Bridging the Gap: Identity Crises and Self-Authorship of Veterans in Higher Education

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Bridging the Gap: Identity Crises and Self-Authorship of Veterans in Higher Education

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Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the identity crises and transitional periods that veterans’ experience enrolling in higher education as well as examining the way they make meaning of their previous experiences on their journey to become self-authors.

Research Question

1. What are the identity crises and transitions that veterans experience when enrolling in college?
2. How do veterans make meaning of their military experience and use it in their new role as a student?

Participants

Veterans attending a Midwestern Catholic university from different military backgrounds and experiences, as well as pursuing various degrees and programs.

Methods

Semi-structured interview process and existing open-ended questions allowed for participants to answer questions open and honestly. The questions focused on the participants experience upon entering higher education and their transition from military life to student life.

Findings

Transition
- Diverse Needs
- Orientation Process
- Difficulty Anticipating Issues
- Understanding Benefits

Identity
- Blending In
- Relating to the traditional student
- Balancing Multiple Roles
- Minimal Veteran to Veteran Support

Self-Authorship
- Worldly View
- Discipline and Structure
- Suppression of Opinions and Thoughts
- Military experiences and use in and out of the classroom

“It was just a really awkward stage, so I didn’t get that whole “Welcome to UD” it was more like “What do we do with you” James*

“Everybody in my situation is isolated a little bit, not because we are pushed to the side, it’s just because we are not around as much…Whenever you run into someone that is a veteran there usually some kind of connection with them.” Mitch*

“College was directly influenced by the military kind of see things like black and white, that there is no real gray areas.” Eric*

Conclusion

From the research findings, it can be concluded that veterans face a wide variety transitional and identity issues when they enter higher education. They are able to utilize their military experience to help them not only learn in the classroom but also learning new culture and interacting with traditional students.