran “is one of America’s greatest untapped human resources” (Lighthall, 2012, p. 88). As of 2011, there were over one million student veterans who enrolled in undergraduate or associate degree programs, and within the next three years, that number increased by 20% (Department of Veterans Affairs et al., 2014). Student veterans are situated within the realm of adult learners as 75% of them are over the age of 24, 50% have children (Pattillo, 2011) and many face a multitude of barriers persisting towards their degrees (Norman et al., 2015). Of the total number of student veterans, 62% are first generation, and of the total number of student veterans 31% of this population are students of color (PNPI, 2019). These demographics highlight the multilayered identities that the student veteran population encompass and the complexity of preparing faculty to support these students.

While student veterans face unique barriers, have specific needs, and require a certain level of support services, such as identity re-negotiation and role incongruities (Rumann, & Hamrick, 2010), they also bring strengths to higher education classrooms

such as drive/grit, an enriched understanding of the world and its citizens, and ability to both lead and follow. In many ways, student veterans are considered the ideal college students by successfully incorporating the above strengths stemming from the military environment/experience into higher education institutions (Bagby et al., 2015). However, student veterans often are identified and described as resistant to teamwork (Vacchi, 2012; Vacchi, 2015). There are two contributing factors of a student veterans' identity that creates this narrative. First, characteristics of student veterans were built to ensure success during their time in the military. These characteristics are the result of being autonomous, self-sufficient, and mature. The military environment is built upon hegemonic, masculine values, in which being assertive, having physical aggression and being competitive is often part of their military job specialty (Osborne, 2013). These characteristics lead to difficulty relating to peers (Hoon Lin et al., 2018), which can result in an insular feeling and experiencing invisibility on campus.

Second, while it may be perceived that student veterans are resistant to teamwork, it is more likely not resistance, but because they view their younger peers as out of touch with the world (Osborne, 2013). While this perspective is prevalent in college classrooms, it is important to note that research found student veterans are considered great team players as they have the ability to both follow and lead, and are incredibly dependable (Vacchi, 2015). It is important for faculty to better understand how veterans experience team comradery and understand how factors such as life experience, age gaps, and team expectations may play a role in team dynamics when creating team-based projects.

Revisiting assets that student veterans bring to the classroom, such as drive/grit, an enriched understanding of the world, and ability to both lead and follow, it is important to understand how these assets are created. Having a drive to complete the mission (Bluaauw-Hara, 2016) is connected to persistence and resiliency that are necessary to be successful in a military environment. In other words, they tend to have grit (Duckworth et al., 2007). Student veterans often have an enriched understanding of the world and its citizens (Bluaauw-Hara, 2016; Morrow & Hart, 2014). This valuable skillset is highlighted through Rumann and Hamrick's (2010) findings that veterans characterize themselves as being interested and accepting of others due to the openness and diversity they experience in the armed forces and during deployment. Furthermore, student veterans have the ability to both lead and follow as they have been trained to be mutually reliant team members (Morrow & Hart, 2014).

While these strengths certainly add to a student veteran's ability to be successful on the college campus, student veterans view their success in a sense beyond themselves (Blaauw-Hara, 2016). The American Council on Education (2011) found that when asked what success in college meant to them, student veterans said success goes beyond grade point average; they also identified social and faculty engagement as major contributors to their degree attainment success. Lighthall (2012) reinforces these findings, further highlighting the role faculty play in student veteran success, stating that a supportive and informed faculty is key to student veteran persistence.

Despite student veterans voicing their need to interact with faculty, research has shown that there is limited opportunity to prepare faculty to interact with student veterans (Queen et al., 2014). Often the training that is available for faculty has a deficit focus.

The training primarily focuses on specific components of some veterans' identities (e.g., White, male) and do not fully represent the intersectionality of identities many individuals within the student veteran community possess (Blaauw-Hare, 2016; Vaachi, 2012). It is evident that there must be institutional support and resources geared towards creating a holistic MCC training to better inform and ready faculty to support student veterans within classroom environments.

Faculty Perspectives

There is a need to better understand what perspectives faculty have on teaching student veterans (Kirschner, 2015). While faculty support is a necessary step to implement on college campus, Gonzalez and Elliott (2013) find that 71% of the general public had minimal knowledge of military experiences, and 72% of university faculty participants within this study reported knowing their student veterans a "little bit." These findings reinforce the argument that faculty are unaware of experiences student veterans have and as a result, may hold uninformed perspectives.

Gonzalez and Elliott (2016) and Patillo (2008) both find that most faculty held negative or biased perspectives towards student veterans. In addition, Doe (2013) states that faculty were unfamiliar with the experiences and challenges faced by student veterans with their perspectives being guided by negative stereotypes of veterans such as the wounded hero who is struggling to pick up the pieces of his/her life. These findings are further reinforced by Banard-Brak et al. (2011), who linked a faculty member's willingness to work with student veterans to be determined by past and present viewpoints on war and politics. These authors found that "the more negative feelings that a faculty member reported about people serving in the military, then the less likely it was

that the faculty member would report being able to put those feelings and perception aside...” (p. 34). Based on the findings from this literature, student veterans may face difficulty in having positive faculty interactions due to faculty being politically misinformed and underprepared to serve this population and having a lack of general knowledge about this community of students’ lived experiences.

Faculty deficit focused perspectives towards student veterans’ academic readiness plays a major role in negatively impacting student veterans inside the classroom. Vacchi (2015) found that “staff and faculty tend to assume that veterans, who may have been out school for an extended period of time, will be academically weak” (para. 7), which contrasts to the actual academic readiness that veterans have. Because of this perspective, “the immediate perception that a specific community of students are incapable of succeeding inside the classroom due to a break in formal education can only hinder successful classroom outcomes” (Sullivan & Everett, 2017, p. 3). This type of negative perspective adds to the deficit focused narrative that surround the student veteran community. These perspectives directly impact the student veteran’s ability to be successful within their classes. When student veterans have difficulty in cultivating positive relationships with their faculty, their persistence and retention within the institution is at stake.

Stigma of the military is more prominent among faculty and staff than expected (American Council for Higher Education, 2011). The common perspective that student veterans are academically deficient (Vacchi, 2012; Vacchi, 2015) is both harmful and false. In addition, this author determined faculty tend to assume that veterans who left traditional educational environments will be academically weak. This stems from the

perspective that veterans' time away from a formal classroom environment equates to lack of preparedness to enter a degree program. In actuality, the military environment is intellectually stimulating as servicemembers often take continuous education classes throughout their military career (Vacchi, 2012; Vacch, 2015). Osborne (2013) stated that many veterans

...have lived throughout the world and have immersed themselves in different cultures. They have mastered foreign languages, worked for foreign governments, operated and maintained expensive and high-tech equipment, managed others, and applied critical leadership and decision-making skills in tense situations. (p. 3)

Contrary to the perspective that student veterans are academically deficient, these students often have continuous and rigorous academic opportunities while serving in the military. It is up to the faculty to be willing to meet student veterans at their level and include them in developing their academic plan (Vacchi, 2012).

Faculty perspectives towards student veterans are grounded in a deficit model (Blaauw-Hara, 2016; Vacchi, 2012, Vacchi, 2015). The deficit model that underpins faculty perspectives of student veterans is harmful to both the relationship between student and instructor, and the veteran's experience inside the classroom. Doe (2013) found that some faculty "view veterans as empty shells of human being;" these negative perspectives often continue the narrative of all veterans having PTSD, acting aggressively, and being ticking time bombs. Such viewpoints leave faculty feeling uncertain or suspicious in regard to a veteran's mental health status and well-being (Osborne, 2013). Due to these feelings, the relationship dynamic and ability to foster positive relationships inside the classroom between student veteran and faculty is

hindered. Beyond perspectives of mental health, Smith et al. (2018) found that faculty vary in viewing military experience as an asset or deficit. Faculty not understanding how military experience can positively translate into a college classroom can impact the student veteran experience. Therefore, it is critical that faculty better understand how military experiences can translate into class content.

Consequences to Student Veterans

The impact that negative faculty perspectives have on student veterans includes, loss of degree/low degree completion rates, a feeling of alienation, and negative classroom experiences. As the American Council on Education (2011) found, student veterans reported that positive faculty interactions are the key component to their degree completion. Fernandez et al. (2019) state that student veterans who felt valued by faculty were less likely to consider leaving. According to the Marcus (2017), federal data from 2014 found, there was only a 15% graduation rate for full-time student veterans (using the Post 9/11 G.I bill enrolled in community colleges) and for student veterans going part-time, the degree completion rates were 7%. These findings were “perplexing given student veterans were found to have behavioral characteristics that normally are associated with college students who earn high GPAs” (Durdella & Kim, 2011, p. 122) and complete degrees. Both negative interactions between faculty and student veterans, and faculty being underprepared to work with these students have impactful consequences. Lower GPAs and degree completion rates can impact student veterans’ benefits, financial stability, and other life goals. With the student veterans seeking positive relationships with faculty, it is clear negative interactions play a role in low degree completion rates.

The feeling of alienation is often reported to stem from two places; (1) from interactions with professors that were upsetting or offensive (Elliott et al., 2011) and (2) the student veterans not understanding the role they play inside the classroom (Durdella & Kim, 2011). An issue that faculty can easily fix through an increased awareness of military cultural competency and an understanding of support needs. In addition, student veterans consider themselves invisible members on the college campus and because of this shy away from seeking academic support (Livingston et al., 2011). An example of the feeling of alienation is Elliott et al. (2011) reporting that a

professor showed a film about terrorism in the Middle East and it was all too real for one former Marine: “I had to walk out of class because I was literally one block away from where some of the footage was taken.” (p. 287)

As evident, faculty are seemingly unaware of the impact actions like this can have on a student veteran with similar previous military experiences. Gonzalez and Elliott (2013) state faculty may at best be unaware of student veterans, or at worst be insensitive to the presence of student veterans in their classes.

When it comes to student veteran success, faculty members being unaware of veterans’ challenges is the top priority to address (Sander, 2012). This lack of faculty awareness situates itself in student veterans feeling alienated inside the college classroom which leads to lower GPAs and unwillingness to seek academic support. If faculty can become more aware of student veterans’ needs and implement effective social and educational support, these actions can be found to counteract the feeling of alienation on the college campus (Elliott et al., 2011).

Student veterans report being strongly affected by faculty members in their classroom environments (Fernandez et al., 2019); such instances include feeling undervalued by their faculty. Another aspect that added to an overall negative classroom experience is faculty holding expectations grounded in a hidden civilian curriculum, cultural values and expectations which are unknown to student veterans (Hoon et al., 2018). These grounded expectations could include understanding syllabi dates are subject to change, how to communicate and approach faculty members, and teamwork expectations. Negative classroom experiences have been found to lead to confusion, negative interactions, and feeling there is a lack of military appreciation from faculty and the campus in general (Livingston et al., 2011).

That being said, Gonzalez and Elliott (2013) found that a faculty member that has familiarity of veteran's previous military experience and a grasp of the student veteran support needs has the possibility to serve as the changing factor to ensure student veterans have a positive classroom experience. Negative perspectives of student veterans often result in consequences in the form of degree incompleteness, the feeling of alienation, or negative classroom experiences. It is imperative that faculty understand how their perspectives and actions can result in these consequences. When faculty gain an understanding of their impact, they can serve as a change agent for how student veterans experience classroom environments.

Policy Related to MCC Trainings

MCC trainings focus on the skills, traits, and qualities that contribute to a faculty member's ability to support, educate, and have positive interactions with student veterans inside the classroom environment. It is important to note, when it comes to this type of

faculty development training, there is not a unified national training protocol or namesake. Institutions vary in terminology, such as Green Zone Training, Military Cultural Competency Training, and Veteran Friendly Training. For the purpose of this study, the term *Military Connected Competency Training* is the term that encompasses all institutional faculty development trainings as they pertain to working with student veterans. This means while institutions may offer training (which is up to each individual institution on what content that is), there is no regulated process that determines what faculty learn, and if faculty even take it. This lack of regulation poses a problem when veterans unknowingly select an institution because it is determined as *Veteran Friendly*, expecting supportive faculty, but may be met with undertrained faculty that still hold deficit-based perspectives towards them.

In April 2012, then-President Barack Obama, instituted Executive Order 13607 (see Appendix B) which established principles for educational institutions serving servicemembers and their family members. “The Executive Order was developed to make sure there is protection for these individuals, as educational institutions have used aggressive and deceptive targeting of service members, veterans, and their families” (Bonura & Lovald, 2015, p. 6). Working hand-in-hand with this executive order, Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC) established their *Military Student Bills of Rights*, and the White House (during the Obama era) announced their *8 Keys to Veteran Success Initiative*.

Colleges who adhered to these Bill of Rights and the Keys to Veteran Success were deemed *Veteran Friendly* to military servicemembers. This label is a nationally recognized identifier that lets servicemembers know that the institution is a campus that

has resources which support military members. The issue that arises is that these resources aren't always vetted and are a very broad sweeping. An example of this is a university that is Veteran Friendly can have entire programs dedicated to student veterans and their dependents or have one person within a program who works with student veterans and dependents as part of their job duties. This example demonstrates the broad range of support services that may be available for student veterans, but both types of services fall under the umbrella term of veteran friendly.

A key issue regarding these implemented support strategies revolves around universities adhering to only portions of these initiatives and still putting the emblem of a *Veteran Friendly* institution on themselves. An example of this circumstance is in Fain (2012), who reported that 68% of schools have failed to track retention rates of the student veteran population, which is a principle found within some of these national guidelines. The lack of implemented tools to track student veteran retention creates a massive barrier for student veterans as it not only limits an institution's ability understand the retention rates of this community but also hinders the ability to identify what aspects are contributing to the decisions for veterans to leave (Wagner et al., 2014). As of 2017, four years after the Department of Veterans Affairs was ordered "by frustrated members of congress to provide veterans with streamlined tools to compare education institution using key measures..." (Marcus, 2017), the department still has yet to produce anything nor has given a target date for doing so.

With many higher education institutions accepting student veterans on campus, and student veterans identifying relationships with their faculty as a key component to their success, it is important that these institutions train faculty on how to best support

them (Bonura & Lovald, 2014). Barriers that are present in the ability to successfully implement these types of trainings are two-fold. First, 0.5% of the American population currently serves in the armed forces, and 12.7% of the population are veterans. These data mean the majority of faculty that interface with student veterans do not have any previous experience or basic concepts of military culture or environment (Eikenberry & Keneedy, 2013). Furthermore, if these trainings are created from a civilian perspective, it often perpetuates an already established negative stereotype of the veterans, such as *the wounded warrior* (Hart & Thompson, 2013), and does not acknowledge the complex histories or the nuances of military service. Blaauw-Hara (2016) explains that the second issue relates to faculty training programs are created with deficit perspective, focusing on potential problems that the veterans might have rather than on their strengths.

Qualitative Approach

As Merriam (2009) reminds us, research is motivated by intellectual interest in a phenomenon and has, as its goal, the extension of knowledge. Qualitative research is concerned with how individuals or groups of people make meaning in their lives (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002). This type of approach allows for an in-depth examination of what faculty members perspectives and experiences are when teaching student veterans. Furthermore, “qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (Merriam, 1998, p. 5). In this sense, detailed observation and a systematic approach to examine people’s experiences is required.

Qualitative research designs are flexible, as the data collection techniques are responsive to the ever-changing landscape of a participant’s life circumstances (Merriam,

1998). Yin (2016) reinforced the notion of an effective qualitative research design through identifying three key objectives that qualitative research must fulfill, (1) transparency, (2) methodic-ness, and (3) adherence to evidence. First, *transparency* revolves around implementing qualitative research in a publicly accessible manner. This accessibility allows for it to be scrutinized, supported, or refined by others. The second objective, *methodic-ness*, allows for discovery and room for unanticipated events. It also ensures there is an adherence to a set of research procedures to minimize errors and careless work. The final objective, *adherence to evidence*, “grounds qualitative research on an explicit body of evidence” (Yin, 2016, p. 14). This means that the research conclusions should be drawn in reference to the research findings or evidence.

Case Study

A case study helps to draw attention to what can be specifically learned from a phenomenon (Stake, 1995). As Yin (2003) posits, it can be used as an “empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 13). A case study will allow for an investigation of faculty members experiences participating in an MCC training, and observations of how current MCC trainings are delivered and the best practices that are being utilized in a real-life context. Later on, Yin (2016) emphasized that “case studies get as close to the subject of interest as they possible can, partly by means of direct observation in natural settings, and partly by their access to subjective factors (thoughts, feelings, and desires)” (p. 68). This is what the present dissertation aims to accomplish while documenting the faculty perspectives teaching student veterans. Likewise, Creswell (2013) defined a case study as a “qualitative approach in which the

investigator explores a bounded system or multiple bounded systems over time, through a detailed, in depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observation and interviews), and reports a case description and case-based themes” (p. 97). In the present dissertation, the unit of analysis centers on faculty perspectives teaching student veterans and characteristics of effective military connected competency trainings.

Merriam (2009) identified three characteristics that a case study must fulfill. First, a case study is *particularistic*, meaning it focuses on a particular event or phenomenon. This dissertation revolves around military connected competency trainings and faculty participating in, as well as their perspectives teaching student veterans. Second, a case study is *descriptive*; the goal here is to provide rich description. This aspect was evident through the narratives and the report of the study findings. Third, the outcome of the case study aims to be *heuristic*, which refers to the discovery of new meaning, extending the reader’s experience, or confirming what is known. Therefore, this dissertation aims to contribute to the existent body of literature on best practices educating student veterans and equipping faculty with relevant job competency skills to work with them.

Sampling Strategies

The selection criteria for study participants includes both criterion-i sampling (Palinka et al., 2015) and snowball sampling (Patton, 2002). These sampling techniques ensure documenting information-rich cases, allow for identification of key informants, and exhibit specific characteristics that represent the study population (Merriam, 1998). Snowball sampling is helpful to recruit the desired number of participants (see Appendix C). Once a first group of participants who fulfill the required characteristics to take part

in the study is identified, they can provide referrals to colleagues and people they know who also fulfill the requirements to participate in the study.

Criterion-i sampling is “used to identify and select all cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance” (Palinka et al., 2015, p. 535). In this type of sampling method, participants are identified through systems, organizations or agencies involved in the implementation of a process (in this case, implementation of a military connected competency training program). Individuals “are selected based on the assumption that they possess knowledge and experience with the phenomenon of interest” (Palinka et al., p. 539). In this case, faculty were selected based on their previous experiences working with student veterans, as well as their participation in military connected competency training(s). Criteria for becoming a participant in this dissertation include: (1) having served as a faculty member with experience teaching student veterans, (2) completing the military connected competency training, and (3) having previous interactions with either student veterans, active military members, or veterans in the classroom.

Data Collection Sources

This is a two-article dissertation presenting two related studies regarding MCC trainings characteristics and faculty perspectives teaching student veterans. Table 1 illustrates the research questions answered in each of the two articles and the corresponding data collection sources to inform these articles. Data for this dissertation include training observations, a research journal, Q-sort, and conversational interviews. Yin (2018) suggested using a large breadth of sources to fully examine where different aspects of each inquiry can meet. The data collection process took place during the

worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. To follow IRB regulations, observe social distancing measures, and safety protocols, data collection took place through virtual formats such as Zoom videoconference, email, and online. Only one piece of data was collected face-to-face, the observation of one of the MCC trainings, which happened prior to the COVID-19 crisis.

Table 1

Overview of the Two Articles for the Dissertation

Article	Research Questions	Case Study Sources	Data
MCC TRAINING FOR UNIVERSITY FACULTY	1.How are MCC trainings being designed and offered to university faculty? 2.What are the current characteristics of MCC trainings available to university faculty? 3.What are the best practices designing and delivering MCC training to university faculty?	Layered Case Study	Observation and Observation Protocol Research Journal Training content transcripts
FACULTY EXPERIENCES TEACHING STUDENT VETERANS	4.What are university faculty perspectives teaching student veterans? 5.What are university faculty experiences in light of participating in an MCC training?	Instrumental Case Study	Two Q-sort sessions Conversational Interview Email correspondence Research Journal

Observation

Uncovering the characteristics and best practices for MCC trainings required two approaches to observation. As the researcher, I played the roles of participant-observer and full observers to document the content and delivery of the trainings. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated:

Observations take place in the setting where the phenomenon of interest naturally occurs rather than a location designated for the purpose of interviewing; second, observational data represents a firsthand encounter with the phenomenon of interest rather than a secondhand account of the world obtained in an interview. (p. 137)

These authors suggest that observations can also help to record behavior as it is happening. I observed and participated in each of the four MCC trainings twice, the first time as a participant observer and the second time as a full observer utilizing an observation protocol.

Research Journal

The research journal documents descriptive and reflective field notes, providing “insight into specific aspects of the research process” (Borg, 2001, p. 161). Fieldnotes are considered “the written account of what the researcher hears, sees, experiences, and thinks in the course of collecting and analyzing the data in a qualitative study” (Bodan & Biklen, 2007, p. 118). Descriptive field depict social interactions within the research as they occur (Roper & Shapria, 2000). Regarding reflective field notes, Burawoy (2003) found that fieldnotes are a necessary dialogue between the observed phenomenon and

theory. Keeping a research journal allowed for a thorough, in-depth account of observations and other data collected for the dissertation.

Q-Sort

Q-sort is an aspect of Q-methodology, a data collection method that unearths subjective opinion from a group of individuals (Cross, 2005) to collect and examine the variety of accounts participants construct (Kitzinger, 1987). Q-methodology is the systematic study of subjectivity, centering around a person's viewpoint, opinion, beliefs, and attitude (Brown, 1993). In a Q-sort exercise, respondents are asked to rank-order statements based on their individual perspective and experiences using a quasi-normal distribution (Brown, 1993; de Graaf & van Excel, 2005). It is noted that the participants should represent or be a stakeholder in whatever topic the Q-sort is exploring.

Conversational Interview

Merriam (1998) found that interviewing is necessary to dive deeper into people's life experiences and the meaning they make of them. Conducting the interview as a conversation puts the participants at ease making it a more fluid and organic process. Merriam and Tisdell (2016, p. 109) suggested five components to ensure the effectiveness of conversational interview: (1) include a mix of more highly structured or loosely structured interview questions, (2) all questions are used flexibly, (3) specific data required from all respondents, (4) largest part of the interview guided by list of questions or issues to be explored, (5) no predetermined wording or order. To document faculty perspectives as related to the dissertation, it was helpful to conduct conversations rather than a question-answer type of interaction. This was a flexible way to give them freedom to describe their experiences and perceptions.

Data Analysis

Qualitative analysis requires the researcher to explore large amounts of data. The data analysis process is “the classification and interpretation of linguistic (or visual) material to make statements about implicit and explicit dimensions and structures of meaning-making in the material and what is represented in it” (Flick, 2014, p. 5). In addition, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) state that data collection and analysis should be a simultaneous process, as this type of timing creates a clear distinction between a qualitative design and positivistic research.

Narrative Analysis

Narrative analysis is a qualitative process that uses participants’ stories to represent lives, reshape the past and imaginatively project the future (Frank, 2015). Storytelling allows participants to reflect and revise a sense of self and voice how they situate themselves within groups or communities (Frank, 2006). Stories were used to identify faculty perspectives teaching student veterans and provide answers to the research questions formulated for the dissertation.

In this chapter, data analysis is presented as an overall process. The specifics for data analysis for each of the two studies conducted for the dissertation appear in their respective chapters, chapters 3 and 4. Thus, Yin’s (2016) five step analytical phases (see Figure 3) was the central process for data analysis. These steps are compiling the data, disassembling the data, reassembling the data, interpreting the data, and concluding findings.

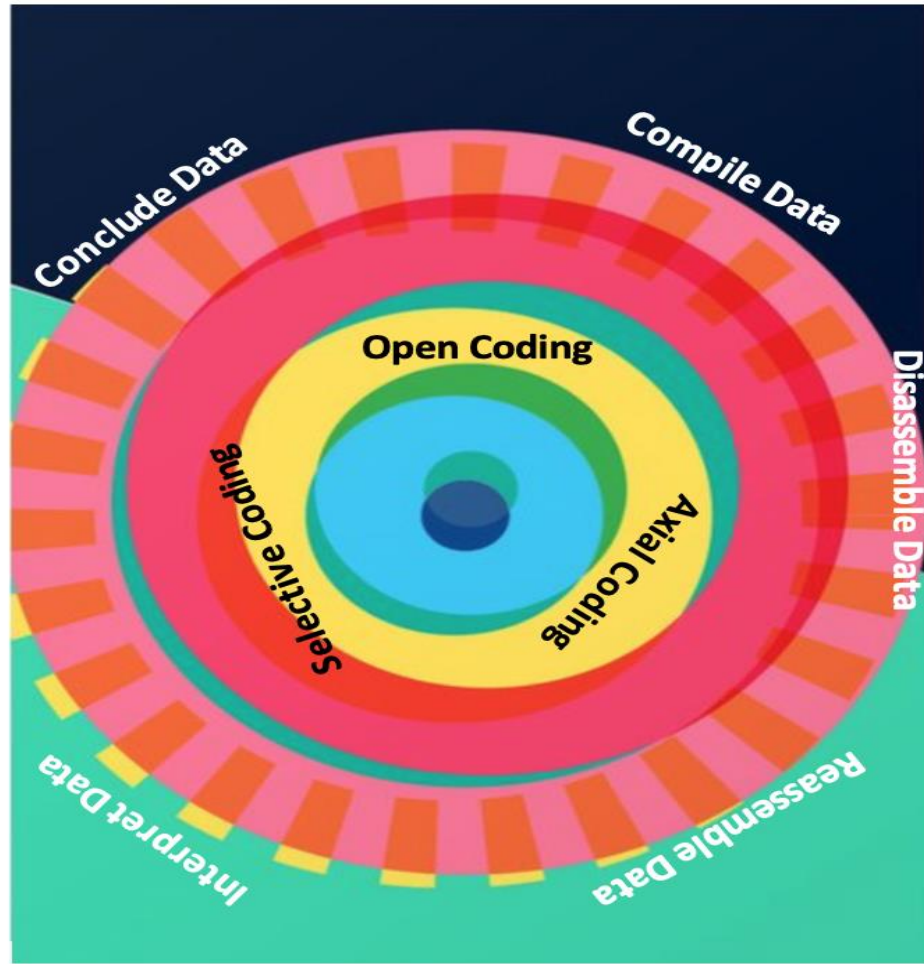


Figure 3. Data Analysis Process

The first step involves *compiling* and sorting the data that have been amassed from the data collection. The second step is to *disassemble* the data into smaller fragments or pieces. To this effect, the MAXQDA software served to compile, sort, and organize the collected data:

MaxQDA analyzes qualitative data that can be used for content analysis with its basic structure consisting of four windows: one that provides the data from each project, the texts and groups of texts (document system); one that provides the structure of the codes and categories (system code); one for editing and consulting

texts (document browser), and another for conducting searches and checks regarding coded material (retrieved segments). (Oliveira et al., 2013, p. 306)

The third step, *reassembling de data*, includes reorganizing the data, grouping, and sequencing the pieces, and identifying substantive themes. The fourth step is *interpreting* the data. Here is where the researcher examines the data in light of existent theory. The final step of the analytical phases is *concluding*; the researcher draws conclusions derived from the entire study. In this phase the analysis is complete, and the researcher is able to present findings to share them with an audience.

Trustworthiness

Guba and Lincoln (1989) post that the trustworthiness of a study is imperative when it comes to evaluating its worth, in other words, it builds credibility and the confidence in the findings. Therefore, these authors proposed four stringent criteria for a constructivist inquiry for trustworthiness: *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability*, and *confirmability*. Patton (2015, p. 685) expands on this criterion stating, *credibility* is the agreement of the participants' voices and the researcher's depiction of them. This can be done through ensuring the researcher's natural perspective and biases adopt a neutral stance. *Transferability* is the ability for another researcher to recreate these findings in a similar research setting. To ensure transferability, I provide enough detail regarding the study design. *Dependability* is the process of being "logical, traceable, and documented" (Patton, 2015, p. 685). In other words, research findings are consistent with and reflect the data collected. *Confirmability* is the ability for the researcher's interpretation of the data to have a clear link to the findings. To ensure confirmability of study findings, the

researcher utilizes direct quotes and verbatim narratives provided by the study participants.

Ethical Considerations

While there was little risk for participants in this study, ethical research guidelines were followed (Patton, 2002). As an ethical researcher, I made sure that Institutional Review Board (IRB) and proper COVID-19 regulations were fulfilled. These regulations included zero in-person contact with study participants, and all data were collected via virtual methods.

Volunteer research participants were informed of all aspects of the study in advance of their agreement to participate. I provided all of them with a consent form to explain the study and the expectations for their participation. They had the opportunity to read and discuss this before committing to taking part in the study. They were informed of the voluntary nature of their participation and their rights to discontinue participating at any time without consequences. In addition, participants were given a copy of the consent form for their records.

Participants were also informed of the extent of the time commitment for their participation of this study, and the steps to ensure confidentiality to the best of the study's ability. In addition, the MCC trainings under study are easily recognized and available to the public. Therefore, the names of any universities using these trainings and names of faculty taking part in the study are not disclosed. Assigning pseudonyms was helpful to protect their identities.

Dissertation Overview

This is a two-article dissertation documenting best practices and characteristics of MCC trainings, as well as university faculty perspectives teaching student veterans. This dissertation is organized into four chapters. *Chapter 1* introduced the dissertation topic. This first chapter delivered an overview of the literature, statement of the problem, theoretical framework, and specified the study design as well as trustworthiness and ethical considerations. *Chapter 2* presents the first article for the dissertation “MCC training for university faculty.” This is a multilayer case study examining different nationally recognized MCC trainings for university faculty. Four MCC trainings were selected to examine: The Shock Value, The Roleplay, Veterans as Assets, and The Practical Approach (all pseudonyms). The purpose was to determine how these trainings were designed, identify best practices and prevalent characteristics of the trainings. Building on a Veteran Critical Theory (VCT) framework, this chapter aimed to answer three research questions: (1) How are MCC trainings being designed and offered to university faculty? (2) What are the characteristics of current MCC training available to university faculty? (3) What are best practices designing and delivering MCC training to university faculty? *Chapter 3* presents the second article for the dissertation “Faculty experiences teaching student veterans.” This is an instrumental case study with 10 faculty participants from four different universities. The research questions guiding this article included: (1) What are the perspectives of faculty teaching student veterans? (2) What are the experiences faculty have in light of experiencing an MCC training? Finally, *Chapter 4* discusses study highlights, implications, and recommendations for practice, as well as future research.

II. MCC TRAINING FOR UNIVERSITY FACULTY

For some time now, faculty have been trying to figure out what it means to be military culturally competent...It is imperative to understand who student veterans are in order to bridge the cultural gap between non-military Americans and those who wear the uniform of their country. Through training, faculty will gain knowledge and perspective to bolster their job competencies working with student veterans (Training facilitator at an MCC training).

Professional development is seen as a pathway to improve faculty productivity, institutional effectiveness, and student success (Stevenson, 2019). As illustrated in the introductory vignette, military connected competency (MCC) training in the scope of professional development has these same outcomes in mind; as it is important for both higher education institutions and faculty to have a basic understanding of military populations (Bonura & Lovald, 2015). While 98% of institutions have reported enrolling student veterans on their campuses, Queen et al. (2014) found only 21% reported offering some type of military connected competency training opportunities.

According to the Student Veterans of America (2013), 1.4 million student veterans attended a degree program in 2013. Also, over 40 billion dollars came from the Post 9/11 G.I. Bill (Wagner et al., 2014). With a growing number of student veterans returning to school, it becomes imperative for faculty to be prepared to work with this community of students. MCC trainings drastically vary in terms of content, delivery method, and characteristics from institution to institution (Bonura & Lovald, 2015). Consistent standards have yet to be developed that identify best practices and characteristics for effective military connected competency training programs.

This chapter examines four different military connected competency training programs available for universities. It brings forth the findings for higher education institutions, professional development programmers, and veteran offices when training

faculty to work with these student veterans. In addition, this article identifies potential challenges that these professional development programs might encounter to bring awareness of such experiences. The overall goal is to identify prevalent characteristics of the trainings as well as best practices designing and delivering MCC trainings. Therefore, the research questions guiding the study are:

1. How are MCC trainings being designed and offered to university faculty?
2. What are the characteristics of current MCC training available to university faculty?
3. What are best practices designing and delivering MCC training to university faculty?

Veteran Critical Theory

This study builds on the work of Phillips and Lincoln (2017). This framework highlights essential aspects of the student veteran narrative focusing on equity, multiple identities, values, and the lived experience of the student veteran. Phillips and Lincoln identified eleven tenets for their framework (see Table 2) encompassing all aspects related to the student veteran community and the different perspectives of stakeholders.

Veteran critical theory (VCT) framework describes relevant ways of gaining knowledge about the circumstances and characteristics of student veterans. The VCT framework serves different purposes: (a) broaden the scope of research on student veterans, (b) assist faculty in gaining sensitivity and awareness of the student veteran experience, and (c) inform support services and faculty professional training. The VCT framework works as a blueprint to examine the data collected for the study, the research journal, and observations regarding the content and delivery of these trainings.

Table 2

VCT Framework (Phillips & Lincoln, 2017)

Veteran Critical Theory Tenets
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Structures, policies, and processes privilege civilians over veterans.2. Veterans experience various forms of oppression and marginalization including microaggressions.3. Veterans are victim of deficit thinking in higher education.4. Veterans occupy a third space (country) on the border of multiple conflicting and interactive power structures, language, and systems.5. VCT values narratives and counter narratives of veterans.6. Veterans experience multiple identities are once.7. Veterans identity is constructed (written) by civilians, often as a deviant character.8. Veterans are more appropriately positioned to inform policy and practice regarding veterans.9. Some services advertised to serve veterans are ultimately serving civilian interests.10. Veterans cannot be essentialized.11. Veteran culture is built on a culture of respect, honor, and trust.

Need for Professional Development

As the student veteran population continues to grow, higher education institutions must become proactive in readying their faculty to work with this population. Offering MCC training for faculty is imperative to equip them to effectively work with student veterans. Research (Lighthall, 2012; The American Council, 2011) suggests that student veterans identify positive faculty engagement as a key component to degree attainment. As stated by Lighthall (2012), student veterans expect faculty to have enough knowledge

of the military experience to be able to implement teaching strategies supportive of student veterans' needs.

University faculty often teach students how they themselves were taught (Schmidt et al., 2016). These practices could create an outdated facilitation style that does not support all student communities, namely student veterans. Professional development programs intend to equip educators with new techniques for achieving better results with their students, and develop more confident, capable, and fulfilled faculty (Shaha et al., 2004). Therefore, "all education professionals should engage in their own continuing professional development" (Malloch et al., 2011, p. 153) so that they are prepared for their ever-changing job competency, work functions, and in this case, student veteran support needs.

The challenges associated with achieving sustained change in teaching practices are linked to faculty learning and how we might ready faculty to incorporate new practices into their ongoing systems of practice (Kennedy, 2016). Outdated training programs only add to these challenges and must be reexamined to increase faculty preparedness. Thus, effective professional development is a necessary practice to uphold throughout a faculty member's career (Gorard et al., 2001). As suggested by Bonura and Lovald (2015), promoting faculty awareness and preparedness to work with student veterans is a complex task, as it includes gaining knowledge about multiple aspects of military culture and student veteran identity as well as support systems for student veterans.

Faculty must be better educated to understand military experiences and how student veteran needs transfer into the classroom. Therefore, it is imperative that

institutions begin to educate faculty to help student veterans assimilate into the college classroom (Sander, 2012). The objectives of these trainings should include: (1) an increase of faculty familiarity to military culture, (2) to increase faculty feeling of preparation to work with student veterans, and (3) to increase awareness of student veteran's military service (Fernandez et al., 2019). Faculty development programming works (Camblin & Steger, 2000), and it is imperative that instructors begin participating in them. Therefore, the more faculty increase their familiarity with student veterans, the higher their self-efficacy will be when it comes to teaching them (Barnard-Brak et al., 2011). Increasing familiarity is crucial as faculty often hold a reluctance to reach out to veterans when they have no prior military experience or preparation when trying to relate to a student veteran (Hart & Morrow, 2014).

Effective Professional Development

It is important to substantiate the call for why professional development is needed. McKee and Tew (2013) argued that faculty must be sufficiently prepared to lead their institutions through “the seismic shift of the very ground on which their institutions are built on,” (p. 13). In order to meet these needs, it is argued that it should be a requirement for faculty to be engaged with ongoing professional development (McKee & Tew, 2013). The fast influx of student veterans returning for degrees is one of these occasions that calls for faculty to be confidently prepared to meet these shifting needs. The harmonious collaboration between recognized importance and commitment (McKee et al., 2013) while ensuring *effective* professional development programs is imperative for the continuous improvement of classroom facilitation.

There are many definitions for what is deemed an *effective* professional development program and how it is deemed effective. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) defined *effective professional development* as structured professional learning that results in changes in teacher practice and improvement in student learning outcomes. Broadly, very few professional development programs provide data as evidence of their efficacy in training faculty (Guskey, 2002; Killion 2002). There is a gap in research on how a military connected competency training is deemed effective. Limited data are available regarding how faculty trainings result in fostering better practices for teaching student veterans (Atuel & Castro, 2018).

The content, training, and facilitation of the faculty professional development program must be cohesive to be able to be effective. Significant improvements in skills, knowledge, and attitudes should result from the implementation of such a program (Bilal et al., 2017). As suggested by Darling-Hammond,et al. (2017), the acquisition of new skills and knowledge should be measured through learning competency checks, critical discussion, question and answer periods, and completion checks prior to obtaining certification. In addition, collaboration, models of effective practice, coaching, feedback, and reflection for the duration of the program (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017) is imperative.

Best Practices Training Faculty

When designing training for faculty, understanding motivation factors such as being forced to attend career related workshops (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999) or resistance to exploring new perspectives (Langer, 1997) must be addressed. Communicating the importance of why participating in MCC training is essential.

Allowing space to support faculty in examining or questioning their own perspectives during the training is critical to a successful training experience. In addition, feedback that faculty receive from the facilitator must be specific, beneficial, and practical to motivate them to engage in the training (Galbraith, 1990).

Many factors influence faculty perceptions and willingness to learn while participating in the training. Some examples include the different ways faculty learn, the various purposes they bring to learning, the cultural and political constraints they endure, and their personal and professional identities and cultural backgrounds (Brookfield, 2013). To address these aspects, Brookfield (2013) proposes different practices to assist training participants. These include, first, *building self-confidence*, meaning faculty are confident and able to implement the learning objectives into their facilitation and mentoring styles. Second, *understanding instinctive perspectives and habits*, meaning reflecting on their closely held perspective towards subjects the professional development program is touching on and understanding their responsive habits and decisions to those perspectives. Third, *making decisions*, ability to make real time decision based on real life scenarios in light of the professional development training. Fourth, *having an awareness of emotional fluency*, meaning they are aware of the emotions they hold that are attached to their perspectives and have room to express them within the training environment.

There are two teaching methods that are considered best practices in both online and face to face mediums for authentic learning environments, “the guide on the side” and “the meddler in the middle” (Judd & Marcum, 2017, p. 135). On one hand, as a guide the facilitator holds authority and supports a certain level of participants’ autonomy. On

the other hand, the meddler approaches participants as a colleague and equal. Galbraith (1999) and Cross (2004) suggest different teaching practices that coincide with these training methods. These are: (1) involving workshop participants in evaluating their own learning, (2) establishing a friendly, open atmosphere that allows participants to partake in a meaningful educational experience, (3) adjusting the level of tension to the level of relevance of the concept being taught, and (4) setting the degree of training difficulty high enough to challenge participants but not too high as to frustrate them.

Military Connected Competency Training

There is not a unified national training protocol or namesake to identify MCC trainings (Bonura & Lovald, 2015). Institutions vary in terminologies, such as but not limited to Green Zone Training, Military Cultural Competency Training, and Veteran Friendly Training. For clarity purposes, this article adopts the term *MCC training* when describing any training designed for faculty with the goal of improving their teaching practice for student veterans.

Beyond the lack of unification, regulation, and content, there are challenges that are found when developing MCC trainings. For example, when created from a civilian perspective, MCC trainings often perpetuate an already established negative stereotype of the veterans, such as *the wounded warrior*, neglecting the complex histories and nuances of military service (Hart & Thompson, 2013). Similarly, Blaauw-Hara (2016) explained that MCC training programs are often created with a deficit perspective, focusing on potential problems that the veterans might have rather than on their strengths. This issue is important for program developers and facilitators to keep in mind as they design and implement MCC trainings.

Faculty should become aware of their own attitudes and knowledge of the diverse cultural groups that they serve and engage in practice that promotes and advocates for the wellbeing of all students (Atuel & Castro, 2018, p. 76). As previously suggested, faculty must be cognizant of the diversity and culture that student veterans bring and implement effective teaching practices to support this community.

As found in the literature, MCC trainings should focus on the skills, traits, and qualities that contribute to faculty's ability to support, educate, and positively interact with student veterans inside the classroom environment (Atuel & Castro, 2018; Bonura & Lovald, 2015). In addition, Bonura and Lovald (2015) argued that faculty must gain a holistic familiarity with student veteran military experiences to include knowledge of basic organizational and leadership structure of the military, active duty service members, military family members, support needs, military culture, and student veteran identity. It is important to note that there is a gap in literature regarding the effectiveness of MCC training and how transferable the content of these trainings is to faculty teaching experiences.

The Study

Patton (2015) defined a layered case study as an examination of patterns across multiple cases. The layers of multiple cases are evident within this dissertation through examining different types of military connected competency faculty training programs and investigative the impact a military connected competency training has on faculty perspectives all in the context of higher education institutions. This is a qualitative method that allows the investigation of complex social phenomena anchored in real life scenarios and gives an "in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system"

(Merriam, 1998, p. 37). With this purpose in mind, this chapter takes a close look at four different MCC trainings. Furthermore, Creswell (2013) explains that in a multilayer case study

The investigator explores multiple bounded systems over time, through a detailed, in depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observation and interviews), and reports a case description and case-based themes. (p. 97)

The present study utilizes a cross case comparison analysis of these trainings. Describing existent MCC trainings allows implications to be drawn for higher education institutions and other relevant stakeholders. The study addresses a gap in the literature on best practices for designing and implementing meaningful MCC training for university faculty.

Student veterans enroll in higher education institutions all over the nation, making it a priority for university faculty to be prepared to work with them. The setting includes two training modalities; face-to-face, and online training platforms. Frequently, the face-to-face MCC trainings are offered on campus and are delivered either by a Student Veteran Office representative or the facilitator who created the training. The online MCC trainings can be taken based on the faculty time preference, are self-paced, and are facilitated in different ways (e.g., an instructor, an interactive avatar, a navy veteran). These online trainings do not offer actual-time interaction between the trainer and the participant. They are asynchronous, and the participant works on them at their own pace and in their own time.

The Military Connected Competency Trainings

This study examines four MCC trainings and aims to include different options that are available to faculty (e.g., paid, free, online, and face-to-face). The four trainings described in this section were chosen with the following criteria in mind: Duration, access, mandatory/voluntary, and institutional financial support. Depending on the needs of the faculty, time availability, and institutional financial support, a faculty member can take one training or the other. Different options are available for faculty in need of training.

Table 3

Training Setting & Description

	The Shock Value	The Roleplay	Veterans as Assets	The Practical Approach
Type of Training	Online and F2F options Commercially available, free of charge to participant No learning checkpoints	Online only Commercially available for \$35.00 Learning checkpoints	Hybrid delivery Designed for this institution (not available to the public, by invitation only) Learning checkpoints	Online only Commercially available, free of charge Learning checkpoints
Length of Training	1 hour	37 minutes	3.5 hours	21 minutes

As illustrated in Table 3, using pseudonyms to label the trainings allows for anonymity to protect the identity of the organization, the university, and the training

participants. In addition, the selected pseudonyms encapsulate prominent aspects of each training helpful to describe them. These pseudonyms are: *The Shock Value*, *The Roleplay*, *The Veterans as Assets*, and *The Practical Approach*.

The Shock Value brings in multiple voices and identities that represent the student veteran community and support services. There are six different presenters delivering the training both within the university setting and the local Veterans Affairs (VA) Office. The institution purchases and adapts the training to their needs. It is one hour long, and there are no learning checkpoints (e.g., quizzes or Q & A sessions). Faculty who are not able to attend the in-person training on campus receive a link to watch a recording, which is also available on their website. The reason behind naming this training *The Shock Value* has to do with the unique perspectives and shocking stories shared by the facilitators. The stories shared aimed to provoke a reaction (e.g., shock, anger, fear, empathy, hope, interest) in the participants to help faculty gain an understanding of the student veteran experience.

The Roleplay can be found through a web search, is affordable, and is user friendly. It is easy to navigate the website and decide the training that fits the client's needs (e.g., staff, university faculty, high school teacher, other stakeholders). This training is only found online through a specific simulation training company. Institutions can buy access codes in large quantities to this training. If there is no institutional funding available, faculty can purchase it themselves through the website at an affordable price, \$35.00 US dollars. The online facilitators that run the training are interactive avatars that take participants through different role-playing scenarios. These avatars represent diverse identities of student veterans, including veterans of color, women veterans, and first-

generation veterans. The training lasts 37 minutes, and there are a few learning checkpoints. The faculty member is asked to make correct decisions through a role play format, and there is a final completion form with questions related to the role-playing activities that they participated in. The pseudonym assigned to this training is based on the many role-playing scenarios presented to faculty to participate in the training.

Veterans as Assets is built for a specific institution's identity and culture to help support their student veteran community. It brings in multiple veteran voices during the creation and delivery of the training. Providing a central role to the student veteran is a point of pride for the institution offering this training. It takes on an asset-based approach to share the student veterans' strengths, and it highlights the positive aspects these students bring to the classroom environment (e.g., team leadership, grit, time management, persistence, discipline, and commitment). Student veteran characteristics that may seem detrimental to the classroom (e.g., pride, respect for authority, low tolerance for ambiguity, and different communication styles) are presented as opportunities to build on student strengths and reach points of understanding. This training is available in a hybrid delivery format, with the first part (90 minutes) of the training being online and the second part (2 hours) being offered face-to-face on campus. The delivery format follows traditional training strategies using online modules, testimonies, and lecturing. After each module is completed the participant must pass a quiz to be able to continue with the following module. During the face-to-face session, there is a series of testimonies by VA Office representatives, followed by lecturing by a facilitator. The pseudonym assigned to this training is based on the emphasis placed on the potential for the student veteran to become an asset to the classroom environment.

The Practical Approach is only available online through the creator's website. The company designing this training specializes in trainings related to mental health, transition assistance, higher education institutions geared for the student veteran population. Created and facilitated by veterans, the input by civilians in the design of the training is limited. It is commercially available, free of charge, and lasts 21 minutes. The focus is on gaining an understanding of the military culture and how it influences student veteran behavior within the classroom. The training aims to humanize the student veteran experience to help participants understand that all experiences are different, and they do not have to be negative. The training uses testimonies to reinforce the points being made with the goal of eradicating negative stereotypes (e.g., every veteran has killed someone, all student veterans suffer from PTSD, all student veterans have seen combat). From this point of view, it is user friendly by giving enough context and relevant information to the faculty. In addition, it provides a list of communication strategies to implement while interacting and teaching student veterans. Once the training is completed, a new screen appears with a few reflection questions for the faculty member to answer. For example, they are asked: What do you feel your level of preparedness is to work with student veterans? What did you learn from this training? How do you plan to apply the content of this training? The pseudonym assigned to this training is based on its delivery and practicality for faculty. It is packed with relevant information and adds a reflection component connecting professional development and teaching practice.

Data Collection

Denzin and Lincoln (2013, p. 6) explain that qualitative research is an activity that locates the observer in the world and consists of a set of interpretive, material practices

that make the world visible. Therefore, data sources for this study include a research journal with descriptive and reflective fieldnotes and an observation protocol capturing transcripts of the different trainings. The success of a study, specifically one that relies on observation, is determined by the details included in fieldnotes (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). As stated by Patton (2002), observation as a type of data collection allows for in depth description and detail of the setting of what is being observed, with the descriptions being factual, accurate, and thorough without being cluttered.

Observation Protocol

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggest that observations should take place in the setting where the phenomenon of interest naturally occurs. To this end, my role as a researcher included serving as a participant observer and as a full observer (Adler & Adler, 1998; Wilson, 1977;). I attended each of the four MCC trainings, twice. As a participant observer, I interacted as a learner within each of the MCC trainings and took bountiful notes. As a full observer, I used an observation protocol (see Appendix D) to record descriptive fieldnotes. An observation protocol was created specifically for the study and drew on VCT tenets (Phillips & Lincoln, 2017) and theory on best practices teaching adult learners (Brookfield, 2013; Cross, 2004; Galbraith, 1999). To ensure systematic observation, details about date, time, duration of training, and setting were recorded first. Next, I looked at three different aspects of the trainings (e.g., introduction, presentation, closing) and followed a list of questions to guide the observation of these three aspects. These questions included a set of open-ended questions and a set of Yes/No questions. In addition, there were two columns for writing down descriptive and reflective field notes.

Researcher as a Participant Observer

According to Patton (2002), the role of the participant observer is to behave as an inquirer who is open to new information and is discovery oriented. This is a method used to investigate human presence where the researcher actively participates within the situation (Jorgensen, 2015). Being a participant observer allowed me to behave as a learner and to be able to identify best teaching practices when I experienced them. A participant observer works to continuously be aware of the meaning of events (Wilson, 1977). Therefore, using an observation protocol and splitting the journal entries into descriptive and reflective field notes served as a step-by-step process for data collection.

Researcher as a Full Observer

Adler and Adler (1998) referred to a full observer as having peripheral membership to what is being observed. Here, the researcher interacts in a loose role to establish their identity as an observer without participating in the activities. Furthermore, a full observer has the opportunity to see things that may routinely escape awareness among the people in the setting; this allows for an opportunity to move beyond selective perceptions of others (Patton, 2002, p. 333). Utilizing an observation protocol allowed me, as a researcher, to pay full attention to detail. I was able to pay attention and take note of other aspects of the training that I did not see before when I was engaged as a learner. Therefore, I was able to see how smaller details impacted the participants.

Research Journal

In her research journal, the researcher documents factual events, descriptions, and observations. The content of this journal has two types of field notes, descriptive and reflective field notes. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) explain that both types of field notes

within a research journal allow for a thorough, in-depth account of facts and analytical reflection. Fieldnotes are considered “the written account of what the researcher hears, sees, experiences, and thinks in the course of collecting and analyzing the data in a qualitative study” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 118). Field notes also depict social interactions within the research as they occur (Roper & Shapria, 2000).

Descriptive Fieldnotes

Journaling is an important tool to record the research process during data collection. Bogdan and Biklen (2007, p. 121) identify six aspects of descriptive fieldnotes that should be fulfilled. These are: portraits of study participants, reconstruction of dialogue, description of the setting, critical events, depicting activities, scrutinizing researcher’s behavior.

First, fieldnotes provide portraits of the study participants. This includes their mannerisms, dress, and style of talking and acting. For example, the interactions between training participants and their facilitator was an important piece of information to take note.

Second, allowing for reconstruction of the dialogue, including the conversations that happen between subjects and what the subjects say to the researcher. These notes contain summaries of conversations with the training facilitator and among participants.

Third, describing the physical setting and virtual setting allows for pencil drawings of the space, verbal sketches of different physical elements, and the building location in which the observation takes place. Descriptions of the rooms and online mediums in which MCC trainings take place, as well as the experiences navigating the websites are included here.

Fourth, giving accounts of particular events, listing which participants are involved in the event, in what manner, and the nature of the action. For instance, critical events that happened throughout different segments of the trainings were recorded.

Fifth, depicting activities, includes detailed descriptions of behaviors and particular acts. This refers to the different activities implemented for the training, participant reactions, and how these reactions were addressed by facilitators.

Sixth, scrutinizing the researcher's behavior as the instrument of data collection, their assumptions, and whatever else might affect the data gathered. As a researcher, I played two roles; at times I was a full participant of the training, and some other times I was a participant observer.

Reflective Fieldnotes

Journaling can also be used as a tool for reflecting on the different aspects of the research process such as analysis, method, ethical dilemmas, assumptions, and points in need of clarification (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 123). These are often based on the researcher's realizations and analytical memos. These memos include mini write-ups that summarize what a researcher is learning during data collection.

First, these field notes include reflections on analysis. This includes speculating about what is being learned, the themes that are emerging, patterns that may be present, and connections between pieces of data.

Second, reflections on the research method addressing the procedures and strategies employed in the study are included. It was important to monitor the records process and ensure that precise records were kept as to provide detailed description of the trainings and gather plenty of data to adequately answer the research questions.

Third, these notes included reflections on ethical dilemmas and conflicts, including relational concerns between the observer's values and responsibilities to the subjects and profession. A relevant example is making a conscious effort to fairly describe the different trainings without favoring one over the other. Providing enough detail about the trainings while protecting the identity of the organizations and participants was another concern.

Fourth, reflections on the observer's frame of mind addresses the assumptions held by the observer. This practice included addressing positionality and airing out personal biases. For example, assuming all faculty had previously taught a student veteran, when that was not always the case.

Fifth, points of clarification, include simple interpretations on a point that the observer might have found confusing. This included watching the different MCC training videos several times to clarify points of confusion. Utilizing the training workbook was helpful in the case of the trainings that were offered face-to-face.

Data Analysis

MaxQDA software was a helpful tool for storage, organization, and classification of the data collected for the study. Yin's (2016) cycle was utilized to follow a systematic step by step data analysis process. This author identified five steps for the analytical cycle: (1) compiling the data, (2) disassembling the data, (3) reassembling the data, (4) interpreting the data, and (5) drawing conclusions.

First, *compiling the data* involved utilizing the MaxQDA software to upload different data sets, such as the transcripts of the content of video recordings of the trainings, the notes typed for the research journal, and the notes taken in the observation

protocol. This step also included organizing and classifying these data in different folders.

Second, *disassembling the data* into smaller fragments or pieces meant to conduct different rounds of coding (see Appendix E). For this step of data analysis process, three levels of coding were utilized. First open coding, data were chunked into small unites and descriptors were attached to these units. Second, axial coding served to collapse codes into categories. Third, selective coding required grouping these categories into larger themes.

Third, *reassembling* the data involved reorganizing the fragments, grouping and sequencing the pieces, and identifying substantive examples from the data that clearly illustrate the themes that emerged in the previous step. For instance, it was important to identify examples that best illustrate each of the emergent themes without duplicating data.

Fourth, *interpreting* the data referred to examining the emergent themes in relation to the study framework. Thus, VCT (Phillips & Lincoln, 2017) served as a lens to make sense of these findings. In interpreting the data, it was also important to look at whether these findings aligned with existent research.

The final step, concluding, involved drawing conclusions about what was learned from the entire study. This means pondering about connections to existent research, study contributions, implications, and formulating ideas for future research.

Findings

This article describes four different MCC training programs. An analysis of the data collected examining these trainings brought forth three emergent themes. These are:

(1) Prevalent characteristics, (2) Best practices, and (3) Challenges and tensions (see Appendix E). In the following section, each theme is presented along with supporting data.

Prevalent Characteristics

Most of the MCC trainings aimed to build faculty knowledge so they could apply it to real life scenarios. Exposing training participants to a variety of experiences aimed to support faculty in contemplating a new viewpoint where military culture and student veterans' experiences were envisioned as assets. Therefore, three characteristics were prevalent among the four trainings: (1) An assets-based approach, (2) Presenting informed solutions, and (3) Diversity and military culture.

An Assets-Based Approach

All trainings but *The Shock Value* brought in asset-based perspectives to varying degrees. The content of most of the trainings helped bridge the gap in knowledge regarding military experiences of student veterans. Three of the MCC trainings made visible and assigned positive value to the skills, knowledge, connections and potential that student veterans bring with them. The training allowed for having a session for faculty to ask questions.

This asset-based approach was evident when the training facilitators and training content described veterans' strengths such as grit, leadership, commitment, and drive. There was also discussion about the different aspects of military culture student veterans brought to campus, such as holding oneself to a high standard and maturity levels. These characteristics were presented as contributing to success in the classroom and degree completion.

Two of the MCC trainings, the *Veterans as Assets* and *The Practical Approach*, presented material to help faculty demystify generalized, false perspectives such as most veterans have killed someone, or all veterans have PTSD. For example, in *The Practical Approach* one of the veterans' testimonies illustrated that while for some veterans this is a reality, it is not true for all:

We did not all kill someone, and those who have do not want to talk about it. This one doesn't need a lot of commentary. Unfortunately, this is a question that gets asked of our military veterans far too often, and I realize people are just curious, but I hope this course will educate you to realize this is not a question to ask any military veteran. We do not all have PTSD. There is a general perception that anyone who deployed to combat develops PTSD, and that's just not true. While combat can certainly be very traumatic, it can lead to moments of reward and friendship, and love. Of those who do have invisible wounds of war, we are not dangerous, and we are not violent.

This is a valuable statement as it works against microaggressions some veterans face inside the classroom and gives faculty a chance to reflect on their teaching style and preconceived notions towards student veterans.

Another instance when an assets-based approach was evident relates to *The Roleplay* training. It provided faculty with an opportunity to use their knowledge and role as university employees to provide valuable information, direct students to resources they could use, and serve as a referral to appropriate offices for the student veterans utilization in a positive way.

<i>Student Veteran Avatar:</i>	<i>What is the office?</i>
<i>Faculty:</i>	<i>ODS</i>
<i>Student Veteran Avatar:</i>	<i>(surprised) ODS?</i>
<i>Faculty:</i>	<i>Yes, Office of Disability Services. They work with all kinds of students to get accommodations. If you want, we can call them right now and ask them about the process. What do you say?</i>
<i>Student Veteran Avatar:</i>	<i>Yeah. Thanks.</i>
<i>Faculty:</i>	<i>Great! And before I call them, I just want to say that I'm really glad that you told me you're a veteran</i>

Student Veteran Avatar:

because here at the school we have a number of veteran's services that I can refer you to as well. Some faculty and staff don't feel comfortable talking to student veterans, especially about topics like needed support services beyond what faculty can provide. But a student veteran's situation can pose unique challenges...helping a student veteran through these situations increases their chances of graduating ...If you do refer a student to a specific office or service, try to normalize the process of getting help, and follow up with the student in a week or so to see how it went.

The first portion of the roleplay scenario illustrates a possible interaction between a faculty member and a student veteran in need of identifying student services. The purpose of the exercise is to have faculty practicing and gaining confidence referring student veterans to services that go beyond what a faculty member can do for them in the classroom.

Presenting Informed Solutions

All four trainings addressed communication as an area where faculty could improve and as a possible source of misunderstanding and conflict. The trainings aimed to present alternative solutions on how to successfully communicate with student veterans. In addition, they presented topics of conversation that were best never to approach when interacting with the students such as gruesome questions (e.g., did you see someone die? What was war like? Do you miss it?), sensitive topics (e.g., political affiliation, political opinion), and providing misinformed opinions about service (e.g., judging military service). In addition, the training participants were exposed to a variety of resources and informative materials that could broaden their knowledge about services available to student veterans (e.g., benefit limitations, health and wellness, and active duty).

All but one of the MCC trainings brought forth ideas on how to successfully communicate in the classroom. For example, one of the trainings, *The Roleplay*, ran a scenario for faculty to practice managing difficult classroom discussions and provided feedback to the participants. In the following scenario, the faculty are provided with a dialogue between a civilian student (a student who has not served in the military) and student veteran. The context of the classroom discussion revolves around recent political conflicts overseas:

Civilian Student: I had a strong reaction to this case study, to be honest. I mean, when you think about all the money that's wasted on weapons and stuff for the military. And they use that money to lobby Washington to spend even more money on defense. You know, it's almost criminal.

Student Veteran: We're spending more because we're trying to fight smart. I was in for four years, Marine Corps. We don't know the terrain over there. Yes, that costs money, but it also saves lives. I don't know how you put a price on that...on soldiers' survival.

The Roleplay training presented the faculty with different options to mediate between students' viewpoints. They had to select their classroom management style and what the response to these students' interaction would be. Once the exercise was completed, the training provided feedback:

Student veterans can add a unique and valuable perspective to class discussions. Here are some tips for getting them involved in a positive way. First, just be aware that there could be veterans or service members in class. So, comments about the military can be personal to a lot of people, not just veterans. Two, if you want us to share our experience, that's great! Just talk with us first to make sure we are comfortable with that. Three, ask open-ended questions, like, "What did you do in the military?"

Beyond communication strategies, having a variety of resources and materials readily available for faculty was an aspect most of these trainings included. Three of the

four trainings explained to different degrees that acquiring in-depth knowledge of military culture is complex and takes time. One of the trainings, *The Practical Approach*, contended that having general knowledge of military culture increases credibility for faculty when communicating and supporting student veterans. A portion of this knowledge is having a general understanding of both community and institutional resources that are offered to support student veterans. Three of the MCC trainings namely, *The Shock Value*, *The Roleplay*, and *Veterans as Assets*, gave faculty local and on-campus resources to have in case they needed to refer a student veteran. For instance, the facilitator in the *Veterans as Assets* training distributed a small booklet of resources, general facts, and tips for faculty. Some of these materials included complete information about where to refer a student who needs a specific service such as on-campus veteran liaison, financial aid for veterans, and hold removal to register a course. If a booklet was not available, trainings such as *The Shock Value* made sure to speak about where to send student veterans if such issues arose:

For our chapter thirty-three students, their tuition and fees are paid in-part or in-full directly to the bursar. As long as the students have turned in their paperwork for the semester and we're aware of that, we are just waiting for the VA to pay them. The bursar office removes holds on their account or releases their loan money to them so that they have the opportunity to have a monthly allowance while they're waiting on the VA. They have money to live on while they're waiting on the VA money to arrive. For our non-chapter thirty-threes, these are students whose tuition and fees are not paid directly to the bursar. As long as they're making their monthly payments on a regular basis when it comes to enrollment time, when everybody is trying to get into the right class, our bursar office will remove the hold. That is, as long as they've been making regular payments even if they still owe money for the semester.

This is important information and allows faculty to reach beyond themselves as a resource and have a general understanding about the complexities of aspects of a veteran identity, such as where and how to get their benefits.

Diversity and Military Culture

In the data collected, diversity was represented through differences in terms of race/ethnicity, gender, academic backgrounds, life experiences, and opinions. All four MCC trainings brought forth a veteran voice to share experiences or insights, with all of them including at least two forms of diversity in the guests and testimonials. Therefore, their guest speakers and facilitators included veterans of color, veterans as first-generation college students, and women veterans in their presentations. As an example, *The Shock Value* training brought in a student veteran who was in the Marine Corps. She spoke to her experience as a woman veteran transitioning from military service to a higher education institution:

Um... you could say there was a little bit of a culture shock there coming back with adjustment time. It wasn't about resources for me, it was about the day to day exchange. As a female veteran what we know is that we're really kind of the ghosts on the campus. So, we don't see a lot of female veterans, we're not really there as far as being like the loud outspoken boys a lot of time. As far as my own personal experience as a female, I've been questioned a lot of times as far as "Are you really a veteran?" because I don't have combat experience. So, my advice is... don't question your student veterans, as far as if they're a veteran. Especially not your female veterans. I don't appreciate that.

Concerning military culture, the trainings educated faculty on the cultural threads that build the veteran character (e.g., Army values: loyalty, duty, respect, service, honor, integrity, courage) and the Military code of justice, and faculty were made aware that each military branch has a primary mission, lexicon, and set of core values. In a few words, the trainings transmitted the complexities that military culture entails. As a case in point, *The Practical Approach* training gave insight on how military culture shapes student veterans and help-seeking behaviors:

It's really hard for us to ask for help. The military culture is based on service, sacrifice and helping or even rescuing others and has historically not valued self-

care or help-seeking behaviors. There's an expectation of "mission accomplished" even at personal cost because of the long-standing cultural bias of reaching out for help. Some veterans view asking for help as a sign of weakness, and it also takes a great level of trust for veterans to allow himself or herself to be vulnerable. Please have patience and don't give up on us.

Specifically, two of the MCC trainings, *Veterans as Assets* and *The Practical Approach*, included information on the Military Code of Justice, dress code standards, interactions with others, the leadership hierarchy and chain of command, and general information about the five branches of the military.

Best Practices

All four of the MCC trainings included best teaching practices to train faculty even though different facilitators adhered to these practices to varying degrees. These best practices aimed to better connect with higher education faculty as the training participants. Common to the four trainings, best practices included: (1) Audience analysis, (2) Up/Dated literature, and (3) An interactive approach.

Audience Analysis

Audience analysis means facilitators adapt their facilitation style, speech, content, time duration, and delivery to participants' level of understanding, jobs, attitudes, beliefs. The ability for training facilitators to understand and mold their facilitation style and content to their audience is imperative. In this instance, awareness of duration of time, distilling complex information, and including clear learning objectives were prevalent practices throughout the trainings.

The time duration of all the respective trainings that were examined in this study is 3.5 hours or less. It is important to note, that there was difficulty in cutting out 3.5 hours of a workday for participants, especially in a face to face context. As a participant

observer, I had to plan three weeks ahead to be able to participate in *The Veterans as Assets* training due to how long the training took and having to be on campus. All other trainings were more manageable in terms of duration of time: *The Shock Value* training was 60 minutes long, *The Roleplay* training was 37 minutes, and *The Practical* training was 21 minutes. This time duration and flexible scheduling option was much more manageable and allowed the training to be completed over lunch breaks, in between classes, and on weekends.

Regarding distilling complex information, as stated in *The Practical* and *Veterans as Assets* trainings, military culture is very complex especially to civilians who have limited knowledge about and no previous experience working with student veterans or the military. Therefore, three out of the four trainings worked to distill information into concise segments and clearly communicated learning objectives. *The Roleplay*, *Veterans as Assets*, and *The Practical Approach* trainings all created participant-friendly presentations in terms of: making PowerPoints easy to read with bulleted text, pictures, infographics, booklets, and making online portions user friendly. As previously stated, *Veterans as Assets* had handouts and booklets to help participants retain information upon completing the training session. These materials allowed for faculty to interact within the training and have readily available access to complex information. For example, during *The Veterans as Assets* training this was seen through participation in Q & A sessions, limited use of cell phones, and discussion segments. Conversely, *The Shock Value* training did not provide many options or material for engagement. The training played a one-hour long video of lecturing by different facilitators. During this training, faculty

participants were instructed to refer student veterans to the respective student veterans' offices for information.

In addition to the ability to distill complex information, *The Practical* and *Veterans as Assets* trainings laid out clear learning objectives both at the beginning and end of the MCC trainings. An example of this is the *Veterans as Assets* training made core competencies for faculty to obtain as the learning objectives which included: (1) Understanding military values and attitudes, (2) Engaging with student veterans one-on-one, (3) Creating a student veteran friendly syllabus, (4) Formalizing respect, (5) Being cognizant of military humor and language as coping mechanisms and psychological buffer, (6) Learning to respond, rather than react, and (7) Practicing privacy and confidentiality. These learning objectives included three to four bullet points under each one of the competencies that included what faculty were going to learn and the skills they were going to practice. *The Roleplay* summarized the situational learning objectives at the end of the training. An example of this includes: (1) Understand that they may have commitments that aren't under their control—like reservist training, deployments, or appointments at the VA—and may need more flexibility than other students, (2) Know what services are available for veterans at your university, (3) Best Referral Option (if available): Veteran Liaison or Veteran Services Office, and (4) Make sure you are referring to the right office by calling first. While these three trainings had different structures to their learning objectives, these structures allowed participants to understand the importance of what they were learning and to summarize what they learned at the end of the training.

Up/Dated Literature

The use of current literature in MCC trainings is important, as it connects faculty with the truths and ideas of the student veteran. The literature that was chosen to build each training varied in terms of dates. As a result, this aspect influenced messaging and perspectives that were interwoven throughout the different MCC trainings. Two of the MCC trainings, *Shock Value* and *The Roleplay*, used dated information and strategies, which resulted in the use of non-inclusive terminology, antiquated practices, and deficit perspectives. On the other hand, the other two trainings, *Veterans as Assets* and *The Practical Approach*, were using current literature and had more of an assets-based perspective (e.g., using proper and inclusive terminology).

In terms of dated literature and incorrect terminology, most of the examples encompassed labels for veterans, such as referring to women veterans as females, “*Some might not all be males, there are females. We’ll hear from a female student veteran, so there is a varying spectrum*” (*The Shock Value*). The term “female veteran” has a negative connotation in military culture, as its often used in a demeaning way. Another example related to positioning student veterans as generally underprepared to enter a college classroom, as a victim or helpless, or in a deficit perspective. An example of this is when *The Roleplay* training positioned veterans as lacking academic readiness, “*They haven’t been in school for eight years. I mean, they have all of this life experience, but, at the same time, they’ve forgotten how to study for exams.*” On the contrary, *The Practical Approach* and *Veterans as Assets* MCC trainings explained that while a lack of academic preparedness may be true for some student veterans, this generalization does not apply to all. While in the military, service members continuously find themselves in learning

environments and are consistently trained in different skills, trades, and global issues (e.g., study/test taking, writing reports, living abroad, engineering, and medical support to name a few). Specifically, The *Veterans as Assets* training stated that “*Veterans bring a wealth of experience in leadership, administration, and diplomacy to the classroom. Veterans are exceptionally motivated and bring a diversity of perspectives to the classroom.*”

Interactive Approach

Any training that takes on an interactive approach works to center participants in their own learning experience; this type of approach can take the form of simulations, scenarios, role playing, quizzes or games. Based on the variety of the trainings being examined, three of the four training models included some of these aspects. In terms of the *Veterans as Assets* training, there was a face-to-face component allowing participants to ask questions in real time, reflect with peers, and hold critical face-to-face discussion. Of the trainings that were examined, *Veterans as Assets* was the most interactive of the four. The training was organized in different modules with learning objectives specific to each module and implemented frequent learning check points (quizzes), scenarios, Q&A sessions, and discussion. Such interactive approaches ensured participants’ attention was captured and allowed for knowledge construction through social interactions. This was seen through minimum use of cell phones, not allowing trainees to continue to a next section until passing the learning check point, and providing immediate answers to hypothetical questions (e.g., *what if...* ” or “*what happens when...* ”) asked by participants.

True to its name, *The Roleplay* training required active participation and performance from the audience and ensured engagement. Role-play scenarios allowed for different outcomes based on decisions that participants made when interacting with student veteran avatars. When participating within these role-playing activities, it was critical that participants paid attention to the scenario and previous information that they had received, or else the exercise would continue until they made the correct decisions. There was also an option to ask questions in a chat box to an online assistant when further information on a topic was needed. It is also important to note that both the *Veterans as Assets* and *The Roleplay* trainings kept the certificate of completion locked until all portions of the training were completed. Unless the faculty actively participated in the training, they would not get the certificate of completion.

On the contrary, in the other two trainings, *The Practical Approach* and *The Shock Value*, the facilitator and guest speakers would only lecture, read off the PowerPoint, and not have any type of reflective discussion or learning check points. These trainings were offered online with no way of ensuring participants were actively engaged, meaning participants could just play the video in the background and do other work. Furthermore, *The Shock Value* training had a live online link form available to participants to fill out and submit with no mechanism to ensure that the training was completed or taken at all.

Challenges and Tensions

Looking closely at the four MCC trainings it became evident that training faculty to work with student veterans can be influenced by different aspects such as their perspectives, behavior, reactions, political affiliation, knowledge of the topic, readiness,

and motivation to participate in training, and media portrayals. Therefore, challenges and tensions were grouped into three categories: (1) Shock value statements, (2) Deficit approach, and (3) Misinformation and fluff.

Shock Value Statements

Shock value statements look to elicit strong emotional reactions; if done incorrectly this practice can result in negative or upsetting feelings, and the objective is not accomplished. To clarify, the intent of shock value statements is to snap participants to attention, awaken critical thought, move participants to a discomfort zone, and walk them through in a supportive way. Three of the MCC trainings practiced this strategy. While the purpose of some of the shock value statements within the trainings remain unclear, they did result in negative emotional and physical reactions from the participants. In some cases, this practice achieved the opposite of what good training techniques should do. Shock value statements caused disengagement, indirectly positioned veterans in a deviant light, turned off participants from learning, and the strategy did not come full circle (e.g., presentation, emotion, reflection, resolution, and support). For example, within the first five minutes of *The Shock Value* training, the presenter had spoken about friendly firing, killing women and children, and veterans watching their own die as part of the experiences they had been through:

I am just going to list some of the things that your students might have witnessed or experienced. Multi-causality incidents such as IEDS or ambushes, you go through something like that when somebody is trying to take your life with your buddies, and it can be pretty traumatic. Some will be involved in friendly fire incidents these are far and few between, but they do happen. They may witness the death or even maiming of children and women civilians, innocent civilian, they see those kinds of things.

After providing the statement above, the facilitator did not provide any support for participants to digest the information. The participants remained in the uncomfortable zone mentally, which was felt through tension, and physically, which was evident through tense facial expressions, with no opportunity to discuss and reflect with others. There was not a discussion on lessons learned or on how to apply the knowledge presented.

In another training, *Veterans as Assets*, the facilitator started the training by displaying an unpleasant picture of a war scene without warning the participants and said: “This is what some veterans experienced while in service.” As a result, some of the faculty in the room gasped and there were different reactions out loud: “That’s so inappropriate!” “Why would you share this without warning?” “Where I come from you need to warn people before doing this!” One of the participants immediately left the room and did not come back to the training until forty-five minutes had gone by. The facilitator promised that next time they would provide a “graphic content warning” on the slide show before showing the picture, and the training continued.

Deficit Approach

Facilitation and training content that take on a deficit-based approach emphasizes failure, helplessness, and low expectations. Varying degrees of a deficit approach were evident within *The Shock Value* and *The Roleplay* trainings in terms of situating student veterans in negative and victim perspectives.

In *The Roleplay* training, faculty were placed in a role of saviors and the student veteran as helpless and as failing to adapt. The role-playing scenarios were prerecorded and did not account for human emotion, outside stressors, and reaction time. Because of

this, faculty were given a false sense of preparedness to successfully resolve conflict since all scenarios portrayed faculty as power holders. As a result, the scenarios did not provide space for critical self-examination or for thinking of negative outcomes, nor did they attribute any agency to student veterans. In addition, most of the scenarios presented the veteran as victims and as dependent on faculty to succeed. This created odd narratives that indirectly victimized student veterans and positioned the faculty avatar as controllers of the narrative. For example, faculty had the power of referring the learners to student support services often associated with a negative stigma. In this example, the faculty was able to refer the student veteran smoothly without feeling any reaction with such a referral. In real life, these interactions may not happen with such effortlessness, as *The Quick and Clear* suggested, there is resistance to help-seeking behaviors.

Furthermore, there were talking points that positioned student veterans as the wounded warrior, which is associated with dependency on caregivers. For instance, the facilitator in *The Shock Value* training stated:

There is one student here who switched places with his buddy on a convoy. His name is [name of veteran], he's the president of the Student Veterans Association. You know, had they not switched places, he wouldn't be here today. It is because it was his buddy's vehicle that got hit. ...That is something that he is even dealing with now...

The presenter did not state whether the student had given permission to use his name and share his story. The narrative essentialized the student veteran's experience in a way that he might not agree with. This story provided personal and sensitive information shared by a third party. The student was not present to decide what he wanted to share. Now the faculty know his name, and this story may influence their relationship in the classroom.

Misleading Information and Fluff

Two of the trainings, *The Shock Value* and *The Roleplay*, presented misleading information that either hurt the student veteran community or misled faculty into a false sense of preparedness. In addition, *The Shock Value* training had sections of the training in which presenters added in fluff information that did not enhance either the training or further the feeling of preparedness from the participants. Instead, the fluff took up valuable time and often distracted from the training itself.

The Shock Value training had six different presenters come in for an hour-long session. Having six presenters trying to present information in an hour, pushed presenters to deliver complex information in an over simplified way. This training began with the facilitator saying that:

...We do have issues with military folks coming back with these traumatic brain injuries... They are coming back into our classroom environments and struggling. Almost 20% of our veterans returning to school have PTSD. My instinct is that it's a little higher now.

The presenter associated brain injuries and PTSD with struggles to succeed in the classroom. They also failed to recognize the stigma involved in labeling student veterans with this mental health condition. These important data support the need for faculty to obtain training and additional support to understand how these health conditions can affect learning and how they can support these students. Another example of giving misleading information was during *The Roleplay* training in which the training covered how faculty should manage difficult classroom discussion regarding political conflict or international relations issues. The training gives an example of how faculty could navigate the classroom; the issue that arises is that it gives a predetermined simulation and solution with no external factors. In other words, it is overly simplistic and does not

account for aspects such as human emotions, other student input, or student veterans not wanting to be part of the conversation. It misleads faculty into believing that all they need to do to manage classroom discussion is open up the floor to let all voices be heard.

As might be expected when having six presenters lecturing in such a short period, time management was poorly executed in *The Shock Value* training, leading to fluff information being added. Four of the six presenters repeated multiple points that previous presenters had given, and often went off topic. For instance, one speaker associated winning lottery tickets to the fight or flight feeling student veterans have when stressed from experiencing combat in the military,

Now let me tell you something about change; change induces stress. I've got a lottery ticket on the dashboard of my car and if I win the lottery, I'll be the proud owner of two hundred and sixty-two million dollars. I will have so much money that I could spend the rest of my life lighting my cigars with twenty-dollar bills, and I wouldn't even care. But at the same time, I got the news, my body would begin to move blood to my extremities to my core there would be an increase in my blood pressure and increase in my heart rate there would be at that moment in time a massive jolt of adrenaline.

There was a limited connection to what this story was supposed to offer to training participants in terms of how stress affects student veterans.

Discussion

This article described four MCC trainings currently available for university faculty. It identified prevalent characteristics of the trainings as well as best practices to inform the reader. In addition, this article recognized challenges and tensions present in delivering the trainings.

Designing and Offering MCC Trainings

Regarding the four MCC trainings, there were different approaches as to how they were designed and offered to prepare faculty to work with student veterans inside the

classroom. Bonura and Lovald (2015) argued that faculty must gain a holistic familiarity with student veteran military experiences to include knowledge of basic organizational and leadership structure of the military, active duty service members, military family members, support needs, military culture, and student veteran identities. *The Practical training* and *Veterans as Assets* included all aspects of the core competencies that Bonura and Lovald (2015) determined to be important. *The Roleplay* included portions of support needs, military culture, and student veteran identities, and *The Shock Value* was even more limited in offering information in those areas.

When examining how the content was designed for these trainings, it was important to keep in mind how new skills acquisition was measured, if there were critical discussion, question and answer periods, and completion checks prior to obtaining a certificate. These are aspects of professional development trainings that Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) deemed to be critical when offering successful professional development training. Each of the trainings varied in degrees of providing such aspects in their program design, but *Veterans as Assets* included all of them, ensuring engaged faculty participants, ability to measure knowledge growth, and properly preparing their faculty to work with student veterans. Other trainings such as *The Shock Value* did not offer any of these aspects, which is a disservice to the faculty participants.

Prevalent Characteristics of MCC Trainings

Prevalent characteristics of current MCC trainings included, (1) having an assets-based approach, (2) presenting informed solutions, and (3) the inclusion of diversity and military culture. These characteristics were also found to align with the theoretical framework, Veteran Critical Theory (VCT) tenets (Phillips & Lincoln, 2017).

First, MCC trainings taking on an assets-based approach. VCT affirms that veterans are victims of deficit thinking in higher education. Two of the four trainings, *The Practical* and *Veterans as Assets*, worked to ensure an assets-based approach was taken in order to work against the deficit perspective in higher education. This assets-based training allowed for faculty to better understand the strengths student veterans bring to the classroom and the attributes military culture contributes to their civilian success.

Second, different trainings worked to present informed solutions through veteran voices and veteran research to ready faculty to work with the student veteran community. This characteristic is reflected in the eighth VCT tenet, “veterans are more appropriately positioned to inform best practice regarding veterans” (Phillips & Lincoln, 2017, p. 10). In different trainings veteran testimonies were presented to give faculty an insight on solutions of how to interact with this community, how to support them, and how to teach them. This was achieved because veterans were put in a position to inform both the training and faculty.

Third, all trainings included a diverse student veteran population representation and military culture. This characteristic coincides with the sixth tenet of VCT, “veterans experience multiple identities at once”, and the eleventh tenet, “veteran culture is built on a culture of respect, honor, and trust,” (Phillips & Lincoln, 2017, p. 11). How this characteristic aligns with VCT was evident through the inclusion of veterans of color, women veterans, and first-generation veterans. In addition, all trainings spoke to how the military culture shaped student veteran identities to varying degrees. Through including a diverse group of veterans, faculty were able to reflect on their own perspectives and gain valuable insight on a diverse set of experiences.

Best Practices Designing and Delivering MCC Trainings

Best practices designing and delivering MCC trainings included: (1) audience analysis, (2) up/dated literature, and (3) an interactive approach. These three characteristics reflect some of the best practices for training in the adult literature (Brookfield, 2013; Cross, 2004; Galbraith, 1999).

First, the practice of audience analysis was evident when designing and delivering these MCC trainings. Facilitators had to work to understand who their audience was, and then mold the trainings accordingly. Galbraith (1999) stated that training faculty should encompass such aspects including critical discussions, learning check points, and offering resources to set the degree of training difficulty high enough to challenge participants but not to frustrate them. These aspects were included in *Veterans as Assets* and *The Roleplay*. Another example was through the different role-playing scenarios and the practice of decision making in situations faculty specifically find themselves in, a concept that Brookfield (2013) included in best practices to assist training adult learner participants.

Second, the use of up/dated literature. While there is limited literature available around this characteristic of the study findings, both Galbraith (1999) and Cross (2004) speak to the topic of allowing participants to partake in a meaningful education experience. *The Shock Value* and *The Roleplay* did not incorporate updated literature, resulting in an education experience that might not be as meaningful compared to the faculty that participated in *Veterans as Assets* and *The Practical*.

Third, an interactive approach. Based on which training a participant would choose to take, the level of interaction varies. This type of interaction included role-

playing, scenarios, facilitator interaction, and learning check points. This characteristic reflects Judd and Marcum's (2017) methods for a facilitator's role in a training as "the guide on the side" or "the meddler in the middle," (p. 135). Different trainings either took on the "guide on the side", such as *Veterans as Assets* and *The Practical*, or "the meddler in the middle," as a style of facilitation *The Roleplay* turned to through equalizing the facilitator and the participants' roles.

Challenges and Tensions of MCC Trainings

Study findings brought forth three challenges and tensions. These are: (1) shock value statements, (2) deficit approach, and (3) misleading information and fluff. These findings are in direct contradiction with the available literature on best practices teaching adult learners (Brookfield, 2013; Cross, 2004; Galbriath, 1999) and MCC training characteristics (Atuel & Castro, 2018; Blaauw-Hara, 2016; Bonura & Lovald, 2015). In addition, these challenges and tensions reflect a disconnect when examined in light of VCT (Phillips & Lincoln, 2017).

First, the use of shock value statements often had an adverse effect on the participants than was the likely intention. This category fell in line with the seventh tenet, "veteran identity is constructed by civilians, often as deviant characters," (Phillips & Lincoln, 2017, p. 7). This was evident through *The Shock Value* and *The Roleplay* training in which stories of the student veterans ended up casting a negative and deviant light on their community. There was also evidence of veterans being essentialized in the narrative. This aspect aligns with the tenth tenet in VCT, "veterans cannot be essentialized," (p.7). This was reflected through *The Shock Value* presenting a majority of the testimonies and narrative through a combat veteran experience, likely setting a

precedence that all veterans must have the attribute of combat experience. Such statements also did not allow there to be a friendly and open atmosphere that allowed participants to partake in learning (Cross, 2004; Galbraith, 1999). The lack of ability to create this type of atmosphere was due the level of severity of the different statements the made by the facilitator in *The Shock Value* training. Talking about traumatic war injuries, losing friends, and explosions creates a tense atmosphere.

Second, two of the four trainings took on a deficit approach. Blaauw-Hara (2016) explained that MCC training programs are often created with a deficit perspective, focusing on potential problems that the veterans might have rather than on their strengths. This also once again aligns with the VCT assertion that veterans are victims of deficit thinking in higher education. It was evident through the data that both *The Shock Value* and *The Roleplay*, that student veterans were being highlighted in a deficit perspective. This was apparent through role playing scenarios that portrayed student veterans as helpless and dependent, and the use of shock statements that spoke to horrible and negative life changing experiences student veterans had experienced during their time in their service. While there are instances of these situations occurring, when deficit scenarios are the only ones portrayed, there is not an opportunity for other narratives to be expressed that represent the whole of the veteran student community. This limiting approach can lead to essentializing all veterans in particular ways.

Third, misleading information and fluff were prevalent in some of the trainings. This category was evident in *The Shock Value* and *The Roleplay* training leaving participants unable to see the benefit of how the content that was being delivered in the training could accurately translate into the classrooms. This allowed for the possibility of

hindering their motivation to learn (Galbraith, 1999.) If faculty lose motivation to learn, the training is then counterproductive.

Implications

The present article focused on describing MCC trainings available for universities and faculty interested in such trainings. Data on how faculty applied the training, or their perspectives were not collected; a future study will be conducted to address this gap (article 3 of this dissertation). Thus, this section presents implications relevant to universities and facilitators of MCC trainings.

Implications for Universities

Prevalent characteristics of MCC trainings that emerged from the study indicate that universities must become cognizant of the diversity within student veteran communities (e.g., first generation, women veterans, veterans of color, LGBTQIA veterans). Universities must work to provide faculty with assets-based, interactive, MCC trainings that represent a diverse set of student veteran voices and identities to ready faculty to teach and offer them the needed learning support. In addition, universities labeled as *veteran friendly* or *military embracing* must adhere to the regulations established to qualify them as such, which includes mandating MCC training for faculty, staff, and leadership officials. Pertaining to these regulations, President Barack Obama instituted Executive Order 13607 which established principles for educational institutions serving servicemembers and their family members. The application of this policy intends to ensure that colleges recruiting veterans institute adequate support systems to provide quality education to this student body.

Facilitators of MCC Trainings

When implementing an MCC training, military culture should be a central topic of discussion. The culture in which veterans often build their identities and perspectives plays a pivotal role in how they navigate higher education systems. Regarding MCC training content, difficult topics such as military culture, PTSD, academic readiness, and combat experiences were addressed in the four trainings described in this article. Training facilitators should discuss these topics with care so that student veterans' experiences are presented as assets to the classroom environment. Furthermore, it is important for any MCC training to fall in line with the current literature and research. Likewise, these trainings should be treated as a *living document* and not as static knowledge to continually update them. Research on student veterans, their transition coming back to college, support needs, and best practices will continue to evolve, and MCC trainings must reflect this evolution.

Study Contributions

This study has contributed to four fronts revolving around design and implementation of MCC trainings. First, the findings addressed a gap in literature that speaks to best practices and prevalent characteristics of MCC trainings. The article highlights challenges and tensions related to the content, implementation, and delivery of trainings. Second, study findings established connections between VCT, adult learning, and faculty professional development. It became evident that the success of the trainings required these three areas of knowledge to interact and overlap. Third, the article fills a gap in the literature documenting existent MCC trainings and the different platforms they utilize. These findings will allow universities and faculty to make informed decisions on

what training fits best with their professional development needs and the culture of place particular to each institution. Fourth, this study has identified prevalent characteristics and best practices for facilitators to build on when training faculty to interact and support student veterans. For instance, study findings highlight the possibility of designing and delivering MCC trainings that present the student veteran as an asset to the classroom.

Conclusion

The main goal of the article was to examine MCC trainings available for universities and faculty to document prevalent characteristics, best practices, and challenges in designing and delivering these trainings. This goal was accomplished through a multilayer qualitative case study which produced findings applicable to higher education settings enrolling student veterans on their campuses. As the number of student veterans continue to increase, higher education and faculty must continue to prepare to support this community of students. This article provides insights on the numerous possibilities for getting adequate training to continue to offer better services to students.

III. FACULTY EXPERIENCES TEACHING STUDENT VETERANS

We need to move away from the idea that cultural competency is just about race, gender, and ethnicity. The term envelopes much more, like veteran or disability status. It's time for institutions to wake up. Information about military cultural memberships is critical for the variety of roles new faculty members fulfill within an institution. It is time we are mindful of the privilege that is sometimes projected when asking questions or interacting with student veterans. Training is a good start. (LaToya, Study Participant).

This vignette comes from an interview conducted with a study participant on how she views the importance of being culturally competent regarding student veterans and their military service. Thus, this chapter examines faculty perspectives and experiences teaching student veterans. With 98% of higher education institutions reporting to enroll student veterans (Queen et al., 2014), university faculty are expected to be prepared to support this student community. Since the inception of the Post 9/11 G.I. Bill, 5.2 million student veterans have enrolled in a post-secondary degree program (PNPI, 2019). A number that is becoming hard for institutions to look past in terms of providing support services, like MCC training for faculty. While this number continues to grow, 66% of higher education institutions are failing to provide any type of professional development training to ready faculty and better inform their perspective towards teaching student veterans (O'Herinn, 2012). This lack of training opportunity is a disservice not only to faculty members, but also to student veterans who chose to spend their earned educational benefits at these institutions. A deficiency in faculty readiness is evident as Albright and Bryan (2018, p. 4) found: (a) 44% of faculty are not prepared/knowledgeable about common challenges student veterans face, (b) 75% of faculty are not prepared to approach student veterans to discuss concerns about classroom interactions, and (c) 70% of faculty do not feel prepared to recognize when a student

veteran is exhibiting signs of stress. This limited MCC training opportunity results in lack of military cultural awareness and best practices for faculty teaching student veterans.

Research on faculty perspectives working with student veterans highlights two significant issues: Faculty have reported feeling underprepared to work with these students, and student veterans' experiences in the classroom are influenced by faculty perspectives of this student body (Barnard-Brak et al., 2011; Doe, 2013; Gonzalez & Elliott, 2013; Kirschner, 2015; Patillo, 2008; Vacchi, 2015). Furthermore, Morrow and Hart (2014) linked negative faculty perspectives towards student veterans to faculty's limited proximity to military culture, service, and understanding of student veteran classroom support needs. These types of issues create a ripple effect that ultimately have the most negative impact on the student veteran themselves. With student veterans identifying positive faculty interactions as the key to their degree attainment (Lighthall, 2012), faculty's limited preparation and professional development training opportunities combined with negative perspectives of student veterans severely impacts their degree success.

A solution that is continuously presented to better inform these negative perspectives and increase faculty job competency teaching student veterans is implementing MCC trainings for faculty to participate in. As Gonzalez and Elliott (2013) and Vacchi (2015) stated, there is a call for faculty to understand the unique identity and needs of student veterans. This type of mission must have both institutional and faculty support to be successful. Heeding this call, 94% of faculty specified that higher education institutions should offer an opportunity for this type of training to be completed (Albright

& Bryan, 2018). Understanding what the actual experiences are that faculty have participating in these trainings have yet to be determined.

While implementing an MCC training may be the critical solution to ready educators and better inform their perspectives, there is a gap in research in determining faculty perspective teaching student veterans and the actual experiences faculty have participating in MCC trainings. Therefore, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are university faculty perspectives teaching student veterans?
2. What are university faculty experiences in light of participating in a military connected competency training?

Theoretical Framework

The research study presented in this chapter builds on constructionism (Crotty, 2005; Shadish, 1995) and veteran critical theory (Phillips & Lincoln, 2017) to examine the experiences and perspectives of university faculty regarding the student veterans they teach. Shadish (1995, p. 67) explained that social constructionism relates to constructing knowledge about reality not constructing reality itself. To this end, Crotty (2005) stated, “knowledge is not discovered but constructed – meaning it does not inhere in the object, merely waiting for someone to come upon it” (p. 42). From this point of view, reality does not have one truth; everyone has their own description of reality based on their lived experiences. There are as many versions of reality as people living these experiences. In addition, reality is also constructed through group interaction. The interactions between individuals within a society is central to constructionism (Schwandt, 2003). This lens serves to examine multiple realities constructed by faculty and the implications of those

constructions in their professional lives and interactions with colleagues and students. Learning is a never-ending process and individuals create their own meaning based on their realities. Reality is a social construct, but at the same time it can be impacted by the subjective experiences of each individual (Hammersley, 1992).

Table 2

VCT Framework (Phillips & Lincoln, 2017)

Veteran Critical Theory Tenets
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Structures, policies, and processes privilege civilians over veterans. 2. Veterans experience various forms of oppression and marginalization including microaggressions. 3. Veterans are victim of deficit thinking in higher education. 4. Veterans occupy a third space (country) on the border of multiple conflicting and interactive power structures, language, and systems. 5. VCT values narratives and counter narratives of veterans. 6. Veterans experience multiple identities are once. 7. Veterans identity is constructed (written) by civilians, often as a deviant character. 8. Veterans are more appropriately positioned to inform policy and practice regarding veterans. 9. Some services advertised to serve veterans are ultimately serving civilian interests. 10. Veterans cannot be essentialized. 11. Veteran culture is built on a culture of respect, honor, and trust.

As explained by Phillips and Lincoln (2017), veteran critical theory (VCT) (see Table 2) framework describes relevant ways of gaining knowledge about the circumstances and characteristics of student veterans. The VCT framework serves different purposes: (a) broaden the scope of research on student veterans, (b) assist faculty in gaining sensitivity and awareness of the student veteran experience, and (c)

inform support services and faculty professional training. The VCT framework works as a blueprint to examine the data collected for the study, the research journal, and observations regarding the content and delivery of these trainings.

Regarding this study, in examining the perspectives of university faculty, the goal was to document their experiences teaching student veterans and their perspectives towards this population and their learning needs. In addition, asking these university faculty members to complete an MCC training intended to trigger their memory and allow the researcher to document their experiences and perspectives teaching these students.

The Student Veteran

As of 2017, there were 5.2 million student veterans enrolled in undergraduate or associate degree programs, and within the next three years, that number continued to exponentially increase (PNPI, 2019). As it is clear that this community of students is a large one, it is important to give an overview of the general characteristics student veterans identify with.

Student veterans are situated within the realm of adult learners, as 75% of them are over the age of 24, 50% have children (Pattillo, 2011), and many face a multitude of barriers persisting towards their degrees; such issues are identity re-negotiation and role incongruities (Norman, et al, 2015; Rumann, & Hamrick, 2010). Of the total number of student veterans, 62% are first generation, and 31% of the total population are students of color (PNPI, 2019). These demographics highlight the intersectionality of identities that the student veteran population encompass and the complexity of preparing faculty to support these students.

While student veterans face unique barriers, have specific needs, and require a certain level of support services, they also bring strengths to higher education classrooms. As Lighthall (2012) stated, student veterans are “one of America’s greatest untapped resources,” (p. 88). This community of student’s strengths include drive/grit, respect and honor, an enriched understanding of the world and its citizens, and ability to both lead and follow. These strengths are the pillars that much of the military culture stands on. In many ways, student veterans are considered the ideal college student by successfully incorporating the above strengths stemming from the military environment and its culture and bringing it into higher education institutions (Bagby et al., 2015).

While these strengths certainly add to a student veterans’ ability to be successful on the college campus, student veterans view their success in a sense beyond themselves (Blaauw-Hara, 2016). The American Council on Education (2011) found that when asked what success in college meant to them, student veterans said success goes beyond grade point average; identifying positive faculty engagement as one of the major contributors to their degree attainment success. Lighthall (2012) reinforces these findings, further highlighting the role faculty play in student veteran success, stating that a supportive and informed faculty is key to student veteran persistence. With faculty holding one of the major key components to a student veterans’ degree completion, ensuring faculty are knowledgeable and prepared to teach student veterans is vital.

Despite student veterans voicing their need to interact with faculty, research has shown that there is limited opportunity to prepare faculty to foster such relationships (Queen et al., 2014). Often the training that is available for faculty has a deficit focus. Trainings primarily focuses on specific components of some veterans’ identities (e.g.,

White, male) and do not fully represent the culture that helped mold them into the people they are today (Blaauw-Hare, 2016; Vaachi, 2012). It is evident that institutions must implement a holistic, assets based MCC training to help better inform and ready faculty to teach student veterans.

Faculty Role

There is a call for educators to understand the unique needs of student veterans (Gonzalez & Elliott, 2013; Vacchi, 2012; Vacchi, 2015). In the Kognito study, Albright and Bryan (2018) reported that 95% of faculty acknowledged their responsibility to create supportive environments for student populations, and 94% of those faculty specified that institutions should offer some type of military connected competency training. Unfortunately, institutions are not doing enough to raise faculty sensitivity to work with student veterans and lag in providing professional development for their instructors (Sander, 2012). In addition, one half of instructor's interviewed by Gonzalez and Elliott (2013) reported being both unwilling to attend any faculty development programming related to student veterans and being resistant to changing teaching styles to support these students. This set of study participants also rejected the notion that student veterans feel alienated on college campuses based on their interactions with the faculty. Even though in the literature the faculty acknowledged their responsibility towards educating all students, when it came to being prepared to work with student veterans, many expect the institutions to provide such training, but faculty seem unwilling to participate.

Only one third of the nation's institutions offer some type of resources and training to prepare faculty to work with student veterans (O'Herinn, 2012). This limited

opportunity to even participate in an MCC training can result in lack of preparation to support student veterans. This lack of preparation impacts faculty's negative perspectives of student veterans and negatively impact student veterans' success inside the classroom (Elliott et al., 2011; Fernandez et al., 2019). This gap became evident through faculty self-reporting a lack of awareness of challenges faced by student veterans (Hoon Lim et al., 2018; Sander, 2012). This lack of preparation is further exemplified in the Albright and Bryan (2018, p. 4) study: (1) 44% of faculty are not prepared/knowledgeable about common challenges student veterans face, (2) 75% of faculty are not prepared to approach student veterans to discuss concerns about classroom interactions, and (3) 70% of faculty do not feel prepared to recognize when a student veteran is exhibiting signs of stress.

Faculty have limited familiarity with student veterans, military environments, and military culture (Gonzalez & Elliott, 2016). Research found that the closer in proximity and the more familiar a faculty member is with student veterans, the more likely they are to hold positive perspectives of these students and the more willing they will be to work with them (Gonzalez & Elliott, 2016; Morrow & Hart, 2014). What is missing from these findings is how proximity to the military plays a role in faculty being prepared to support student veterans. Limited familiarity with military culture plays a central role in a faculty member's ability to be accommodating of student veteran learning needs (Gonzalez & Elliott, 2013) and further deepens the military-civilian divide (Gonzalez & Elliott, 2016; Sander, 2012). Gaining understanding about military culture appears to be a determining factor in faculty decision to participate in training and adapt their teaching style to also include student veteran learning needs.

Implementing professional development opportunities for educators is recognized as a vital component to heighten the quality of teaching and support practices for faculty within higher education institutions (Ingvarson et al., 2005). Furthermore, professional development programs geared towards higher education faculty often work to make explicit connections between their daily experience in the classroom and the new skills acquired (Haviland & Rodriguez-Kiino, 2009). Often, faculty participate in training and continue with their day-to-day teaching activities, but it is difficult to document how they are utilizing what they learned in training. To this effect, Haviland and Rodriguez-Kiino (2009) propose a logic model (see Figure 4) to document the impact that training may have on faculty professional development.

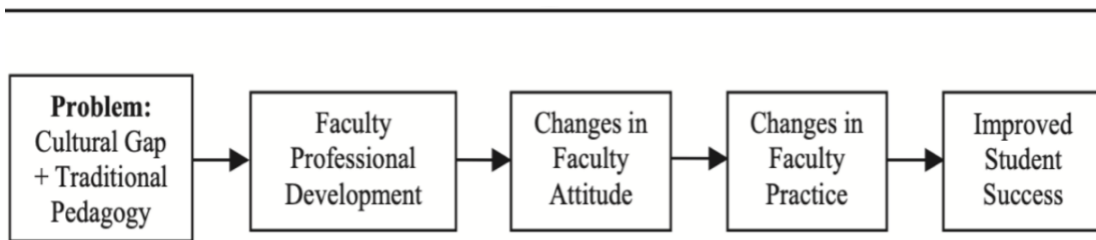


Figure 4. Haviland and Rodriguez-Kiino (2009) PD Impact Model

This model proposes an interesting sequence, but it calls for further consideration to make sure that the context and reality of a university professor job duties and the learning needs of the students are taken in consideration. There are a few assumptions that need to be addressed when utilizing this model. First, there is an assumption that faculty have the time and institutional support necessary to make and hold substantial changes to their curricula (Haviland & Rodriguez-Kiino, 2009, p. 201). In other words, the faculty today have to wear multiple hats and face many work demands. Therefore, the ability to fully devote themselves to increase their cultural competencies to the point

where there is pedagogical innovation is an aspect that must be considered (Gorski, 2008).

In terms of the model, Haviland and Rodriguez-Kiino (2009) determine that for this model to be substantiated, the MCC training would need to influence faculty attitudes through raising awareness of the military culture knowledge gap. Then, in an ideal situation, once faculty understand the gap, the training would influence their attitude and promote an appreciation for cultural competency and responsibility. Once these changes in attitude happen, Haviland and Rodriguez-Kiino assume it would prompt a change in practice, which in return would lead to greater student learning and success (p. 202). It is important to note that when applying the model to their research, Haviland and Rodriguez-Kiino realized that even though the training influenced faculty attitudes, it was too soon to determine major changes in faculty practice. Participants in the Haviland and Rodriguez-Kiino's (2009) study reported that while their attitudes might have changed, it was unlikely that any changes in their best practices would follow that path (p. 209).

Figure 4 illustrates a possible positive impact that training, such as an MCC training, could have on faculty perspective (attitude), job competency (teaching practice), and positive faculty and student veteran interactions (student success). The ability for faculty to take what is learned in these professional development trainings and apply it inside their classroom settings is the critical component. The only way that faculty praxis will change is through intensive involvement and belief that a training is beneficial to them and their work. Keehn and Martinez (2012, p. 24) state that if intensive involvement does occur, it will result in clear articulation in the learned practices, enhanced awareness

of the importance of the topic, and in faculty changing current practices to informed best practices.

As the landscape of higher education continues to evolve, professional development opportunities are imperative to ensure educators are up to date on best practices for student communities. “A faculty development plan is required in order to optimize the overall quality of education that is ultimately delivered” (Al-Ghamdi & Tight, 2013, p. 83), as the authors equate high quality faculty to higher quality research and teaching, which produces better graduates who contribute to the development of the community. Implementing MCC training opportunities and creating spaces for faculty to engage in dialogue and praxis will support faculty in their work with a growing student veteran community.

Instrumental Case Study

A case study methodology allows for reflection on human experiences (Merriam, 2009). In particular, this chapter presents an *instrumental case study* to capture the deeper experiences of the participants using specific data collection instruments (Patton, 2002; Stake, 2006), completing a Q-sort exercise and an MCC training in this case. Therefore, the focus of the case study is on the faculty experiences and perspectives rather than on the instrument used to generate the data for the study. As explained by Stake (1995), case study here is instrumental to accomplish something else rather than focus on assessing the MCC training. In particular, the PsychArmor Training was selected to serve as a catalyst to examine the faculty collective subjective opinion and experiences on the topic at hand.

Patton (2002) further explains that the *instrumental case study* approach aims to generate findings that can be used to inform changes in practices, programs. For this dissertation, a concourse of 23 items (Q-set) was designed based on existent literature regarding faculty perspectives, their experiences teaching student veterans, and literature on student veterans' experiences in higher education. This Q-set as well as an MCC training selected by the researcher served as instruments to document university faculty perspectives and experiences teaching student veterans. Completing the Q-Sort exercise and the online MCC training aimed to trigger the participant's recollections about their experiences and subjective viewpoints teaching student veterans.

MCC Training

The previous chapter presented the landscape of MCC trainings at the national level. However, for the present chapter the study participants completed only 1 MCC training. The virtual MCC training used in this study is named "15 Things Every Veteran Wants You to Know" and it is owned by PsychArmor. This training was chosen because it is available free of cost, fully online, and asynchronous allowing it to fit the participants' individual schedules. Participants were able to access the training through a website that I sent via email. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the data collection process took place through different communication methods and virtual platforms. The logistics to make a group of faculty members from different states and universities attend face-to-face training was almost impossible. This virtual MCC training allowed for easy access when the participants schedule allowed for them to complete this task.

This virtual MCC training is created and facilitated by veterans, with input from civilians being limited. It is considered a well-rounded training video currently available,

as it strictly focuses on military cultural competency in an assets-based way. It is commercially available, free of charge, and lasts 21 minutes. See Appendix F for a transcript describing the training step-by-step. The goal of this training is for participants to gain an understanding of military culture and how it can influence student veteran behaviors within the classroom. The training aims to humanize the student veteran experience to help participants understand that all experiences are different and do not have to be negative. The training uses testimonies to reinforce the points being made with the goal of eradicating negative stereotypes (e.g., every veteran has killed someone, all student veterans suffer from PTSD, all student veterans have seen combat). From this point of view, it is user friendly by giving enough context and relevant information to the faculty. In addition, it provides a list of communication strategies to implement while interacting and teaching student veterans.

Participants

For the present study, criterion-i sampling was used “to identify and select all cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance” (Palinka et al., 2015, p. 535). The pre-selection criteria to participate in the study included: (1) having served as a faculty, adjunct faculty or lecturer with a military connection or with experience teaching student veterans, (2) educator at a four-year public or private institution, and (3) willing to complete a MCC training within the study. This participant criteria were determined as all participants are post-secondary educators and are likely to come into contact with student veterans within the college classroom. In addition, snowball sampling was utilized (Patton, 2002) as it allowed for the ability to recruit the desired number of participants.

Ten faculty members, seven females and three males, working at different universities in four states (Texas, Kentucky, Washington DC, and North Carolina) volunteered to participate in the study (see Table 4).

Table 4

Study Participant Description

Participant	Position	Degree	Experience	Military Connected
Maria	Lecturer	Master's	16 years	Father & Spouse
Peter	Lecturer	Master's	12 years	Son & Brother-in-Law
Elisa	Full Professor	Ph.D.	14 years	No (Student Veterans)
Seth	Associate Professor	Ph.D.	16 years	Father & Uncle
Kate	Lecturer	Master's	5 years	Veteran (Navy)
Ruth	Assistant Professor	Ph.D.	3 years	No (Student Veterans)
Todd	Assistant Professor	Ph.D.	3 years	No (Student Veterans)
Carla	Lecturer	Master's	9 years	Father & Brother
LaToya	Associate Professor	Ph.D.	12 years	Spouse
Alice	Lecturer	Master's	3 years	Father & Brother

Eight of the study participants were White, one was a Latina, and one was an African American. Nine of the participants worked at public 4-year universities and one worked at a 4-year private university. One of the public institutions was an HBCU.

Maria predominately works with undergraduate students within the STEM field. She hopes to move into a tenure-track professor position once she completes her Ph.D. Maria has experience both as a university faculty member and as the spouse of a student veteran. She has supported her spouse as he navigates difficult classroom interactions. She explained that “student veterans are my problem students in the best way, and I want to be better equipped to work with them.”

Peter teaches within the field of engineering and safety regulation and works with undergraduate and graduate level students. His campus is in-between three different military installations. Therefore, he feels he has come into contact with hundreds of student veteran and active military college students as his institution partners with these installations for education and degree purposes. He was interested in participating in this study as he wanted to reinforce his current practices and gain new knowledge.

Elisa is a faculty member focusing within the realm of healthcare. She mentioned that she wasn't sure if she should take an MCC training because she doesn't think she has many student veterans in her class. Once she participated in the training, she spoke about how she now saw the utility of an MCC training, and she had newfound knowledge about how to communicate with student veterans. Elisa believe this training should be implemented as a refresher for tenured faculty members and mandatory for junior faculty members.

Seth reported to have come into contact with at least 14 different student veterans during his time as a faculty member. He reports that most of his perspective and best practices stem from his father and uncle both serving in the military, and he framed his perspective and teaching style around those experiences. He spoke to both negative and positive experiences teaching student veterans.

Kate works with student veterans within the realm of organizational development. Her experience working with student veterans in the classroom is limited, and she often spoke about her time working with student veterans and participating in the training as a collective experience, always referring to student veterans as “us” or “we.” Kate spoke about how the training brought back memories and gave a feeling of immense pride of being a veteran and having served the United States of America. She expressed interest in this study as she was curious about the current information and practices that were being presented to faculty and wanted to see how she could better work with student veterans.

Ruth has served as an educator in higher education at multiple institutions. This participant comes from a student affairs background and reports being eager to continuously expand on her knowledge of different student communities to provide the best support possible. Ruth expressed interest in this study, as her contract renewal is coming up and she wanted to have this training in her professional development history. She conveyed how happy she was with the training, as she believed it gave her realization of how important it is that faculty take an active approach to supporting student veterans.

Todd teaches primarily in the realm of education and reported that he has come in contact with a limited number of student veterans. He labels himself as a big supporter of both first responders and military servicemembers and recalls always being really

fascinated by history books that spoke about WWII and other historical events regarding the military. He considers himself to be comfortable around the few veterans he has had in the classroom and states that institutions need to do more to support them.

Carla teaches all of her classes in a virtual setting, primarily in school psychology. She reported to be excited to participate in the training as she never had the opportunity to take an MCC training for her professional development. Carla recalled only positive interactions that she has had with her student veterans, but also reflected on negative interactions that student veterans themselves had when expressing their frustration in the classroom setting and the age gap of their classroom peers.

LaToya recalled helping to support her significant other in his degree attainment while he was still active duty. This participant considers herself incredibly aware of the different support services that are offered to student veterans on her campus, as she reported to have worked with multiple student veterans throughout her years of tenure at this institution. LaToya voiced that institutions needs to wake up and realize that post traditional students, such as student veterans, are the key to their financial success and continued existence.

Alice recalled prior to becoming a lecturer, she served and interacted with student veterans in multiple capacities during her time in student affairs. She spoke to the need to never generalize a student veteran and emphasized the importance that student veteran behaviors are often on a spectrum. She stated that she had grown up in a military household and conveyed that her experience of being a military connected family member is a major component to her job competencies and perspective towards student veterans in her classroom.

Data Collection

Due to the worldwide pandemic, COVID-19, all aspects of the data collection were virtual. Both administrations of the Q-sorts were completed remotely through Qualtrics, and the MCC training the participants completed was fulfilled through a link to a website where the training was housed. In addition, the follow-up interview was conducted through a Zoom call. These virtual mediums ensured that no physical contact happened, but also provided flexibility for participants to complete the Q-sort, MCC training, and follow up interview on their own time.

Qualitative research is interested “in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences,” (Merriam, 1998, p. 5). This study is qualitative in nature, meaning it works to adhere to three key objectives Yin (2016) sets forth, (1) transparency, such as implementing research in a publicly accessible manner, (2) methodic-ness, which allows for discovery and room for unanticipated events, and (3) adherence to evidence, through providing an explicit body of evidence (p. 14). To ensure these three key objectives are fulfilled, data was collected using a variety of sources which included; research journal, Q-methodology, and conversational interview.

Q-Methodology

Ten university faculty who volunteered to be study participants completed the same Q-sort exercise twice: once before taking the PsychArmor Training and once after. Since this is an instrumental case study, the intention was to help study participants to reflect and trigger memories and past experiences as well as opinion on teaching student veterans in the university classroom. Q-methodology is a data collection method that

unearths subjective opinion from a group of individuals (Cross, 2005) to collect and examine the variety of accounts participants construct (Kitzinger, 1987). It is noted that the participants should represent or be a stakeholder in whatever topic the Q-sort is covering. For this study, only the qualitative portion of Q-methodology was utilized or the Q-sort exercise.

According to de Graaf and van Excel (2005) and Brown (1993) respondents are asked to rank-order statements based on their individual perspective and experiences using a grid from most agreeable statements to least agreeable statements. In this case, due to COVID-19, I adapted the exercise to be completed online. Participants were asked to drag and drop 23 statements into five different boxes. These boxes were labeled, “Most agreed,” “Agreed,” “Neutral,” “Disagree,” “Most Disagreed.” They were instructed to have no more than five statements in each box. Once those decisions were made, the participants were then asked to rank order each of the statements (1-5) within each box to what they perceive their level of agreeability to the statement being. All ten faculty participants completed two Q-sort sessions; one before taking the MCC training online and another after the training.

Regarding the Q-sort exercise, the concourse was made up of 23 statements pulled from existent literature regarding faculty perspectives, their experiences teaching student veterans, and literature on student veterans’ experiences in higher education (see Appendix G). These statements reflected a wide range of viewpoints to ensure that the participants’ subjective opinions were brought forth. These statements were previously tested on eleven university faculty members who volunteered to participate in a pilot study during the summer of 2019. This was helpful to make sure that the 23-item

concourse was presenting information in a clear manner to the participants. Once the dissertation study participants finished taking the training and completed the second Q-sort session, they engaged in a conversational interview with me, the researcher.

Conversational Interview

This conversational interview (see Appendix H) was created using a transformative semi-structured interview technique. The assumption of this approach is that individual respondents have defined the world in unique ways (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), and the interview process allows the opportunity to dive deeper into meaning making (Merriam, 1998.) Having the opportunity to dive deeper into faculty perspectives and their experiences participating in the training allowed for an abundance of data. Five components were suggested ensuring that this type of interview is effective. These include (1) a mix of more highly structured or loosely structured interview questions, (2) all questions are used flexibly, (3) specific data required from all respondents, (4) largest part of the interview guided by list of questions or issues to be explored, (5) no predetermined wording or order (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 109).

In addition, the sequence in which the questions appear, the interview was influenced by Seidman's (1998) interview model. The interview structure adhered to the past life history, present details of the experience, and reflection of the meaning of their experience. This author posits this strategy allows for the interview to get to the nature or essence of the participants' lived experience, which helped to clarify why faculty hold the perspectives they do, and what experiences faculty had participating in the MCC training. The 45-minute interview was held upon completion of the second Q-sort.

I utilized the Q-sort responses to help prompt the faculty to start the conversation on their perspectives teaching student veterans. I was mindful of reviewing changes in the Q-sort exercise from the first to second round of administration of Q. Doing this alerted me of possible changes of opinion that the faculty went through. Also, if there was a Q-sort statement that had a strong response, I would ask about it, which allowed participants to expand on their responses and make connections to their experiences teaching student veterans.

Research Journal

The research journal documents factual events and descriptive and reflective observations. Borg (2001) suggested that a research journal gives “instructive insight into specific aspects of the research process” (p. 161). The contents of this journal were at times referred to as field notes with the goal to keep a detailed record of data collection. Fieldnotes are considered “the written account of what the researcher hears, sees, experiences, and thinks in the course of collecting and analyzing the data in a qualitative study” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 118). Implementing both descriptive and reflective field notes within a research journal allows for a thorough, in-depth account of the data collection process.

Descriptive Fieldnotes

Journaling is a vital tool to help the research record the data collection process and ensure transparency. Bogdan and Biklen (2007, p. 121) identified six aspects that descriptive fieldnotes must fulfill.

First, descriptive fieldnotes provide portraits of the study participants. For example, the proximity of each participant to previous military experience and how it

influenced their perspectives of student veterans were important pieces of information to take note of. Second, descriptive fieldnotes allow for reconstruction of the dialogue, including the conversations between subjects and the researcher. These notes contained summaries of conversations between the researcher and participant found in the transcripts. Third, descriptive fieldnotes allow the researcher to describe the virtual setting. Because of the global pandemic, all interactions with participants and data collection pieces were virtual. Documentation of the environment of these virtual meeting places were recorded. Fourth, accounts of particular events were recorded. This documentation was done through listening which participants completed all aspects of the study. Fifth, descriptive fieldnotes allow for depicting activities, including detailed descriptions of behaviors and particular acts. A relevant example would be how the emotional reactions elicited by the training or interview were documented. Sixth, the researcher's behavior as an instrument of data collection is addressed, through scrutinizing personal assumptions, and whatever else might affect data gathered. As a researcher, I assumed the role of a nonbiased individual to the best of my ability.

Reflective Fieldnotes

Serving as a base for a researcher's personal reflections, reflective fieldnotes allowed for different personal aspects of analysis, methods, ethical dilemmas, assumptions, and points in need of clarification to be documented (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 123). There are five aspects of reflective field notes: First, reflections on analysis. This type of reflection included the researcher speculating about what is being learned while the participants are completing the MCC training, the themes that might be emerging after the interviews are complete, and any connections between the Q-sort and

interviews (p.123). Second, reflections on methods addressing the different data collection strategies employed within the study. It was important to keep detailed transcripts of the interviews and ensure all Q-sort applications were complete to adequately answer the research questions. Third, reflections on ethical dilemmas and conflicts in terms of researchers' positionality and responsibilities as an ethical researcher. An example of this was ensuring all participants had adequate opportunity to express their personal perspectives teaching student veterans and their experience with the training. Fourth, reflections on the researcher's frame of mind and addressing the assumptions of the researcher. This was completed through airing out personal biases, such as all participants learned from the MCC training. Fifth, points of clarification, including simple interpretations on the point that the researcher might have found confusing. A relevant example would be asking to follow up questions so the participant can expand on their responses to the interview questions.

Data Analysis

The data collection and analysis were simultaneous processes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Utilizing software was helpful to store, organize, and classify the different data collected for the study. Thus, I used MaxQDA to analyze the data collected from the interviews and Qualtrics to map out the results from the Q-Sort exercise responses. In addition, data analysis for this study was based on the work of Strauss and Corbin (1998) and Yin (2016).

Yin's (2016) cycle was used to ensure a systemic data analysis process. It was important to have Constructionism (Crotty, 2005) at the center for interpreting the data. Analysis of the Q-sort and conversational interview utilized and the narrative analysis

employed by Yin (2016), which includes five steps for the analytical cycle: (1) compiling the data, (2) disassembling the data, (3) reassembling the data, (4) interpreting the data, and (5) drawing conclusions.

First, *compiling the data* involved employing the MaxQDA and Qualtrics software to upload different pieces of data such as transcripts from the 10 interviews, and notes typed from the research journals. In addition, the 20 Q-sort assessment participant responses were compiled to create a matrix of responses. The data was organized and then chunked into small units.

Second, *disassembling* the data, which has the researcher arrange the data into smaller fragments or pieces in order to be able to conduct different rounds of coding to examine the data for the conversational interview (see Appendix I). Three rounds of coding were implemented: Open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. For *open coding*, the data are chunked into small units with an attached descriptor or code to each of the units. Color coding is also helpful at this point. Highlighting with a different color was a form of coding as each color had a different meaning to make groups of codes. For *axial coding*, codes were grouped into categories. Next, in *selective coding* I looked for themes that expressed the content of the categories that were identified in the previous round of coding.

Third, *reassembling* the data, which required the different fragments, groups, and sequencing of pieces to be craftily reassembled to identify substantive examples to illustrate emergent themes. This step focused on reassembling both the Q-sort administration (see Appendix J) and conversational interview fragments for emergent

themes. For example, it is vital to identify examples that can illustrate each emergent theme without the duplication of data.

Fourth, *interpreting* the data, which allows the examination of the emergent themes in light of the study framework. Therefore, constructionism served as the lens to make sense of these findings. Within this step, it is also important to look at whether the findings aligned with existent literature regarding the faculty perspectives of student veterans and faculty professional development.

Fifth, *concluding*, the researcher draws conclusions about what is learned from the study. Determining the meaning, evaluating connection to existent research, the contributions of the study, and formulating ideas for future research.

Study Findings

As a result of the analysis of the data collected from the conversational interview and the Q-sort exercise, three emergent themes were identified. These are: (1) Past experiences and perspectives, (2) Experiences resulting in job competency growth, (3) Self-reflection to foster awareness.

Past Experiences and Perspectives

Most of the study participants reported that their previous experiences teaching student veterans have molded their perspectives towards this community of students. Three categories that contributed to this theme include (a) Positive experiences and perspectives, (b) Challenging experiences, and (c) Military connectedness.

Positive Experiences and Perspectives

All ten participants recalled positive past experiences and perspectives they had teaching student veterans. These experiences ranged from positive interactions in

academic settings, highlighting the maturity and proactive nature of student veterans, to faculty rejecting the notion that all student veterans are dealing with a mental or physical trauma in their classroom. As Alice recalled, “I just never had a negative experience in an academic setting with a military servicemember.” Alice had worked to support student veterans in different facets throughout her career. From serving as the point of contact for student veteran benefits to now being a faculty member, she only spoke about positive experiences she had with this community of students. Speaking more to the classroom experience, Elise stated, “I love having veterans in the classroom. They seem very mature compared to students I typically have in class. They are professional and talk in a professional manner. That’s been my experience.”

It is important to note that the frequency with which study participants interacted with student veterans varied. For example, Alice recalls having dozens of student veterans within her courses per year, and Elise recalled having one or two every few years. These experiences created lasting positive memories regardless of the number of student veterans that were participating in the courses. Further reinforcing these positive memories, Ruth recollected, “They were extremely motivated and really excited to be part of the institution. I saw veterans as really proactive, really able to efficiently get things done, and really engaged on the college campus.” Ruth’s positive previous interactions with student veterans impacted how she perceived student veterans’ work habits.

Study participants also viewed student veterans from an assets-based perspective when disagreeing to support negative narratives portraying student veterans as all having mental health issues. In the Q-sort exercise, for statement F (It is more likely than not that

student veterans have some kind of mental or physical trauma from their prior military experience), 60% of the responses indicated that faculty participants disagreed with this statement. Further emphasizing this assets-based viewpoint, faculty participants chose statement P (The military culture is based in service and sacrifice. It is others-based), as one of the most agreed upon statements. This viewpoint towards military culture was echoed by Todd, as he stated,

My entire life I have held military service members in high regard and work to treat them with a lot of respect. I was a teenager when 9/11 happened and was happy to see people being respectful of first responders. I have always had a more positive vibe towards being pro military than others, so I am always looking forward to meeting them when I do. I try to be extra understanding with them, just to make it easier.

These findings were important as previous literature had suggested that faculty perspectives of student veterans were often deficit focused and negative (Vacchi, 2015). These findings suggest positive interactions with student veterans help mold positive perspectives.

Challenging Experiences

While all 10 participants recalled positive interactions with student veterans, there were still instances in which faculty reported having some challenging classroom experiences. For example, when asked about negative experiences he had teaching student veterans, Seth recalled:

There was one lady that had a traumatic brain injury (TBI) from the middle east. It messed up her ability to focus, we had to give her some slack. She didn't respond well to certain situations, like feeling pressure on exams. We sent her to the Office of Student Disabilities (ODS). I did give her extensions for papers, but no special treatment. We had another veteran and he was really anti-social, I guess. He did not get along with his peers at all, but he dropped out of the program.

Seth did not speak to his cultural understanding of what might have been contributing to these issues, nor did he present any best practices he implemented to help support these student veterans. He explained he had never participated in any MCC training. Seth just relied on his past experiences with student veterans to inform his teaching practices. Similarly, Maria alluded to her shortcomings interacting with student veterans in her classroom:

One experience in particular I remember was 4 years ago, a student veteran got upset at me first verbally and then in an email. He essentially communicated to me his high level of frustration about having to come to class and be around younger students. He said, "These kids know nothing and I'm tired of coming to your class." Another student experienced really bad PTSD. His attendance was very sporadic. I was not prepared to help these students. Training like the one I just participating in for your study could have helped me see what I was doing wrong.

As evident in these testimonies, the challenges faculty reported while teaching student veterans often seemed to result from not having the proper knowledge and training on how to navigate these situations. In the Q-sort exercise, statement J (It is important that all faculty and staff enter into an MCC training to improve student veterans experience on the college campus) had a response rate of 35%. In other words, like Seth and Maria, some of the faculty stated the need to participate in training.

Military Connectedness

Of the ten participants, seven of them were military-connected. This proximity to the military included, being a veteran, being a parent to a military service member, having a parent(s) serve, having extended family members (uncle, aunt, grandparent) serve, and being a life partner to both active servicemembers and veterans. Faculty participants who were military connected shared a close proximity to military environments and service members. This connectedness was found to have contributed to

how the faculty interacted with student veterans in classroom environments and informed their positive perspectives of this community of students. As every military-connected participant stated, their families, loved ones, and children who served, shaped their perspective of student veterans in the classroom.

Kate, a Navy veteran, spoke to how her being a veteran informed both her perspective and best practices when working with student veterans. She stated,

I say almost half of my students in the program I teach are veterans. So, I get a lot of student veterans that ask me loads of questions. I usually self-disclose first, "Hey I was in the military." Essentially, I am telling them I understand most of the challenges they are currently experiencing. We are conditioned to seek out information alone, and if you can't find it, then you go about your business. I help veterans identify those resources when they need them.

Kate makes a distinct connection to having an insider's knowledge on the culture of the military and how she is able to serve as a supporting faculty member when a student veteran is looking for resources.

LaToya and Maria were military connected but not a Veteran. They explained how having significant others who were student veterans provided them a dual insight on barriers faced by the veterans and the faculty. LaToya stated,

My significant other was in the military for over 20 years. That helped me understand what barriers he met. ...I was right beside him when he was completing his bachelor's degree. I feel like I am a seasoned faculty member when it comes to supporting student veterans because of my experiences supporting him and being at an institution that enrolls a high number of student veterans.

Maria further spoke to this dual faculty and military connected experience,

I feel like I have a few extra insights because of my husband's experience with school and dealing with different student offices. All the extra hoops they make you jump through. It helps me connect with my student veterans. I get it from both sides.

Maria's experience, like LaToya's, showcases the importance of having first-hand knowledge and insight to military culture. This was the case for Carla, Peter, Alice, Seth, Kate, LaToya, and Maria. These seven participants agreed that they already knew most of the information presented at the training. However, they also recognized that they did not stop to reflect on this knowledge and how they could apply it with student veterans. Aligned with this finding is the participants' response to statement G in the Q-sort exercise. With a 70% response rate, statement G (All student-veterans are transitioning into college from warzone and are considered soldiers), was the most disagreed with statement. The seven participants showed an understanding that not all student veterans have been to war.

Experiences Resulting in Job Competency Growth

The MCC training completed by the participants was utilized as an instrument to trigger discussion about the faculty's experiences and perspectives. However, not having participated in prior MCC training allowed for some participants to report on the impact the training had on them. Therefore, three categories contributed to this emergent theme: (1) Professional growth, (2) Willingness to learn, and (3) Reaching out to students.

Professional Growth

Seven out of ten faculty participants reported to have gained understanding of how military culture may impact student veterans. They also mentioned having acquired some strategies to do a better job interacting with student veterans. For example, Carla stated:

I hadn't given much thought to it before, but the aspect that stuck out the most, was that self-help seeking behaviors is not taught in the military. I have made it a point now to contact my veterans, engage with them on a weekly basis. I also

didn't think much about the different branches that they served in and how it might be culturally different. Now I understand why that is so important.

Carla also spoke to how she had not reflected much on the different terminologies that were part of the military culture, although she knew them due to being military connected. She reported to feel “silly” because she never truly reflected on them. In addition, Ruth added,

My conception of the military was really individualized. I now respond to interactions and make meaning differently; I realize that the military culture itself still has a heavy impact on a portion of the student veteran's life. This is a really intensive culture they are a part of and understanding that culture is impactful.

Furthermore, Ruth and Peter both spoke to the confidence they felt in the ability to apply the new facilitation strategies they experienced through the training. This included the ability to know how to interact with student veterans. Ruth said that,

I felt good about myself that I can now identify some of the issues and barriers student veterans face. I know what questions to ask without being worried I am asking the wrong thing. This type of training was clear and concise and will help me interact with my student veterans in the future.

When it came to relationship building, Peter shared,

I feel confident and comfortable asking questions now because I have the correct lingo, I can talk to them now. I understand the expansion that military jobs entail, which allows me to build the relationship more.

With a response rate of 30%, statement R in the Q-sort (Military culture holds certain beliefs and values that may depart from the cultural norm of civilians. Military culture plays a role in shaping student veterans' identity and behaviors) supports the participants' explanations of their newly acquired understandings.

Willingness to Learn

LaToya reported not having experienced any “*ah-ha*” moments from completing the training. During the interview she stated:

I only maintained the knowledge I already came into this study with. I am a seasoned faculty member working with student veterans. MCC trainings are only necessary for incoming faculty members. I already have the knowledge I need.

When asked “What is your advice for future faculty members who have student veterans inside their classroom?” Her response was:

Never make assumptions. Don’t assume that every veteran is a soldier or that they all have engaged in combat. Don’t assume everyone has engaged in combat. I can probably shoot my gun better than most people in the military.

Answering the Q-sort exercise, she chose statements B and M as two of her top, most-agreed-with statements. Statement B was: “Professors’ perspective on military history that departs significantly from student veterans’ first-hand experience is a welcomed classroom discussion,” and statement M was “student veterans who experience combat have PTSD.” In addition, LaToya disagreed with statement P, “The military culture is based in service and sacrifice. It is others based.”

Some faculty members seemed to be unwilling to express a possible gap in knowledge supporting student veterans and having room to grow their cultural awareness. Thus, at the beginning of the interview, Peter reported that the training “only reaffirmed my current best practices. I am very proud of my past experiences with student veterans and consider myself to be very prepared to work with these students.” However, when given the chance to offer any additional comments, he spoke about the training in terms of his newly acquired knowledge and facilitation strategies:

I wasn’t sure what to expect but I definitely learned something. The one thing that stuck out the most is... I didn’t give much thought about... student veterans asking

for help. I made it a point after I took the training to now contact my veterans and offer support knowing they were not trained to ask for help.

The responses provided by Ruth also showcase the faculty willing to improve their facilitation styles and participate in training. She said:

I appreciate that you reached out to me to participate in this training. It had me really reflect about my interactions, and it was a good reminder and push to be proactive. I just didn't know much about this student populations specific needs, now I know to be thoughtful and aware to try to figure that out. I have taken a step back and have become more intentional towards thinking about student veterans best support services.

Ruth was by far the most excited and willing participant in this study which is exemplified in the above testimony. Likewise, Seth, an associate professor and military connected participant, had a similar response:

From my experiences, I just want to continue to emphasize active listening, being able to listen to people, wait for them to self-identify as veterans as well as be respectful of their identity. You learn a lot about who they are just from that. It's interesting because just like what was explained at the training, they all have labels (branch, active duty, reserves, etc.) but that shouldn't stop you from meeting them where they are. This training highlighted that experience for me. It was very beneficial.

Lastly, statement E in the Q-sort exercise (Faculty that are aware of military culture hold more credibility with student veterans) received a 40% response rate indicating study participants' most agreed with choice. Most faculty reported to be excited and willing to learn through participating in the MCC training.

Reaching out to Students

In the Q-sort exercise statement C (how a student veteran identifies with the military is on a person-by-person basis) was the most agreed upon statement with 65% selection rate. Faculty members recognized that one-size fits all is not a solution. In addition, after completing the MCC training, faculty expressed a newly acquired

awareness of the need to reach out to student veterans in a one-on-one basis. Elisa stated, “I am realizing that maybe I don’t focus on student veterans enough. Maybe they really would like faculty to reach out to them a little bit more.” Similarly, Todd explained that “every semester ...a student in need of special accommodations enrolls in my course, the Office of Disability Services (ODS) notifies us. Why, then, we don’t institutionalize this same practice with student veterans, so that faculty are aware and can also reach out to them?” He further explained,

We get emails from our college if we have a student with disabilities or special circumstances all the time. Maybe we should consider that. If we get a student athlete and we are notified, it shouldn’t be different for student veterans. They are an important community too.

Six study participants spoke about becoming aware that student veterans do not always possess self-help seeking behaviors. The faculty reported gaining a new understanding of how they must be proactive reaching out to student veterans themselves to ensure these students are getting the resources they need. Peter stated, “One thing I recognize I need to do better is emphasizing that I am here if they need help. In the future, I will make sure to ask what they need and check in on them.” Kate reinforced this perspective,

My advice is to be transparent, be open about what your personal experiences are in this world. Be open to hearing what their experiences are even if they are different. Ask the veteran, is there anything in particular that I can support you with? Are there resources you need? If possible, don’t specifically call out veterans, direct the question towards the whole class. This training and my personal experiences shed light on a lot of things many faculty members don’t think about, including the cultural differences between a student veteran and a regular civilian.

There was a consistent narrative of faculty wanting to be proactive and taking the initiative to create a dialogue with their student veterans for support their learning needs.

Self-Reflection to Foster Awareness

Participating in the study created a space for faculty to reflect and develop some level of awareness to recognize their shortcomings and reconsider some of their viewpoints. This happened at different levels for all ten participants. Some continue to say that they did not need training and that they were knowledgeable about teaching and good quality classroom practices. Therefore, three categories contributed to this emergent theme; (1) Recognized assumptions, (2) Reframing the wounded warrior, and (3) Classroom practices.

Recognized Assumptions

Participants identified different assumptions that they came with into the study and spoke about how those assumptions might have been wrong. As Ruth stated,

Not that I assumed all military had been in warzones or deployed but I assumed the transition would be easier. I had to realize that the cultural shift from a really structured military context to college and universities would be really hard. I also can't assume that they may all need mental health services, but as a big proponent of mental health support myself, I would encourage them to seek it, just with different underlying assumptions. More based on them just being in school, less based on them having served in the military.

Ruth consistently spoke to her affinity for serving as a referral to mental health support services for her students on campus regardless of the community she was working with. She realized that her assumptions for why she thought these students needed mental health services were situated in the fact they served in the military. On the other hand, Carla was surprised to learn the following:

I really had never asked anyone if they had killed anybody, it never occurred to me, I just sort of assumed everybody knew not to ask that. I was really surprised to hear that was the most asked question of our service members. It really raised my awareness.

Carla also touched on being military connected but not being mindful of the different cultures of each military branch. She stated, “military culture is something I had never thought about before. If you just never had that experience of that culture, you’d just never know. It enlightened me.” In addition, Todd acknowledged that “I recently made a mistake regarding speaking to someone about different branches. I didn’t realize the coast guard was part of the military. I just forgot it existed. Sometimes, we just assume we know everything about military, and I didn’t.”

Reframing the Wounded Warrior

Literature has suggested that faculty view student veterans as wounded warriors, that are too broken to pick up the pieces of their lives (Doe, 2013). However, in their Q-sort responses, eight of the ten participants classified statements F and M as two of the top 5 statements that they most disagreed with. Statement F read: “it is more likely than not that student veterans have some kind of mental or physical trauma from their prior military experience.” Statement M was: “Student veterans who experience combat have PTSD.” This selection in the Q-sort exercise may be an indicator that faculty are becoming aware of the importance of avoiding overgeneralizations and essentializing the experience of the student veteran. For example, in the narrative below, Peter is humanizing the veteran experience and is able to see past this experience to offer support:

I’m upset that my brother-in-law feels ashamed of what he had to do. He says he isn’t proud of it, but it was his job and he had to do it. Not everyone comes back experiencing some trauma. My own son just joined the Marines... that information was a bomb that dropped on us. My past experiences with family members and student veterans plus the video we watched for the training allow me to feel on par with the support I give. If they are afraid to ask for help, I let them know I am here for them, and I emphasize that more. I want to engage them and I want them to feel they are being heard.

Maria also spoke about one of her student veterans having PTSD, but she never over generalized it; she understood that “every veteran is different, every veteran has a story. I haven’t encountered every type of veteran, so all of these experiences and the training helps me get a broader perspective of their point of view and what they are dealing with.” Similarly, Todd touched on not seeing veterans who have PTSD in a negative light and that the idea of PTSD is not something to be scared about,

For me, it’s the awareness that PTSD isn’t a negative thing. We don’t need to walk around eggshells when speaking to them if we know they have PTSD. We also need to reject the idea that it has a strong connection to violence. You don’t just become violent if you have PTSD. It can present itself differently depending on the person, just like anything else. It’s our job to understand we can’t generalize it.

The responses provided by the study participants illustrate a positive way to view student veterans. They acknowledge that all veterans have different experiences and faculty need to provide individualized support.

Classroom Practices

Faculty participants reflected on classroom policies that may not support student veterans. As an example, LaToya stated,

Be mindful of your written and verbal communication strategies, that includes blackboard, Tracs, Canvas, whatever you use. Be respectful and aware. Student veterans are sometimes active duty. Due to security reasons, they can’t always access the course online platform if they are deployed. Be prepared to grant leniency. We need to understand their circumstances.

Likewise, Alice elaborated on areas where faculty can reconsider classroom policies:

Faculty don’t have the training to understand what student veteran are going through or what their new civilian lives encompass. I think where you see this a lot is the rigidity of the classroom environment, like the syllabus and attendance policies. There is no flexibility around these aspects. When dealing with a student veteran or active duty, they may have a VA appointment that can’t move or get deployed. They have no control over it. There has to be flexibility for attendance and assignments, and as faculty we get caught up in our role and power. These

are the things we don't take into consideration when life events dictate certain situations.

In addition, in the Q-sort exercise, statement V (Understanding military culture is a key to better supporting the student veteran in the classroom) received a 50% rate of responses as a most agreed upon statement. This finding somewhat reflects faculty perspectives when it comes to being flexible and re-envisioning a classroom that is inclusive of student veterans' needs.

Discussion

A gap in the literature speaks to the need for documenting the perspectives faculty hold towards teaching student veterans (Kirschner, 2015). Therefore, this study aimed to find answers to the following research questions: What are university faculty perspectives teaching student veterans? What are university faculty experiences in light of participating in an MCC training? To this effect, constructionism (Crotty, 2005) and veteran critical theory (Phillips & Lincoln, 2017) served as the study frameworks to bring forth understanding on how faculty make meaning of their experiences interacting with student veterans. As such, three themes emerged to present study findings. These are: Past experiences and perspectives, Experiences resulting in job competency growth, and Self-reflection to foster awareness.

Past Experiences and Perspectives

The interactions between individuals within a society are central to constructionism (Schwandt, 2003). The testimonies provided by the faculty participating in the study illustrated this concept. Study participants described positive views of student veterans and assigned favorable characteristics to these students such as being proactive and mature. They did not recall having bad experiences with these students;

however, they were aware of their needs to become more knowledgeable of how to better engage with student veterans. On the other hand, when contrasting these findings with VCT tenets (Phillips and Lincoln, 2017) claiming that “*veterans are victim of deficit thinking in higher education,*” study findings reject this notion since the majority of study participants were striving to improve their teaching and examine their assumptions. What was evident from study findings is that faculty are vastly underprepared to support and teach student veterans.

Feeling underprepared added to the challenges that faculty faced in the classroom teaching student veterans. Six out the ten faculty members related that they have not taken MCC training prior to participating in the study. This finding aligns with the literature stating that faculty report being underprepared to work with student veterans in a classroom setting (Barnard-Brak et al., 2011). An important finding was the fact that faculty acknowledged not having the tools to properly navigate challenging situations in the classroom when it came to interactions with student veterans.

Similar to what the literature states, the closer in proximity a faculty member was to military service (e.g. having a relative, spouse, or child serving in the military) the more likely they were to have positive perspectives and be more culturally aware of student veterans’ needs. This finding reinforced Morrow and Hart’s (2014) statement pointing to the aspect that being military connected helps to close the cultural gap between student veterans and faculty. For example, LaToya, and Maria explained that having relatives who were student veterans provided them with dual insights on barriers faced by the veterans and their instructors.

Phillips and Lincoln (2017) explained that veterans are more appropriately positioned to inform policy and practice regarding veterans. To this effect, eight of the ten study participants were military connected. For instance, Kate spoke about her insights being a veteran herself and using that cultural membership to inform her own practices to support student veterans in her classroom. Similarly, LaToya and Maria recalled having significant others who were student veterans; supporting them while they were completing a degree was an eye-opening experience. This practical knowledge helped to inform their teaching practice.

Experiences Resulting in Job Competency Growth

In terms of professional growth, the faculty participating in the study had the opportunity to reflect on their day-to-day interactions with student veterans. This finding connects with principles of constructionism (Crotty, 2005) stating that the reality faculty construct in their professional lives can impact their interactions with student veterans. Understanding the conflicting power structures, language, and systems that student veterans face when transitioning to civilian life (Phillips & Lincoln, 2017) can only happen through negotiated understandings between faculty and students. To this effect, completing the MCC training somewhat influenced the faculty participants; they recognized a gap in knowledge and that military culture is essential to who student veterans are. Implementing professional development programs for educators is recognized as one of the vital components to heightening the quality of teaching within colleges and universities (Ingvarson et al., 2005). Study findings provided evidence that the MCC training combined with reflection on previous experiences can lead to professional growth.

Keeh and Martinez (2012) determined that faculty must have an intensive involvement with training itself to gain enhanced awareness of the importance of the topic. When it came to willingness to learn, study findings took two different stances. A few of them said they did not have much to learn and considered themselves as seasoned instructors. Some others recognized the need for training and professional growth to be better equipped to teach student veterans. For example, LaToya said there was nothing new for her to learn; however, an examination of her responses for the Q-sort exercise contradicted the answers she provided during the interview. Other participants such as Ruth articulated aspects that were learned from the training. This included recognizing the impact that military culture has on student veterans while interacting in classroom dynamics. Some participants were able to identify new best practices, such as reaching out to students, taking initiative to cultivate relationships, and showing respect towards military culture. As an example, Carla and Peter began to understand this community of students often does not practice self-help seeking behaviors.

Self-Reflection to Foster Awareness

The MCC training served as a catalyst for faculty participants to revisit their assumptions of student veterans, reframe the narrative that student veterans are wounded warriors, and reflect on their current classroom practices. Faculty recognizing negative assumptions held towards student veterans' mental health status is a key example. As Phillips and Lincoln (2017) remind us, veterans cannot be essentialized and each veteran has a different experience regarding their military service. Vacchi (2015) stated that faculty assume student veterans are weak, and Doe (2013) found faculty are guided by negative stereotypes of veterans such as the wounded hero who is struggling to pick up

the pieces of their lives. In other words, the Wounded Warrior stereotype that generalizes student veterans as a victim, broken, unable to cope, and unsuccessfully to transition to civilian life. All ten faculty participants discussed in one way or another that they have reframed these negative views. Thus, rejecting the general narrative that all student veterans have PTSD or experience mental or physical trauma after serving in the military showcases the movement towards a more assets-based perspective of student veterans in the classroom environment.

Student veterans actively seek positive faculty relationships (Blaauw-Hara, 2016); the issue that arises is that there is limited opportunity to prepare faculty to assist in developing these relationships (Queen et al., 2014). Faculty reflected on their own classroom practices and realized that these aspects were not inclusive of student veterans' educational needs. According to Phillips and Lincoln (2017), structures, policies, and processes privilege civilians over veterans. As multiple participants reflected on, there must be processes and practices in place to support student veterans; for example, granting leniency when life events and priorities overtake syllabus due dates and attendance policies. If these processes that privilege civilians over veterans are not recognized in the classroom context, the status quo will remain the same. Flexibility and respectful relationship building are key to the success of students and faculty professional growth.

Implications

The present article focused on examining faculty perspective teaching student veterans and their experience in light of participating in an MCC training. Thus, this

section presents implications relevant to universities who enroll student veterans and faculty who facilitate and support this community of students.

Implications for Universities

Universities must be held accountable and begin to take initiative in providing assets based MCC training that represents a diverse set of student veteran voices and support needs to ready faculty to support this community of students. Furthermore, they must provide different mediums of accessibility of these trainings for faculty to access (face-to-face, hybrid, online) and keep in mind the length of time these trainings run to ensure they can fit into the busy schedules of higher education faculty members.

Implications for Faculty

Faculty must be open and willing to learn when participating in an MCC training instead of perceiving themselves as hitting their knowledge ceiling due to having previous experiences working with student veterans. As evident in the findings, even the most experienced faculty can still learn a new piece of knowledge, even if they did not realize it. Faculty need training to be able to support student veterans in class when an incident takes place. The reality is that some student veterans have PTSD, or other physical and mental health conditions stemming from their military service. It is important that faculty are prepared to handle these situations. It is imperative that faculty continue the lifelong learning process to further develop their skills and inform their perspectives, gaining knowledge about student veterans is no exception. Furthermore, faculty must become aware of how inclusive their classroom practices and policies are, taking a critical lens to how these structures might create a barrier for student veterans.

Study Contributions

This study has contributed to three aspects revolving around faculty perspective teaching student veterans and their experiences participating in MCC trainings. First, the findings addressed a gap in literature that examines current faculty perspective of student veterans, and past experiences teaching student veterans. This highlighted the different perspectives and assumptions faculty held towards student veterans and challenging experiences faculty encountered inside the classroom while teaching student veterans. Second, this study provided the first ever documentation of faculty members experience participating in an MCC training. These experiences resulted in faculty speaking about their future best practices, new insights, and a growth in military cultural competency. Third, this article filled a gap in literature that focused on faculty job competency in supporting student veterans and military cultural awareness. For instance, study findings highlight faculty becoming critically aware of how military culture impacts student veterans in the classroom when it comes to self-help seeking behaviors.

Conclusion

The main goal of this study was to examine faculty perspectives of student veterans through documenting past experiences and perspectives. In addition, this study also aimed to document their experiences participating in an MCC training, which was documented through aspects of job competency growth and perspective change. This goal was accomplished through an instrumental qualitative case study which produced findings that aligned with the mission of fostering positive faculty and student veteran relationships and ensuring faculty have increased military cultural competency. This article provides insights to the numerous perspectives and experiences faculty have

teaching student veterans and the different experiences of faculty participating in MCC trainings.

IV. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Building on Veteran Critical Theory (VCT), best practices for training adult learners, and constructionism as frameworks, this two-article dissertation presented two related studies regarding military connected competency training and faculty perspectives teaching student veterans. This dissertation established two important facts: in general, there is a large number of undertrained university faculty and limited military connected competency training (MCC) opportunities offered by universities. Study findings presented in chapters two and three examine existing MCC trainings and addressed a gap in research documenting faculty perspectives and experiences teaching student veterans. The present chapter will present the following sections: (1) Study highlights, (2) Recommendations for practice, (3) Challenges and tensions, (4) Future research, and (5) Concluding thoughts.

Study Highlights

Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 brought forth important pieces of information within the two different studies. This section discusses salient findings from each of these chapters and is organized in the following subsections: Chapter 2 highlights, Chapter 3 highlights, Research questions, and Connections to adult learning.

Chapter 2 Highlights

Study findings in chapter 2 identified best practices, challenges, and tensions regarding four different MCC trainings that were observed. In terms of best practices, three different categories were present: (1) Audience analysis, (2) Up/dated literature, and (3) Interactive approach. First, facilitators' ability to analyze the audience and mold their facilitation style and content to their audience was evident. An example of this was the

ability for facilitators to distill very complex information about military culture into manageable, clear chunks of information for participants who had limited previous knowledge of military culture. Second, the use of updated literature within the content of the MCC training. It is important to understand that new research and literature is constantly coming forward about support of student veterans. The ability to view these trainings as a living document, in other words not just static knowledge, is important. This was evident as three out of the four trainings used updated terminology. Third, facilitators and the trainings themselves utilizing an interactive approach. More than half of the trainings used different interactive strategies including simulations, scenarios, role playing, quizzes or games, a practice deemed to be imperative for teaching adult learners.

Another key highlight from chapter 2 relates to challenges and tensions, the different aspects of the trainings that need to be reconceptualized and implemented differently. These were: (1) Shock value statements, (2) Deficit approach, and (3) Misleading information and fluff. First, shock value statements were misapplied. Three trainings practiced this strategy, with two of the three resulting in negative reactions from participants, including negative emotions, disengagement from the training because participants left the room, and positioning student veterans in a deviant light. Second, the trainings taking on a deficit approach, which emphasized failure, helplessness, and having low expectations. The deficit approach was found throughout two of the four trainings. Third, the use of misleading information and fluff in the trainings. This misleading information led faculty into a false sense of preparedness, as some of these simulations were pre-created and did not take into account human emotion. In terms of

the fluff information, this aspect happened when different facilitators took up valuable time, went off on tangents, and often distracted from the training itself.

Chapter 3 Highlights

When it came to chapter 3, there were two main highlights (1) past experiences and perspectives and (2) experiences resulting in job competency growth. In terms of previous experiences and perspectives, three categories contributed to this finding; (1) Positive experiences and perspectives, (2) Challenging experiences, and (3) Military connectedness. All ten-faculty recalled positive past experiences and perspectives they had teaching student veterans. They spoke to student veterans' mature nature and their willingness to work hard in class. An interesting aspect that emerged was the participants' mention of negative experiences. While these experiences did happen, faculty perspective of student veterans were not impacted. Instead, these negative experiences highlighted faculty members lack of preparedness to manage the classroom environment, as multiple participants spoke specifically of the need to better develop different competencies.

In addition, all but three of the participants were military connected in one way or another. This connectedness brought forth an interesting finding. Some participants spoke to having dual insight when it came to supporting their veteran family members while they returned for a degree. Using those previous experiences and knowledge, they were able to better support their current student veterans inside the classroom.

The second major highlight of chapter 3 was faculty participants' experiences that resulted in job competency growth; this included (1) Professional growth, (2) Willingness to learn, and (3) Reaching out to students. The personal growth many faculty members

stated to have experienced after participating in the training is the feeling of increased confidence in their ability to do their job now that they have more informed insights. These insights include, for example, an understanding of the importance of military culture and ability to identify issues and barriers student veterans face. The majority of faculty participants reported to be excited to learn from the MCC training and saw this experience as beneficial to being able to support student veterans in a constructive manner. However, there were participants who were unwilling to state that they learned anything new from the training, even if their Q-sort assignments and responses to some interview questions stated otherwise. The final aspect was faculty participants reporting to be willing to take more initiative based on their experience participating in the training and reflecting on their past experiences. There was a constant narrative of faculty wanting to be more proactive to create dialogue and be the first ones to reach out and start a conversation.

Research Questions

RQ#1

How are MCC trainings being designed and offered to university faculty?

Chapter 2 described four MCC trainings: The shock value, the roleplay, veterans as assets, and the practical approach. *The Shock Value* training had both an online and face-to-face option, was commercially available, free of charge, and was one hour long. It was important to note that this training was deficit focused, and there were no learning check points or post training assessment to validate any knowledge competencies. This training was designed and facilitated by both civilians and veterans.

The Roleplay was designed only with an online option, was commercially available but charged \$35 for access, and was 37 minutes in length. This training utilized avatars for simulation and role-playing components and used those scenarios as learning check points. The avatars in the training that presented that information were all veterans.

Veterans as Assets was designed specifically for one institution to utilize and was developed as a hybrid training. This means the first half of the training was completed online and the second half was completed in person. The total time it took to complete this training was 3.5 hours. This training was assets based; in addition, the online portion had learning check points. This training was designed by both civilian and veterans but was presented by a civilian facilitator.

The Practical Approach was commercially available, free of charge, and was completely online. This training was assets based and had learning check points upon conclusion of the training. In addition, this training was designed and facilitated by veterans. As evident, these trainings were designed and offered in a variety of ways, but there was always an online component to all four the trainings.

RQ#2

What are the characteristics of current MCC training available to university faculty?

There were three prevalent characteristics of the observed MCC trainings that were available for university faculty to participate in: (1) Assets based approach, (2) Presenting informed solutions, and (3) Diversity and military culture. First, MCC trainings took on an assets-based approach. VCT asserts that student veterans are victims of deficit thinking in higher education; however, different trainings worked to ensure that deficit language and content were not included. By taking on this type of approach, and

in the lens of VCT, it allows faculty to better understand the strengths student veterans can bring into the classroom environment. *Second*, veteran voices and veteran research was included when it came to the content and delivery of the different trainings. This allowed for informed solutions to be presented to the audience as they came from student veterans themselves. This characteristic was reflected in the eighth VCT tenet, “veterans are more appropriately positioned to inform best practices regarding veterans,” (Phillips & Lincoln, 2017, p. 10). By involving veteran perspectives and voices, their own perspectives were included, and they were centered within the training. Third, all trainings worked to include a representation of a diverse student veteran community. This category reflects the sixth VCT tenet, “veterans experience multiple identities at once,” (Phillips & Lincoln, 2017, p. 10). The inclusion of veterans of color, women veterans, and first-generation veteran is pivotal as it showcases the intersectionality and the complexity of student veteran identities.

RQ#3

What are the best practices designing and delivering MCC training to university faculty?

In terms of the emergent theme Best Practices, there were three categories that contributed, (1) Audience analysis, (2) Up/dated literature, and (3) Interactive approach. First, facilitators and individuals that were designing these different MCC trainings had to work to understand who their audience was and mold the content accordingly. This practice is reflected in Galbraith’s (1999) research as he stated that when training faculty, specific aspects must be included such as: critical discussion, learning check points, and knowledge assessment to set the degree high enough to challenge but not frustrate

participants. These aspects were reflected in most of the different trainings. Second, the use of current and dated literature, as the use of the most current best practice and research allows training participants to partake in a meaningful educational experience (Cross, 2004; Galbraith 1999). Third, using an interactive approach to ensure participants engage with the training material. This included role playing, avatar simulations, critical discussion, and learning check points. In addition, facilitators took on two different approaches. As Judd and Marcum (2017) stated, a training facilitator can take on two roles, “the guide on the side” or the “meddler in the middle,” Veterans as Assets and The Practical used “the guide on the side,” strategy, and The Roleplay utilized the “meddler in the middle.”

RQ#4

What are university faculty perspectives teaching student veterans?

Kirschner (2015) stated that there must be further research implemented to understand faculty perspectives of student veterans. Chapter three finding suggest that faculty study participants hold positive perspectives of student veterans. Utilizing a constructionism framework (Crotty, 2005) and VCT (Phillips & Lincoln, 2017) allowed for the examination of multiple realities constructed by faculty and the implication of those constructed realities on their professional lives and interactions with student veterans. Participants spoke about student veterans being some of their favorite students in their classroom, and how mature and hardworking they are. However, positive perspectives did not preclude challenging experiences between faculty and student veterans. These challenging experiences that resulted between student veterans and faculty stemmed from faculty not being prepared to work with student veterans. As

Barnard-Brak et al. (2011) found, faculty feel underprepared to work with student veterans in the classroom setting. This was evident as multiple faculty members spoke about realizing they were underprepared and did not have a knowledge base when it came to military culture, student veteran support needs, and facilitation strategies to improve relationships. Furthermore, Morrow and Hart (2014) suggest that the closer in proximity faculty members are to military culture, the more likely they are to be culturally aware. This proved to be true as seven out of the ten participants were military connected. The majority of these faculty participants reflected on how they use their experience being military to give them insight to military cultural knowledge and support current student veterans inside their classroom.

RQ#5

What are university faculty experiences in light of participating in an MCC training?

The majority of faculty participants reflected on how their perspective changed, specifically recognizing personal assumptions that they had of student veterans upon participating in the MCC training. The framework utilized to help answer RQ#4 was also used to answer RQ#5, as a constructionism approach allows for the examination of impacted realities based on subjective experience for an individual (Hammersley, 1992). In other words, asking the faculty participants about their experiences in light of the MCC training allowed for critical reflection to take place. These experiences resulted in job competency growth and perspective change. For example, faculty recognized assumptions that they were holding towards student veterans, reframed negative mental health narratives, and became aware of privilege that they had as an authoritative figure inside the classroom environment. In addition, as part of the fourth step of Haviland and

Rodriguez-Kiino (2009), it is clear that faculty participants had a change in knowledge from their current practices to best practices, as participants reported to feel more prepared in being able to support student veterans inside their classroom in a proper way.

MCC Competencies Needed to Teach Student Veterans

After conducting data analysis and presenting findings for the studies described in chapters 2 and 3, I can outline MCC competencies that faculty need to acquire to better serve student veterans in the classroom. These competencies find a foundation on adult learning principles and veteran's critical theory as well.

Understanding best practices to teach student veterans. For example, university faculty must be mindful of classroom policies. Classroom policies must be supportive of the reality of student veterans must be implemented. This includes flexibility, syllabus, and attendance leniency, and understanding that student veterans may be active duty, which means they need to be able to access classes in a different format that is not just face-to-face.

Learning how to foster positive relationships with student veterans. Faculty must take initiative and reach out to them on a one-on-one level and offer support. To this effect, Brookfield (2013) proposes some relevant practices which can prove helpful for university faculty. First, building self-confidence in approaching student veterans to help foster positive relationships. Second, understanding instinctive perspectives and habits by reflecting on closely held perspective towards people will assist faculty to foster relationships in an asset-based manner. Third, the ability to making timely decisions based on real life scenarios and considering professional development training

Developing an awareness of the diverse identities that student veterans have. Faculty must become cognizant of the intersectionality of identities student veterans hold. Phillips and Lincoln (2017) assert that student veterans experiences multiple identities at once. After participating in the training, faculty reported to reflect becoming aware of the diverse nature of student veterans' identities. In addition, faculty began to combat negative stereotypes such as the *wounded warrior*, which portrays the student as a deficient and broken individual.

Connections to Adult Learning

Examining praxis is powerful since faculty are often viewed as gate keepers to student veteran retention and degree success. Study participants reflected on their previous experiences teaching student veterans and conceptualized their future actions. Through experiential learning and reflection on praxis, university faculty can positively impact their student veterans. Institutions can take actionable steps to ensure accessibility to MCC trainings so that faculty can increase their job competency. Praxis refers to informed action or critical reflection when applying theory as well as dialogue and a problem-solving approach to teaching-learning (Freire, 1970; Wink, 2005). According to Wink (2005) "theory building, and critical reflection inform our practice and our action, and our practice and action inform our theory building and critical reflection" (p. 50). Participating in training as well as having the opportunity to engage in reflection, dialogue and action are essential processes so that university faculty can increase their job competency and have an informed perspective.

Participation in the study provided faculty an opportunity to reflect on past experiences, perspectives, and future action. It became evident that faculty began to

reflect on the needs of student veterans and the importance of reaching out to them as mentors and instructors. Faculty actively spoke about taking initiative because of the realization that student veterans did not participate in self-help seeking behaviors. As evident in the data, faculty voiced their desire of taking action and assuming responsibility to ensure student veteran support and foster positive relationships. In addition, there was a call for institutional action to ready faculty to work with this community of students. Todd called for higher education institutions to reframe their practices when it comes to communicating to faculty that there are specific communities of students in their classroom. He explained that if they can do that with student athletes and student that use ODS, nothing should preclude them from doing the same with student veterans. However, it is important to keep in mind the cost and challenges involved in requiring faculty to complete mandatory MCC training. In terms of readiness, some institutions and faculty members may not see the need for training or the institution may not have the required funding to provide training for all.

Experiential learning is a continuous process grounded in experience and the reflection on that experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming those experiences (Kolb, 1984). This author explained experiential learning as a cycle in which knowledge takes place through concrete experience, abstract conceptualization, and the transformation of the experience through reflective observation and active experimentation. Implementing an asset based MCC training in combination with faculty members' previous experiences working with student veterans is pivotal to the experiential learning process.

While experiential learning is often seen as informal, this type of learning can still be found within the context of a university environment to acquire the competency necessary to meet current and future work requirements (Jacobs & Park, 2009). For Blair (2005) and Blair and Chisholm (2006), life experiences (e.g., university faculty experiences teaching student veterans) are significant for real and authentic learning. Coupled with an opportunity to participate in professional development as an informative starting point, faculty may increasingly gain sensitivity and awareness to the required job competency for teaching student veterans and better understand their learning needs.

The implementation of constructionism principles and an assets-based approach to training are promising and create the space for interaction and critical thinking to take place between participants in MCC trainings. This was seen during the *Veterans as Assets* training explained in chapter 2. The multiple opportunities for faculty to interact with one another allowed for conversations to take place about their perspectives and preconceived notions of student veterans. As Hammersley (1992) suggested, reality is a social construct, but at the same time, it can be impacted by the experiences of different individuals. Therefore, faculty interreacting with student veterans and facilitators that were present in the training created an opportunity to examine stereotypes, misconceptions, and lived experiences.

Recommendations for Practice

After conducting the two research studies presented in chapters 2 and 3, I am able to outline some recommendations for practice. The stakeholders involved regarding MCC training for faculty include higher education institutions, MCC training developers, and the faculty themselves.

Higher Education Institutions

- The level of readiness to provide MCC training to faculty and the needed support to student veterans are structural issues that institutions should ponder.
- MCC training should be available year-round and work around faculty schedule and 9-month contracts instead of staff's calendar.
- MCC training should be available through different modalities (online, hybrid, face-to-face). This will provide flexibility so that the faculty can participate in training as it fits their schedule and professional development needs.
- Universities should work in collaboration with the Veterans Offices to build strong lasting relationships beneficial to both faculty and students.

MCC Training Developers

- Present an assets-based approach to eradicate faculty misconceptions of student veterans.
- Include a wide range of guest speakers and presenters to make sure there is diversity represented in the trainings.
- Design training that is progressive and allows for different levels of preparation and professional development to ensure continuity of professional development.

Faculty

- Regardless of level of military connectedness, faculty should take responsibility in supporting student veterans' reentry into education.
- Faculty who have MCC trainings available to them year around and in different types of modalities (online, hybrid, face-to-face) have a higher level of

accessibility than those whose institutions only offer the trainings at specific times and in specific manners.

- Faculty should continue the lifelong learning process through the participation of professional development trainings, such as MCC trainings.
- Faculty should take initiative in reaching out to their student veterans to ensure they have access to the support services they made need.

Challenges and Tensions

Even though study findings are presented as if there were no obstacles to completing this dissertation, there are three different challenges that had to be overcome: Circumstances around COVID-19 pandemic, Faculty openness to vulnerability, and Gaining access to the training.

Circumstances Around COVID-19 Pandemic

The worldwide COVID-19 pandemic hit at the beginning of March when I started collecting data for chapter 3. I had to reconceptualize the data collection process since face-to face interaction was no longer allowed by IRB at Texas State University. All university campuses in the United States closed their doors, and access to faculty became limited. My dissertation came to a halt when IRB requested all current protocols to be reexamined for biosafety reasons. I had to submit an amendment to my IRB even though the dissertation study had been approved before. I had to re-envision how to work and interact with my Dissertation Chair and study participants through fully online mediums.

Faculty Openness to Vulnerability

Engaging with faculty to highlight gaps in knowledge, their perspectives, and their different areas of growth was no easy feat. I had to work for years to build trust and

openness with faculty members so I could gain true insight in these areas, as nobody likes to admit that they have faults or areas to grow. I appreciate the high-level vulnerability that the study faculty participants shared with me. Their willingness to not only share their positive perspectives and experiences but speak to shortcomings and negative experiences from their past were vital in being able to provide a snapshot of what was happening between faculty members and student veterans.

Gaining Access to the Training

Originally, the expectation was to have faculty attending MCC training in person at their university campus. Once COVID-19 became a long-term situation, I had to identify a different MCC training and find participants who were willing to volunteer for participating in training and the study fully online.

In changing the plan for implementation of the study, I had to rely on the relationships I had been building throughout the previous year to gain access to a training that was fully online and affordable. Even though this situation was not ideal, the fully online option for the training became a useful tool to recruit participants knowing they did not have to participate in person and the training could be taken at any given time within a three-week period.

Future Research

As more veterans return to higher education institutions seeking a degree, future research within this area is necessary and timely. Due to the lack of research about the different identities within the student veteran community, investigating the cultural nuances of developing competency training for faculty working with women veterans, veterans of color, LGBTQIA veterans, and first-generation veterans is imperative, as their

military experiences and perspective will be different. These cultural nuances are important to examine as these different communities of student veterans often are underrepresented on the college campus, and it is important for faculty to understand they are present within the college classroom.

Beyond the scope of higher education, many questions remain on how to ready large organizations, managers, hiring professionals and individuals working within the realm of human resources to onboard veterans into the civilian workforce. While some individuals choose an entire career of military service, many veterans are transitioning into the civilian workforce. Investigating what steps civilian organizations are taking to ensure they are prepared to support their veteran employees is imperative to ensure the nation's veterans are gainfully employed, supported, and understood.

With an increasing number of veterans returning for a post-secondary degree, future research in the scope of this topic is well-timed. There is a gap in research regarding the longitudinal impact MCC training has on faculty members best practices in facilitation and supporting student veterans inside the classroom. This includes examining faculty and student veteran relationships upon completion of MCC trainings and investigating the active implementation of new job competency skills acquired from the MCC training. It is imperative to understand what the impact is of MCC trainings, not only to help enhance MCC faculty development programs, but to ensure faculty preparation and awareness.

Concluding Thoughts

I am hopeful that this research will be utilized as an argument to ensure all higher education institutions implement mandatory MCC training programs for their faculty.

The findings from Chapter 2 have the possibility to serve as a national guideline for MCC training developers to utilize when creating MCC trainings as there are no current guidelines to adhere to. However, as evident in the findings, participation in an MCC training pushed faculty to critically reflect on their past experiences and perspectives on current and future student veterans. Overall, it is my ultimate hope to create awareness on the need for MCC training to become mandatory for faculty, so they gain familiarity and knowledge related to military culture and the student veteran's experience.

This dissertation journey was conceptualized from the first pilot study that I conducted the first year of my Ph.D. program. This pilot study focused on faculty and student veteran relationships. These findings brought forth a gap in how faculty perceived themselves interacting with this community of student veterans, and student veterans reporting that they distrusted faculty and believed they were underprepared to support them. Two other pilot studies followed, how faculty members were being prepared work with this community of students and faculty perspectives of student veterans. Two collective realizations came from these studies. First there was a gap in understanding the protocol, characteristics, and best practices of current MCC trainings available for faculty. In other words, there was no collective documentation available regarding the trainings that institutions utilize. Second, there was a gap in literature regarding faculty perspectives teaching student veterans. Despite the large number of professional development programs available to faculty, there was yet to be literature on the experiences that faculty have participating in an MCC training. After much discussion, both my chair and I realized while these studies were different, they coincided with each other. Thus, the two-article dissertation was conceptualized.

As a member of the military connected community and someone who recently watched her little brother begin his service as a Second Lieutenant, this topic is close to my heart. I want this work to have a far enough reach and to serve as the catalyst for faculty and institutions to take action in preparing for returning service members and their families. I aspire that when my brother and my extended veteran and military connected community chooses to return for another degree, they will have the confidence that they will be treated with respect, support, and have faculty that are ready to work with them.

Through this research, I was able to offer meticulous descriptions of the MCC trainings that are being utilized to prepare faculty to work with student veterans. I was also able to report on faculty experiences and perspectives teaching student veterans. This work should serve as an eye opener to facilitators of MCC trainings and higher education institutions, as there is clearly room for improvement. My intention was to help inform stakeholders on either reinforcing best practices that they are already implementing or help them identify how MCC trainings can be more assets-based and take on a holistic approach. While there are faculty that most likely hold negative perspectives of student veterans, I believe we have misrepresented and overgeneralized this case. Instead, I believe that there are a high number of faculty that are underprepared and are not culturally competent when it comes to the military environment, and as a result, negative experiences happen.

While this dissertation has come to an end, the work in this scope of research has just begun. Being able to create effective, assets-based trainings to increase faculty job competency and inform their perspectives remains a timely concern as the number of

returning veterans will continue to increase. I call on institutions to snap to attention and understand that they cannot just offer services and trainings geared to traditional students. The times are changing, the number of post traditional students are rising, and institutions and faculty alike must be held accountable in providing effective support and facilitation strategies to these communities. This research has truly been a work of love and will continue to serve as one of my main passions in the constant fight for equity, diversity, and educational access.

APPENDIX SECTION

APPENDIX A

RELEVANT TERMS

Student Veteran

Student who served 90 days or longer in the military who has been honorably discharged, using the post 9/11 G.I Bill and is currently at a post-secondary institution.

Military Connected Competency Training

Faculty development training that focuses on military competencies, veteran transitions, veteran experiences, and veteran support needs.

Veteran Friendly

Maintaining a SOC membership, offering the Yellow Ribbon Program, fostering an institutional cultural which is supportive, appreciative, respectful, embracing, and inclusive of the veterans it educates.

Perspective

The beliefs faculty members hold towards the student veteran community

Post 9/11 G.I Bill

A military benefit that covers tuition and expenses at institutions of higher education for honorably discharged veterans, their spouses, and children (Gonzales & Elliott, 2016)

Praxis

Reflection and action directed at the structures to be transformed (Freire, 1970)

APPENDIX B

EXECUTIVE ORDER

Executive Order -- Establishing Principles of Excellence for Educational Institutions Serving Service Members, Veterans, Spouses, and Other Family Members

EXECUTIVE ORDER

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ESTABLISHING PRINCIPLES OF EXCELLENCE FOR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS SERVING SERVICE MEMBERS, VETERANS, SPOUSES, AND OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, and in order to ensure that Federal military and veterans educational benefits programs are providing service members, veterans, spouses, and other family members with the information, support, and protections they deserve, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. Policy. The original GI Bill, approved just weeks after D-Day, educated nearly 8 million Americans and helped transform this Nation. We owe the same obligations to this generation of service men and women as was afforded that previous one. This is the promise of the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 (title V, Public Law 110-252) (Post-9/11 GI Bill) and the continued provision of educational benefits in the Department of Defense's Tuition Assistance Program (10 U.S.C. 2007): to provide our service members, veterans, spouses, and other family members the opportunity to pursue a high-quality education and gain the skills and training they need to fill the jobs of tomorrow.

Since the Post-9/11 GI Bill became law, there have been reports of aggressive and deceptive targeting of service members, veterans, and their families by some educational institutions. For example, some institutions have recruited veterans with serious brain injuries and emotional vulnerabilities without providing academic support and counseling; encouraged service members and veterans to take out costly institutional loans rather than encouraging them to apply for Federal student loans first; engaged in misleading recruiting practices on military installations; and failed to disclose meaningful information that allows potential students to determine whether the institution has a good record of graduating service members, veterans, and their families and positioning them for success in the workforce.

To ensure our service members, veterans, spouses, and other family members have the information they need to make informed decisions concerning their well-earned Federal military and veterans educational benefits, I am directing my Administration to develop Principles of Excellence to strengthen oversight, enforcement, and accountability within these benefits programs.

Sec. 2. Principles of Excellence for Educational Institutions Serving Service Members, Veterans, Spouses, and Other Family Members. The Departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs, and Education shall establish Principles of Excellence (Principles) to apply to educational institutions receiving funding from Federal military and veterans educational benefits programs, including benefits programs provided by the Post-9/11 GI Bill and the Tuition Assistance Program. The Principles should ensure that these educational institutions provide meaningful information to service members, veterans, spouses, and other family members about the financial cost and quality of educational institutions to assist those prospective students in making choices about how to use their Federal educational benefits; prevent abusive and deceptive recruiting practices that target the recipients of Federal military and veterans educational benefits; and ensure that educational institutions provide high-quality academic and student support services to active-duty service members, reservists, members of the National Guard, veterans, and military families. To the extent permitted by law, the Principles, implemented pursuant to section 3 of this order, should require educational institutions receiving funding pursuant to Federal military and veterans educational benefits to:

- (a) prior to enrollment, provide prospective students who are eligible to receive Federal military and veterans educational benefits with a personalized and standardized form, as developed in a manner set forth by the Secretary of Education, working with the Secretaries of Defense and Veterans Affairs, to help those prospective students understand the total cost of the educational program, including tuition and fees; the amount of that cost that will be covered by Federal educational benefits; the type and amount of financial aid they may qualify for; their estimated student loan debt upon graduation; information about student outcomes; and other information to facilitate comparison of aid packages offered by different educational institutions;
- (b) inform students who are eligible to receive Federal military and veterans educational benefits of the availability of Federal financial aid and have in place policies to alert those students of their potential eligibility for that aid before packaging or arranging private student loans or alternative financing programs;
- (c) end fraudulent and unduly aggressive recruiting techniques on and off military installations, as well as misrepresentation, payment of incentive compensation, and failure to meet State authorization requirements, consistent with the regulations issued by the Department of Education (34 C.F.R. 668.71-668.75, 668.14, and 600.9);
- (d) obtain the approval of the institution's accrediting agency for new course or program offerings before enrolling students in such courses or programs, provided that such approval is appropriate under the substantive change requirements of the accrediting agency;

(e) allow service members and reservists to be readmitted to a program if they are temporarily unable to attend class or have to suspend their studies due to service requirements, and take additional steps to accommodate short absences due to service obligations, provided that satisfactory academic progress is being made by the service members and reservists prior to suspending their studies;

(f) agree to an institutional refund policy that is aligned with the refund of unearned student aid rules applicable to Federal student aid provided through the Department of Education under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as required under section 484B of that Act when students withdraw prior to course completion;

(g) provide educational plans for all individuals using Federal military and veterans educational benefits that detail how they will fulfill all the requirements necessary to graduate and the expected timeline of completion; and

(h) designate a point of contact for academic and financial advising (including access to disability counseling) to assist service member and veteran students and their families with the successful completion of their studies and with their job searches.

Sec. 3. Implementation of the Principles of Excellence.

(a) The Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs shall reflect the Principles described in section 2 of this order in new agreements with educational institutions, to the extent practicable and permitted by law, concerning participation in the Yellow Ribbon Program for veterans under the Post-9/11 GI Bill or the Tuition Assistance Program for active duty service members. The Department of Veterans Affairs shall also notify all institutions participating in the Post-9/11 GI Bill program that they are strongly encouraged to comply with the Principles and shall post on the Department's website those that do.

(b) The Secretaries of Defense, Veterans Affairs, and Education, in consultation with the Director of the Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection (CFPB) and the Attorney General, shall take immediate action to implement this order, and, within 90 days from the date of this order, report to the President their progress on implementation, including promptly revising regulations, Department of Defense Instructions, guidance documents, Memoranda of Understanding, and other policies governing programs authorized or funded by the Post-9/11 GI Bill and the Tuition Assistance Program to implement the Principles, to the extent permitted by law.

(c) The Secretaries of Defense, Veterans Affairs, and Education shall develop a comprehensive strategy for developing service member and veteran student outcome measures that are comparable, to the maximum extent practicable, across Federal military and veterans educational benefit programs, including, but not limited to, the Post-9/11 GI Bill and the Tuition Assistance Program. To the extent practicable, the student outcome measures should rely on existing administrative data to minimize the reporting burden on institutions participating in these benefit programs. The student outcome measures should permit comparisons across Federal educational

programs and across institutions and types of institutions. The Secretary of Education, in consultation with the Secretaries of Defense and Veterans Affairs, shall also collect from educational institutions, as part of the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System and other data collection systems, information on the amount of funding received pursuant to the Post-9/11 GI Bill and the Tuition Assistance Program. The Secretary of Education shall make this information publicly available on the College Navigator Website.

(d) The Secretary of Veterans Affairs, in consultation with the Secretaries of Defense and Education, shall provide to prospective military and veteran students, prior to using their benefits, streamlined tools to compare educational institutions using key measures of affordability and value through the Department of Veterans Affairs' eBenefits portal. The eBenefits portal shall be updated to facilitate access to school performance information, consumer protection information, and key Federal financial aid documents. The Secretaries of Defense and Veterans Affairs shall also ensure that service members and veterans have access to that information through educational counseling offered by those Departments.

Sec. 4. Strengthening Enforcement and Compliance Mechanisms. Service members, veterans, spouses, and other family members should have access to a strong enforcement system through which to file complaints when institutions fail to follow the Principles. Within 90 days of the date of this order, the Secretaries of Defense and Veterans Affairs, in consultation with the Secretary of Education and the Director of the CFPB, as well as with the Attorney General, as appropriate, shall submit to the President a plan to strengthen enforcement and compliance mechanisms. The plan shall include proposals to:

(a) create a centralized complaint system for students receiving Federal military and veterans educational benefits to register complaints that can be tracked and responded to by the Departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs, Justice, and Education, the CFPB, and other relevant agencies;

(b) institute uniform procedures for receiving and processing complaints across the State Approving Agencies (SAAs) that work with the Department of Veterans Affairs to review participating institutions, provide a coordinated mechanism across SAAs to alert the Department of Veterans Affairs to any complaints that have been registered at the State level, and create procedures for sharing information about complaints with the appropriate State officials, accrediting agency representatives, and the Secretary of Education;

(c) institute uniform procedures for referring potential matters for civil or criminal enforcement to the Department of Justice and other relevant agencies;

(d) establish procedures for targeted risk-based program reviews of institutions to ensure compliance with the Principles;

(e) establish new uniform rules and strengthen existing procedures for access to military installations by educational institutions. These new rules should ensure, at a minimum, that only those institutions that enter into a memorandum of agreement pursuant to section 3(a) of this order are permitted entry onto a Federal military installation for the purposes of recruitment. The Department of Defense shall include specific steps for instructing installation commanders on commercial solicitation rules and the requirement of the Principles outlined in section 2(c) of this order; and

(f) take all appropriate steps to ensure that websites and programs are not deceptively and fraudulently marketing educational services and benefits to program beneficiaries, including initiating a process to protect the term “GI Bill” and other military or veterans-related terms as trademarks, as appropriate.

Sec. 5. General Provisions. (a) This order shall be implemented consistent with applicable law and subject to the availability of appropriations.

(b) Nothing in this order shall be construed to impair or otherwise affect:

(i) the authority granted by law to an executive department, agency, or the head thereof; or

(ii) the functions of the Director of the Office of Management and Budget relating to budgetary, administrative, or legislative proposals.

(c) This order is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

BARACK OBAMA

APPENDIX C

INQUIRY LETTER

Dear XYZ,

My name is Sierra Sullivan. I serve as a Doctoral Research Assistant, and I am currently in the dissertation phase of my doctoral degree within the Adult, Professional, and Community Education Doctoral Program at Texas State University. My dissertation focuses on the impact of military cultural competency programming on the faculty perspectives teaching student veterans.

I come from a military connected family and having previously worked in veteran suicide prevention program have provided me with significant qualification to take on this dissertation topic. In addition, I have worked with post-secondary institutions, Veteran Offices, and have served as an outside contributor to institutional programming geared towards student veterans' transition into higher education. In addition, as part of my PhD study endeavors, I have completed two case studies focusing on student-veterans in higher education.

There is a gap in research regarding faculty perceptions of student veterans' and the impact military competency training has on positively impacting these perceptions (O' Herinn, 2011). Student-veteran's form their relationships with faculty based on the level of respect they perceive from faculty (Patillo, 2011; Barnard-Brak, Bagby, Jones, and Sulak, 2011). Faculty members often have limited training, experience, and understanding of student-veterans (Doe, 2016; Vacchi, 2015). According to Student Veterans of America (2013), 72% of veterans reported their plans of using their educational benefits to obtain a degree in higher education. With these statistics in mind, universities should expect an increase in student veteran populations and should prepare their faculty accordingly. The proposed dissertation study attempts to fill the gaps in the literature and document what a leading institution such as XXXX are doing serving as a role model for other institutions to follow.

I believe the benefits to a possible collaboration are three-fold: First, your university would benefit through documenting their program success through a systematic data collection and analysis utilizing innovative qualitative research tools (e.g., Q-method and conversational interviews). Through Q-Method, I plan to collect data to chronicle individual and group perspectives of faculty working with student veterans. Second, I can serve as a resource for your university through identifying relevant resources, adult learning theories, and serving as support in other areas you may see fit. Third, upon completion of my dissertation, this research may provide opportunities for future collaboration.

The noticeable effort that your university has taken in training your faculty to develop military connected job competency is worthy of recognition. I would be grateful to be considered for an opportunity to study the success of this faculty development program at your institution.

Respectfully,

Sierra Sullivan

APPENDIX D

OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

Date:

Time:

Training Name:

Length of Training:

Introduction

Setting of training? Number of participants? How was the training created? Purpose of training? Overview of topic? Introduction to why this is important. Deficit or Asset-based deficit? Type of instruction? Type of training (PowerPoint? Interactive online?) Was outline given to give overview? Veteran influence? Learning objective outlined?

Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes
<p>Time spent:</p> <p>Topics:</p> <p>Did instructor address above questions? How?</p> <p>Was focus of training established? How?</p>	

Presentation

Deficit or Asset-Based focused? What topics were covered? Overview of veteran needs? Overview of veteran transition? Student veteran experiences? Military structure? Support skills? Overview of benefits? Activity? Type of facilitation of training? Questions posed by participant? Role-Playing? Reflection? Learning Competency?

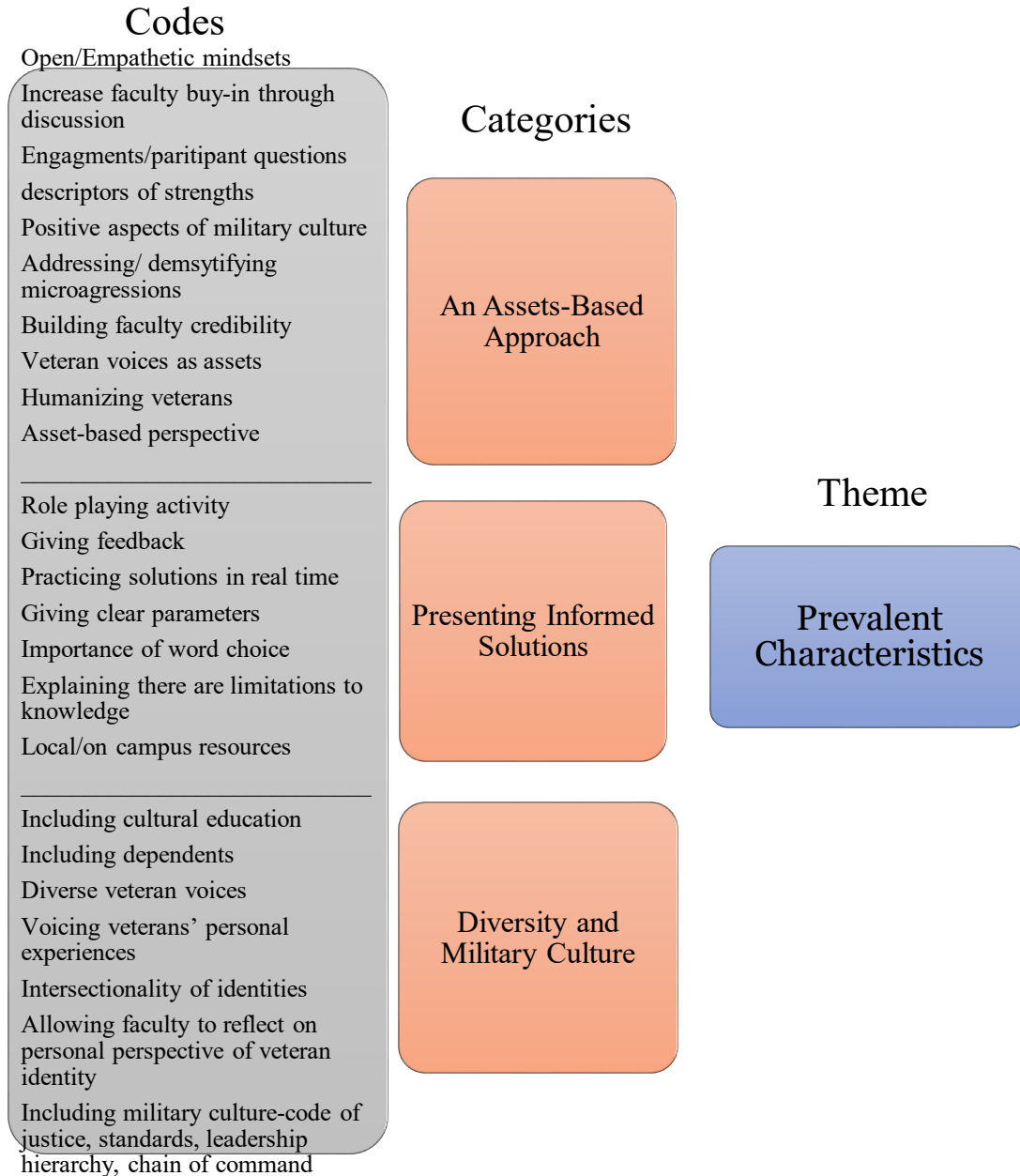
Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes
<p>Time spent:</p> <p>Topics:</p> <p>Did instructor address above questions? How?</p> <p>Content focus? How?</p>	

Closing

Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes
Time spent:	
Topics:	
Did instructor give practical application examples for topics covered?	
How?	
Content focus?	
How?	

APPENDIX E

EMERGENT CODES, CATEGORIES, AND THEMES



Codes

Aware of audience being faculty
duration of training
Ability to fit into schedule
Generating faculty-buy in
Limited previous experience
Clear Communication
Distilling information
Participant engagement
Role-playing
Giving clear feedback

Convoluted statements
Dated research
Wrong terminology
"Female"
Diminishes credibility
What veterans look for

In-person or online
Interactive
Role playing
Discussion
Handouts
Q&A
Capturing attention
Limited cell phone use
Duration of time
Learning check/competency checks
Online interaction

Categories

Audience Analysis

Up/Dated Literature

Interactive Approach

Theme

Best Practices

Portraying deviancy
Talking about killing

Codes

Violence
Friendly firing
No trigger warning
No graphic content warning
Shocking statements
Negatively positioning veterans
Generalizing statements
Tense environment
Tension
Negative audience reactions
Counterproductive to goal

Situating student veterans in negative light
Not presenting counter narratives
Generalizing negative experiences
Lack of academic readiness
Gap in academics
Essentialized veterans
Put student veterans in deficit perspective
Victimized veterans

Convoluting messaging
Poor time management
Oversimplifying general information
Getting off track on the messaging
Too many presenters at once
Too complex information at once
Unrealistic scenarios
Confusing format
Purpose of training is unclear

Categories

Shock Value
Statements

Deficit
Approach

Misleading
Information &
Fluff

Theme

Challenges and
Tensions

APPENDIX F
MCC TRAINING TRANSCRIPT

15 Things Every Veteran Wants You to Know Transcript

Welcome to 15 things veterans want you
00:07 to know my name is Dr. Heidi Craft. I'm a
00:10 clinical psychologist and the Clinical
00:12 Director at PsychArmor Institute. I am a
00:15 Navy Veteran, and I spent nine years on
00:17 active duty in the Navy and deployed to
00:19 Iraq in 2004 with a Marine Corps
00:22 surgical company. I'm very pleased to be
00:25 here today to introduce a new way of
00:27 thinking about military culture. America
00:32 is a country made up of people from
00:34 countless different cultural backgrounds.
00:36 Certainly, it's part of what makes us
00:38 great. For some time now people have been
00:40 trying to understand what it means to be
00:42 military culturally competent. The military is a
00:44 culture just like any other. Military
00:47 people like those from any culture have
00:49 certain beliefs practice certain rituals
00:52 and traditions and hold fast to certain
00:54 ideals that shape who they are as a
00:57 group of people. In order to bridge the
00:59 gap between non-military Americans and
01:02 those who wear the uniform of their
01:03 country, military cultural competence is

01:06 an important first step. So what are the
01:09 most important parts of a culture to
01:11 understand? Well we went to the source. We
01:14 asked our veterans. We asked thousands of
01:17 American veterans what is one thing you
01:19 would want your doctor nurse therapists
01:22 employer anyone in your life really
01:24 who's trying to understand you to know
01:26 about you. This course is based on their
01:29 top 15 answers.
01:32 First and foremost, you should ask a very important
01:35 question, "Did you serve in the military?"
01:37 It matters and it begins the
01:40 conversation. You see, in the military we
01:42 have our own history and our own
01:44 language. In fact, if you listen to
01:47 military people talk it's truly as if
01:50 they're speaking a different language. We
01:52 have very specific traditions and they
01:54 are richly written throughout history
01:56 they often tell you who we are. For
01:58 instance at a ball game when the
02:00 national anthem is played you'll see
02:02 military people standing at attention
02:04 even long after they've left active duty.
02:07 We take pride in our sacrifices and
02:09 sometimes we feel like people who
02:11 haven't lived our lives can't understand.
02:13 So asking "did you serve in the military?"
02:17 is a great way to begin a conversation

02:19 and to engage a veteran. As an
02:22 active-duty marine said, “we are not like
02:24 you, the veteran and his family are tough
02:27 but have the biggest heart and have gone
02:29 through huge sacrifices and a broad
02:32 spectrum of emotions many times.” Knowing
02:35 that please start the conversation ask a
02:38 person if he or she served. If the answer
02:41 is yes let's move on to the 15 things
02:45 veterans want you to know. Number one, we
02:51 are not all soldiers. This is a big one
02:54 for military people and if there is one
02:56 thing to take away from this course it
02:58 would be this while many people
03:00 including those in the media talk about
03:02 military personnel they refer to
03:05 soldiers as a general term. This is not
03:08 correct.
03:08 Soldiers are only in the Army. There are
03:12 four other branches in the Armed
03:13 Services and they are very different.
03:15 They have different missions and even
03:18 different subcultures. Although we are
03:20 all part of that same larger team
03:22 military people are proud of their
03:24 specific service branches.
03:26 Very importantly you do not need to know
03:29 specifics about what the Coast Guard
03:31 does or what the ranking structure of
03:33 the Air Force is or what you call a

03:35 person in the Navy. You don't need to
03:37 know why the Marines mission is
03:39 different from the Army's but knowing
03:42 that these five branches are different
03:44 is the first and important step to
03:47 military cultural awareness. So this
03:49 leads us to an important follow-up
03:51 question. If a person answers yes he or
03:54 she served the next question should be
03:55 "which branch?" Asking this question
03:58 demonstrates that you know the
04:00 difference between the five branches. I
04:02 guaranteed this earns you instant
04:05 credibility with that veteran and it
04:07 keeps the conversation going which is
04:09 the whole point. Number two, the reserves
04:13 are part of the military. There are two
04:16 ways to serve in uniform in our country.
04:18 One is active duty, in which case your
04:21 full-time job is putting on the uniform
04:22 and fulfilling your role in the Armed
04:25 Forces everyday. The other way is the
04:27 reserves. These are people who train and
04:30 stay ready to be called up if they're
04:32 needed. Members of the reserves who are
04:35 seen in every branch train together one
04:37 weekend a month and two weeks a year.
04:39 When not in uniform they go back to
04:41 their civilian jobs in their communities
04:43 and they will be called to help when our

04:46 country needs them either to augment a
04:48 national defense related mission or
04:51 sometimes in the case of the National
04:53 Guard to help in domestic national or
04:55 local emergencies where additional
04:57 support is required. When reservists are
04:59 mobilized and deployed they come home
05:01 from their deployments and go right back
05:03 to their civilian communities but often
05:06 they don't have the same support or
05:08 resources as an active-duty person does
05:10 When they return this can cause a
05:12 significant amount of additional stress
05:14 on military reservists and their family.
05:19 Number three, not everyone in the
05:21 military is infantry. When we think of
05:23 the classic generic version of the
05:25 military person we definitely think of
05:27 infantry. This is an image probably fed
05:30 through our culture from the time we're
05:31 young but the truth is the range of what
05:34 people do in the military is truly
05:35 remarkable
05:36 We are expertly trained in literally
05:38 hundreds of jobs from mechanics cooks
05:41 pilots and sailors to divers
05:44 administrators, doctors, musicians to
05:48 weapons specialists military police
05:50 firefighters and air traffic controllers.
05:53 We operate maintain and fix all types of

05:57 weapons, such as aircraft sea vessels vehicles
06:00 equipment and machinery. Knowing this the
06:03 third important question task after
06:05 learning a person served and in which
06:07 branch would be what did you do during
06:09 your service, ask “what was your job”
06:12 shows that you know there are many
06:14 different things a military person could
06:16 have been trained to do. It's an
06:17 acknowledgement or a validation of that
06:19 person's training and skills and how
06:22 hard he or she has worked to be an
06:24 expert at that job. It also demonstrates
06:26 that you understand each individual job
06:28 is vital to the overall execution of the
06:31 military's mission. This will help you to
06:33 consider the impact of different
06:34 occupations might have physically and
06:36 mentally in order to be sensitive to
06:38 that in conversation. As one veteran
06:40 explains “our bodies are pounded daily by
06:44 the time I hit retirement age I will
06:46 have lost several inches off my height
06:48 due to daily stress.” Number four we have
06:51 leaders at every level in the chain of
06:53 command.
06:54 Almost immediately out of basic or
06:56 officer training military people are
06:57 responsible for those that work for and
07:00 with them and there's a sense of real

07:02 leadership that's engendered taught and
07:04 truly embraced all the way down to the
07:06 lowest level of the chain of command and
07:08 all the way up to the highest leadership.
07:10 This is a very important factor in military
07:12 service, those who wear the uniform feel
07:15 responsible for others and accountable
07:17 to others and this is a large part of
07:19 the pride we take.

07:21 Number five we are always on duty. In the
07:24 military there are no days off even when
07:27 a person is on leave we can be called
07:29 back at a moment's notice. If the unit is
07:31 getting ready to deploy or in the case
07:33 an unexpected mission demand, so even
07:35 when we're on vacation we're not really
07:37 on vacation. Here's a quote from a Coast
07:39 Guardsman, "I am always on call,
07:41 I can never plan a vacation because an
07:44 operation can come up at the last minute
07:45 work schedules are pretty tough at times."

07:48 Number six, we take pride in our
07:51 appearance and in our conduct. Military
07:53 people take appearance conduct and
07:55 physical fitness very seriously even out
07:57 of uniform.

07:58 We're held to a standard with regard to
08:00 how we look physical fitness matters in
08:02 a real way we need to train so that when
08:05 we're called were ready to accomplish

08:07 that mission. Likewise, we're responsible
08:09 for maintaining a standard of conduct. In
08:11 fact active duty people are held to an
08:13 actual Code of Military Justice. It's a
08:16 set of rules that governs military
08:18 people and we can be charged with crimes
08:20 based on these rules and held
08:22 accountable in court.
08:23 Some people have perceptions about
08:25 military people that maybe they're rigid
08:27 based on the way they look. In fact, we
08:29 like to think of ourselves not as rigid
08:31 but as proud. Simply stated this is just
08:34 the way we've been brought up and we
08:36 believe that these standards have a
08:37 purpose. Number seven we did not all kill
08:41 someone and those who have do not want
08:43 to talk about it. This one doesn't need a
08:45 lot of commentary. Unfortunately, this is
08:47 a question that gets asked of our
08:48 military veterans far too often. I
08:50 realize people are just curious but I
08:53 hope this course will educate you to
08:55 realize that this is not a question any
08:57 military veteran wants to be asked
08:59 whether he or she has lived through this
09:01 or hasn't. It's not a question that
09:03 should be asked of military veterans
09:04 please don't ask us that
09:06 ever.

09:07 Number eight, we do not all have PTSD.
09:10 There's a general perception that anyone
09:13 who deployed to combat develops PTSD and
09:16 that's just not true. A vast majority of
09:18 veterans including combat veterans do
09:20 not go on to develop post-traumatic
09:22 stress disorder. Some people might have
09:24 symptoms in the acute aftermath of any
09:27 kind of trauma but then experience a
09:29 natural recovery process. This is also
09:31 true for combat. While combat can
09:33 certainly be very traumatic it can also
09:36 lead to great moments of reward and
09:38 friendship and love. Number nine, those of
09:41 us who do have an invisible wound are
09:42 not dangerous and we are not violent.
09:44 Invisible wounds of war including
09:46 post-traumatic stress disorder traumatic
09:49 brain injury depression and substance
09:51 use disorder are not obvious to someone
09:54 looking at a veteran but they are real
09:56 injuries causing real suffering and they
09:59 deserve the same respect and treatment
10:00 as physical injuries. The media has
10:02 created a bias that insinuates those
10:04 with PTSD might be violent this is not
10:07 true. Those of us with invisible wounds
10:09 of war may be injured but we are not
10:11 violent. Number 10 it is really hard for
10:15 us to ask for help. The military culture

10:17 is based in service sacrifice and
10:19 helping or even rescuing others. It is
10:23 others based and historically has not
10:25 valued self-care or help-seeking
10:28 behavior. There's an expectation of
10:30 mission accomplishment even at personal
10:32 cost because of this long-standing
10:33 cultural bias reaching out for help for
10:36 ourselves is difficult for military
10:39 people. Some veterans view asking for
10:41 help as a sign of weakness. It also takes
10:43 a great level of trust for a veteran to
10:45 allow him or herself to be vulnerable
10:47 please have patience and don't give up
10:50 on us.
10:51 Number eleven, our military service
10:54 changes us. That change is permanent and
10:57 that's okay. We wouldn't expect anything
10:59 else like I said it's a culture with its
11:02 own traditions, rituals, language,
11:05 Standards, expectations, stigma, wonderful
11:08 Moments, and horrible moments. It's
11:10 unreasonable to think that a person will
11:13 go through those experiences and be
11:15 unchanged. Number twelve we differ in how
11:18 much we identify with the military after
11:20 we leave active duty. As in any culture
11:22 some people find themselves truly
11:24 defined by their service and their
11:26 association with the military. Others

11:28 consider it part of their past and move
11:29 on from it. If I'm getting to know a
11:31 veteran I like to ask these questions
11:33 "how has your military service shaped you?"
11:36 "how does it factor into how you define
11:38 yourself now?" Again there's instant
11:40 credibility in those questions as it
11:42 gives us a chance to see that you
11:43 understand. We are all different both
11:46 while we serve and after we serve. Number
11:49 13 our families serve with us. Military
11:52 families have some of the most
11:53 challenging jobs in the world. They're
11:55 subject to frequent separation from
11:57 their loved ones and moving from place
11:59 to place sometimes every 2 or 3 years.
12:01 It's difficult to establish schools for
12:04 the kids or jobs for the spouses then
12:06 the service member comes back from
12:07 deployment and wants to take back some
12:09 of those responsibilities that he or she
12:11 used to have and the spouse feels like
12:13 you know I've really got this process
12:14 down I know what I'm doing now. All of
12:17 this requires flexibility, bravery,
12:19 strength, and resilience. Anyone who knows
12:22 a military family knows that all those
12:25 words define us. Number 14 we would die
12:29 for each other and we would die for our
12:30 country. We would and we do. It doesn't

12:33 matter where we fight, the geographical
12:35 location, or the technologic or political
12:37 backdrop. It doesn't matter what the
12:39 mission is or who's in charge of the
12:41 country why we fight has always been the
12:43 same from the very beginning it's about
12:45 the people to our left and our right and
12:48 any military person will
12:50 tell you that. The people with whom we serve
12:52 become brothers and sisters to us and we
12:55 would die for them and we do and we
12:57 would not change that culture of
12:59 sacrifice for the world. Number fifteen
13:03 we've all made the sacrifice for one
13:05 reason to serve something more important
13:07 than ourselves. When it comes down to it
13:10 this defines our culture people who
13:12 choose to serve in uniform and who sign
13:14 on that line saying they will make that
13:16 sacrifice. They live by a certain code
13:18 and we like to say it's honor and
13:21 commitment and duty. Most of all though
13:23 these are people who make a choice we've
13:25 all chosen to serve something larger
13:27 than ourselves more important than
13:29 ourselves. That's a unique and special
13:32 piece of military culture that runs
13:34 through everything and everyone who's
13:36 part of it we are choosing the concept
13:39 of service. In summary, asking the right

13:42 questions gives you credibility and
13:44 brings you closer to the veterans in
13:46 your lives. It opens the door for a
13:48 better understanding of our experiences
13:50 and our military culture. When you meet
13:52 someone you think might be a veteran ask
13:54 “did you serve in the military?” “which
13:57 branch?” “what job did you do in the
13:59 Military?” The military is a complicated
14:01 culture and you do not have to know a
14:02 lot of details about the military in
14:04 order to show some military cultural
14:06 awareness to bridge that gap between
14:09 yourself and the veterans in your life.
14:11 We hope this course has taught you a few
14:13 important things that veterans want you
14:16 to know. We're not all soldiers, the
14:18 reserves are a vital part of the
14:20 military,
14:21 not everyone in the military is infantry,
14:23 there are hundreds of specific jobs
14:25 people perform, leadership is very
14:27 important and veterans have a heightened
14:29 sense of responsibility for and to
14:32 others. We are always on duty, we take
14:34 pride in our appearance and our conduct
14:36 we did not all kill someone and those
14:39 who have do not want to talk about it. We
14:41 do not all have PTSD those of us who do
14:44 have an invisible wound are not

14:45 dangerous and not violent. It's really
14:48 hard for us to ask for help we're used
14:50 to putting others and the mission before
14:52 ourselves, our military service changed
14:56 us. That change is permanent and that's
14:58 okay,
14:59 we all differ in how much we identify
15:01 with the military after we leave active
15:03 duty, our families served with us
15:06 military families have some of the most
15:08 challenging jobs in the world,
15:10 we would die for each other and for our
15:12 country. We've all made the sacrifice for
15:14 one reason, to serve something more
15:17 important than ourselves. Thank you so
15:19 much for taking the time to take this
15:21 course I hope that this was helpful in
15:24 better understanding military culture
15:27 and our nation's veterans on behalf of
15:30 them all thank you.

APPENDIX G

Q-SORT STATEMENTS AND INSTRUCTIONS

This is a research exercise to rank order your professional and personal opinions. You will be presented with 23 statements reflecting different views from the literature about faculty working with student veterans. Please read the directions and classify the statements in the five boxes provided below. Focus your reflection on answering the following guiding question. There are no right or wrong answers.

To what extent do you agree with the list of statements as they relate to working with student veterans?

Read the statement carefully and reflect on how you feel as a educator in relation to the statement.

Drag and drop each statement into one of the boxes provided based on how passionately you feel about them (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). All 23 statements should be used, and a maximum of 5 statements are allowed per box.

Within each box, organize your statements in the ranking order you desire, with 1 being the highest and 5 being the lowest in how passionately you feel about them (due to there only being 23 statements and 5 boxes, there won't be 5 statements in every single box, but there can only be a maximum of 5). You will see a ranking number on the item once you drag it in the box.

Please keep in mind there are no right or wrong answers. I am just interested in documenting your opinions.

Once complete, click the brown arrow button to submit.

<p>Student veterans feel there are specific questions that faculty and civilian students should never ask.</p> <p>A</p>	<p>Professors perspective on military history that departs significantly from student veterans first-hand experience is a welcomed classroom discussion.</p> <p>B</p>	<p>How a student veteran identifies with the military is on a person-by-person basis.</p> <p>C</p>	<p>Some students could still actively be serving in the military.</p> <p>D</p>
<p>Faculty that are aware of military culture hold more credibility with student veterans.</p> <p>E</p>	<p>It is more likely than not that student veterans have some kind of mental or physical trauma from their prior military experience.</p> <p>F</p>	<p>All student-veterans are transitioning into college from a warzone and are considered soldiers.</p> <p>G</p>	<p>Student-veterans are considered great students as they show leadership, teamwork, and time management skills.</p> <p>H</p>
<p>Faculty are unfamiliar with the actual challenges faced by student veterans.</p> <p>I</p>	<p>It is important that all faculty and staff enter into a military connected cultural competency training to improve student veterans' experiences on the college campus.</p> <p>J</p>	<p>Student-veterans struggle to construct their own professional/academic goals and identify steps to complete it.</p> <p>K</p>	<p>The G.I Bill is a benefit that all student-veterans have, and is a mechanism that flags veterans during the admission process.</p> <p>L</p>

<p>Student veterans who experience combat have PTSD.</p> <p>M</p>	<p>Student-veterans lack assistance-seeking behaviors essential to their academic and professional success in higher education.</p> <p>N</p>	<p>Student-veterans reject the idea of individuality, and thrive in the collective idea of self, which calls for commitment to each other.</p> <p>O</p>	<p>The military culture is based in service and sacrifice. It is others based.</p> <p>P</p>
<p>Veterans have their ultimate and subset of objectives determined by their superior, with specifics tasks to be accomplished with urgency, meaning ambiguity and syllabus due date movement is a difficult barrier.</p> <p>Q</p>	<p>Military culture holds certain beliefs and values that may depart from the cultural norm of civilians. Military culture plays a role in shaping student veterans' identity and behaviors.</p> <p>R</p>	<p>It is important for faculty to have a general understanding of which branch a student veteran served in.</p> <p>S</p>	<p>Student-veterans require a holistic support system at a university.</p> <p>T</p>
<p>While reciprocal in nature, it is primarily student veterans who experience and suffer from the negative consequences of a misunderstanding between faculty and themselves.</p> <p>U</p>	<p>Understanding military culture is a key to better supporting the student veteran within the classroom.</p> <p>V</p>	<p>Student veterans who experience invisible wounds of war may be violent.</p> <p>W</p>	

APPENDIX H

CONVERSATIONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Participant :

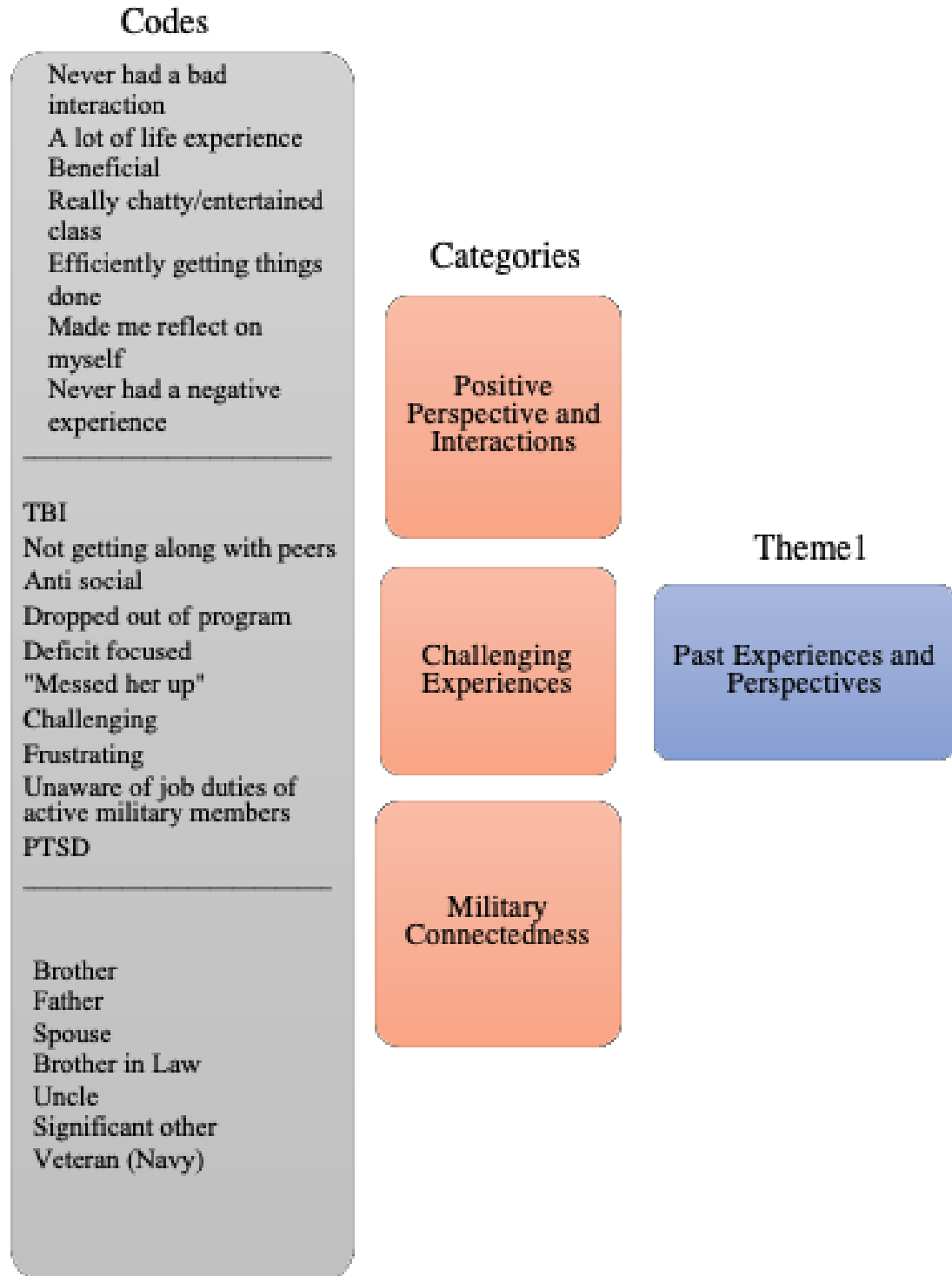
Date/Time :

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview! This interview focuses on your experiences teaching student veterans, and your experience participating in the Military Connected Competency training program. This interview is completely voluntary, and you are free to leave this interview at any point. If you do not feel comfortable answering a specific question, you are free to not answer.

1. Describe some previous experiences you may have had working with or teaching student veterans or military members.
2. From your point of view, what sources have contributed to your perspective of student veterans and the military?
3. What was your experience participating in the MCC training?
4. How has your experience participating in the MCC training impacted your perspective?
5. What is it like now for you to work with student veterans?
6. Describe the needs you now perceive student veterans having?
7. Do you believe that MCC training has better helped you understanding the experience and barriers of student veterans?
8. What is your advice for future faculty members who have student veterans inside their classroom?
9. Is there anything else you would like to share with me regarding your experience taking the training or your perspective of student veterans?

APPENDIX I

CONVERSATIONAL INTERVIEW EMERGENT THEMES



Codes

Several things I learned
Confidence
Critical reflection of
limited knowledge
Knowledge application to
real world issues
Confidence in
implementing new
knowledge
Best practices identified

Every person needs to take
this
Understanding value of
training
Excitement to participate in
the training
Positive experience in the
training
No ah-ha moments because
of tenure
Wanting to use the training
within their classes
Understand the utility

Wanting to build
relationship
Proactive approach
Asking if they need help
Creating credibility
Building respect in the
classroom

Categories

Professional
Growth

Willingness to
Learn

Reaching out to
students

Theme 2

Experience Resulting
in Job Competency

Codes

“I thought a lot of people knew that”
Different perspective was introduced even from my own experience
Asking for help
How culture impacts their world
“If you just never had that experience, you’d just never know. It enlightened me”
Reflection on assumption

Non deficit perspective
PTSD rejection
Combat
Rejection of the wounded warrior
Assets based individuality
Disagreed with any mental health generality statemetns

Communication style
Not pushing them into singular mold
Respect of culture
Awareness of othering
“Not everything that was in that video was in line with what I thought”
“My experience is different than their experience”

Categories

Recognizing Assumptions

Reframing the Wounded Warrior

Classroom Practices

Theme 3

Self-reflection to Foster Awareness

APPENDIX J

Q-SORT MATRIX

Most Agreed		Most Disagreed	
Statement	Times Selected	Statement	Times Selected
C	13	G	15
D	11	F	12
P	10	M	9
V	10	O	9
E	8	W	9
J	7	L	6
A	5	K	5
B	5	N	4
I	5	B	4
T	5	Q	4
R	4	U	3
H	3	S	2
L	2	A	2
S	2	C	2
Q	2	P	1
U	2	D	1
M	1	I	1
O	1	J	1
F	0	E	0
K	0	H	0
N	0	R	0
W	0	T	0
G	0	V	0

First Q-Sort Session

Participant	Most Agreed					Most Disagreed				
	1-5					1-5				
Maria	V	J	E	R	P	W	M	K	N	B
Peter	D	I	E	P	B	W	F	C	A	N
Elisa	B	L	Q	U	P	K	G	D	O	S
Seth	V	C	D	T	H	M	F	B	G	S
Kate	V	E	C	B	Q	U	A	G	W	O
Ruth	T	I	C	J	U	K	G	N	M	O
Todd	R	C	B	D	H	U	O	K	G	J
Carla	D	C	H	R	P	G	W	F	U	M
Latoya	D	M	C	B	T	L	G	O	P	Q
Alice	D	C	J	I	T	S	N	O	P	L

Second Q-Sort Session

Participant	Most Agreed					Most Disagreed				
	1-5					1-5				
Maria	J	V	E	C	S	F	M	W	G	B
Peter	E	C	A	P		M	W	G	F	B
Elisa	V	P	S	L	A	C	F	G	I	W
Seth	A	P	I	C	T	L	Q	G	F	O
Kate	E	C	V	J	D	W	M	O	G	F
Ruth	R	P	A	D	J	M	W	F	G	Q
Todd	A	V	P	I		M	Q	F	U	L
Carla	E	D	P	J	V	F	W	M	G	O
Latoya	D	E	O	V	C	U	G	L		
Alice	D	C	A	E	V	G	F	N	K	L

Maria										
	Most Agreed					Most Disagreed				
A1	V	J	E	R	P	W	M	K	N	B
A2	J	V	E	C	S	F	M	W	G	B

Peter										
	Most Agreed					Most Disagreed				
A1	D	I	E	P	B	W	F	C	A	N
A2	E	C	A	P		M	W	G	F	B

Elisa										
	Most Agreed					Most Disagreed				
A1	B	L	Q	U	P	K	G	D	O	S
A2	V	P	S	L	A	C	F	G	I	W

Seth										
	Most Agreed					Most Disagreed				
A1	V	C	D	T	H	M	F	B	G	S
A2	A	P	I	C	T	L	Q	G	F	O

Kate										
	Most Agreed					Most Disagreed				
A1	V	E	C	B	Q	U	A	G	W	O
A2	E	C	V	J	D	W	M	O	G	F

Ruth										
	Most Agreed					Most Disagreed				
A1	T	I	C	J	U	K	G	N	M	O
A2	R	P	A	D	J	M	W	F	G	Q

Todd										
	Most Agreed					Most Disagreed				
A1	R	C	B	D	H	U	O	K	G	J
A2	A	V	P	I		M	Q	F	U	L

Alice										
	Most Agreed					Most Disagreed				
A1	D	C	J	I	T	S	N	O	P	L
A2	D	C	A	E	V	G	F	N	K	L

Carla										
	Most Agreed					Most Disagreed				
A1	D	C	H	R	P	G	W	F	U	M
A2	E	D	P	J	V	F	W	M	G	O

LaToya										
	Most Agreed					Most Disagreed				
A1	D	M	C	B	T	L	G	O	P	Q
A2	D	E	O	V	C	U	G	L		

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