

5-2018

## The Impact Participation in School Activities, Events and Organizations has on the Veterans' Ability to Assimilate to Campus Culture

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THE IMPACT PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL ACTIVITIES, EVENTS AND  
ORGANIZATIONS HAS ON THE VETERANS' ABILITY  
TO ASSIMILATE TO CAMPUS CULTURE

A Thesis

by

ERIC SCOTT FAGAN

Submitted to the Graduate College of  
The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley  
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

May 2018

Major Subject: Communication



THE IMPACT PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL ACTIVITIES, EVENTS AND  
ORGANIZATIONS HAS ON THE VETERANS' ABILITY  
TO ASSIMILATE TO CAMPUS CULTURE

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by  
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May 2018



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## ABSTRACT

Fagan, Eric Scott, The Impact Participation in School Activities, Events and Organizations has on the Veterans' Ability to Assimilate to Campus Culture. Master of Arts (MA), May, 2018, 64 pp, 18 tables, 2 figures, references, 53 titles.

This study examines the relationship between student veterans' self-perceived level of participation in school activities/events and school organizations and the association his/her participation has with his/her level of assimilation to college life. This study serves as the basis for follow up research, aiming to discover innovative tools and resources that will assist veterans facing difficulty with assimilating to college life. Subjects in the study are one hundred student veterans from a southwestern university and college. The instruments for the study are the Veteran Involvement Questionnaire (VIQ) and the Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ). The results of the study reveal significant correlation between the variables participation and assimilation. The results of the study also suggest the need for further research to investigate other contributing factors of student veteran assimilation into campus culture.

*Keywords:* Veteran, Assimilation, Participation





## DEDICATION

The completion of my thesis study would not have been possible without the help of my God Almighty and my beautiful family. The successful completion of my thesis study is dedicated to glorifying and exalting of my savior, Jesus Christ. As well, to my wife, Jeannie Marie Fagan, my daughter, Nataly Nicole Fagan, and my son, Donavin Texas Fagan, thank you so much for allowing me to fulfill my dreams as a United States Marine and now as a graduate student. The sacrifices that you have made gave me all the motivation that I needed to work hard and never give up. As well, I would like to dedicate the completion of my thesis study to my mother, Flora Ramirez Fagan, and my late father, Patrick Michael Fagan. Thank you so much for all your love and dedication in raising me to be disciplined and dedicated to everything that I do. None of this could have been possible without all your support and blessings.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. McQuillen, chair of my thesis committee, for all the mentorship and guidance he provided me during my time as a master's student. From my class work to the completion of my thesis study, Dr. McQuillen was always there to help me, despite my disabilities. His dedication and commitment to my successful completion motivated me to do the absolute best that I could. I would also like to thank my thesis committee members: Dr. Gregory Selber, and Dr. Philip Ethridge. All their advice, input, and comments on my thesis study helped to ensure the quality of my intellectual work.

As well, thank you to Mr. Frank Martinez, from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Military Veteran Service Center. His advice and mentorship, as a fellow combat veteran, aided me in my transition from combat veteran to student veteran.

Lastly, I would like to thank all student veterans who took part in my thesis study. Without their commitment to helping other veterans, the collection of my data would not have been possible.



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Participation contributes to the acquisition and development of critical life skills such as developing friendships and a sense of assimilation (Thirumanickam, Raghavendra, & Olsson, 2011). Therefore, if one wanted to feel part of an organization, they would simply need to take an active role in participation with the organization. In fact, it is something that people have done for much of their life. From early childhood and throughout adulthood, people often participate in events, functions, and gatherings simply to fit in or feel part of a group or organization (Thirumanickam, Raghavendra, & Olsson, 2011). For example, children participate in games and other school activities so that they may feel accepted by their peers. Members of a church community will attend and participate in services and church sponsored events so that they can be accepted as members of the congregation. Even within the military, service members participate in rituals and ceremonies that celebrate their membership in the organization. Unfortunately, for some people, participation and assimilation has been much easier said than done. One such group of people that have had difficulty with participation and assimilation is military veterans.

One issue often overlooked by researchers is the inability veterans have to re-assimilate to life as civilians. The Department of Defense (DOD) spends approximately six and a half to thirteen weeks of boot camp, training civilians to let go of their current mindset and accept a life of instant obedience to orders and loyalty to team members and country (Smith, 2016). However,

upon separation from the military, the DOD spends only three days preparing service members for their return to civilian life (VETS Fact Sheet, 2016). So much time and emphasis has been allocated to preparing new service members for war, but only a few days are allotted to prepare them for life outside the military, and even less consideration is given to preparing the service members for college life (TAOnline, 2016).

When veterans exit the military, and decide to further their education, they use what is known as educational benefits to pay for their tuition. These educational benefits are provided by the Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944, the Post 9/11 Veterans Education Assistance Act of 2008, and Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Services for Veterans with Disabilities. More commonly known as the G. I. Bill, Post 9/11 G. I. Bill and Voc. Rehab (Education and Training, 2013). These benefits have provided veterans with the means to pay for their tuition as a form of reimbursement and gratitude for their faithful service to their country (Education and Training, 2013). Since the creation of the Post 9/11 G.I Bill in 2008, of the nearly one million active-duty and veteran population, approximately 75% were enrolled in American universities and colleges (Kim & Cole, 2013).

### **Statement of Problem**

In 2012, over 900,000 veterans began receiving educational benefits (Hultin, Veterans and College, 2014). Of the veterans who attended an accredited university, the National Center for Education Statistics reports only 51.7% graduated (Zoroya, 2014). In comparison, 59% of the 17 million non-veteran student population, graduated (Zoroya, 2014). The increase of veteran attendance in colleges and universities illustrates that more and more veterans are taking advantage of their federal benefits, but nearly half a million do not graduate (Zoroya, 2014). In their years of service, the nation's warriors have obtained a vast amount of technical skills that

have been proven to be beneficial in the workforce. However, 48% were unable to graduate from college as compared to the 40% of non-veteran students who did not graduate (Velez, 2014). The lack of academic success by veterans is disconcerting. While in the military, veterans have shown the distinct ability to accomplish all tasks; however, that same ability is not apparent in college success. Upon further investigation, the researcher found one prevalent disparity among student veterans and non-veteran students-participation. Veterans level of participation is significantly less than non-veteran students. In turn, the lack of participation limits the opportunity for student veterans to reacquire critical life skills, such as, the development of new friendships and a sense of assimilation (Thirumanickam, Raghavendra, & Olsson, 2011).

### **Statement of Purpose**

While in the military, veterans are required to participate in all field exercises (Kim & Cole, 2013). In these field exercises, veterans learn to communicate and work with each other to accomplish tasks and missions (Kim & Cole, 2013). However, in the college setting, veteran participation outside the classroom is almost non-existent (Kim & Cole, 2013). In fact, veterans have reported that they are less likely to engage in campus life (American Council on Education, 2013). Approximately 51% of student veterans have reported that they sometimes or never attend campus events and activities (Kim & Cole, 2013). A statistical anomaly that the researcher feels may coincide with the current graduation rate of 51.7% (Zoroya, 2014). The present research investigated the impact participation in school activities/events and school organizations had on student veterans' ability to assimilate to college life.



## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### **Assimilation**

Establishing connections with other group members can help a new organizational member to assimilate effectively into the organization (Sollitto, Johnson, & Myer, 2013). When connections are established, it is known as organizational assimilation (Sollitto, Johnson, & Myer, 2013). Organizational assimilation is considered to be the process through which employees join an organization and become integrated into an organization (Sollitto, Johnson, & Myer, 2013). Organizational assimilation is applicable to the academic setting for two key reasons. First, just as employees begin to develop their own expectations for the organization in which they are about to enter, college students develop their own expectations for the classroom environment, peers and instruction (Sollitto, Johnson, & Myer, 2013). Second, just as organizational newcomers experience uncertainty about the organization, their roles, organizational standards, and fellow coworkers, college students experience uncertainty about the class, their role as a student, classroom standards, and fellow classmates and professors (Sollitto, Johnson, & Myer, 2013).

Another perspective that helps characterize assimilation is Courtois and Herman's (2015) definition of assimilation. Courtois and Herman defined assimilation as the act of avoiding, minimizing, or ignoring group differences, whereby, the minority group adopts the mainstream

point of view of the organization. A key factor to note, regarding veteran assimilation, is the student veteran population. Veterans accounted for only 4% of the national student population (Hultin, Veterans and College, 2014). Accordingly, the student veteran population is seventeen times smaller than the non-veteran student population (Zoroya, 2014). Consequently, the student veteran population is a minority within the university (Hultin, Veterans and College, 2014). Applying Courtois and Herman's (2015) logic to the university setting, student veterans need to avoid, minimize or ignore group differences and adopt the mainstream point of view of the university in order to assimilate to college life. Therefore, for the present study, assimilation is operationalized as the student veterans' (minority group) ability to avoid, minimize, or ignore group differences by adopting the university's point of view and establishing connections with other group members so that they may assimilate into the campus culture.

Whether veterans are cognizant of the assimilation process or not, they have already experienced an extreme case of assimilation (Kim & Cole, 2013). For example, at boot camp, recruits are immediately immersed into the culture and become fully indoctrinated to the warrior ethos (History of Drill Instructor School, 2016). In a matter of less than twelve hours, the sense of individualism is suddenly stripped away (Grant, 2007). Recruits at Marine Corps boot camp adopt the Marine culture for the rest of their career, and for many, the rest of their lives (Cardenas, 2013). The problem for veterans, however, occurs when they leave the military and decide to use their educational benefits. Assimilating to college life is not as easy or automatic as the assimilation process they experienced in the military (Kim & Cole, 2013). Assimilation becomes more difficult when veterans begin to feel that the culture of the university and classmates does not reflect their own (Francis, Kelly, & Bell, 2003). In other words, veterans have not been able to fully deculturate from the military and re-acculturate to life as a civilian.

Kim and Cole (2013) revealed that student veterans did not feel supported by their institution and are not as engaged in non-core academic areas such as organizations, events and activities as their non-veteran peers. So, what prevented veterans from being able to assimilate to college life? Why don't they feel supported by the university? One explanation often used to answer this question is, veterans suffered from medical and psychological impairments that inhibited their ability to perform well in school (Transitioning to Campus, 2017). Though this may have been true, in part, the entire student veteran population does not suffer from medical and psychological impairments such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) (Helping Veterans Return to Work: Best Practices for Behavioral Health Practitioner, 2013). From the national student veteran population, reported in 2012, only 20.6% of student veterans reported having disabilities (Students with disabilities, 2016). Therefore, combat related medical and psychological impairments are not considered in this study. However, what is taken into consideration is the life readjustment struggle that most veterans faced when they attempt to assimilate into college life (Helping Veterans Return to Work: Best Practices for Behavioral Health Practitioner, 2013). Factors such as social and interpersonal problems impede veterans' ability to successfully readjust to life outside the military, accept their roles as students, assimilate to college and ultimately, from successfully graduating (Hultin, Veterans and College, 2014).

Student veterans have struggled to discover exactly where they belong amongst a population that is on average seven years younger than they are (Theiss & Knobloch, 2013). Their social and interpersonal complications create a high level of relational turbulence that inhibit them from accepting their roles as college students (Theiss & Knobloch, 2013). But, how are interpersonal problems linked to creating turbulence among relationships? First, one needs to

understand that interpersonal problems are recurrent difficulties in relating to others (Locke, 2005). Difficulty relating to others creates negative interpersonal expectations (Locke, 2005). Expectations regarding how others will react to the self and how the self will respond to those reactions (Locke, 2005). When a person imagines the reaction of another person, the imagined reaction is probably a reflection of expectations specific to the situation and relationship, as well as, more general interpersonal scripts and schemas (Locke, 2005). Therefore, negative expectations create negative interpersonal problems (Locke, 2005). To further add, veterans who feel that they have little to nothing in common with their peers, find it difficult to create and maintain relationships that go beyond the classroom or class work, thus, increasing their feeling of isolation and decreasing their willingness to accept their role as a student (Theiss & Knobloch, 2013). As student veterans struggle to negotiate their roles as students, identify and relate with other students, and find importance and meaning in college, their experiences turn into negative interpersonal expectations, which in turn make assimilation to college life seem less appealing (Transitioning to Campus, 2017).

For veterans, in general, role renegotiation has always been an area of concern (Murphy & Murphy, 2009). When veterans return home from deployments, they face the possibility that their family members may have some difficulty relinquishing the duties and responsibilities entrusted to them, thus creating tension within the relationship (Murphy & Murphy, 2009). For student veterans, however, negotiating the role of student poses more difficulty than negotiating back into the role of family member (Murphy & Murphy, 2009). With family members, veterans have already established common ground, which eases the role negotiation process (Murphy & Murphy, 2009). With students, veterans have little common ground to base the relationship on;

this increases the amount of tension on the role negotiation process with other students (Parsons, 2016).

As students, veterans do not always share common ground with their classmates (Parsons, 2016). Student veterans have been, on average, seven years older than their classmates, 47% have already married and have children, have already held a steady full-time job, and have already held leadership roles within their jobs (VA Campus Toolkit, 2016). In comparison, many non-veteran students are coming straight to college out high school, may or may not have a part-time job, and are still dependent on their parents (Hultin, Veterans and College, 2014). When student veterans begin to believe they have little in common with the younger generation of students who have never been away from home or held a job that puts them in harm's way, the veteran begins to feel like a spectacle, alienated and ostracized by their peers and the university (Parsons, 2016). As well they begin to feel as if they are excluded from the team because of their differences and often question their reasons for attending school in the first place (Parsons, 2016). In order to create common ground for the student veteran and non-veteran student populations, an understanding first needs to be made of veteran relationships inside the military.

During deployments, service members rely on the soldier to the left and right of them to keep them safe (Grant, 2007). From the grueling days at boot camp and through their individualized training, service members learned their roles within a unit. During pre-deployment workup cycles and through deployments, service members endured shared hardships, creating an unshakeable bond of brotherhood (Grant, 2007). Zorn and Gregory (2005) discovered that medical students created similar relationships. As they attempted to create attitudes, values and behaviors appropriate to medical school, they simultaneously seek out to individualize their roles as a student and friend to their classmates (Zorn & Gregory, 2005).

Medical students formed friendships because they shared common interests, struggles, and experiences with fellow medical students (Zorn & Gregory, 2005). As medical students create friendships, their satisfaction of being medical students and commitment to finishing medical school increases (Zorn & Gregory, 2005). Though it may not be forced acculturation, as it was in the military, shared hardships and common goals in a school environment creates opportunities for student veterans and non-veteran students to build functional and cohesive relationships inside and outside the classroom. In turn, student veterans will feel as if they are part of a team again with a common goal (Parsons, 2016).

The process of assimilation is not considered to be a passive process (Gordon, 1964). Whether forced or desired, assimilation requires the minority group to relinquish some of their beliefs and behavioral patterns and take on the cultural beliefs and behavioral patterns of the dominant group (Vander Zanden, 1963). For student veterans, relinquishing prior beliefs and behavioral patterns is easier said than done, however, not impossible. As student veterans aim to find common ground with non-veteran students outside the classroom by engaging in social interactions/activities and events at the university, the more likely they are to accept the behavioral patterns and beliefs of the university as their own (Vander Zanden, 1963).

### **Participation**

Social participation is defined as a person's involvement in activities that provide interactions with others in an organization (Levasseur, et al., 2015). Social participation contributes to the acquisition and development of critical life skills, such as, developing friendships and a sense of belonging (Thirumanickam, Raghavendra, & Olsson, 2011). This study operationalizes participation as veteran involvement in activities that provide interactions with others in the university setting, whereby they develop friendships and a sense of belonging.

When the service members exit the military and begin college, their perception of participation vastly differs from that of non-veteran students (Kim & Cole, 2013). Student veterans view class participation as a necessity for passing a course, not as a means for social interaction with classmates (Kim & Cole, 2013). Student veterans view and treat the class period of instruction as if it is a mission briefing; taking in all the information they can to ensure a higher likelihood of mission accomplishment (Kim & Cole, 2013). In fact, 48% of student veterans report having no problem working with other classmates on class assignments and projects (Kim & Cole, 2013). However, student veterans have reported that they are less likely to engage in campus life (American Council on Education, 2013). Approximately 51% of student veterans report they sometimes or never attend campus events and activities (Kim & Cole, 2013). As well, only 11% report participation in school organizations (Kim & Cole, 2013). But the question remains; why do veterans have a different understanding and point of view for participation? To understand this, the reader must look back to the veterans' time served at boot camp.

For new recruits and officer candidates at boot camp, participation is not viewed as an option (Grant, 2007). For six and a half to thirteen weeks, new recruits and officer candidates endure three intense training phases; each phase more grueling than the last. (Grant, 2007). For their duration at boot camp, recruits and officer candidates are required to participate in every field exercise. Excessive failure to accomplish or pass field exercises meant that the recruit or officer candidate will be recycled through the training phases and will have to start all over (Grant, 2007). Boot camp is designed so that as each training phase progresses, new recruits and officer candidates will become more confident in their abilities. Subsequently, the new recruits and officer candidates will be more willing to perform tasks that go beyond their comfort zone

(Grant, 2007). From this point, participation for veterans eventually evolves into instant obedience to all lawful orders (Grant, 2007). Hence, when veterans receive an assignment from class, they treat the assignment as if it is a mission that needs to be accomplished. By viewing class instruction as their mission briefing, student veterans gather required information needed to accomplish or complete the assignment.

Participation contributes to the acquisition and development of critical life skills, such as, the development of friendships and a sense of assimilation (Thirumanickam, Raghavendra, & Olsson, 2011). Therefore, if a student were to expand his/her horizon on participation and take an active role in participating in school activities/events and/or school organizations, the higher likelihood he/she will be able to develop meaningful relationships with other students and develop a sense of assimilation. Just as the medical students create meaningful relationships that will help them assimilate to medical school, a similar process is argued to be true for veterans who participate in school activities/events and/or school organizations.

Just as Zorn and Gregory (2005) believed, so did Thirumanickam, Raghavendra, and Olsson (2011) believed that the creation of meaningful relationships and shared commonalities among both veteran and non-veteran students will help mitigate some negative expectations held by both groups. Through active participation in school activities/events and/or school organizations, student veterans can create and maintain relationships that go beyond the classroom setting (Theiss & Knobloch, 2013). In turn, participation will help decrease the feeling of isolation and increase the willingness to accept the role of a student (Theiss & Knobloch, 2013).

When students participate in school activities, they become less likely to engage in behaviors that deter them from completing their course work (Cassel, Chow, Demoulin, &



Reiger, 2000). The more students actively participate in school activities, the more likely they are to continue a post-secondary education and complete a four-year degree (Stewart, 2009). Every student, veteran or non-veteran, endures hardships in their pursuit of higher education. Even though student veterans and non-veteran students have a slightly different understanding and approach to participation, the desired outcome of course completion and graduation are shared by both.

Stewart (2009) along with Cassel, Chow, Demoulin, and Reiger (2000) conclude that participation does have an impact on a student's sense of assimilation, the area that student veterans struggle with the most (Hultin, Veterans and College, 2014). By refusing to socially participate in campus events/activities and college organizations, student veterans will continue to struggle with developing friendships and building a sense of assimilation to campus life.

### **Hypothesis**

Based on the findings and rationale from the previously mentioned studies, the present study posits that if student veterans increased their level of social participation in school activities/events and school organizations, their level of assimilation to college life will also increase. Accordingly, the hypothesis is posed:

Hypo. As veterans' level of participation in school activities/events and school organizations increase, their level of assimilation to college life will also increase.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS

#### **Participants**

One hundred student veterans were chosen through the aid of the veteran service centers, from two locations: a large southwestern university and a midsized southwestern college campus. The participants were selected through convenience sampling. Parameters for this study mandate that the participants be student veterans between the ages of 18 to 65. The age parameter limited the study to veterans who served starting from the Gulf War (1990) to the present Operation New Dawn. All branches of service are accepted for participation in the study.

#### **Instruments**

The questionnaire is comprised of three distinct sections. Section one is designed to gather demographic information from the subjects. Section two provides a measure of veterans' self-perception of their participation in school activities/events and school organizations. Section three measures veterans' self-perceived level of assimilation to school activities/events and school organizations.

#### **Demographic Questionnaire**

By using a demographic questionnaire utilized by the University of Arizona Student Affairs (2011), each participant self-reported their classification

(see Appendix A). While names were omitted from the questionnaire, the demographic information collected in this section were used for correlation analysis.

### **Veteran Involvement Questionnaire**

The Veteran Involvement Questionnaire (VIQ), adapted from Grover's (2015) Family Involvement Questionnaire (FIQ-HS), is a 40-item Likert-type scale that measures veterans' self-perceived level of participation in school activities/events and school organizations (see Appendix B). The FIQ-HS measures parents' level of participation in his/her teenager's school and academic work by measuring the amount of assistance he/she provided to his/her teenagers. The FIQ-HS responses range from 1= "rarely" up to 4= "always" (Grover, 2014). Scores for the FIQ-HS range from 40-160, with higher scores indicating a greater level of involvement (Grover, 2014). The Cronbach's alpha score for the FIQ-HS is .93 (Grover, 2014). The estimated time for completion of the FIQ-HS was 10-15 minutes (Grover, 2014).

The VIQ is a four-point Likert-type scale, with scores ranging from 1= "rarely" up to 4= "always". The VIQ measures veterans' self-perceived level of participation in school activities/events and school organizations. For the researcher to utilize the FIQ-HS, modifications were made to the questionnaire to fit the researcher's study. By changing parents to professors and teenagers to students, the VIQ better reflects a university setting. The VIQ has a Cronbach's alpha score of .964 (see figure one). This investigation operationalized participation as the amount of involvement student veterans reported having in school activities/events and school organizations.

Figure 1: Veteran Involvement Questionnaire Alpha Score

**Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.964	.964	40

### **Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire**

The Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ), developed by Baker and Siyrk (1989), is a nine-point Likert-type scale that measures students self-perceived level of adaptation to his/her university (Baker, 2017) (see Appendix C). The SACQ’s responses range from 1= “does not apply to me at all” up to 9= “applies very closely to me” (Keller, 2013). Scores for the SACQ range from 67-603 with higher scores indicating a more positive adjustment to the university (Keller, 2013). The SACQ is comprised of four subscales: academic adjustment, social adjustment, personal-emotional adjustment, and attachment (Keller, 2013). The Cronbach’s alpha score for the SACQ is .93 (Keller, 2013). The estimated time of completion for the SACQ is 15-20 minutes (WPS: Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire, 2017). Because it is difficult to visibly measure assimilation, the researcher identified the student veterans’ self-perceived level of assimilation, reported on the SACQ, as the means for operationalizing assimilation.

Because only eleven percent of the total population reported that they had lived on campus, questions A26 “I enjoy living in a college dormitory” and A33 “I am getting along very

well with my roommate(s),” will be omitted from the study. Questions A26 and A33 serves no importance to the present study. This revision will change the SACQ’s Cronbach alpha score to .800 (see figure two).

Figure 2: Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire Alpha Score

**Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.800	.787	65

**Assimilation/Participation Variables**

The researcher concurs with Stewart (2009), Cassel, Chow, Demoulin, and Reiger (2000) that participation has an impact on a student’s sense of assimilation. Therefore, participation is the first variable for the study.

Due to the effect participation had on assimilation, as stated by Stewart (2009), Cassel, Chow, Demoulin, and Reiger (2000), the researcher identified assimilation as the second variable in the study.

**Procedures**

Student veterans who entered the veteran service center were asked, on an individual basis, if he/she would be willing to complete an anonymous questionnaire. If the veteran agreed to take part in the study, he/she was given a three-part participation/assimilation questionnaire to complete. A pilot study found that each veteran took approximately twenty-five to thirty minutes

to complete the questionnaire (Fagan, 2016). To ensure that the subjects did not feel rushed, forty-five minutes was given to each participant to complete the questionnaire. Participants were escorted to an office, provided by the military and veteran service center, to complete their questionnaire unimpeded. The only additional information given to the participating veterans was that the questionnaire was exclusively for veterans and he/she should answer the questions honestly. After completion of the questionnaire, the subjects were instructed to return their questionnaire to the researcher.

Upon completion of the study, a standardized email was sent to all student veterans who were currently enrolled in the university. The standardized email primarily served to debrief all participants regarding the study's purpose and results (see Appendix D). Secondly, the email served as an informative piece of literature to the universities' student veteran population who had been searching for ways to ensure successful completion of their higher education.

## **Results**

Of the demographic data collected, 81% of the subjects who participated were male and 19% were female. To include, of the 100 participants, 16% identified their ethnicity as white and 84% identified as non-white. As well, 21% of the subjects stated that they are non-Hispanic and 79% stated that they are Hispanic. The participants ages ranged from 19 years old to 65 years old. Ages 26 and 27 each accounted for 10% of the total population, making them the mode among the participants. Regarding the subjects' military demographic data, 30% indicated the United States Marine Corps as their branch of service, 43% annotated their branch of service as United States Army, 18% specified United States Navy, 5% stated United States Air Force and 4% selected United States Army Reserve as their branch of service. As far as the subjects' current military status, the mode of subjects, 56%, indicated that they reached their end of active

service and are presently out of the military. As well only 11% of the subjects indicated that they still have military obligation with the Individual Ready Reserve, 5% of the subjects are still on active duty status and another 5% still have reserve obligations. Only 3% of the subjects are active reservist, 10% are fully retired from military service and finally another 10% have been medically retired from active service.

Regarding the amount of deployments, 40% of the subjects indicated that they participated in Operation Enduring Freedom and/or Afghanistan. Also, 15% stated that they have participated in Operation Iraqi Freedom and 14% specified that they participated in the most recent military offensive, Operation New Dawn. From the subjects surveyed, 26% indicated that they have never deployed, 34% stated that they have only deployed once and 23% said that they have deployed twice.

From the 50 students surveyed in the University, the total minimum participation score is 45, the maximum participation score is 136, and the mean participation score is 80.10. The participation standard deviation score for the university is 24.91967. When it comes to the university's assimilation scores, the total minimum assimilation score for the university is 229, the maximum assimilation score is 423, and the mean assimilation score is 336.26. The assimilation standard deviation score for university is 42.49841.

From the 50 students surveyed from the college campus, the total minimum participation score is 42, the maximum participation score is 141, and the mean participation score is 80.06. The college's total participation standard deviation score is 24.77771. The college's total minimum assimilation score is 267, the maximum assimilation score is 449, and the mean assimilation score is 341.28. The assimilation standard deviation score for the college is 43.75257.

The combined, university and college, total minimum participation score is 42, the maximum participation score is 141, and the mean participation score is 80.08. The total combined participation standard deviation score is 24.72298. The combined total minimum assimilation score is 229, the maximum assimilation score is for 449, and the mean combined assimilation score is 338.77. The assimilation standard deviation score for the combined campuses 42.98575.

### **Data Analysis**

To examine the hypothesis, a Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was calculated to examine the relationship between participants' perception of participation in school activities, events and/or organizations and their ability to assimilate into campus culture (see table 1). A significant positive correlation was found ( $r(98) = .318, p < .01$ ), indicating a significant linear relationship between the two variables. Adjusted  $r^2$  was .101; indicating that the variable in the model explained 10% of the variance in students' perceptions of participation and assimilation.



Table 1: Combined University/College

**Correlations**

		PSCORES	ASCOREREV
PSCORES	Pearson Correlation	1	.318**
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.001
	N	100	100
ASCOREREV	Pearson Correlation	.318**	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.001	
	N	100	100

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

## CHAPTER IV

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

#### **Discussion**

The results show a significant correlation between veterans' participation in school activities/events and school organizations and their ability to assimilate into the campus culture. Accordingly, the hypothesis was confirmed. The scales that measured participation and assimilation were reliable and were closely related to show a significant amount of correlation between the two variables. Therefore, veterans who participated in school activities/events and school organizations did tend to assimilate more into the campus culture. However, the correlation between the two variables, participation and assimilation, differed within the University and College.

#### **Comparison of Results**

In an effort to explore potential relationships between the variables, the data was subjected to further analysis. Because the following data was not hypothesized, any results found would not be valid. The following analysis were performed to explore any potential relations that could prove fruitful for future research. Therefore, a second Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was calculated, only on the university subjects' responses, to examine the university's relationship between participants' perception of participation in school activities/events and/or

organizations and their ability to assimilate into university's campus culture. A weak positive correlation was found ( $r(48) = .208, p > .05$ ), indicating a non-significant linear relationship between the two variables within the university (see table 2). A third Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was calculated, on the data collected from the college, to examine the college's relationship between participants' perception of participation in school activities/events and/or organizations and their ability to assimilate into the college's campus culture. A strong positive correlation was found ( $r(48) = .426, p < .01$ ), indicating a significant linear relationship between the two variables (see table 3). Adjusted  $r^2$  was .181; indicating that the variable in the model explained 18% of the variance in students' perceptions of participation and assimilation for the college campus. The disparities between the campuses led the researcher to speculate that perhaps the reason for the disparity is due to the size of the campus. Because the college population is smaller than the university population, perhaps it is much easier to develop meaningful relationships with faculty and staff. In turn, this may have been a factor that affected the overall sense of assimilation for the university's participants.

Table 2: University

**Correlations**

		PSCORES	ASCOREREV
PSCORES	Pearson Correlation	1	.208
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.073
	N	50	50
ASCOREREV	Pearson Correlation	.208	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.073	
	N	50	50

Table 3: College

**Correlations**

		PSCORES	ASCOREREV
PSCORES	Pearson Correlation	1	.426**
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.001
	N	50	50
ASCOREREV	Pearson Correlation	.426**	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.001	
	N	50	50

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Based on the aforementioned findings, the researcher proceeded to investigate other factors that may further support the correlation between the two variables. Factors, such as, the number of deployments, sex, participation hours, race and ethnicity of the participants were considered for further investigation.

**Deployments**

Upon investigation of the number deployments, the only significant correlation, between the two variables, was discovered for subjects reporting only one deployment ( $r(32) = .406, p < .01$ ), indicating a significant positive correlation between the two variables (see table 4).

Adjusted  $r^2$  was .164; suggesting that the variables in the model explained 16% of the variance in students' perceptions of participation and assimilation for veterans who had only deployed once. However, participants who reported that they were never deployed revealed a weak positive correlation ( $r(24) = .289, p > .05$ ), revealing a non-significant linear relationship

between the two variables (see table 5). After further examination of the number of deployments variable, a trend emerged. As the number of deployments increased, after one deployment, the weaker the correlation between participation and assimilation become (see table 6, 7 & 8). Based on the declining trend, the researcher speculated that as the number of deployments increased, the more dissociated the veteran became with others and the stronger the commitment to service became. Further investigation would be required to examine the affect increased number of deployments had on the subjects' ability to assimilate into a campus culture.

Table 4: One Deployment

**Correlations**

		PSCORES	ASCOREREV
PSCORES	Pearson Correlation	1	.406**
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.009
	N	34	34
ASCOREREV	Pearson Correlation	.406**	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.009	
	N	34	34

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Table 5: Zero Deployments

**Correlations**

		PSCORES	ASCOREREV
PSCORES	Pearson Correlation	1	.289
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.076
	N	26	26
ASCOREREV	Pearson Correlation	.289	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.076	
	N	26	26

Table 6: Two Deployments

**Correlations**

		PSCORES	ASCOREREV
PSCORES	Pearson Correlation	1	.301
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.081
	N	23	23
ASCOREREV	Pearson Correlation	.301	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.081	
	N	23	23

Table 7: Three Deployments

**Correlations**

		PSCORES	ASCOREREV
PSCORES	Pearson Correlation	1	.372
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.162
	N	9	9
ASCOREREV	Pearson Correlation	.372	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.162	
	N	9	9

Table 8: Four Deployments

**Correlations**

		PSCORES	ASCOREREV
PSCORES	Pearson Correlation	1	.511
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.329
	N	3	3
ASCOREREV	Pearson Correlation	.511	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.329	
	N	3	3

**Sex**

Further exploratory analysis was calculated to examine the differences sex has on the relationship between participants' perception of participation in school activities, events and/or organizations and their ability to assimilate into the campus culture. A Pearson product moment

correlation coefficient was conducted on both (male/female). The researcher discovered a strong positive correlation ( $r(79) = .322, p < .01$ ) for men, indicating a significant linear relationship between the variables participation/assimilation (see table 9). Adjusted  $r^2$  was .103; indicating that the variable in the model explained 10% of the variance in students' perceptions of participation and assimilation among the men. A weak positive correlation was found among women ( $r(17) = .333, p > .05$ ), indicating a non-significant linear relationship between the two variables (see table 10). The disparity between sexes lead the researcher to believe that the data may be skewed on account that women only accounted for 19% of the total population. Future investigation with a larger female population may yield a higher correlation between the variables.

Table 9: Sex/Men

**Correlations**

		PSCORES	ASCOREREV
PSCORES	Pearson Correlation	1	.322**
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.002
	N	81	81
ASCOREREV	Pearson Correlation	.322**	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.002	
	N	81	81

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).



Table 10: Sex/Women

**Correlations**

		PSCORES	ASCOREREV
PSCORES	Pearson Correlation	1	.333
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.082
	N	19	19
ASCOREREV	Pearson Correlation	.333	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.082	
	N	19	19

**Race**

A Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was calculated to examine the relationship between the variable of race (white/non-white). Strong significant, positive correlations were found ( $r(14) = .656, p < .01$ ) for subjects identifying as white. For non-white participants, ( $r(82) = .267, p < .01$ ), indicating a significant linear relationship between the two variables (see table 11 & 12). Adjusted  $r^2$  was .430; indicating that the variable in the model explained 43% of the variance in students' perceptions of participation and assimilation for the participants who indicated they were white. For non-white student veterans, adjusted  $r^2$  was .071; indicating that the variable in the model explained 7% of the variance in students' perceptions of participation and assimilation. The data suggest that white participants may assimilate at a higher rate than non-white participants. The slight disparity among race could imply cultural differences amongst white and non-white participants. Again, an area that would require further extensive research.

Table 11: Race/White

**Correlations**

		PSCORES	ASCOREREV
PSCORES	Pearson Correlation	1	.656**
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.003
	N	16	16
ASCOREREV	Pearson Correlation	.656**	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.003	
	N	16	16

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Table 12: Race/Non-White

**Correlations**

		PSCORES	ASCOREREV
PSCORES	Pearson Correlation	1	.267**
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.007
	N	84	84
ASCOREREV	Pearson Correlation	.267**	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.007	
	N	84	84

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

**Ethnicity**

Another Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was calculated to examine the relationship between the variables among ethnicity (Hispanic/non-Hispanic). A strong significant

positive correlation was found ( $r(19) = .620, p < .01$ ) for non-Hispanic participants (see table 13). A slightly weaker positive correlation was found ( $r(77) = .260, p < .05$ ) for Hispanic participants (see table 14). Adjusted  $r^2$  for non-Hispanics was .384; this indicated that the variable in the model explained 38% of the variance in students' perceptions of participation and assimilation. Adjusted  $r^2$  for Hispanics was .067; which indicated that the variable in the model explained 7% of the variance in students' perceptions of participation and assimilation. Again, even though both Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants showed significant correlation, the researcher speculates that cultural differences amongst the two groups (Hispanic/non-Hispanic) could be the reason for the slight disparity. Further research will be required.

Table 13: Ethnicity/Non-Hispanic

**Correlations**

		PSCORES	ASCOREREV
PSCORES	Pearson Correlation	1	.620**
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.001
	N	21	21
ASCOREREV	Pearson Correlation	.620**	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.001	
	N	21	21

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Table 14: Ethnicity/Hispanic

**Correlations**

		PSCORES	ASCOREREV
PSCORES	Pearson Correlation	1	.260*
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.010
	N	79	79
ASCOREREV	Pearson Correlation	.260*	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.010	
	N	79	79

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

**Branch of Service**

An additional Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was conducted to examine the relationship between branch of services. Only three branches of service revealed a significant correlation. A significant positive correlation was found ( $r(41) = .347, p < .05$ ) for Army (see table 15). Adjusted  $r^2$  for Army veterans was .120; which indicated that the variable in the model explained 12% of the variance in students' perceptions of participation and assimilation. A significant positive correlation was found ( $r(16) = .418, p < .05$ ) for Navy (see table 16). Adjusted  $r^2$  for Navy veterans was .174; suggesting that the variable in the model explained 17% of the variance in students' perceptions of participation and assimilation. And a significant positive correlation was found ( $r(3) = .838, p < .05$ ) for Air Force (see table 17). Adjusted  $r^2$  for Air Force was .702; signifying that the variable in the model explained 70% of the variance in students' perceptions of participation and assimilation. However, participants who had identified as Marines did not show a significant correlation between the variables. Lieutenant Colonel

Grossman (1995) indicated in his book, “On Killing,” Marine boot camp has always been known for being one of the most grueling military training in the world. Every facet and Marine boot camp is intended to train new recruits to accept the role of an infantryman above all other duties (Grossman, 1995). Perhaps there may be more to the notion “The few, the proud, the Marines.” The researcher believes that perhaps the reason for such disparities may be because the duration of boot camp for each branch of service. For example, Air Force boot camp is six weeks, Navy boot camp is eight weeks, Army boot camp is ten weeks, and finally Marine Corp boot camp is 13 weeks. The researcher speculates that perhaps the longer the boot camp the more likely the veteran acculturates to the military lifestyle. Thus, leading to a higher difficulty of re-aculturating to life as a civilian. Further investigation into the matter may yield data that would support the speculation.

Table 15: Branch/Army

**Correlations**

		PSCORES	ASCOREREV
PSCORES	Pearson Correlation	1	.347*
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.011
	N	43	43
ASCOREREV	Pearson Correlation	.347*	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.011	
	N	43	43

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

Table 16: Branch/Navy

**Correlations**

		PSCORES	ASCOREREV
PSCORES	Pearson Correlation	1	.418*
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.042
	N	18	18
ASCOREREV	Pearson Correlation	.418*	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.042	
	N	18	18

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

Table 17: Branch/Air Force

**Correlations**

		PSCORES	ASCOREREV
PSCORES	Pearson Correlation	1	.838*
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.038
	N	5	5
ASCOREREV	Pearson Correlation	.838*	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.038	
	N	5	5

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

**Theater Served In**

The final Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was calculated to examine the relationship between theaters served in. The only significant positive correlation found was in

veterans who annotated they served in theater Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) ( $r(13) = .591, p < .05$ ), indicating a significant linear relationship between the two variables (see table 14).

Adjusted  $r^2$  for OIF veterans was .349; which indicated that the variable in the model explained 35% of the variance in students' perceptions of participation and assimilation. The researcher believed that further investigation into the theater served in and time in service could have had impact on the student veterans' perception of participation and assimilation.

Table 18 Theater/Operation Iraqi Freedom

**Correlations**

		PSCORES	ASCOREREV
PSCORES	Pearson Correlation	1	.591*
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.010
	N	15	15
ASCOREREV	Pearson Correlation	.591*	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.010	
	N	15	15

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

**Analysis of Discussion**

The results of the explored data revealed there is a multitude of factors that have a direct impact in how the variables participation and assimilation interact with each other. For example, the size of the institution may have an influence on the subjects' ability to create relationships. As well, the data shows the number of deployments may be associated to the subjects' ability and willingness to participate and to assimilate to campus culture. The data also reveals that sex, race, and ethnicity has an impact on how the variables participation and assimilation interrelate

with each other. Lastly, the data suggests the branch of service and the theater served in may have a direct connection to the subjects' desire to participate and assimilate to college life. Though this data may not be what the researcher hypothesizes, it proves to be invaluable for follow-on research.

### **Implications/Limitations**

Even though significant correlation was discovered between participation and assimilation, the study was not without its implications and limitations. The first limitation noted by the researcher was that both campuses were non-traditional campuses. This is to say, both campuses were commuter campuses. On a commuter campus, most of the student population do not live in student housing (Horn & Berktold, 1998). Further, as the name states, students have to travel to campus to attend classes (Horn & Berktold, 1998). Many commuters simply stayed on campus just to attend class (Tenhouse, 2017). Rarely did commuter students spend any time outside the classroom and on campus. In fact, most commuters would either leave for home or go to work after class having no desire to socialize with other students (Tenhouse, 2017). In turn, seriously limits the opportunity for students to participate in social events and activities and the ability to assimilate.

The second limitation to the study was the sample size. The study was limited to 100 participants. Therefore, the sample size limited the possibility of having a more diversified participant population among sex, race and ethnicity. However, the researcher found this limitation to be inevitable. Due to the geographical location of both campuses, the majority of the participants were non-white Hispanic males. Perhaps extending the research to residential campuses in other regional locations may provide differing results.



The third limitation discovered by the researcher was found in the demographic section of the questionnaire. The ethnicity question was not properly defined. The researcher combined race and ethnicity in one category. The researcher should have properly identified race as White, Black or African American, Asian, American Indian and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander and ethnicity as Hispanic and non-Hispanic (Race & Ethnicity, 2017). This may have caused confusion for the participants of the study.

The final limitation was also discovered in the demographic section of the questionnaire. Seventeen percent of the participants gave more than one response to questions identifying branch of service and theater served in. However, participants were limited to one response per question. This limited the researcher to identify correlations between single responses. If both questions had been configured for ordinal measure, more significant correlations may have been possible. Though the limitations in the questionnaire did not directly affect the hypothesized results of this study, they should, however, be correct for future follow-on research.

### **Conclusion**

The conclusion for this study revealed that the subjects did in fact reveal an obvious correlation between participation and assimilation. Accordingly, as the level of student veteran participation in school activities/events and/or organizations increased, the more likely they were to reveal higher assimilation into the campus culture. Ultimately, one would “hope” leading to a higher probability of graduation. The post hoc exploratory analysis revealed stronger correlations when demographic variables were entered into the model. The stronger correlations suggest possible avenues for future research on this topic.

Further studies of the subject will prove to be beneficial to veterans who are planning to attend a higher educational institution. It will give veterans the knowledge and tools they will need as they face the challenges of deculturating from military life and acculturating back into civilian life. This awareness may then create a greater probability of adaptation into their campus culture. No longer should veterans accept the fact that only 51.7% of their fellow comrades are graduating from college (Zoroya, 2014). No longer should 48.3% of veterans, who attempt higher education, accept mission failure. Colleges and universities must ensure our veterans are given every opportunity and all resources necessary to assimilate into campus culture. Accordingly, a higher probability of graduating from college may be possible. Another opportunity to achieve mission accomplishment.

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## APPENDIX – FORMS

## APPENDIX A



## Appendix A

### Section 1: Demographics

Read carefully and respond to all questions.

Sex:

Male       Female

Branch of Service:

United States Marine Corps       United States Marine Corps Reserve  
 United States Army       United States Army Reserve  
 United States Navy       United States Navy Reserve  
 United States Air Force       United States Air Force Reserve  
 United States Coast Guard

Current Military Status:

Active       Reservist  
 Active Reservist (AR)       Individual Ready Reserve (IRR)  
 Retired       Medically Retired  
 End of Active Service (EAS)

Age:

\_\_\_\_\_

Theater Served in:

Never Deployed

Operation Desert Storm/Gulf War (1990-1991)

Operation Gothic Serpent/Somalia (1992-1995)

Intervention in Haiti (1994-1995)

Bosnia War (1994-1995)

Operation Iraqi Freedom (2003-2011)

Operation Enduring Freedom/War in Afghanistan (2001-2014)

Operation New Dawn (2012-Present)

Number of deployments

\_\_\_\_\_

Ethnicity:

White

Hispanic/Latino

Black

Asian

Native American

Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

Middle Eastern

Approximately how many hours do you spend participating in school activities/events and school organizations a week?

\_\_\_\_\_ hrs.

## APPENDIX B

## Appendix B

### Section two: Veteran Involvement Questionnaire (Participation)

Please read each of the following questions carefully. Circle the number that best describes what you feel is generally true about the level of participation you feel that you have in your organization. Use the following scale to answer the following questions.

1 = Rarely

2 = Sometimes

3 = Often

4 = Always

1. I attend conferences with other students.

1            2            3            4

2. I contact other students to get information about school activities/events and school organizations.

1            2            3            4

3. I limit my amount of TV watching so I can focus more on school activities/events and school organizations.

1            2            3            4

4. I make sure to complete all school related tasks.

1            2            3            4

5. I suggest activities or events to other students.

1            2            3            4

6. I attend workshops or trainings offered by my university.
- 1            2            3            4
7. I talk to school organizations about their activities and events.
- 1            2            3            4
8. I make sure I have a way to attend school events.
- 1            2            3            4
9. I share information about school activities with other students.
- 1            2            3            4
10. I make sure to gather useful information from job fairs.
- 1            2            3            4
11. I communicate my concerns at student government meetings.
- 1            2            3            4
12. I talk to the university's student involvement department about school activity and event preparation.
- 1            2            3            4
13. I make sure to complete all school work so I can attend school events.
- 1            2            3            4
14. I volunteer to help at school events.
- 1            2            3            4
15. I participate in fundraising events for school organizations.
- 1            2            3            4
16. I talk to school organizations about their accomplishments.
- 1            2            3            4

17. I try to bring home new information about upcoming school events.

1            2            3            4

18. I participate in community service events sponsored by the university.

1            2            3            4

19. I make sure to learn the rules for the school organization I am participating in.

1            2            3            4

20. I talk to other students in my school organization about assisting him/her with difficulties.

1            2            3            4

21. I ask school organizations, that I am interested in, how well did their recent events turn out.

1            2            3            4

22. I encourage others to attend school events.

1            2            3            4

23. I talk with other students about school organizational meetings and events.

1            2            3            4

24. I make sure other students are aware of future meetings and events.

1            2            3            4

25. I talk to my school organization about leadership roles.

1            2            3            4

26. I ask school organizational leaders/officers about my requirements to being a member.

1            2            3            4

27. I talk to other members, in my school organization, about my personal life at home.

1            2            3            4

28. I talk with other students about future school events.

1            2            3            4

29. I have duties in my school organization.

1            2            3            4

30. I teach other students about the regulations of the events I have attended.

1            2            3            4

31. I encourage other students to participate in my school organizational event.

1            2            3            4

32. I help support other students.

1            2            3            4

33. I assist other students with his/her school work.

1            2            3            4

34. I talk with other students about community service opportunities.

1            2            3            4

35. I attend several school organizational meetings.

1            2            3            4

36. I talk to other students about addressing problems in the university.

1            2            3            4

37. I assist my friends with their school organizational events.

1            2            3            4



38. I read my university emails about school events.

1            2            3            4

39. I talk about my school events to family and friends.

1            2            3            4

40. I talk to other students about how school organizations have helped me.

1            2            3            4

## APPENDIX C

## Appendix C

### Section 3: Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (Assimilation)

The 67 items in this questionnaire are statements that describe university experiences. Read each question and circle the corresponding number that best applies to you at the current moment. Use the following scale to answer the following questions

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
←	←	←	←		→	→	→	→
“Doesn’t apply to me at all”					“Applies very closely to me”			

1. I feel that I fit well as part of the university environment

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9

2. I have been feeling tense or nervous lately.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9

3. I have been keeping up to date with my academic work.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9

4. I am meeting as many people, and making as many friends as I would like at college.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9

5. I know why I’m in college and what I want out of it.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9

6. I am finding academic work at college difficult.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9

7. Lately, I have been feeling blue and moody a lot.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9

8. I am very involved with social activities in college.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9

9. I am adjusting well to college.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9

10. I have not been functioning well during examinations.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9

11. I have felt tired much of the time lately.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9

12. Being on my own, taking responsibility for myself has not been easy.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9

13. I am satisfied with the level at which I am performing academically.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9

14. I have had informal, personal contacts with college professors.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9

15. I am pleased now about my decision to go to college.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9

16. I am pleased now about my decision to attend this college in particular.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9

17. I'm not working as hard as I should at my college courses.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9

18. I have several close social ties at college.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9

19. My academic goals and purposes are well defined.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9

20. I haven't been able to control my emotions very well lately.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9

21. I'm not smart enough for the academic work I am expected to be doing now.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9

22. Lonesomeness for home is a source of difficulty for me now.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9

23. Getting a college degree is very important to me.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9

24. My appetite has been good lately.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9

25. I haven't been very efficient in the use of study time lately.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9

26. I enjoy living in a college dormitory. (Omit if you are NOT living in any university housing).

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9

27. I enjoy writing papers for courses.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9

28. I have been having a lot of headaches lately.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9

29. I haven't been having much motivation for studying lately.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9

30. I am satisfied with the extracurricular activities available at college.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9

31. I've given a lot of thought lately to whether I should ask for help from Counseling and Psychological Services or from a psychotherapist outside of college.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9

32. Lately, I have been having doubts regarding the value of a college education.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9

33. I am getting along very well with my roommate(s) in college. (Omit if you do NOT have a roommate).

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9

34. I wish I were at another college or university.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9

35. I've put on or lost too much weight lately.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9

36. I am satisfied with the number and variety of courses available at college.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9

37. I feel that I have enough social skills to get along well in the college setting.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9

38. I have been getting angry too easily lately.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9

39. Recently, I have been having trouble concentrating when I try to study.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9

40. I haven't been sleeping very well.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9

41. I'm not doing well enough academically for the amount of work I put in.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9

42. I'm having difficulty feeling at ease with other people at college.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9

43. I am satisfied with the quality or the caliber of courses available at college.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9

44. I am attending classes regularly.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9

45. Sometimes, my thinking gets muddled up too easily.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9

46. I am satisfied with the extent to which I am participating in social activities at college.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9

47. I expect to stay at this college for a bachelor's/master's degree.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9

48. I haven't been communicating well with the opposite sex lately.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9

49. I worry a lot about my college expenses.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9

50. I am enjoying my academic work at college.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9

51. I have feeling lonely a lot at college lately.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9

52. I am having a lot of trouble getting started on homework assignments.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9

53. I feel I have good control over my life situation at college.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9

54. I am satisfied with my program of courses this semester.

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9

55. I have been feeling in good health lately.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

56. I feel I am very different from other students at college in ways that I don't like.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

57. I would rather be at home than here.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

58. Most of the things I am interested in are not related to any of my course work at college.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

59. Lately, I have been giving a lot of thought to transferring to another college.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

60. Lately, I have been giving a lot of thought to dropping out of college altogether and for good.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

61. I find myself giving considerable thought to taking time off from college and finishing later.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

62. I am very satisfied with the professors I have now in my courses.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

63. I have some good friends or acquaintances at college with whom I can talk about any problems I may have.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

64. I am experiencing a lot of difficulty coping with stresses imposed on me in college.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

65. I am quite satisfied with my social life at college.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9



66. I am quite satisfied with my academic situation at college.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9

67. I feel that I will be able to deal in a satisfactory manner with future challenges here at college.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9

## APPENDIX D

## Appendix D

Good Morning Fellow Veterans,

My name is Eric Fagan and I am a United States Marine Corps combat veteran who is currently enrolled in the Master's in Communication program at the University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley. As a former captain in the Marine Corps, I always took great pride in caring for my junior Marines. Even now, separated from the Corps, I still offer any knowledge and assistance to all veterans in need. Fortunately, another opportunity to help fellow student veterans presented itself in the form of my thesis study. On the final year of my Master's program, I came across a veteran study that was a bit disconcerting. A study conducted by Young Kim and James Cole, "Student Veterans/Service Member' Engagement in College and University Life and Education," stated that in recent years only 51.7% of the student veteran population successfully graduated from college. By utilizing the resources that I had as a student, I decided to investigate the matter further by means of a thesis study. As well, this gave me the opportunity to serve my fellow veterans on a mass scale.

Recently, I was at your campus conducting my thesis study of veteran assimilation into campus culture, which 100 of your fellow student veterans took part in. The study examined the relationship between student veterans' self-perceived level of participation in school activities/events and school organizations and the association participation had with the veterans' self-perceived level of assimilation to college life. In other words, the study examined the

correlation between the variables participation and assimilation and what it meant for veterans and their sense of belonging to their campus. Though another reading assignment may sound mundane, this study will prove to be worth the read. So, I invite you to take a moment of your time and read the study attached to this email. The results may not be what you expect. If you are a student veteran who is struggling to find your place amongst a large diverse student population, this study may provide some insight to improving your life as a college student. If you have any questions, regarding the study, please feel free to contact me via email. Thank you for your time and I hope this study is as insightful to you as it was to me.

Very Respectfully,

Eric Scott Fagan

U.S.M.C Capt. Ret

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

From becoming a teenage parent to joining the military, Eric Scott Fagan never shied away from taking responsibility for his family and his patriotic duty. Eric has always taken great pride and joy in being part of something much bigger than himself. Now out of the military, Eric's desire to be part of a bigger plan carries on. In 2008, Eric graduated from the University of Texas-Pan American in Edinburg, Texas with a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and a minor in communication studies. Immediately after graduation Eric was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps. After proudly serving in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation New Dawn, Eric exited the Marine Corps as a captain. Even now, Eric continues to be part of something bigger than himself. Eric was the student veteran ambassador for the university's student government and vice president and interim president of the Student Veterans of America Rio Grande Valley chapter. Even in this thesis study, Eric continues to find ways of serving his fellow veterans. Eric Scott Fagan graduated May 2018, with a Master of Arts in Communication at the University of Texas-Rio Grande Valley in Edinburg, Texas. After graduating, Eric plans to continue his education and enroll in the University of North Texas School of Law. After obtaining his juris doctrine, Eric hopes to open his own practice to where he can continue to serve his fellow veterans by providing legal representation for them. Eric currently resides in Edinburg TX with his family and can be contacted via email at [ericfagan@gmail.com](mailto:ericfagan@gmail.com).