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As the official journal of the Georgia College Personnel Association (GCPA), the Georgia Journal of College Student Affairs (GJCSA) aims to promote scholarly work and perspectives from graduate students, practitioners, and scholars, reflecting the importance of professional and academic research and writing in higher education. The scope of the journal is focused on state, regional, and national higher education research, concepts, and practices that have implications for both practitioners and scholars within the field of college student affairs.

In addition to peer-reviewed manuscripts using a variety of methodological forms and perspectives, GJCSA will consider publication of other scholarly contributions such as case studies, media reviews (blogs, websites, books, videos, reports), articles highlighting best practices or current trends, and practitioner reflections. When possible, special attention will be made to include scholarly contributions from graduate students, new professionals, and junior faculty. In addition, the GJCSA may periodically call for proposals for theme-focused editions and volunteers to serve as guested editors for these special editions.

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- Research & Scholarship in Student Affairs (Research, Conceptual & Literature Reviews)
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- Double-space between paragraphs.
- Include a cover/title page with the authors names listed as “Blinded.”
- Include an abstract.
- Do not include headers and footers.
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- Figures, tables, and photos should be inserted into the manuscript at the time of submission and should be appropriately titled, sourced, and numbered consecutively.
- The entire manuscript should not exceed 25 pages, including tables and notes.
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Deployments to Diplomas: An Examination of Academic Motivation among Military Dependents using Self-Determination Theory

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Using self-determination theory, the academic motivation of college students from deployed military families was examined. Implementing a case study methodology, interviews with 14 college students were transcribed and coded using a theory-driven rubric to identify their needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Each case was analyzed for one’s self-determination regulatory style (external, introjected, integrated, or identified). The need for relatedness was the most prevalent in the data and the majority of cases exhibited regulatory styles consistent with introjected motivation. Implications for enhancing student success among this population are discussed based on findings.

Keywords: Self-determination theory, military families, college students, motivation


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Military families are an important and integral part of military culture and help to define military life for service members. Military families face their own unique challenges while living a life committed to national service along with their beloved in-service family members (Chandra et al., 2010; Lowe et al., 2012). The various challenges and transitions that military families face require resilience, sacrifice, and acceptance above and beyond what is typical for a family (Huebner et al., 2007; Lowe et al., 2012; Palmer, 2008). The unique duties of the job require a strict adherence to the commands of the military. This can often mean that the whole family is required to move, repeatedly, to duty stations nationally or internationally, or that service members are commanded to new posts which require leaving their families for extended periods of time and with limited notice (Mmari et al., 2009). Aikins and Aikins (2019) discovered that parental deployment can cause disruptions that impact children’s adjustment and psychological health.

In Jill Biden’s 2016 address to the American Educational Research Association she inquired, “What can you and your universities do to help our military students?” In reality, active military, veterans, and their dependents are student populations with unique situations and characteristics. The educational research literature regarding military families has primarily been focused on the educational outcomes of military dependents (i.e., children of military service members) during primary and secondary education (Garner et al., 2014; Stites, 2016). However, outcomes at the postsecondary level dependent on student services. For example, military dependents must navigate the process of transferring to various schools and using benefits, like the GI Bill and Post 9/11 GI Bill. Likewise, many students are transitioning from a military life on base (either domestic or abroad) with many support services to a civilian campus that may not specifically serve their needs. Many educational professionals do not fully understand the unique circumstances that military dependents face.

In addition to considering the special circumstances of military dependents, many higher education professionals do not exhibit knowledge of the basic components of military cultural competence (Gibbs et al., 2019). Indeed, Dillard and Yu (2018) proclaimed that “many veterans feel isolated due to the lack of military cultural competency among faculty and staff” (p. 66). Military cultural competence involves the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to work with this population (PsychArmor Institute, 2019). Basic military knowledge is the first component of military cultural competence. For instance, someone who is
competent in military culture will know that not all military service members are Soldiers as this term only applies to the Army. Other basic knowledge includes that there are five branches of the armed forces in addition to the reserves (i.e., Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, Coast Guard).

Going beyond basic knowledge, a familiarity with the misconceptions of the military community is another component of military cultural competence. For instance, the majority of combat veterans do not develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD; PsychArmor Institute, 2019), moreover, it is a myth that those with PTSD or other conditions known as “invisible wounds of war” (e.g., brain injury, depression) are dangerous or violent (Psych Armor, 2019). Myths, such as these, are pervasive among those who lack military cultural competence. Furthermore, many servicemen and women display stoicism (Hillenbrand, 1976); they find it difficult to ask for help (e.g., financial services, mental health counseling) making it most important to reach out to others who have served. Given that adult dependents from military families were likely reared in a stoic context, it is possible that they have acquired some of the attributes of their parents who have served or been deployed, for better or worse.

Although not all of the participants in the current study served in the U. S. military personally, all of the participants belong to military families, identify as dependents of active or retired military servicemen and women, and have experienced one or more parent being deployed. To address the gap in the literature on military dependents and their academic motivation, this study uses self-determination theory (SDT) to better understand how the context of parental deployment influenced their academic experiences. We hope that the findings can inform the University Community on how to promote student success and satisfaction among these students through awareness, intentional programming, and targeted services. This study started as an investigation of parental separation and academic motivation (Arrastia-Chisholm et al., 2017), but this subsample emerged with unique characteristics and motivations as a result of all subjects being military dependents. Based on Ryan and Deci’s (2000) SDT, we were able to describe the differences in academic motivation along the continuum of external regulation and in terms of the three basic psychological needs (i.e., autonomy, competence, and relatedness). Specifically, in this current study, we answer the following research questions: What are the academic motivations of adult military dependents enrolled in college? How has military life shaped their motivation and psychological needs? To better serve this
population, we explored the academic motivations of military dependents in college using a SDT framework.

**Literature Review**

In this section, we discuss federally mandated resources for college students associated with military service and the unique characteristics of military-related college students and military families. We introduce SDT, regulatory styles identified within the SDT, and prior study findings with military-related students.

**Federally Mandated Resources**

Under the Post 9/11 GI Bill, students can receive full tuition for all in-state public schools, a monthly housing allowance (dependent upon location), an annual stipend for books and supplies, and a one-time rural benefit payment of $500 to individuals who reside in a county with six people or fewer per square mile (U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2019). The GI Bill can be used for graduate or undergraduate degrees and a variety of trainings such as on-the-job, entrepreneurial, and vocational. In the 2018 fiscal year, more than 700,000 beneficiaries had utilized the Post 9/11 GI Bill toward education (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2018).

**Military-related College Student Population**

In 2017, the U.S. Department of Defense reported that there were a total of 4,771,324 personnel and family members. Of this total, 2,667,909 were family members of service members (U.S. Department of Defense, 2017). When taking a further look at the number of family members, almost one million were spouses in either a dual military or civilian marriage (U.S. Department of Defense, 2017). Furthermore, according to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (2018), 1.4 million U.S. children currently have one parent in the military. Even with the prospect of one parent being in the military and possibly deployed, 75% of students from military families graduated high school on time with their peers (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2018). In the 2018 fiscal year, 708,069 service members, veterans, spouses, and dependents used the Post 9/11 G.I. Bill for higher education with 32,478 of those individuals being listed as dependents (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2018). Thus, higher education’s veteran-focused programs and services may need to be more aware that the participating student population encompasses the veteran’s family (e.g., spouses, children), as well.
Military Family Characteristics

Although the needs of children and adolescents in military families have been addressed in the literature (Oliver & Abel, 2017), far less is known about military dependents that enroll in college (Dudley-Miller & Radel, 2020). In terms of parental deployment, the absence of fathers has been explored since the Vietnam War. Hillenbrand (1976) collected data from 73 boys and 53 girls enrolled in 6th grade at a domestic school for military dependents. The 126 children were rated by parents, teachers, and themselves on a variety of measures, including intelligence and dependency. In general, these families accepted the absence of the father who was deeply missed. This attitude was described by the families as stoicism. According to Hillenbrand (1976), boys within this family context exhibited more irritability, aggression, depression, and lower impulse control than girls. The girls in this sample did not display these characteristics but they scored lower on their math assessments in comparison to the boys.

According to developmental studies with civilian children in primary and secondary grades, this distinction with math performance between girls and boys does not occur until mid- to late adolescence (Jacobs et al., 2002). According to Hillenbrand’s study (1976) with children (N = 126) from military families, having an older female sibling was associated with increased negative characteristics for boys and only slightly higher aggression and significantly higher academic achievement in girls. Within this study’s sample, the oldest male child tended to assume the role of the father during deployment while the younger male children tended to react in maladaptive ways (e.g., physical violence, behavioral issues at school, regressive tendencies). The findings indicated that the deployed father’s absence seemed less explicitly impactful for female children within the study’s sample.

Similar to Hillenbrand’s (1976) findings, a meta-analysis study by Gregory (1965) found that students with parental loss of varying degrees (e.g., prolonged separation, divorce, death) also had higher rates of delinquency and high school failure than students without parental loss. Gregory’s (1965) review of students’ retrospective data and statewide data sets indicated that parental loss had a substantial impact on the students’ success. Likewise, Dr. Gregory cited a study of college students by Ingham (1949) where the group who reported various psychopathologies (n = 138) also had a statistically significant higher rate of reported parental separation than the control group (n = 370). Among Gregory’s conclusions was a call for more research about the impact of childhood loss on the
academic success of students—college students in particular. These prior studies by Hillenbrand (1976), Gregory (1965), and Ingham (1949) present contrasting narratives about the outcomes for students from military families who experience prolonged and repeated parental separation. The impact of deployment on children and their academic achievement past second school represents a gap in academic motivation research literature.

**Self-Determination Theory (SDT)**
According to Ryan and Deci (2000), when the context of task performance aligns with the psychological needs of an individual (i.e., autonomy, competence, and relatedness), they are more likely to enjoy, identify with, and be motivated to complete a task. The repeated engagement with a task and supportive conditions (e.g., autonomy-supporting, competence-supporting) influences the development of intrinsic motivation along a continuum of regulatory styles. Thus, when university life fulfills a student’s psychological needs, they are more likely to engage in academics and other activities without as much external regulation.

**Psychological Needs**
The psychological needs identified as supportive of well-being and intrinsic self-motivation are autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Within the SDT, autonomy refers to one’s desire for control or agency while completing tasks and within life in general. Examples of this psychological need is often represented by exercising control through choice such as choosing the subject of your term paper, your career goals, and where you live. In the context of SDT, competence is one’s desire to be knowledgeable and maintain a sense of self-efficacy while completing tasks. Examples of this psychological need are found in the popular expression, “I’ve got this!” Sometimes this need includes the desire to be held in high esteem for one’s knowledge or ability. Also, within the context of SDT, the psychological need for relatedness is one’s desire to belong to a group or to be valued by others. Examples of messages that support this psychological need are “we’re here for you,” “we want you here with us,” and “I like or value you.” Accordingly, Ryan and Deci (2000) posited that the contexts that support these innate psychological needs will influence one’s self-motivation and mental well-being to develop progressively *intrinsic* self-regulatory behaviors toward goals. In general, “contexts supportive of autonomy, competence, and relatedness were found to foster greater internalization and integration than contexts
that thwart satisfaction of these needs” (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 76).

**Regulatory styles**

According to SDT, the least autonomous form of motivation is external regulation. Individuals who are externally regulated have an external locus of causality and their behaviors are regulated by external rewards and punishments. Individuals who experience external regulation show less interest, value, and effort in regard to achievement. These individuals tend to deny any responsibility when encountering a negative outcome. External regulation is associated with compliance to external factors. Introjected regulation, the next style on the motivational continuum, is a somewhat autonomous form of extrinsic motivation. Individuals engaging in introjected behaviors have an external locus of causality even though their behaviors are influenced by internal rewards and punishments. Specifically, behaviors are performed to decrease negative feelings (e.g. guilt and anxiety) or to attain ego enhancements (e.g. pride). Individuals may also seek to increase their feelings of worth through demonstrations of ability (i.e. ego involvement). Individuals who experience introjected regulation expend more effort, handle failures poorly, and experience negative feelings (e.g. anxiety) when facing failure (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

After introjection, the next regulatory style on the motivational continuum is identified regulation. It is influenced by intrinsic interest; therefore, it is a more autonomous form of extrinsic motivation. It involves a conscious valuing of a goal, so the actions are deemed as personally important. In the context of an educational setting, students with identified regulation experience more interest and enjoyment of school, have more positive coping styles, and put forth more effort (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This type of regulation is considered somewhat internal but not fully because it is not integrated with the self (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Finally, integrated regulation is the most autonomous form of extrinsic motivation. It happens when identified regulatory mechanisms are embraced as part of one’s self, which means they have been brought into congruence with one’s other values and needs. Individuals internalize the value of goal to the point of self-identity, meaning the goal becomes a part of their sense of self. However, integrated regulation still involves the goal as an extrinsic achievement, as opposed to the intrinsic motivation of internal regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Although Ryan and Deci (2000) presented SDT as a general theory of
motivation that could be applied to different contexts, researchers have yet to explore the extent of its applicability with military personnel and dependents. Studies with military service members and veterans pursuing postsecondary education (Johnson, 2018) and doctoral degrees (Ross, 2019) have yielded mixed results. For example, autonomy and desire for personal growth was the most significant factor in persisting to graduation in a sample of 114 service members (Johnson, 2018). However, the need for relatedness and having a solid support group was the strongest theme that emerged from a sample of nine veterans pursuing their doctorate degrees at a distance (Ross, 2019). Moreover, recent SDT studies of college student motivation at military academies (Filosa et al., 2020; Ghadampour et al., 2019; Raabe et al., 2020) identified unmet needs for autonomy among the study participants. In order to understand a documented pattern of attrition, a survey regarding regulatory styles and psychological needs was administered to 728 Army ROTC cadets (Raabe et al., 2020). Overall, the cadets reported that their need for autonomy was not being met at the academy. The summation of these studies (Johnson, 2018; Ross, 2019; Raabe et al., 2020) is that higher education barely identifies and scarcely addresses the needs of this minority student population. In order to support college students with military associations to persist and graduate, the university community needs to understand their psychological needs. Thus, the purpose of this study was to identify regulatory styles and the psychological needs of those who have experienced parental deployment.

**Method**

This study used an exploratory case study methodology (Yin, 2003) to answer the following research questions: 1) What are the academic motivations of adult military dependents enrolled in college? and 2) How has military life shaped their motivation and psychological needs as described by Ryan and Deci (2000)? Interviews with 14 college students from military families were transcribed and coded using a theory-driven rubric to identify their needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. In addition, we coded for the type of motivation they exhibited in terms of academic achievement. Each participant was treated as a unique case from a separate context with information from interviews and surveys used to contextualize their experiences.

**Participants**

For recruitment, a survey link was emailed to all students at a four-year university located in the southeastern United States. The email requested students who had experienced...
parental deployment to voluntarily complete an online survey and participate in an interview. Table 1 includes demographic information about each participant. A total of 14 semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants ranging in age from 18 to 53 years. In terms of race and ethnicity, the largest portion of the sample identified as Black \((n = 6)\). The majority of the sample were traditional college-aged (18-24 years old; \(n = 11\)), female \((n = 12)\), and enrolled as undergraduates \((n = 12)\). It is important to note that both Dan and Pamela were veterans. Only one participant experienced the deployment of both parents, with fathers being the most likely deployed. All participants reported using their parents’ GI Bill or their own to fund college. Each participant was given a $25 Amazon gift card for their participation in this study.

Table 1
Participant Demographics in Order by Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Parent Deployed</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sabrina</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Multi</td>
<td>Mom &amp; Dad</td>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>Dependent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jarnelle</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Mom</td>
<td>Exercise Phys.</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>Dependent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abby</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Latina</td>
<td>Stepdad</td>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>Dependent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Dad</td>
<td>Art Education</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>Dependent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denise</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Dad</td>
<td>Middle Grades</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>Dependent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Multi</td>
<td>Dad</td>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>Dependent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Dad</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>Dependent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arika</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Mom</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>Dependent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lauren</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Multi</td>
<td>Dad</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>Dependent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashleigh</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Dad</td>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>Dependent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jake</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Dad</td>
<td>School Couns.</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>Dependent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Dad</td>
<td>ASL Interpreting</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>Veteran&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mena</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Dad</td>
<td>Org. Leadership</td>
<td>U</td>
<td>Dependent&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pamela</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Dad</td>
<td>Org. Leadership</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>Veteran&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. U = undergraduate, G = graduate, <sup>a</sup>These participants were formerly dependents of military members, but have aged out.
Data Collection and Analysis
Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured protocol to generate conversation about the student’s experiences during and after parental deployment. Questions about academic experiences throughout grade school and college were part of the protocol (see Table 2). For example, students were asked how they picked their majors, about their role models growing up, and their current motivation for graduating. Interviews ranged from 30-75 minutes in length. Interviews were transcribed and coded using a theory-driven rubric based on Deci and Ryan’s SDT (2000). The transcripts were coded using the following codes: need for autonomy, need for relatedness, and need for competence. Participants were categorized into regulatory styles based on the highest frequency of quotes found in each category: external, introjected, identified, or integrated.

Table 2
Sample Interview Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conversation Prompts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What was the process for applying to college?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How did you pick your major?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What challenges have you faced?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What has helped you get through these challenges?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How could the university supported you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. How do you utilize the [military resource center] on campus?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. How has your parent’s deployment contributed to your decision to finish high school? To attend college?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. How has your parent’s deployment affected your motivation (drive) for your major? How about motivation to graduate college and pursue your chosen career path?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Have other things (factors), like your school environment, friends, teachers, role models influenced these decisions?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Clarifying questions and probes were also used in this semi-structured interview process.

Trustworthiness
To establish trustworthiness, the researchers engaged in iterative coding over multiple cycles (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). In terms of inter-rater reliability, two coders chose one interview (Sabrina) to code simultaneously.
and discuss. This transcript served as the exemplar case for coding. The two coders discussed coding for each category and findings for the interview until consensus was reached across categories. The remainder of interviews were divided among the coders, but codes were discussed for clarity and consensus. Overall, inter-rater reliability was calculated as $\alpha = 0.93$ with raters initially agreeing on the categorization of 13 of the 14 interview subjects along the continuum of motivation identified in the SDT.

**Findings**

This section presents the findings of each participant in the order of SDT regulatory styles. No students were identified in the external regulatory style, so the order will begin with introjected regulatory style and end with integrated regulatory style. Each case describes the psychological needs that were identified within participants' narratives and are assumed to represent their academic motivation at the time of the interview. Further themes outside of this framework are presented in the discussion section including implications for future research and practice.

**Jarnelle: Introjected Regulation**

Jarnelle’s mother was deployed during Jarnelle’s childhood, and her father was deployed before she was born. Her father struggled with alcoholism, and her parents subsequently divorced. The deployment and divorce left Jarnelle at home with more responsibilities to help care for her two younger brothers. The increased responsibility was her primary concern when selecting a college because it was important to get “as far away as possible” and still have in-state tuition. Jarnelle thus described herself as independent, having to “grow up and do things on [her] own quicker” than her peers. No one assisted her in applying to five colleges, all of which were far enough from home that she could get away from the domestic expectations of her family.

Moving Away in Search of Autonomy and Relatedness

Once she was enrolled at a university, Jarnelle majored in exercise physiology, a decision mostly driven by the promise of a lucrative career in physical therapy; she also worked at the campus bookstore while taking classes full-time. Although the autonomy of being self-sufficient was important to Jarnelle, whenever procrastinating, she would hear her mom saying, ‘If you’re not gonna make it, if you’re not gonna put in the time and the effort, then you better join the military.’ According to Jarnelle, this was the external motivation that she needed to continue in her academic studies. Making her family proud was very important to her and drove her
goals of getting good grades to eventually get a doctorate. Despite wanting to be away from home, she did lament not feeling “connected” to others around her or feeling like she had a family at college.

**Mena: Introjected Regulation**

Mena, a non-traditional student and self-proclaimed “Army brat,” looked to outside motivators to finish her bachelor’s degree in organizational leadership at the age of 35. She was determined to finish her degree despite attending five universities. As a young child she lived in Germany while her father was deployed. Throughout her many moves, Mena recalls being bullied in school while still being a high achiever. At one point, Mena lived in the states with her mother while her father was deployed. She recalled feeling resentful toward him until he returned. Both her parents were college graduates, so Mena felt a lot of external pressure from her family to graduate college.

**Living Up to Family by Seeking Competence and Relatedness**

The first time she enrolled in college was a failure due to viewing college as time to socialize. Connecting with others was something that Mena reported being important to her. In fact, Mena picked her initial college major, psychology, because she wanted to help people and it was what her mother studied. She recounts, “because I saw how much joy she gets from the work she does helping people.” Her mother was her main motivation and role model growing up, even today while finishing the degree she began years ago. In Mena’s case, her father’s deployment created an environment in which her mother had to work extra hard to accomplish her goals. Mena resented this situation, and these vicarious experiences provided high standards for Mena to meet. With renewed focus, Mena reported that she wanted to establish her competence and feel more connected to others who have obtained a college degree.

**Denise: Introjected Regulation**

The main motivator for Denise includes the external expectations set by her family to care for others. Denise was born on a military base and moved frequently because of her father’s Army assignments. She was a 21-year-old middle grades education major and identified as a caregiver. Growing up she was told the following was expected: “Graduate high school, go to college, get a job, get a house, get married.” During the interview she described being homesick at college and recalled having a hard time being away from family, especially when her father was deployed.
Changing Majors to Gain Competence

Originally, Denise was a psychology major. She chose this path on the advice of her parents who suggested listening to others’ problems could be her “calling.” However, due to a rigorous gateway course in psychology, Denise did not succeed academically and had to change majors. Even though Denise recalled being singled out and picked on by teachers in elementary and middle school, she still chose education as her future career. She described being cast as a “motherly type” and that others expected her to take on a career within the caring professions. Despite several setbacks, transferring schools and changing majors, Denise was determined to gain a sense of competence. Likewise, she described changing majors to better meet her need for relatedness and helping others.

Mary: Introjected Regulation

For Mary, there were more external motivators than internal such as meeting her parents’ expectations that she would attend college. It was ingrained in her that school was her only job; therefore, coming to college was the only option. Both of her parents also earned bachelor’s degrees. She looked up to her mother as a role model because she was able to manage a full household and work full-time during her father’s deployments. Mary’s internal motivational drive was being able to finish her Sociology degree early, even if she did not enjoy all her classes. She was excited to be finished in a shorter time, something she did in middle and high school as well.

Starting a Group to Increase Relatedness

Although Mary reported all three basic needs, she was personally motivated to help others like her feel that they belonged on campus. Her autonomy is showcased because even though her parents lived in the same town where she attended college, she chose to work and live separately to maintain her independence. Mary was allowed to take dual enrollment classes in high school and hoped to finish college early, which speaks to her competence. However, she desperately wanted to connect with other students and was a part of various sports and clubs. In fact, Mary wanted to start a group for students on campus who come from a military family so they could share their experiences and stay connected after graduation. The interviewer was able to connect her with Veteran services to start the process of establishing a student group.

Marie: Introjected Regulation

Marie valued school based somewhat on external influences. There were more external motivators than internal ones present in her narrative. For example,
Marie’s parents told her it was “required” for her to go to college. In fact, they stated “You aren’t not [emphasis added] going to college.” Both of her parents and aunt went to college and graduated with different undergraduate and graduate degrees. Because Marie looked up to her mother and aunt as role models, she valued graduating from college more than pursuing her real passion of art. To fulfill her family’s expectations, she chose to major in art education.

Processing Deployment to Meet Needs
Marie knew in 4th or 5th grade that she was good at art, so she started focusing on that subject area as a possible career. Working on her skills helped her feel competent. Marie’s need for relatedness was evident by the way Marie talked about her aunt and mom. Being an only child, Marie reported that having autonomy was important to her. For example, finding and holding a job after high school graduation was an important marker of independence. Marie experienced anxiety and depression since childhood and struggled with these challenges by herself. As she got older, her feelings concerning her father’s deployment evolved from ambivalence to resentment as she reflected on those times. For instance, Marie’s relationship with her dad was not as close due to the length of his deployments. Processing these feelings with friends and in therapy helped her overcome her anxiety and depression.

Jake: Introjected Regulation
Jake valued school but was externally motivated in his educational pursuits. For example, he shared that he wanted to prove to his parents and the rest of his family that he could succeed professionally. Growing up he looked up to his older brother as a role model until his brother was expelled from college. That is when Jake realized that he had to be better than his brother. His parents were an external force making him go to college without alternative options. After completing his undergraduate degree, Jake had to pursue a graduate degree because “who’s to say [his older brother] will not catch up” to him. His sentiments regarding his brother indicated some ego involvement, or comparison to other as an extrinsic motivator.

Psychological Needs of the Graduate Student
Jake admired his dad, the parent who deployed, as a role model. His father was someone who got things done and Jake strived to emulate this ability. He did consider his older brother a role model until his brother was incarcerated. Throughout the interview, it was clear that he wanted to get a good job
in order to be financially self-sufficient and not reliant on anyone. In discussing his future profession of school counseling, Jake only discussed the financial stability it would offer him. Jake very much identified with his work on campus, serving as a resident assistant and later a graduate assistant for housing. He described working with residents as more fulfilling than getting good grades in graduate school. Jake found communal living on campus to be similar to living in a military community.

**Arika: Introjected Regulation**

Arika did not value school personally, but her commitment to get an education came from the values ingrained in her from parents and step-parents who served in the military. Her biological parents were in the Army and her dad went on to join the Marines; therefore, she had always been immersed in the military culture. Arika said multiple times during the interview that she hated school growing up but needed to go to college in order to be the best possible self that she could be. She recalled hearing the phrase it is either “boots or books” from her parents. Although Arika did not intend on joining the military, she did feel like it was always on option if school did not work out.

**Maintaining Autonomy and Achieving Relatedness**

Arika’s mother was her role model because her mother was not required to enlist in the military, but she chose to make that sacrifice. Arika reported feeling motivated to finish school because the military emphasized perseverance. If the external forces of her parents being in the military and learning the concepts of perseverance were not present in her life, she would not be as motivated. Arika grew up in a blended family with 13 siblings and half siblings and recalled finding independence when moving away to college. Choosing the major of psychology was straightforward and to the point, like decisions in the military, according to Arika. In her mind, industrial organizational psychologists are in demand in the military, so that meant job security. Despite participating in clubs, like Jarnelle, Arika reported finding it difficult to connect with fellow students.

**Dan: Identified Regulation**

Dan valued school and this was made evident by his decision to return for a second degree after retiring from the military. His first degree was in exercise sports science, and at the time of the interview Dan was finishing a degree in American Sign Language (ASL) interpreting. Throughout his childhood, he was told he would have to go to college by
his father who deployed. Dan’s experiences in the military motivated him to finish school because he wanted to teach other service members ASL and be a part of the deaf community. In middle and high school, he was on a “bad track.” With the help of his role models (e.g., church pastors), Dan was able to get back on the right track, do well in school, and graduate. Growing up, he was closer with his mom and his sister but was able to keep a connection with both parents after their divorce.

**Need for Relatedness for a Veteran Student**

His levels of autonomy and competence can be seen starting in ninth grade because he kept a job and became independent as a result of his dad’s deployment. He would step up to the plate and take on more responsibility. The absence of Dan’s father disrupted his family structure and left him feeling like an outsider. To regain this feeling of relatedness, Dan tried joining a gang. That was short lived, and he was able to fulfill this need with JROTC, martial arts, and eventually his own military service. At the time of the interview, Dan belonged to a religious student group, as well as the ASL club on campus. Dan’s time in the military drove his passion for finishing his degree so he could go back and help other military members. When asked about internships, Dan lamented the lack of military-focused career services on campus that could make his dream a reality.

**Lauren: Identified Regulation**

Lauren valued school and hoped to practice military psychology with her degree. Neither of her parents went to college; therefore, they pushed her to get a bachelor’s degree. Her interest in military psychology stemmed from watching her dad and other family members’ paths in their military careers. At the time of the interview, Lauren was being recruited to join the Navy and hoped to help individuals, as well as travel. She did not name a specific role model who encouraged her to finish college, but Lauren wanted to make her parents happy and live a “comfortable” lifestyle in the future. She also wanted to take advantage of the travel that a military career might require.

**Staying within Military Culture to Meet Needs**

Part of being comfortable meant going back to military culture. Like Arika, Lauren wanted to pursue a career that could give back to the military, a community she felt she should support. Her sense of autonomy was showcased when she wanted to go to college out of state. Lauren’s desire to continue school in either clinical or industrial organizational psychology demonstrates her
need for competence. However, she expressed frustration with the lack of good advising she was able to receive. Lauren discussed how none of her professors understood the options for working for the military. When asked about career services, she said they “didn’t know” the pathways either, and she resorted to speaking with the Navy recruiter.

Ashleigh: Identified Regulation
Ashleigh valued school personally and was eager to finish her physics degree. She enjoyed building and breaking down things and hoped to work for an organization like NASA one day. Both of her parents held master’s degrees; therefore, not going to college was never an option. Her role model was her mom, a second-grade teacher. Overall, Ashleigh did not believe that her father’s deployments affected her and cited her young age as the major factor. Her parents’ education levels encouraged her to get a bachelor’s degree and pursue a master’s degree. In fact, Ashleigh was interning out of state at the time of the interview.

Relatedness as a Twin in College
Although Ashleigh did not believe that her father’s deployment had an effect on her academic motivation, she did acknowledge that the multiple deployments disrupted her family structure and left her relationship with her father strained. Ashleigh commented on how important her family support was to her, especially the support from her mother and twin sister. Going to school separate from her twin sister made her feel independent, autonomous. However, her sister’s choice to attend college out of town left her at home with their mother and father, who live locally. Going away for the internship was a relief for Ashleigh who still felt uncomfortable around her father. To combat her feelings of being away from her twin and “stuck” at home, Ashleigh focused on the rigor of the physics degree.

Abby: Identified Regulation
Like Jarnelle and Arika, Abby’s mother also gave her the choice to attend college or join the military. Because she did not enjoy relocating often, Abby decided at an early age that she would prefer to attend college. Repeatedly, she mentioned that her parents did not go to college, so it was important to them that their children have the job security a college degree affords. Abby reported seeking help along the way as a first-generation college student, “I actually got help from counselors at my school … I went around town asking questions.” Abby received help from school counselors when applying to school and she researched the nursing field thoroughly before enrolling.
Competence as an English-language Learner
During her stepfather’s deployment, Abby’s father was also incarcerated. Abby explained, “since I was the oldest child, I had to hold it strong for the younger kids, as well.” At a very young age, she “went straight to get a job” and dealt with any issues on her own. Once getting to college, Abby had to put extra effort into assignments as an English-language learner. Abby reported that college classes were so much harder than high school classes, especially while working many hours. When asked what help she sought, Abby explained that the university was not as easy to navigate as the schools on the military base. For example, she did not realize the Academic Support Center was located in the library.

Lisa: Identified Regulation
School was personally important for Lisa because she strived to do well in her academic studies. In high school, she stayed after school with a speech language pathologist to eliminate her speech problems. Lisa recalls having to work harder than the other students in order to learn the same content and skills. In college, she wanted to pursue a major that led to a career involving helping people. She acknowledged that she had to have a college degree to avoid a “back breaking” job and follow her passion. Her parents went to college and held different degrees, but when Lisa was younger her parents questioned if she could go to college. Her sister advised, “If you don’t feel like going to college, you don’t think that you can do it, then don’t do it. Don’t let other people pressure you into it.”

Helping Others to Meet Needs
Throughout her interview, it was evident that school was personally important to Lisa, but it was a means to an end. She stated that her undergraduate program (psychology) was difficult and that she does not want to apply to graduate school because it sounds “awful.” Finally, throughout the interview she discussed how close she is to her mother and that her mother is her role model. Even though her parents insisted on her going to college, it is her personal affiliation and drive to help others that helps her succeed in school. Growing up in a military family helped Lisa keep perspective because being in college was not like being at war. Lisa would say to herself, ‘You know what? I failed this test but it’s one test, I’m gonna live hopefully a very long life, and when I’m sitting on my death bed, hopefully like 102-years-old surrounded by family and grandchildren and great grandchildren, this test is not gonna mean anything to me.’ Despite this strategy, Lisa did complain of struggling to regulate her emotions, especially in regard to her
mother’s bipolar disorder which manifested during her father’s deployment.

**Sabrina: Identified Regulation**

School was of upmost personal importance to Sabrina, which she ascribed to her mother’s influence. Her mother always pushed education. In fact, Sabrina said that “My mom always gave 110%, so that really resonated with me.” Her mom was the external motivation that began her journey of internalization. At the time of the interview Sabrina did not completely fit the category of integrated regulation because she said things like, “I lose motivation very easily if something is too tough.” Sabrina described this as a “military mentality.” She explained that she wanted to do hard things, just like her parents who both served overseas. In essence, she felt the need to prove her competence to others.

**Challenges to Feel Competent**
The need for relatedness is demonstrated in her close relationship with her mom. She says she can share anything with her mom. Even though she relied on her father when her mother was deployed (e.g., he drove her around everywhere), Sabrina regained autonomy when her mom returned from deployment. Furthermore, throughout the entire interview, it was evident how competent Sabrina felt about school. She mentioned how she has always been in gifted classes since elementary school and that she would not do her homework unless it was challenging enough. Her competence shined through when she said, “And then I got to the International Baccalaureate Program and it just, ‘Whoo!’ It challenged me beyond belief and that’s where I really found that I liked the challenge.”

**Pamela: Integrated Regulation**

School was an essential aspect of Pamela’s life as she began college at 17, enjoyed a career of teaching for 21 years, and was pursuing her doctorate in organizational leadership at the time of the interview. Growing up she was surrounded by education because her parents went to college and her grandmother was a school principal. Pamela shared, “I loved school. I always did.” Despite her love for school and early enrollment in college, Pamela enlisted in the Army. In explaining this shift in paths, Pamela explained, “my dad probably had a little something to do with that because I just have a lot of respect for the military.” In the Army, she was trained as a medical technician. She enrolled in medical school after completing her biology degree but could not continue the degree while still serving in the Reserves.
Increasing Competence as a Veteran Graduate Student

When asked about the difference between going to college before and after the military, Pamela explained that she did not have any support from faculty or advisers the first time around, “I talked to my counselors but they weren’t really much help.” When she completed her undergraduate degree, it was at an institution with explicit support for veteran students, “We were told, ‘Take these classes.’” This removed the guess work for Pamela and simulated the military culture. After a full career as a science educator, Pamela still had a need for competence. At one point, she even helped her mother with studying for her own college courses. For this reason, Pamela enrolled in a doctoral program and was actively working on her dissertation.

Summary of Findings

In general, our analysis identified more statements of introjected regulatory behaviors (or stated motivations for behaviors) among the college student participants. Table 3 displays the summary of participants’ regulatory styles and an illustrative quote from their narrative. As seen in the table, the majority of students (n = 7) provided statements about ego-related self-control as well as a mix of perceived external influences on locus of control. A subgroup of students (n = 6) was identified as engaging in identified regulatory behaviors meaning that their statements expressed perceptions of internal locus of control and completion of tasks because of personal importance or value. One student was identified as engaging in integrated regulatory behaviors because she reported internal locus of control and completion of tasks that aligned with her sense of self (e.g., I did it because that is who I am).

Each participant expressed needing autonomy, competence, and relatedness in order to persist in college. Across all student narratives, references to the need for relatedness (n = 22) had the highest frequency and was closely followed by statements about competence (n = 20). The need for autonomy was expressed by each participant (n = 17), but not as prevalently as relatedness or competence. Across the three regulatory styles, references to the need for relatedness was the dominant need among students classified in the introjected regulatory group. Across these seven cases, social support and a feeling of belonging was an essential part of being successful in college. Participants with an identified or integrated regulatory style reported the need for competence most frequently. Because this half of the sample enjoyed academics more, they did not rely on external motivation as much as the students with introjected
motivation. Consequently, these participants craved the academic support needed to feel competent in college. Overall, the study participants reported using multiple campus resources, but also identified key aspects that were not as military friendly as they could be. In light of these findings, we present the implications in the next section.

### Table 3

*Participant Quotes Illustrating Regulatory Style*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Style/Needs</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Quote</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>External</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introjected</td>
<td>Jake</td>
<td>“I wanted to prove that I could do something he never did… I’ve gone this far, who’s to say he can’t catch up at this point”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arika</td>
<td>“Since my mom was so emerged in the military life, it trickled down to me too. So, the perseverance, integrity, all that stuff, it’s just like, “I need to go to college ‘cause I need to be the best that I can be.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Denise</td>
<td>“With my friends, it seems less about homework, more about personal problems and then my parents noticed it. And they’re like, ‘Maybe you should go into being a therapist or something … Maybe that is my calling.’”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jarnelle</td>
<td>“I like expensive things, I want to have a substantial amount of money, not saying that I need money but it’s money. And I know I wanted to work with athletes so… I felt like exercise phys gave you more options.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mena</td>
<td>“She was like don’t go to school just because you think that’s what we want … So, I took a couple of years off and worked and I didn’t go back until I knew I was ready.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>“I think watching them making their decisions not to go to college made me want to go to college, ‘cause a lot of them are just staying at home still, working for pizza delivery.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identified</td>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>“I just felt like college was what they wanted, so I went”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Abby</td>
<td>“I actually got help from counselors at my school.” “I went around town asking questions.” “I don’t wanna disappoint my parents, and I don’t wanna feel like I’m wasting money either.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lisa  “Well, I knew that I needed to go to college in order to get a job that wasn’t back breaking.”

Sabrina “My mom always gave 110%, so that really resonated with me.”

Lauren “I just really do like Psychology and I chose to keep it as my major.”

Ashleigh “Well, out of highschool I knew I wanted to do something maybe with NASA … It turns out [my college] has a Physics program. So, I was like, ‘Oh, I really wanna do physics.’”

Dan “I go introduced to the deaf community … ‘Okay.’ I think this is something I can put myself doing, I just need to go to school so I can learn, y’all language, that way I can communicate with you easier”

Integrated Pamela “I could really be a life-long student.”

Discussion
Evidence of varying SDT regulatory styles was gathered from the study participants who experienced parental separation due to military deployment. According to prior studies of SDT with college students (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009), there is a range of motivational styles during the pursuit of academic goals (e.g., graduating college). However, we did not discover strictly external regulation among the college students in the sample. It was most common for students to express introjected motivation because they referenced external rewards and negative consequences as motivation rather than consciously valuing or identifying with the achievement, such as “I like expensive things, I want to have a substantial amount of money, not saying that I need money but it’s money” (Jarelle). The most common type of motivational style was identified regulation. These students felt personally invested in their education, partly due to their membership in a military family. For example, “My mom always gave 110%, so that really resonated with me” (Sabrina). On the other end of the continuum, we found some evidence of an integrated motivation for school, meaning that the student’s academic achievement or interest in learning was inseparable from their self-concept. For example, the only student classified as having integrated motivation said, “I could really be a life-long student” (Pamela). The psychological needs of military dependents identified in the study indicated that an increase in awareness, intentional programming, and targeted services across the University Community could promote success and satisfaction for these students.
Parental Deployment Fostering Autonomy

Although some of these students’ needs (e.g., autonomy) were reportedly being met, others, including relatedness, were not. The low frequency of statements about their need for autonomy suggests that these students had high levels of individual motivation. Their current college context was a sufficient autonomy-supportive experience. Although not traditionally included in the list of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), students who were separated from their parents due to military deployment face varying degrees of hardships, including economic struggles, divorce, and multiple relocations (Oliver & Abel, 2017). Despite these challenges, we found a common characteristic of independence and resilience among college students from military families. For example, because of her prior experience with moving multiple times throughout childhood, Denise was not deterred by transferring schools or changing majors and had addressed academic challenges with resilience. Furthermore, similar to prior research by Palmer (2008), we found that prolonged parental separation due to deployment had influenced several participants to make choices for themselves with less parental guidance. For instance, parental deployment left Jarnelle, Dan, and Abby taking on more responsibilities around the home and with siblings. This empowered them to be more “independent” when it was time to go to college.

Military Friendly Social Support to Foster Relatedness

Despite the military culture of being individually responsible for one’s success, we found many instances of participants expressing a need for relatedness. Academic success was a top priority to the parents (both civilian and active duty/veteran). Participants stated that high parental expectations were communicated from an early age and never questioned the expectations to graduate from high school and college. Many of the participants also identified a parent as a role model, rather than a teacher, friend, or celebrity. The parent role models served as emotional, financial, and social supports for these students, which helped meet their need for relatedness (Mitchall & Jaeger, 2018). Specific challenges faced by students from military families include the stress of parents being deployed in war zones, reintegration of parents into civilian culture, and their fear of the death or injury of a loved one in the line of duty (Kelley, 1994; Oliver & Abel, 2017). As a result, the needs for relatedness among the military dependents in this sample could be explained by their shared military culture.
Military Culture on Campus: Student Spaces

Although participants did not directly attribute their academic success to being from a military family, we believe that carrying a shared identity, internalizing the values of military life (such as perseverance) was a factor. This sense of internalized value was expressed by participants across regulatory styles: Arika, Sabrina, and Pamela. Lisa stated her affiliation with the military helped to put academic challenges into perspective. When she encountered small setbacks, Lisa knew it was nothing compared to war. Thus, it is also possible that benefiting from veteran and active military resources make up a protective factor. This is in sharp contrast to other college students who experienced parental separation for other less “honorable” reasons (e.g., incarceration, adoption, and divorce; Arrastia-Chisholm et al., 2017). However, when the student is working in a non-military culture (e.g. civilian college) are the protective factors decreased when the shared identity is with a minority population? It is reasonable to assume that when the student is no longer in frequent daily contact with the parent or the military community that they may need additional support. For example, Abby stated not finding the campus as easy to navigate as the schools on military bases. Similarly, Mary so desperately wanted to connect with other students from military families that she had to create her own club. Although the participants all had access to a military resource center on campus, only the two veteran students felt like it was intended for them. The other dependents, like Mary, did not know it existed until the interview.

Military-specific Counseling and Advising

The findings from this study could help promote self-determination in future college students. For example, programming and resources should be provided separate from, as well as in conjunction with, any existing veteran services. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides different resources for student veterans. For example, the VA provides a campus toolkit for faculty, staff, and administrators to help welcome these individuals by understanding their sources of trauma and needs that may require different resources in an academic setting. In addition, there are specific counseling services available to families dealing with pre- and post-deployment issues on and off base. Likewise, PK-12 school counseling services are now tailoring their services for students in military families (Cole, 2014).

Similar services should be present on university campuses in highly visible places, explicitly marketed to military-affiliated students – not just active military and veteran...
students. We know that active duty and veteran students are at higher risk of post-traumatic stress symptoms and alcohol abuse as compared to other students (Nyaronga & Toma, 2015; Mitchell et al., 2017). However, counseling resources, even in a support group or peer counseling setting (Cox, 2019), could have been especially helpful for students like Mena, Marie, Ashleigh, and Lisa who spent a lot of time processing feelings of resentment, disconnection, and emotional dysregulation associated with parental deployment and its effects. Due to the separation from their parents, some individuals expressed higher levels of relatedness needs. In fact, Arika and Jarnelle both found it hard to connect with people on campus (civilians) as compared to their military families and communities. Therefore, we recommend support groups and common spaces (Haynes, 2014), like the one Mary started creating, to help meet this need. Housing communities for military students, similar to the ROTC Living-learning communities (Haynes, 2014), could further meet these students’ need for relatedness. Jake likened his experience living on campus and serving in Residence Life to living in a military community. This could be one missing link that could help military dependents and veteran college students alike feel more connected on campus.

In terms of other student support services, military career counseling could have shortened the paths of veteran students, like Dan and Pamela. The unique challenges of veteran students are being addressed in veteran student centers but should also be targeting in career counseling centers (Miles, 2014). However, military dependents may need to be considered when being counseled or advised about career planning. For example, military-informed advising could have benefited students like Arika and Lauren, who specifically wanted to pursue careers in the military. Both of them wanted to give back to the community from which they benefitted. Lauren could not get information or internships connected to the military from her advisor and resorted to joining the Navy as a means of getting more information.

Support from Faculty and Staff
Prior research indicates the necessity of military learners’ feelings of institutional belonging, but research is limited on the realities and experiences of these students (Ford & Vignare, 2014). Instructors may also consider how these needs are being met in the classroom for students who identify as military dependents or veterans (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009). Particularly, students with military associations may experience challenges in transitioning from service and
a base environment or community to a college campus and community. As such, faculty need to develop competency in how to best support these students and guide them in their academic endeavors. Although faculty may be unable to identify if students are military dependents unless the student provides this information, faculty are able to engage in professional development focused on how to better support these students. Dillard and Yu (2018) suggested that faculty are able to participate in faculty development focused on developing empathy and an understanding that students with military associations may experience in establishing mentors and advocates on their college campuses. Further, Dillard and Yu (2016) outlined military cultural competence professional development trainings should encompass topics that include available campus resources, academic transitions and challenges experienced, deployments, PTSD, and realistic scenarios that faculty may encounter with teaching military students. Institutions need to provide a united front that is focused on developing learning environments that support the unique characteristics of this minority student population. Faculty and staff also need to foster veteran students’ success as a community effort in order to create a military friendly campus (Dillard & Yu, 2016). By more effectively training faculty and staff to work with students’ military associations, they should be able to provide mentorship and guidance to ensure student success and retention. Faculty and staff who have undergone such training report feeling empowered to better assist military active, dependent, and veteran students (Gibbs et al., 2019).

**Implications for Research**
Future studies should explore these themes using a larger sample and consider individual differences, such as age at parental deployment, military branch, as well as other parental factors, like gender and number of deployments. For example, research suggests that more challenges are faced by children when the mother is deployed (Southwell et al., 2016). Additionally, we would like to explore the protective factors of military culture in terms of academic success. Are military cultural norms (e.g. stoicism, self-reliance, perseverance, explicit expectations) related to greater academic success among college students from military families? Likewise, what barriers does military culture create for academic success? Once those factors are concretely identified, the effectiveness of interventions to support students can be explored. We expect further research will help to explain the greater need for relatedness for this population of college students. Particularly, given that our research found that many
participants described a need for relatedness in order to succeed in their academic studies. Participants discussed relatedness as in regard to their familial connections and activities on campus. However, to ensure that students feel better supported in classes and on campus experiences, faculty need to have more trainings and understandings of military cultural competence.

**Conclusion**

According to SDT, if the University Community can help meet the needs of the military students on campus, they will be more internally motivated to learn and persist to graduation. When examining the three basic needs of relatedness, competence, and autonomy, the highest need identified most frequently among participants was relatedness. The participants were able to relate to and be successful in their relationships with their parents, friends, and other family. Regulatory styles were moderately externally regulated with the most common regulatory style in the sample being introjected motivation. Institutions of higher education should consider the implications for practice when serving military dependents as part of an ever increasingly diverse student population. In particular, faculty need to consider military dependents’ motivational styles in order to better serve their students. Likewise, future research could explore to what extent current policies and practices within higher education thwart motivation and self-regulation for academic success among military-related populations.
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The Out-of-Classroom Engagement Experiences of First-Generation College Students that Impact Persistence

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This article is the result of research conducted with first-generation upper-class college students enrolled at a comprehensive university in Georgia. The researcher sought to answer the following research question: How do first-generation college students perceive the impact of out-of-classroom engagement experiences on persistence? The study focused on out-of-classroom engagement experiences that included work, residence, athletics, clubs and organizations, and volunteer work. The researcher utilized a qualitative interpretive approach and collected data via individual interviews and a focus group. Participants were selected based on a purposeful sampling technique. The researcher was able to organize the rich data into themes. Findings of this study indicate that the participants perceive that out-of-classroom experiences impacted their persistence by connecting them with the university and faculty, by becoming or being a part of a community, and because of the relationships that they had established by being engaged in an out-of-classroom experience. The article concludes with implications for student affairs professionals and future research on first-generation college students.

Keywords: first-generation college students, engagement, persistence
College attendance and completion are critical issues facing first-generation college students today. While higher education levels can elevate career and income status, improve the standard of living, and mitigate the effects of family background for first-generation students, many are less likely than non-first-generation students to attend or complete college (Chen, 2005; Choy, 2001). Researchers estimated that 33% of the students beginning college in 2015 had parents who did not attend college and could be categorized as first-generation (McFarland, Hussar, de Brey, & Snyder, 2017). In general, first-generation students are more likely to be Black or Latinx and come from lower-income families. They are also less likely than students whose parents completed college to be academically prepared for college, attend college, and persist in attaining a degree (Bui, 2002; Chen, 2005; Choy, 2001; Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996).

Collegiate academic and social experiences, coupled with pre-college characteristics and attributes, are believed to have a considerable impact on student persistence (Astin, 1993; Tinto, 1993). A common presumption in higher education practice is that student engagement outside of the classroom results in greater levels of academic achievement and persistence (Astin, 1993; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Some scholars note that out-of-classroom experiences such as living and working on campus and involvement in extracurricular activities heighten academic performance and persistence for all students, even those with background and other hardship challenges such as first-generation status (Astin, 1999; Chen, 2005; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, & Terenzini, 2004; Tinto, 1993). However, first-generation students who have pre-college characteristics such as family education and income status and academic aspirations and preparation that are different from those of other students may have college experiences, including out-of-classroom engagement experiences, that are also different and may persist at lower rates than students whose parents attended college (Astin, 1993; Padgett, Johnson, & Pascarella, 2012; Pike & Kuh, 2005).

In the past, first-generation students were considered to be those whose parents had not attended college (Chen, 2005; Choy, 2001; Terenzini et al., 1996). More recently, researchers have begun to re-categorize first-generation students as those whose parents may have attended college but are first in their family to complete college and earn a bachelor's degree (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Pike & Kuh, 2005). The disparity in defining first-generation students, even within colleges and universities, and the lack of
knowledge specific to first-generation student engagement experiences, creates a problem in identifying these students and the engagement experiences that might assist them in overcoming background challenges and persisting in earning a degree.

The purpose of this study was to explore first-generation college students' out-of-classroom engagement to gain an understanding of the impact those experiences may have on their persistence. The next section of this paper is a review of relevant literature related to the out-of-classroom engagement and persistence experiences of first-generation students. The methods used to gather information including the research questions that guided the study, a description of the research design, sampling and participant selection, and data collection and analysis techniques are described thereafter. Then, presentation of the results and findings from interviews with five individual participants and seven focus group participants, and finally, a detailed discussion of the findings that are related to the literature and address the research question are presented.

Literature Review
A review of the literature and related research was conducted to understand first-generation college students, their college experience, and persistence. The literature review that follows is organized into three broad categories: a) characteristics of first-generation college students; b) student involvement theory; and, c) college student persistence.

Characteristics of First-Generation College Students
Historically, first-generation students were considered to be those who were first in their family to attend college (Chen, 2005; Choy, 2001; Terenzini et al., 1996). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), a first-generation student is one where neither parent or only one parent has earned a college degree (NCES, 2014). However, many leaders at institutions are taking a second look at how they define first-generation students, including students whose parents have some college credits but have not earned a bachelor's degree (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Pike & Kuh, 2005).

It was estimated that 47% of the students beginning college in 1995-96 had parents who did not attend college and could have been categorized as first-generation (Choy, 2001). However, as the percentage of the U.S. population that enrolled in college and earned a bachelor's degree increased from 21% in 1990 to 36% in 2015, the percentage of first-generation students has declined to an estimated 33% in 2015 (McFarland et al., 2017). Although the percentage of undergraduate first-generation students has declined, the group remains sizeable.
One-third of students enrolled in U.S. post-secondary institutions in 2011-2012 were believed to be first-generation (Cataldi et al., 2018).

Chen (2005) reported that first-generation college students were more likely to be Black or Latinx and come from families in the lowest income quartile (less than $25,000). Among first-generation students, African Americans have shown the greatest decline in representation compared to the decline in other ethnic groups (62.9% in 1971 to 22.6% in 2005). Latinx have remained the most likely group to be first-generation college students (38.2% in 2005) at four-year colleges. In 2012, the highest percentage of first-generation college students were White (49%), followed by Latinx (27%), Black (14%), Asian (5%), and students of other races (5%). Of students who were not first-generation, the majority were White (70%), followed by Black (11%), Latinx (9%), and Asian (6%) (Redford & Hoyer, 2017).

Choy’s 2001 study is widely referenced in studies of first-generation students and serves as a foundation of measure for first-generation college student research. Choy (2001) reported that parents’ education level, family income, educational expectations, academic preparation, parental involvement, and peer influence were linked to postsecondary enrollment. Students whose parents did not attend college were at a distinct disadvantage when it came to post-secondary access, persistence, and degree attainment compared to students whose parents had some college and those whose parents had earned a bachelor’s degree (Choy, 2001).

First-generation students are also more likely than their peers, whose parents have a bachelor’s degree, to leave college before earning a degree. For instance, among students who began college at a four-year institution, first-generation students were two times as likely as those whose parents had a bachelor’s degree to drop out during their first year or not return for their second year (23% versus 10%) (Cataldi, Bennett, & Chen, 2018). Three years after enrolling, more first-generation students who had begun post-secondary education at a four-year institution, had left without earning a degree (33%), than those whose parents had earned a bachelor’s degree (14%).

**Student Involvement Theory**

Student engagement was identified by Astin (1999) and Tinto (1993) as one of the necessary conditions for college student success and persistence. Tinto claimed that the most important factor in student departure before degree attainment was the student’s academic and social experiences within the college. Astin’s (1999) theory of student involvement stemmed from a longitudinal
study of college dropouts and sought to distinguish factors in the college environment that significantly impact student persistence (Astin, 1993). He identified these environmental factors as significant predictors of student persistence: residency, on-campus employment, participation in co-curricular activities such as social fraternities and sororities and clubs and organizations, and participation in intercollegiate sports. According to Astin (1999), involvement has both quantitative and qualitative features; involvement can be measured quantitatively by the amount of time spent on a task, and qualitatively by the achievement of the outcome at the completion of the task. For instance, a student's involvement in a student organization can be measured quantitatively by the amount of time spent attending meetings versus qualitatively by serving as an officer and organizing activities for the organization. Astin also notes that it is not just the quantity of involvement that matters, but also the quality of the involvement (Astin, 1999). With this, Astin (1999) suggested that students have a better chance of staying in college if they are more involved in their academic experience and the institution's social life, and institutions can contribute to student persistence by offering activities or programs to enhance student involvement. Tinto (1993) concluded that the more integrated or engaged a student is in the college's academic and social environments, the more likely the student would persist.

**College Student Persistence**

To better understand the impact that first-generation status and out-of-classroom experiences may have on a college student's persistence requires that student persistence be defined. Experts in the field have long credited Tinto's work with expanding the scope of research on college student persistence by bringing attention to factors that affect retention and attrition, particularly the importance of academic and social integration in reducing dropout rates. Tinto (2012) defined student persistence as "the rate at which students who begin higher education at a given point in time continue in higher education and eventually complete their degree, regardless of where they do so" (p. 127). Student persistence is made more complex because students will temporarily stop out and may continue at another institution. It is difficult to determine whether the student has merely stopped out or has dropped out altogether (Tinto, 2012).

Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) and Kuh et al. (2005) wrote volumes about student success and college students' engagement experiences. Pascarella et al. (2004) used a sample from the National Study of Student Learning (NSSL) to estimate and understand the impact of the college
experience on first-generation student persistence. The researchers found that first-generation students experienced college differently than their peers. Through their third year of college, first-generation students completed significantly fewer credit hours, had lower overall GPAs, and worked significantly more hours per week than their peers whose parents had some post-secondary education or who had completed a degree. They were also less likely to live on campus, participate in extracurricular activities, participate in athletics, and volunteer compared to students whose parents had college experience (Pascarella et al., 2004). These tendencies toward part-time enrollment status, work obligations, living off-campus, and lower levels of extracurricular involvement negatively influenced the persistence of first-generation students.

Pike and Kuh (2005) attributed lower persistence and graduation rates of first-generation students to differences in pre-college characteristics and college engagement experiences. As compared to students whose parents had earned some college credits or who had a college degree, first-generation students were less likely to live in campus housing, more likely to work more hours off campus, less likely to develop relationships with faculty and other students, and less likely to become involved in clubs and organizations (Pike & Kuh, 2005). These findings indicated that low levels of engagement were an indirect result of being first-generation but were directly associated with lower persistence rates for first-generation students.

Kuh (2008) identified ten high-impact practices (HIPs) that are vastly assessed evidence-based practices that enhance student learning and persistence for college students from differing backgrounds. Among the HIPs are living-learning communities, global learning experiences such as study abroad, and faculty-led service-learning. Participation in HIPs is especially impactful for students who may be first-generation by improving the quality of a students' college experience (Bonet & Walters, 2016). However, first-generation students are less likely than their peers to be familiar with HIPs or engagement opportunities because of their lack of knowledge with the overall college experience (Kuh, 2008).

**Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study is grounded in a synthesis of Astin's (1991) input-environment-outcome (I-E-O) model of college effects and is guided by existing student engagement and development theories (Astin, 1993, 1999; Tinto, 1993). Astin (1993) described his input-environment-outcome (I-E-O) model as a "conceptual guide" for analyzing college student growth or development (p. 7). In Astin's model, inputs are the
pre-determined characteristics at the time a student enters college. Such data could be age, sex, race, socioeconomic status, educational level of parents, or academic preparedness. According to Astin, environment refers to various programs, policies, people, places, or experiences that a student encounters during his or her time in college. These could be academic experiences, social experiences, institutional or cultural experiences, or a combination of the three (Astin, 1991). The outcome in Astin's model involves student characteristics after exposure to the environment or a particular experience. Change, or growth in student development, is determined by comparing the outcome characteristics with the input characteristics.

Figure 1 depicts the concept map for this study. The arrows show connections between input, environment, and outcome. Input (pre-college characteristics) can impact environment (out-of-classroom engagement experiences), and both input and environment can impact the outcome (persistence) (Astin, 1991; Astin, 1999; Tinto, 1993). The impact can be either positive or negative (Astin, 1999).
Methods
The researcher explored the perceptions of first-generation upper-class college students enrolled at a comprehensive university in Georgia. The researcher sought to answer the following research question: How do first-generation college students perceive the impact of out-of-classroom engagement experiences on their persistence? A qualitative interpretive approach (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2002) was chosen for this study because qualitative research is most often used to understand the how and why of an experience and adds humanistic value to a study. Data collection took place via face-to-face semi-structured individual and focus group interviews. Interviews with participants took place in March of 2019 in a pre-arranged private library study room at the research site institution. The interviews, including introductory and consent statements, were audio recorded, and the transcribed data were later analyzed to identify common themes of information that surfaced from the data.

A combined introductory and consent statement was read to each participant as the interview began. Utilizing an interview guide method, a 30-to-45-minute interview with five individual participants and a 75-minute focus group with seven participants was conducted to gather data about their pre-college background characteristics, their college out-of-classroom engagement experiences, and their perceptions on the impact of their experiences on persistence. The interview guide method provided consistency in data collection and increased the credibility of the study (Patton, 2002). The interview questions were guided by the research literature and reflected common themes related to first-generation students, engagement, and persistence. Open-ended questions encouraged participants to share their perceptions of their campus engagement experiences.

Participants
Potential participants for the individual interviews consisted of students who had completed a freshman seminar course designed specifically for first-generation students, who had earned a minimum of 60 credit hours, and who were currently enrolled and in good standing at the institution. There was a total of 72 possible participants; five self-selected to participate. Potential focus group participants were self-identified as first-generation and had completed a minimum of 60 credit hours but did not complete the freshmen seminar course. The researcher sent an email to a random sample of 1,750 students; seven self-selected to participate in the focus group. In the interviews, the participants were asked to describe their family background and the last two years of their high
A descriptive profile of each participant was constructed, which provided information about family education, socioeconomic status, college preparedness, and high school experiences, all predominant pre-college background factors identified as impacting persistence of first-generation students (Astin, 1993; Astin & Oseguera, 2012; Pascarella et al., 2004; Somers, Woodhouse, & Cofer, 2004). Tables 1 and 2 provide demographic information on participants; pseudonyms are used as first names.

Table 1
Individual Interview Participant Profile Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Family Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ana</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>No College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelsey</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>No College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jake</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Father Some College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travis</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>Mother 2-year Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>No College</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2
Focus Group Participant Profile Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Family Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shayla</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>No College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alena</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Mother Some College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isabella</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>No College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>Mother Some College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>No College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kadeem</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>No College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amber</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>Father Some College</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants also reflected on their engagement experiences as first-generation college students and how those experiences have helped them persist. To achieve the goals of this study, the researcher used a purposeful and inductive approach to identify similarities among responses, which were further developed into themes.
Data Collection and Analysis

In this study, data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously, so that the collection could continue, change, or end, depending on if more data was needed, new themes or questions arose, or if there was a saturation of data (Patton, 2002). Qualitative data were collected from face-to-face individual and focus group interviews. The transcripts of the interviews were coded line-by-line, using open coding techniques that identified any word, short phrase, or segment of data that symbolically represented or captured the essence of the elements of the conceptual framework or a concept from the literature, and that were relevant or important in addressing the research question (Saldaña, 2016). In some cases, the codes overlapped, demonstrating the multiple ways an experience can impact student persistence. The researcher created a conceptually clustered matrix to display the categorized and coded data together for use as a visual aid in presenting common themes and representative data (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). The matrix lists the themes or categories down the left column, and the coded supporting data consisting of descriptions, statements, or experiences collected in the right column and in the row with the corresponding theme. The researcher organized the data into a matrix to visually connect the participants' responses and perceptions that emerged from the data that addressed the research question.

Trustworthiness

Techniques identified by Lincoln and Guba (1985) that were used to establish the credibility of this study were triangulation, frequent debriefing sessions, and member checks. The researcher chose these measures as they address the possible threats specific to this study.

Data were collected from a purposefully selected group of participants by more than one method—individual and focus group interviews. The multiple methods of data collection enriched the overall findings. Lincoln and Guba (1985) consider member checks "the most crucial technique for establishing credibility" (p. 314). Each participant was sent an electronic transcript of his or her individual or focus group interview to review, had the opportunity to make revisions or additions, or change any responses as a method of validating the collected data. Debriefing sessions were held between the researcher and secondary authors after the first individual interview and the after the focus group interview as a check-point so that modifications to the interview guide could be made and data collection could continue, change, or end as needed. A second interview with the first individual interview participant was conducted to gain a deeper
understanding of that participant’s experiences and modify the interview guide questions for the remaining participant interviews.

**Researcher Reflexivity**

Reflexivity is the awareness that the researcher’s values, personal history, and prior experience with the phenomenon can influence the research process and findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Working as a student affairs professional for more than 20 years shaped the researcher’s belief that student engagement and out-of-classroom experiences can add value to the student experience (Kuh, 2009). In undertaking this study, the researcher wanted to understand the out-of-classroom experiences of first-generation students to inform practice that may impact this group’s college experience. This topic was of interest because a significant number of the students at the researched institution are first-generation students. The researcher’s background in working with this population as a student affairs professional has increased their cognizance of the obstacles that first-generation students face in getting to college and persisting to degree completion. While bias cannot be totally eliminated, understanding how the researcher’s background and experiences may influence the study’s findings and acknowledging that bias exists, minimized their impact (Maxwell, 2013).

**Findings**

Both the individual and focus group interviews provided rich data related to the research question. The question was designed to understand how participants perceived their out-of-classroom engagement experiences, impacting their persistence. Findings will be presented as the interpretation of the researcher’s understanding of the participants’ experiences from the emergent common themes.

**Interview Participants**

The researcher asked the individual interview participants if they had ever considered leaving the university and why, and if they thought that their out-of-classroom engagement experiences made a difference in their decision to stay at the university and finish their degree. The previously described process for analyzing the interview transcripts was used to identify key ideas, phrases, and themes that represented the essence of participant responses to the interview questions. The themes were organized to construct conceptual patterns and then compared across the participant responses. The most common themes that emerged were "connection," "community," and "relationships."

**Connection**

For the majority of the participants, finding a connection with the university through their
out-of-classroom engagement experiences was key in their persistence. Travis considered leaving after his first semester, but he started working on campus and began going to basketball games with friends and joined a fraternity. Travis felt more connected through these experiences and no longer thought about leaving. Travis gave this example: "Towards the end of my first semester, I thought about leaving and transferring back home, but I came back after Christmas, and after I started working on campus and going to basketball games, I felt more of a part of the university. Like this is my home now." Emma thought about transferring before her junior year. However, because of her connections with faculty in the honors program and her involvement in a service project through the biology club, she felt like the university was where she was meant to be. Hence, she stayed and finished her degree. Jake found a strong connection between his involvement in SGA and the institution. Jake noted, "I found the Wesley Foundation, coupled with serving and being connected to my institution through student government, has certainly impacted how I view the university. I feel more connected, and it certainly has influenced me not to transfer." Jake considered transferring after his first year but realized that there was much opportunity for him to be a leader and learn skills that would complement his academics, so he decided not to transfer.

Community
Participants of this study expressed that being part of a community, or finding a community where they belonged or fit, was important to their persistence. Three of the individual interview participants, Kelsey, Jake, and Emma, said that although they did not like going to class, their out-of-classroom experiences enhanced their college experience and made them feel as though they were a part of something and that brought them back year after year. Travis said that he would have probably transferred after his first semester if he had not found his community in joining a fraternity. Anna said, "I was able to experience a sense of community with people that were like me, and being able to be a part of those types of groups and to be able to bring our music together, that has made my experience here better." Kelsey added, "Obviously, no one loves going to class, but I was a part of something that kind of made my experience and made me look forward to coming back the next year and then the next year because if you just focus on lecture, you're not going to be very happy."
Relationships

Relationships was an additional common theme. Many of the participants shared that they were motivated to continue towards their degree, or they did not quit or transfer because of the relationships they had found or established with groups, friends, or faculty because of their engagement in out-of-classroom experiences. Having relationships with professors, coworkers, and friendships made Emma felt that she was cared about and encouraged her to succeed. "It is about having those relationships, having those friendships, having those coworker relationships, and also just having those professors that you have relationships with, you know someone cares about you, and it makes you want to succeed." Ana said that living off campus was a disconnect for her. While she never considered quitting college, making friends through membership in a music fraternity gave her the human interaction she needed to survive. "You can't just always be in your book or in your class. You need to have that human interaction to be able to survive this journey." Kelsey shared that her out-of-classroom engagement made her a better and more well-rounded student. According to Jake, he found acceptance in the groups he joined, and this acceptance developed into a vested interest in finishing his degree.

Focus Group Participants

One of the questions that the researcher asked the focus group participants was how their out-of-classroom engagement experiences impacted their decision to stay at the university and complete their degree. The over-arching theme that emerged from data analysis was "enhancing the overall experience."

Enhancing the Overall Experience

A common theme from the focus group that developed in response to the research question was "enhancing the overall experience." Many of the focus group participants shared that they were motivated to continue towards their degree because their out-of-classroom experiences had enhanced their overall experience, and they stayed to complete their degree. Alena felt her engagement in out-of-classroom experiences kept her going. "I enjoyed doing things besides academics because I made friends. It was great having something that I could be equal to the others. When you are volunteering, the focus is on the people you are helping and not yourself." Shayla said, "I decided that I am going to make the best of my experience and get everything I can out of college. There is more to going to college than just going to class. If that was all there was, lots of students would quit." For Isabella, her focus was on getting her degree."The most
important thing is for me to get my degree. Nothing else, except my family, matters to me. If I am able to do other stuff, great, but my family and my degree comes first." Daniel shared the importance of his out-of-classroom experiences and said, "I found that being involved outside of my classes, both in modeling and tutoring has enhanced my college experience. If I hadn't found myself, in modeling especially, I don't think I would have made it." Kadeem shared:

I didn't want to be that Indian student who just came to school and got good grades. I wanted to be involved in organizations and be an outgoing person. I wanted to meet more people than the friends I had from high school. I wanted to do volunteering in the community, at the local hospital because that will help me in my career. I wanted to get the most out of my college experience.

The findings revealed that these first-generation participants perceived that out-of-classroom experiences impacted their persistence by connecting them with the university and faculty, by becoming or being a part of a community, and because of the relationships that they established by being engaged in an out-of-classroom experience. Participants of this study also perceived that out-of-classroom engagement experiences enhanced their overall college experience, which impacted their persistence.

**Discussion**

Data collected from interviews with 12 first-generation students, five individual interview participants, and seven participants in a focus group interview were used to answer the research question that guided this study. In his I-E-O model of student engagement theory, which served as the conceptual framework for this study, Astin (1991) concluded that a student's pre-college characteristics, or inputs, impact that student's college experiences. According to Astin's theory, inputs coupled with environments or experiences, are predictive factors of the eventual college outcome. In asking the participants of this study to describe their family background and the last two years of their high school experience, a descriptive profile of each participant was constructed. The participant profiles provided information about family education, socioeconomic status, college preparedness, and high school experiences, all predominant pre-college background factors identified as impacting persistence of first-generation students (Astin, 1993; Astin & Oseguera, 2012; Pascarella et al., 2004; Somers, Woodhouse, & Cofer, 2004). Further, themes that emerged are discussed in connection to relevant literature. Connecting to the I-E-O model (Astin 1991), each theme
can be considered a way for the students' environment to impact their outcome.

**Connection**
For most of the participants, finding a connection with the university through their out-of-classroom engagement experiences was key in their persistence. Emma had this to say: "These out-of-class experiences where you get to meet and connect with people, with faculty, with projects, that's what really keeps you here." Tinto (1993) presents the concept of connecting with the institution as being "marked by stages of passage, through which individuals must typically pass in order to persist in college" (p. 94). Out-of-class experiences are key stages of passage for students. Connecting to the college can be the difference between continued persistence and early departure.

**Community**
The transition stage of Tinto's (1993) theory of individual departure suggests that students who come from families, schools, and communities whose cultural norms and behaviors differ from those of the college that they now attend, face difficulties in becoming part of or integrating into that new community which can lead to higher instances of departure. Generally speaking, families of first-generation students do not have familiarity with college nor the knowledge of the college environments, as do families of students who attended or completed college. Tinto (2012) also believes that it is essential that students see themselves as valued members of a community of faculty, staff, and other students and feel like they belong. Jake commented, "I came here and still had actual intentions to eventually transferring. But I found my place." The result of the community bond serves to bind the individuals together as a group or community, even when there are challenges. The participants said they felt like their engagement in out-of-classroom experiences made them feel more a part of the university community, that the university was their home, and that they belonged or fit there, making them less likely to leave and more likely to stay and complete their degree. Anna was able to experience a sense of community with people that were like her through music. In her interview, Kelsey talked about the impact of her out-of-classroom experiences on her persistence as being part of something that was outside herself.

**Relationships**
Tinto (1993) discussed the importance of social involvement with peers and faculty as having an important impact on student persistence. Tinto noted that the relationships between faculty and students are often the primary social integration factors that are
valuable to meaningful student experiences. "They stay because of friendships they have developed" (Tinto, 1993, p. 131). As Ana shared, "You can't just always be in your book or in your class, you need to have that human interaction to be able to survive this journey."

Astin (1999) found that regular student interactions with faculty outside of the classroom were more strongly related to student satisfaction than any other type of engagement. Jake, one of the individual interview participants, said, "The friends and the relationships and the acceptance that I found played a big role in me falling in love with the university and for me, the out-of-classroom experiences, the engagement that I've had out-of-the-classroom, has made me feel positively towards the institution, and I have a vested interest in finishing my degree here."

**Enhancing the Overall Experience**

Astin's (1991) input-environment-outcome (I-E-O) model provides a conceptual structure for analyzing student growth and development. The theory behind the I-E-O model is a method that can be used to assess the impact of experiences by determining whether students grow or change under various environmental conditions. The outcome element of Astin's theory involves student characteristics after exposure to the environment or a particular experience. Change or growth is determined by comparing the outcome characteristics with the input characteristics. The participants of this study, mostly the focus group participants, said they felt as though their out-of-classroom experiences enhanced their overall college experience, and that because of their experiences, they had grown or changed as an individual and therefore returned year after year and were motivated to complete their degree. Shayla made the comment, "There is more to going to college than just going to class. If that was all there was, lots of students would quit." Daniel attributed his persistence to finding his passion. "I found that being involved outside of my classes, both in modeling and tutoring has enhanced my college experience. If I hadn't found myself, in modeling especially, I don't think I would have made it."

**Limitations**

As with any research that relies on interview data, the participants' level of comfort and ease discussing personal experiences and feelings during their participation limited the study. The out-of-classroom engagement experiences explored were limited to the experiences that were available to the participants at one institution. Although the findings of this study contribute to the knowledge of the first-generation student experience, this study was limited to first-generation college students who, at the time of the study,
were registered undergraduate students at one 4-year comprehensive university in Georgia, and the results may not be generalizable to all first-generation college students. While the findings of this study were limited to first-generation students who self-identified at one institution, readers may be able to adapt the findings to first-generation students at other institutions.

**Recommendations for Student Affairs Professionals**

The study's findings indicate that out-of-classroom experiences can positively impact first-generation student persistence. Accordingly, student affairs practitioners should consider ways to engage first-generation students in out-of-classroom experiences that connect them with faculty; make them feel like they are part of the university community; and where they can establish and build relationships with faculty and peers, as these were perceived by the participants to be ways that out-of-classroom experiences impacted their persistence.

It is also recommended that student affairs professionals seek ways to encourage participation in high impact practices (HIPs) (Kuh, 2008). Participation in HIPs can be especially impactful for students who may be first-generation by improving the quality of a students' college experience (Bonet & Walters, 2016). Introducing HIPs to first-generation students through academic advising or student engagement programming can lessen the gap in participation for first-generation students.

One suggestion to engage first-generation students in HIPs is to create a first-generation living-learning community (Kuh, 2008). First-generation students would live together on-campus and could receive needed support from residence life staff and faculty on topics such as financial aid and scholarships, advising, and career opportunities, and where they could connect with other students who experience similar hurdles. Participation in co-curricular activities is also crucial (Astin, 1993; Kuh, 2008). There should be several opportunities for first-generation students to become aware of and join student organizations. It is also important that organizations that may appeal to first-generation students, such as those with cultural, ethnic, and religious affiliations, are available.

The formation of a first-generation student organization could be beneficial to students in building relationships and making friends and could serve as a foundation for out-of-classroom engagement. Student affairs staff should encourage and partner with faculty on service-learning or volunteer projects to connect first-generation students to the institution and their academic major.
Recommendations for Future Research
Multiple future research possibilities evolved from this study. First, Astin's (1999) discussion of his student involvement theory suggests that different forms of involvement may lead to different outcomes. For example, the conceptual framework outcome for this study was student persistence, and as suggested by Pascarella et al. (2004), residency, work, involvement in clubs and organizations, and volunteer work, were considered to determine the impact that those experiences had on the persistence of the first-generation participants. However, this researcher recommends that other experiences, even those mentioned by the participants of this study, such as study abroad, involvement in faith-based organizations, and interactions with peers, be explored to understand what impact those experiences may have on first-generation student college outcomes.

It is also recommended that additional research explore the characteristics and experiences of uninvolved first-generation students who nonetheless manage to persist and complete college. All of the participants of this study were engaged in out-of-classroom engagement experiences to some degree. However, other first-generation students at the researched institution, who had very little or no out-of-classroom engagement, may have been successful in completing their degree. Further exploration of these students' experiences will help determine the relationship of pre-college characteristics, during-college experiences, and college outcomes, as outlined in Astin's I-E-O model.

Conclusion
Each first-generation college student has unique pre-college characteristics and experiences college in his or her own way. Much of the past research describes first-generation college students as more likely to be People of Color, low-income, academically underprepared for college, and less likely to persist to degree completion (Bui, 2002; Chen, 2005; Choy, 2001; Terenzini, Springer, Yaeger, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996). This portrayal of the typical first-generation college student is not necessarily true for the participants of this study. The first-generation students who participated in this study represented diverse racial backgrounds. While they came from families with lower incomes than their non-first-generation peers, they did not fall into the low-income socioeconomic class, as depicted in the literature. Most, if not all, of the participants felt academically prepared for college. While each of their out-of-classroom experiences was unique, they chose their engagement experiences in similar ways. This study's primary purpose was to explore the out-of-classroom engagement experiences of first-generation
college students to understand the impact those experiences may have on persistence. The focal point became the perceptions of the participants and how they perceived that out-of-classroom experiences impacted their persistence.

This study's findings provided insight into the out-of-classroom engagement experiences of a select group of first-generation college students and the perceptions of that group of participants on how those experiences impacted their persistence. The goal was to examine pre-college characteristics and in-college experiences and the impact of those two combined on persistence. The findings revealed that these first-generation participants perceived that out-of-classroom experiences impacted their persistence by connecting them with the university and faculty, by becoming or being a part of a community, and because of the relationships that they established by being engaged in an out-of-classroom experience. Participants of this study also perceived that out-of-classroom engagement experiences enhanced their overall college experience, which impacted their persistence.

This research will inform practice for student affairs practitioners in engaging first-generation students in out-of-classroom experiences such as those that connect them with faculty, make them feel they are part of the university community, and where they can establish and build relationships with peers, as these were perceived by the participants as having an impact on their persistence. In conclusion, although there is abundant opportunity for further research on first-generation students' college experiences, this study provided a foundational understanding of the out-of-classroom experiences that impact persistence.
REFERENCES


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The Rise in Use of Emotional Support Animals by College Students: The Impact of Parenting Styles

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As the generational context of higher education shifts, a rise in Emotional Support Animal (ESA) use and mental health concerns are present for students on college campuses. While previous studies have aimed to address the relevancy and controversy of ESAs in higher education as well as their effectiveness in supporting individuals, less research has explored underlying factors that contribute to the use of an ESA. The purpose of this study was to explore the parenting behaviors of parents/caregivers of students with ESAs in comparison to parents/caregivers of students without ESAs. An embedded mixed methods design was used. Participants completed the Parenting Behaviors Questionnaire (PBQ) assessment scale and an embedded qualitative question. Findings revealed significant differences in the PBQ subscales of responsiveness, explaining, and discipline indicating that the parenting behaviors among parents/caregivers of students with ESAs differ in these areas. Students with ESAs also disclosed higher incidents of unexpected life events and caregiver instability than their non-ESA counterparts. The data provides essential assessment and intervention information for college counseling centers.

Keywords: emotional support animals, higher education, parenting, college counseling centers, mental health


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With the generational demography of college students evolving, new phenomena are surfacing in higher education. With an increase in mental health concerns on college campuses, the use of emotional support animals is on the rise. Institutions of higher education face the challenge of developing policies and practices that both support and protect students. As these situations evolve, it becomes necessary for higher education to have a consistent response on multiple fronts, with regard to policies, practices, and direct support services for student success. In order for counseling centers in higher education to be prepared to address the overall health and well-being of students under their care, it is critical to have a broader understanding of such phenomena. While previous studies have debated the relevancy and controversy of emotional support animals and focused on the value of using an emotional support animal, little focus has aimed at identifying underlying factors contributing to the need for their use. In an effort to better understand this gap, the purpose of the study was to explore the parenting behaviors of the parents/caregivers of students using an emotional support animal compared to the parenting behaviors of the parents/caregivers of students without an emotional support animal while attending college.

**Emotional Support Animals and Higher Education**

Mental health concerns are growing in the United States (Locke et al., 2016), especially in adults ages 18-25 years old (SAMHSA, 2018). College counseling center directors have reported an increase in the use of mental health services and that students are coming to college with higher severity of mental health concerns (Gallagher, 2014). A new phenomenon that provides support for students who have mental health concerns is the use of emotional support animals (Adams, Sharkin, & Bottinelli, 2017). However, the subject of emotional support animals on campuses of higher education has been one of controversy in recent years (Kogan, Schaefer, Erdman, & Schoenfeld-Tacher, 2016). The requests to bring service animals (defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act) and assistance animals (defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development) continue to increase on campuses of higher education (Adams, Sharkin, & Bottinelli, 2017; Kogan et al., 2016), while there is a significant lack of consistent policy towards these requests across institutions nationwide.

**Emotional Support Animals versus Service Animals**

One of the more difficult challenges associated with recognizing the difference between emotional support animals (ESA)
and service animals is the lack of a single definition of the two. One of the main differences is that an ESA is not trained to perform a specific task to aid the individual. According to the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) (2015), under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, “Service animals are defined as dogs that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people living with disabilities” (p. 1). Examples of this can include physical disabilities, such as a dog that aids a person who is blind, and psychiatric disabilities, such as a seizure alert dog (Kogan et al., 2016). The DOJ also states that this definition does not restrict the broader definition of the term “assistance animal” by the Fair Housing Act or the term “service animal” by the Air Carrier Access Act (U.S. Department of Justice, 2015). In the Fair Housing Act, an emotional support animal is considered an assistance animal (Fair Housing Act, 1968).

In the higher education setting, the two laws that are most applicable to the regulations regarding service animals and emotional support animals are the ADA and the Fair Housing Act. However, both of the federal laws have different definitions and names for service, assistance, and emotional support animals, which have an adverse impact on the confusion regarding policy formation in higher education (Kogan et al., 2016).

Emotional Support Animal Policies in Higher Education

A large concern for institutions is setting the precedent of allowing ESAs on campus. If they give approval of an ESA to one student, they will not be able to refuse approval to another student (Field, 2006). This could be problematic on several fronts, one of which is a concern of students trying to bring their pets to campus under the guise of an ESA, when that is not the case (Von Bergen, 2015). As ESAs are untrained, there are no regulations to vet whether or not the animal is of legitimate psychiatric use to the individual, and many ESAs are certified without an accurate examination from a mental health professional (Salminen & Gregory, 2018). Another concern could be other legal issues, especially the liability of having animals on campus (Adams, Sharkin, & Bottinelli, 2017). The differing definitions, laws, and lack of consistent regulation make for uncertainty when it comes to policymaking in higher education regarding ESAs (Von Bergen, 2015).

Generational Context

As the demography of students entering higher education evolves, exploring the generational context of this cohort as well as their parents/caregivers is necessary. For higher education institutions serving undergraduate students, first-time college students ranging from 18 to 22 years of age
are the youngest generational cohort being referred to by numerous suggested names including the Homeland Generation, Post-Millennial, Generation We, IGen, or Generation Z. According to Beck and Wright (2019), the use of the title IGen for this cohort encompasses the historical significance of being real digital natives, having had wide access to technology for the duration of their lives, and suggests the isolation present from growing up in a society where technological connection is easier than a connection with people.

For the IGen cohort, technology has played an influential role in their lives. Members of this cohort participate in frequent use of social media which has skewed boundaries about information that is public versus private, thus reshaping social norms (Beck & Wright, 2019). Because absorption with technology is present, social and relationship skills may be weaker (Chicca & Shellenbarger, 2018). Another increasing concern is the rate of mental health concerns with this generation as they have been found to be much lonelier than any other adult cohort (Beck & Wright, 2019). Friendships usually transpire through a technological platform, making it a challenge for the IGen cohort to engage and make connections face to face. The IGen cohort is being parented by GenX parents, which have endorsed a hovering style of parenting allowing their children some level of freedom but staying connected with them through technology. As a result, parents struggle to let go (Jenkins, 2017), thus, drawing the conclusion that parenting may be influenced by an individual's generational cohort.

**Parenting Styles**

Research on parenting styles has been explored for decades. Baumrind (1971; 1991) asserts that the best parenting outcomes evolve when parents are not too punitive or too detached. Guidance and monitoring are needed among all children, which can be flexible according to their developmental needs. Numerous researchers have recorded positive outcomes on children raised by caregivers who are warm and affectionate but who also set clear, consistent, and reasonable expectations for their children, opposite of being punitive or aloof (Jaffee & Jacobs, 2013). Researchers have indicated an authoritative parenting style, which encompasses high levels of love, support, and discipline, lead to higher academic adjustment as compared to other parenting styles such as permissive or authoritarian (Spera, 2005; Love & Thomas, 2014). Additionally, individuals whose parents and/or caregivers employed an authoritative parenting style also had higher levels of self-esteem (Love & Thomas, 2014). Studies comparing authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting styles have identified...
that using the authoritative approach has resulted in positive outcomes of emotional well-being, academic adjustment, social adjustment, and positive social behaviors (Silva et al., 2007). Wissink, Dekovic, and Meijer (2006) note the quality of the relationship between caregiver and adolescent appears to be more paramount than tangible parenting behaviors.

A rise in the use of emotional support animals on college campuses is occurring among the current IGen student population. This upward trend has caused unique challenges for universities and student counseling centers, but research remains limited. Although a depth of studies has been conducted linking parenting styles to academic outcomes and emotional well-being, research exploring the parenting behaviors of students with emotional support animals has not been explored.

Purpose of the study
The overall purpose of this study was to explore the parenting behaviors of the parents/caregivers of students using an emotional support animal in comparison to students without an emotional support animal while attending college.

RQ1: What is the difference in parenting behaviors of the parents/caregivers of the participants with ESAs and the participants without ESAs on a university campus?

RQ2: How is the relationship between the participant and their parents/caregivers described?

RQ3: How does the relationship described by the participants about their parents/caregivers further explain the differences of parenting behaviors among the parents/caregivers of the participants?

Methods

Procedure
The design for this study was an embedded mixed methods design, in which the qualitative data played a secondary role to the quantitative data collected (Creswell, 2014). Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently from students enrolled in a medium-sized regional southern university, who either had an emotional support animal (ESA) or who did not have an emotional support animal (ESA). The researchers not only aimed to explore the parenting behaviors of the participants’ parents/caregivers through the collection of quantitative data, but the researchers wanted to know more deeply how the participants described the relationship they had with that parent/caregiver through qualitative inquiry. Thus, the embedded mixed methods design was selected, as
participants’ description of the relationship they had with their caregiver could not be obtained through the use of quantitative measures alone. Approval was obtained from the university’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). At this university, only the students who live on campus in residence halls are required to register the use of an emotional support animal. Due to the lack of tracking at the university overall of students who have emotional support animals on campus, a convenience sample was used. Two primary recruitment strategies were used: 1) students were informed about the voluntary study through the weekly email announcements disseminated to all students at the university through their campus email and 2) the university housing office sent an email about the voluntary study to students who had an emotional support animal living on campus in their residence hall.

Qualtrics, an online survey tool, was used for obtaining informed consent electronically. Once a participant completed the informed consent form electronically electing to voluntarily participate, they were redirected to a separate Qualtrics link to complete the electronic survey. The students’ university identification number was obtained on the informed consent form only for all participants of the study to be included in a drawing for a one-hundred-dollar Visa gift card. Completed survey data was not linked to the informed consent forms to protect participants’ confidentiality and anonymity. The link to participate in the study was open for one 16-week academic semester.

Participants
The participants of this study consisted of 54 total students in a medium-sized regional southern university. Half of participants reported having an ESA, while the other 27 participants reported having no ESA. Although more students without ESAs participated in the study; there were only 27 students with ESAs who participated in the study. Thus, the first 27 participants without an ESA to submit the survey were included in the study in order to have equal representation of both groups. Although the university does not track students’ use of ESAs overall, at the time of the study, the university had 61 students using an ESA who were living in a residence hall on campus, therefore, the study represented 44% of this total number. Table 1 shows the demographic information gathered from participants. The questions regarding gender and cultural background were open ended responses, as to allow participants to self-identify.
Table 1
Participant Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Students with Registered ESA (%)</th>
<th>Students Without ESA (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>30-34</td>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-39</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40&amp;up</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural Background</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White/Caucasian</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
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<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mixed Race</td>
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<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
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</tr>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>67</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transgender</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Class Standing</strong></td>
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<td>Freshman</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N=54 (n = 27 for each participant group)
Measures
The Parenting Behaviors Questionnaire (PBQ), developed by Wissink, Dekovic, and Meijer (2006), is a 30-item questionnaire measuring six subscales on a Likert scale of one (never) to five (very often). The questionnaire measures the frequency of existing child rearing behaviors rather than parenting beliefs, attitudes, or behavioral intentions. Three dimensions of parenting behaviors are assessed: support, authoritative control, and restrictive control. Each dimension was also subdivided into two subscales each. The first dimension of support includes the subscales of warmth (i.e. How often do your parents let you know that they love you?) and responsiveness (i.e. How often do your parents really try to help, comfort you, or cheer you up when you are having a (small) problem?). The second dimension of authoritative control includes the subscales of explaining (i.e. How often do your parents try to give you a good answer when you ask something you don’t understand?) and autonomy (i.e. How often do your parents say you can do something on your own?). The final dimension of restrictive control includes the subscales of strictness (i.e. How often do your parents have strict rules you have to obey?) and discipline (i.e. How often do your parents punish you severely?) (Wissink et al., 2006).

Permission was granted in the American Psychological Association (APA) PsychNet database to use the PBQ questionnaire for research and/or teaching purposes. An additional seven demographic questions were added to the questionnaire by the researchers: age, culture, gender, academic classification, family structure, caregiver age bracket, and birth order. Demographic questions designed with a forced response included age, academic classification, family structure, age of caregivers, and birth order. Researchers provided an open text entry option for cultural background and gender. One open ended question was also incorporated, (How would you describe the relationship with your parent(s)/caregiver(s)?), where students typed their open-ended response in a text box.

Data Analysis
The demographic questionnaire consisted of seven questions developed by the researchers. Data from the demographic questionnaire enabled the researchers to compare specific demographic variables with other study variables. The Parenting Behaviors Questionnaire (PBQ) was developed by Wissink et al (2006) and is a 30-item questionnaire measuring six subscales with an accompanying answering Likert scale of 1 to 5. Data analysis was conducted using a paired-sample two tailed t-test on each subscale of the questionnaire.
using an Excel spreadsheet (p value < 0.05). To minimize the possibility of errors, two of the three researchers analyzed the data independently, and then met to discuss the analysis to ensure consistency and accuracy.

Qualitative data was also collected by using one open-ended question developed by the researchers to identify emerging themes that were different among the two groups (students with ESAs and students without ESAs) to better address the research questions. Participants typed their response in a text box to answer this qualitative question. This process involved: assigning units of data, sorting the units of data into categories, dividing categories into subcategories if needed, assigning codes for each category type, and defining the attributes of both the categories and subcategories (Creswell, 2014; Stringer & Dwyer, 2005). The researchers analyzed the qualitative data collectively to come to a consensus on the emerging themes.

Results

Parenting Behaviors Questionnaire (PBQ)

For the Parenting Behaviors Questionnaire (PBQ), a paired-sample two tailed t-test was conducted to identify differences in parenting behaviors of the parents/caregivers of participants with ESAs versus the behaviors of the parents/caregivers of participants without ESAs on a university campus. The PBQ consisted of 30 items, measuring six subscales, providing participants an answering scale of 1 (never) to 5 (very often). Each subscale consisted of five questions. As displayed in Table 2, the results suggest significant differences on three of the six subscales. Of the three subscales that were statistically significant, participants with an ESA responded with the selection of sometimes (3); whereas the participants without an ESA responded mostly with sometimes (3) to rarely (2). The subscales of significant difference included responsiveness (p=0.004), explaining (p=0.000), and discipline (p=0.037).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2</th>
<th>Parenting Behaviors Questionnaire (PBQ) Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PBQ Scale Item</strong></td>
<td><strong>Registered ESA</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>M</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subscale Warmth</td>
<td>3.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) Show love</td>
<td>3.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Give a compliment</td>
<td>3.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subscale</td>
<td>Item</td>
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<tr>
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<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3) Call you a nickname or pet name</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4) Give a kiss or say something nice before bed</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5) Hug you or give you a kiss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subscale</td>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6) Tries to understand when you talk about something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7) Really try to help, comfort you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subscale</td>
<td>Explaining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8) Notice, if you’re feeling sad or down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9) Ask you if something is bothering you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10) Give you the feeling you can call on them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1) Try to give you a good answer when you ask</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) Explain why something is forbidden to you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3) Explain why you are being punished, if they punish you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4) Make sure that you understand why certain rules are important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5) Explain something to you when you fail to grasp</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at the 0.05 level.
### Subscale Autonomy Granting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>T-Value</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6) Say you can do something on your own</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Tell you to consider yourself what you have to do or say</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) Tell you that you are responsibility for your own actions</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>4.26</td>
<td>0.81</td>
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<td>9) Allow you to decide something for yourself</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10) Parents ask your opinion</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
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</table>

### Subscale Strictness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>T-Value</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Say you should listen to people who are older</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Are your parents strict</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Get angry when you contradict them</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Use strict rules you have to obey</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Want you to do what they say, even if you don’t agree</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>0.86</td>
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</table>

### Subscale Discipline

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<tr>
<th>Item</th>
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<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>T-Value</th>
<th>P-Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6) Forbidden to do something you like</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>0.97</td>
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<tr>
<td>7) Parents punish you severely</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>1.25</td>
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<tr>
<td>8) Give you a box on the ears, a pat, or a pinch in the arm</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9) Punishment if you don’t do what your parents tell you to do

10) Yell to you if you did something against their will

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall Scale</th>
<th>3.62</th>
<th>1.12</th>
<th>3.33</th>
<th>1.17</th>
<th>5.163</th>
<th>2.734</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

*p ≤ 0.05

Qualitative data themes
An open-ended qualitative question asked participants to describe the relationship with their parent(s)/caregiver(s). Qualitative results revealed two primary emerging themes that differed between the two groups (participants with ESAs and participants without ESAs); the two themes were unexpected life events and caregiver instability.

Theme 1 - Unexpected life events (ESA n=10; non-ESA n=2)
The first primary theme that emerged from the results was unexpected life events. Participants with ESAs encountered more unpredictable and unexpected prior life events that impacted the participants and their relationships in the family with their parents/caregivers, as compared to participants without an ESA. Examples of statements that illustrated the unexpected life events theme follow:

Joanna - I am very close with my mom. I was close at times with my dad but as I grew up, it got more strained. He passed away suddenly a month before I came to college my freshman year.

Brandy - It was very tense growing up, as my father is an alcoholic who had some abusive tendencies. I was also suffering from prolonged sexual abuse at the hands of a bully and took out my repressed feelings on my parents.

Tracy - I am very close with both my parents but I am closer to my mom ever since she had cancer.

Sierra - I was adopted; it was not good.

Heather – With my mom it's rather intense and not as close as others, she impacts me a lot and after my father's death, I closed off from my
mom and step-father. And I never speak to my step-mother after telling of the abuse her and her son put me through growing up.

Theme 2 - Caregiver Instability (ESA n=14; non-ESA n=6)

Caregiver instability was the second primary theme that emerged from the results. Participants with ESAs encountered higher caregiver instability with their parent(s)/caregiver(s), as compared to participants without an ESA. Examples of statements that illustrated the caregiver instability theme follow:

Amy - My dad is quite distant; he only speaks to us when it is convenient for him. My mom is very in tune with my life.

Elizabeth - Not great. I am estranged from my mother, and am recently not on speaking terms with my father. My relationship with my mother was more of a sister relationship throughout my life, accompanied by extreme verbal abuse. I have not seen her since I moved out at 17. As for my father, he is a good person, we just do not see eye-to-eye and he has recently cut me off with financial aid due to him not in agreement with my major change to nursing.

Taylor - Hostile, constantly lying and always yelling/angry with each other.

Sara - We have a complicated relationship. My mom is a helicopter mom, and my dad is ready to kick me out and make me live on my own.

Whitney – I have a great relationship with my mom. I barely talk to my father, we practically have a non-existent relationship.

Laurie – My mom and I have a great relationship. My dad and I barely get along and hardly talk to each other outside of meals.

Converged Data Results

The quantitative data results revealed significant differences in parenting behaviors of the parents/caregivers of the participants with ESAs compared to the participants without ESAs. Within the responsiveness subscale, participants with ESAs indicated that their parents/caregiver sometimes asked them if something was bothering them or they wanted to talk compared to participants without ESAs who responded rarely. As the qualitative results revealed, participants with ESAs had more unexpected life events and more caregiver instability within their relationships, which could have been a contributor to explaining their
parent/caregiver(s) need to be responsive to their child, due to the stress and chaos that the instability within the home was already causing. Within the explaining subscale, participants with ESAs responded that their parents/caregivers sometimes explained why something was forbidden to them, often explained the reason they were being punished, and often explained something if they failed to grasp the subject. Due to the instability of relationships within the home and unexpected circumstances, parents/caregivers of participants with ESAs had more enmeshed relationships without clear boundaries among roles. This type of relationship fostered the need to overly communicate and explain the reasons and rationale for their decisions as parents to avoid further strife, negativity or difficulties, as revealed in the qualitative data. Within the discipline subscale, participants with ESAs responded that their parents/caregivers sometimes gave them a box on the ears, a pat, or a pinch on the arm. Due to the level of stress in the home environments among participants with ESAs, parents/caregivers may have resulted in reacting with quick, punitive physical control behaviors toward their children, as revealed in the qualitative data.

Discussion
As the rise of students with ESAs continues in higher education, it becomes necessary to learn more about the underlying reasons or contributing factors related to this phenomenon. Previous articles have explored the dilemmas of relevancy and controversy that ESAs have presented for institutions (Phillips, 2016). In addition, prior studies have indicated ESAs have afforded psychological, social, and physiological benefits to persons living with emotional or mental difficulties (Butwin, 2019). “This is in part because emotional support animals offer love and acceptance, but it is also because they alter behavior, offer distraction, and promote a sense of responsibility” (Butwin, 2019, p. 204). However, to better understand underlying factors that are contributing to the rise of students enrolling in college with an ESA rather than the present effectiveness of using an ESA, this study focused on the familial context with specific attention on students’ assessment of their parent/caregivers parenting behaviors. By comparing the parenting behaviors among students with ESAs to students without an ESA, the data revealed key differences in parenting practices and caregiver relationships. These findings provide deeper insights of target areas for assessment and intervention with students.
with ESAs for mental health professionals in counseling centers on college campuses.

A high responsiveness subscale for participants with ESAs could come from the chaos and instability within their home environments. Increased unanticipated life events, higher levels of caregiver inconsistency, and enmeshed relationships create a picture of understanding for participants with ESAs. Lastly, participants with ESAs indicated overall that their parents/caregivers were more likely to use lower levels of violence to initiate control compared to their counterparts’ parents/caregivers. These data points create a narrative around participants with ESAs that can allow institutions to create more efficient policies that include direct service support for their students and the changing context of higher education.

What do these findings mean for counseling centers in institutions of higher education? Health and wellness topics are currently a national level conversation in institutions of higher education due to years of increasing service usage and now the COVID-19 pandemic that has brought mental health and domestic violence into the national spotlight. Institutions of higher education have the perfect opportunity to appraise their systems and begin to confront narratives that are hindrances to vulnerable student populations and their accessibility to success. The purpose of this study was to explore the parenting behaviors of the parents/caregivers of students using an emotional support animal while attending college. Institutions of higher education can use this data to shape policies and identify strategies to incorporate ESAs into their service provision for a comprehensive health and wellness experience for students. Higher education institutions should provide policies that connect students during the registration of their ESA on campus with student counseling services. This recommendation would allow the opportunity for those students to begin therapeutic interventions that may/may not have been accessible prior to arriving at their institution.

Limitations
The participants for this study consisted of 54 total students of one medium-sized regional southern university. A convenience sample was used and, although the study represented 44% of the total number of students using an ESA who were living in a residence hall on this particular campus, it was still a small sample size on one university campus, lacking generalizability. The participants who had ESAs were predominantly between the ages of 18-24, white females, with the majority indicating upper level academic classification. Their counterparts, students without ESAs, were
more evenly dispersed in age categories, white females, with the majority indicating upper level academic classification. Data collected from the participants were based on participant self-report, which did not allow for independent verification of the information. Because past research has not been focused on this particular area, to address this gap, future research on this topic will be necessary to validate this study's findings.

Future Research and Implications for Practice
Future research on parenting practices of students with ESAs needs to be continued for confirmation of this study's outcomes. Once additional findings are confirmed, research can move forward on the key areas of unexpected life events and relationship dynamics for students with ESAs and the level of impact it has had on students' coping capacities. The majority of students with ESAs participating in the study were the youngest in their sibling birth order; whereas, the majority of students without ESAs were the oldest in their sibling birth order. Future research efforts could explore the notion of birth order along with parenting practices in regard to students using ESAs. In addition, exploring the impact of culture and its influence, if any, as to whether or not students make the choice to use an ESA would further this research topic. In evaluating the data of this study and applying it to the multicultural and social justice counseling competencies, future research should include the process of the empowerment model to create the space for participants who are members of groups living with marginalization to have a voice in the narrative that is being created. Specific recommendations to capture that data would include “what is the relationship between the empowerment process of one individual and the empowerment of another individual or group?” (Cattaneo & Chapman, 2010, p. 655).

Furthermore, findings of this study highlight the need for added policies and practices on college campuses. According to Von Bergen (2015), there are several areas for institutions of higher education to consider when forming or changing policies and practices regarding emotional support animals. First, the administrators need to know the differences in definitions between emotional support animals and service animals. As emotional support animals become more popular, so does misinformation about the regulations surrounding emotional support animals versus service animals. Second, Von Bergen (2015) suggests that institutions have only one office or department on campus that oversees animals on campus,
both emotional support animals and service animals, as legal issues have arisen in the past when two offices on campus gave conflicting information to a student (Kyra Alejandro v. Palm Beach State College, 2011). In addition, administrators must maintain consistent responses to address the concerns of students who object to emotional support animals with legitimate concerns. Finally, with the rise in mental health concerns and the severity level of mental health concerns on college campuses (Gallagher, 2014), it is likely that the upward trend of the use of emotional support animals will continue (Von Bergen, 2015). It is imperative for institutions of higher education to review regulations and case law regarding emotional support animals to aid them in the development of realistic policies that are helpful for students in need and also ensure the legal culpability of the institution.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to explore the parenting behaviors of the parents/caregivers of students using an emotional support animal compared to the parenting behaviors of the parents/caregivers of students without an emotional support animal, while attending college, to gain a deeper understanding of any potential underlying factors that may contribute to the use of an ESA. Through the completion of the Parenting Behaviors Questionnaire (PBQ) along with an embedded open-ended question, key differences were identified, providing a broader narrative of the potential factors from within the familial context that may contribute to the use of ESAs. This data can provide more focused guidance on specific strategies for assessment and treatment interventions of students with ESAs; this insight will aid mental health professionals within counseling centers located on higher education campuses. Due to a lack of research in this area, further research on this topic is necessary to confirm the findings and build upon this research emphasis area in order to provide the most effective intervention for students with ESAs.

**Acknowledgements**

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**Disclosure statement**

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.
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The University System of Georgia’s Well-Being Policy Regarding Tobacco Product Use: A Proposal for Changing from Opt-Out to Opt-In

Donald L. Ariail (Kennesaw State University)
Benedikt M. Quosigk (Kennesaw State University)

The University System of Georgia (USG) has a state-wide initiative aimed at increasing the well-being of faculty and staff by incentivizing a decrease in tobacco product usage by employees covered by a USG healthcare plan. This incentive is positive in that aid in stopping tobacco product usage is offered to each member; and negative in that each member who is a tobacco product user is penalized. A healthcare surcharge is added to the monthly health insurance premium paid by each faculty/staff member for themselves and covered dependents over 18 years of age who are tobacco product users. The current policy considers covered employees and their applicable dependents to be users of tobacco products unless they annually opt-out. This paper includes summaries of the incidence of cigarette and tobacco product usage in the U.S., a summary of USG’s policies related to the current tobacco initiative, a brief literature review regarding opt-in and opt-out programs, and a discussion of the possible negative impact of the current USG tobacco use policy. Support is provided for the present tobacco surcharge penalty being either eliminated or its implementation changed, and for the current opt-out default being changed to an opt-in program.

Key Words: Health Insurance, opt-in vs. opt-out programs, tobacco product usage, tobacco use penalty, sin tax, regressive tax


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Despite cigarette usage in the United States (U.S.) having decreased since 1965 by 67% (ALA, n.d.), the use of tobacco products remains a leading cause of preventable diseases (CDC, n.d.). The University System of Georgia (USG) has a state-wide initiative (Well-Being Initiative, 2020) aimed at increasing the well-being of faculty and staff by incentivizing a decrease in tobacco product usage by those members covered by a USG healthcare plan. The incentive is both positive and negative: Positive in that aid in reducing tobacco product usage is offered to each member; and negative in that each member who is a tobacco product user is penalized. A healthcare surcharge is added to the monthly health insurance premium paid by each member for themselves and covered dependents over 18 years of age who are tobacco product users. The current Board of Regents (BOR) policy is to consider the member and applicable dependents as users of tobacco products unless the member opts out on an annual basis. That is, the default position is that the member is a user of tobacco products.

The authors propose that the default option be changed from assuming that members are tobacco product users (the opt-out option) to assuming that members are not users of tobacco products (the opt-in option). That is, changing from an opt-out to an opt-in default. With an opt-in program each member who is a tobacco product user or has covered dependents over 18 years of age who are tobacco product users, would be required to opt into the program—annually declaring by opting-in that they are a tobacco product user. Therefore, our research question (RQ) is as follows:

*RQ: Is there support for the USG Well-Being Initiative changing its tobacco use policy from an opt-out to an opt-in program?*

In attempting to answer this question, this paper proceeds with summaries of the rate of occurrence (incidence) of both historical and current cigarette and tobacco product usage in the U.S., a summary of USG’s policies related to the current tobacco Well-Being Initiative, a summary of USG employment, a literature review regarding opt-in and opt-out programs, a discussion of possible negative impacts resulting from the current USG tobacco use policy, and a conclusion which includes a proposal for either eliminating the surcharge or restructuring how it is determined, and for changing the USG tobacco use policy from an opt-out to an opt-in default.

**Tobacco Use in the U.S.**
As indicated in the selected data included in Table 1, the CDC (2018) reported the 2017 incidence of cigarette smoking in the U.S. at 15.8% for men and 12.3% for women. For age ranges between 35-65, which may
roughly approximate the ages of the majority of USG faculty and staff, the incidence of smoking is 9.0%-18.7% for men and 7.5%-16.0% for women. In other words, a high majority of both men and women in the U.S. do not smoke cigarettes. Compared to cigarette smoking rates in 1965 of 51.9% for men and 33.7% for women, there has been a notable decrease in cigarette smoking. A year-by-year analysis performed by the American Lung Association (ALA, n.d.) of CDC data indicated an overall decrease of 67% in cigarette smoking.

### Table 1

**Incidence of Cigarette Smoking (%) in the United States: 1965-2017.**  
Selected demographics adapted from CDC (2018) Table 17 Trends Tables.

<table>
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<td></td>
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<td>51.9</td>
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<td>18-24</td>
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<td>20.7</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥65</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>20.9</td>
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<td>10.2</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Age (All Females)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>38.1</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
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<td>25-34</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥65</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>13.5</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As of November 15, 2019, the latest data available, the CDC’s Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR, 2019) indicated (Table 2) a further decrease in the incidence of cigarette smoking to an overall rate of 13.7%: 15.6% for men and 12.0% for
women. However, taking into account all forms of tobacco usage, which includes e-cigarettes, the rates were 25.8% for men and 14.1% for women. The overall tobacco usage was 23.8% for ages 25-44, and 21.3% for ages 45-64. On a regional basis, the Southern region had an overall rate of tobacco product usage of 21.4% which was higher than the rates in the Northeast and West regions but lower than the rates in the Midwest region. Of interest to the present study, adults with graduate degrees, which would include almost all instructional faculty, had the lowest incidence of the usage of cigarettes and all tobacco products: 3.7% for cigarette use and 8.2% for the use of any tobacco product (MMWR, 2019).

### Table 2

2018 Incidence of Tobacco Product Usage in the United States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Any Tobacco Product (%)</th>
<th>E-Cigarettes (%)</th>
<th>Cigarettes (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall</strong></td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-44</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-64</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;65</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Census Region:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>16.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education (adults ≥ 25 yrs.):</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-12 (no diploma)</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>21.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GED</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>36.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school diploma</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college, no degree</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate degree</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate degree</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate degree</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Selected data adapted from CDC Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR), November 15, 2019
**USG Well-Being Tobacco Use Policy**

While the incidence of tobacco product usage in the U.S. continues to decline, the USG’s 2020 Wellness Initiative includes a punitive policy regarding the use of tobacco products by faculty and staff. According to Chancellor Wrigley, “the goal of the USG Wellness Initiative is to increase opportunities for our employees to participate in a program that will assist them to lead happier and healthier lives as well as aid in reducing personal and healthcare costs” (Chancellor’s Letter, n.d., para. 3). Currently, the tobacco product usage policy is an opt-out program. Employees and staff who are covered by a USG healthcare plan and who do not use any form of tobacco products must certify that they and their covered family members, which includes dependents who are over 18 years of age, are not tobacco users. The default position is that the faculty/staff and their applicable dependents are tobacco users. The surcharge for family tobacco users is $100 per month per person. According to the USG’s Tobacco Use Certification Information (USG Well-Being, 2020), faculty/staff who are deemed (including errors in not opting out) tobacco users will “each month . . . pay between $100-$300 (or more in some cases) in additional surcharges, depending on how many people are covered by . . . [the] USG healthcare plan. No refunds will be given” (pp. 2-3). Consequently, a member with a spouse and three dependents over 18 years age who are all tobacco users would pay $500 per month in surcharges or $6,000 per year. Thus, a faculty or staff member who makes an inadvertent error in not opting out could pay dearly, and this error cannot be retroactively reversed. New hires and covered family members who are not tobacco users must opt-out within 30 days of being employed. All other faculty must complete tobacco use certification information (opt-out or be defaulted in) each year during the health care enrollment period (USG Well-Being, 2020).

A USG employee who fraudulently opts out of being a tobacco product user can be subject to criminal prosecution. That is, an employee who falsely certifies that they (including covered dependents who are 18+ years of age) are not tobacco users are subject to criminal prosecution. The Tobacco Use Certification Information specifies the false opt-out penalty as follows:

If you knowingly and willfully make a fraudulent statement to the University System of Georgia regarding your insurance coverage, including your status as a tobacco user, you may be subject to criminal prosecution. Under state law (at O.C.G.A. Section 16-10-20), if convicted, you shall be punished by a fine of no more than $1,000.00 or by imprisonment for no less than one nor more than five...
years, or both. (USG Well-Being, 2020, para. 11)

In addition, having been found guilty of an ethics violation or a criminal offense the policy may subject faculty and staff to disciplinary actions including termination of employment. The ethics policy contained in Section 8.2.18.1 of the Code of Conduct of the BOR’s Policy Manual requires, in part, that “member[s] of the USG community . . . comply with all applicable laws, rules, regulations, and professional standards” [emphasis added]. In addition, the BOR’s Policy Manual (BORPM: 8.3.9.1) in part indicates that grounds for the removal of faculty include “conviction or admission of guilt of a felony . . . during the period of employment . . . [and] violation of Board of Regents’ policies . . ..” Under Georgia Code Title 16, Crimes and Offenses § 16-11-131 a felony is defined as “. . . any offense punishable by imprisonment for a term of one year or more and includes conviction by a court-martial under the Uniform Code of Military Justice for an offense which would constitute a felony under the laws of the United States” (FindLaw, n.d.). Thus, faculty and staff found guilty of lying about their use of a tobacco product could potentially be terminated.

**USG Employment**

As of fall semester 2019 the USG had a total of 49,541 employees. Of this number, 11,851 were full-time instructional faculty with the remainder composed of 1,550 other instructional faculty and 36,140 non-instructional employees. Faculty members were predominately male (53.8%) and had graduate degrees (97.9%). A summary of USG employment data is presented in Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>USG Employees Fall 2019</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Full-Time Faculty</strong></td>
<td>11,851</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6,372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5,469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Degree</td>
<td>11,599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate Degree</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Instructional Faculty</strong></td>
<td>1,550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary</td>
<td>479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1,071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-Instructional employees</strong></td>
<td>36,140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Employees</strong></td>
<td>49,541</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: USG Faculty Data (n.d.)
Opt-In Opt-Out Literature Review

As previously indicated, the authors suggest that the USG change their tobacco product usage policy from an opt-out to an opt-in program. Accordingly, a review of the literature was undertaken. This review indicated that the published research on opt-in and opt-out choices is scant. When presented with a decision, either of the two choices can be used as a default option. In theory these choices neither affect relative prices nor supply and demand. However, outcomes can be greatly affected by an opt-out default option as inertia can result in greater participation (e.g., McMichael, 2008; Rutecka-Gora et al., 2018). As indicated below, many opt-out policies are instituted to produce a perceived “good” for the individual (e.g., pension or savings plan participation) or for society (e.g., the availability of organs for transplant).

Inertia, which is defined by Merriam-Webster dictionary as including an “indisposition to motion, exertion, or change,” is a widely accepted phenomenon that affects many consumers (Johnen, 2019). The opt-out system is being used in many areas whereby overcoming inertia it directly benefits the consumer. In the case of pension coverage an opt-out option can improve the outcome for individual employees since an opt-in system can result in some employees, those who fail to sign up because of inertia, being left without coverage (Rutecka-Gora et al., 2018). On the other hand, Rutecka-Gora et al. (2018) suggested that an opt-in default comes with implicit fixed or barrier costs that can prevent an individual from making the most beneficial choice. These barriers include costs of obtaining information relevant to participation and investment choices and of becoming knowledgeable about investing.

McMichael (2008) provided another example of an opt-out program being used to overcome inertia. The U.S. Department of Defense supported an opt-out default for their Thrift Savings Plan (TSP)—a plan that provided troops with tax-free earnings at retirement. McMichael suggested that through an opt-out default sign up process troop inertia worked to their benefit by providing retirement earnings that could have inadvertently been lost. That is, members of the military were deemed by default to agreeing to participate in the TSP. To change their participation status, they had to opt-out of the plan.

Much of the literature regarding default options relate to organ donations. Ferguson et al. (2020) argued that in this regard an opt-in system presents a free-rider problem where individuals that have not opted-in still benefit from the system. That is, at no cost to themselves free riders receive a potential benefit. The larger the donor base, the greater the availability of organs. In addition, by the free rider not opting into organ donation, others may be discouraged from
registering or may decide to deregister. An opt-out system generally has significantly more individuals signed up for organ donations than does an opt-in default (Davidai et al., 2012). Stanford SPARQ (n.d.), a self-styled “do tank,” suggested that the U.S. should change from an opt-in to an opt-out organ donation policy. They indicated that such a change would increase the U.S. organ donation rate from around 15% to about the 90% donation rate found in opt-out countries. In addition, Shepherd et al. (2014) found that “opt-out consent is . . . associated with an increase in the total number of livers and kidneys transplanted” (p. 10).

By providing more in short supply organs for transplant, it can be argued that an opt-out policy provides a public good. Nevertheless, organ donation is an intimate personal decision. Due to reasons such as distrust of the medical profession and religious objections, many people do not want to donate their organs. Distrust of the medical profession includes donor questions about brain death versus death from one’s heart stopping, and whether non-organ donors might be kept alive longer (Wen, 2014). According to Bruzzone (2008), “no religion forbids donation or receipt of organs or is against transplantation” (p. 1064). However, some sects of Judaism and Islam proscribe directed organ donation and transplantation (Bruzzone, 2008). Nevertheless, people may still object to organ donation based on their personal religious beliefs. For example, Wen (2014) noted that “. . . Catholics are less likely to donate than other religious groups. . .” (para. 11). Thus, an opt-out policy could indvertibly result in organ donations by people who object to having their organs taken—a potential public injustice that must be weighed against the potential for public good.

In regard to organ donations, a default also virtue signals or recommends a certain action (Johnson & Goldstein, 2003). If the default is to opt-out then the government has made a conscious choice for its citizens that suggests a best practice, namely the donation of organs. This accepted and virtuous choice needs no additional input from the citizen rather an individual who wishes not to donate organs would have to make a conscious decision and take action in order to opt-out. In the case of making this selection when applying for a driver’s license several barriers may exist. The selection may not be entirely anonymous if the individual has to communicate the choice to a clerk or complete the form in public and pass it to the clerk for data entry. Further, the license may state the selection publicly, which creates an additional hurdle to choosing contrary to the accepted default. Under an opt-out system for organ donations, each citizen potentially benefits from the organ donations of others directly or indirectly. When opting
out of the organ donation program one might be seen as a “free rider” who may consume benefits without incurring any cost.

Opt-out defaults can also have real costs for consumers. In the example of Medicaid managed care, Marton et al. (2017) described how the auto sign up for Medicaid plans benefited neither the system by keeping costs low nor the average consumer by covering their needs. Inertia caused most individuals to remain in their auto assigned plans. Only the highest cost individuals changed their plans which resulted in adverse selection and individual plan margin declines.

In some instances, however, opt-out defaults along with inertia are used specifically to achieve higher payments while providing fewer average benefits, seemingly under a profit motive. For example, Bibby (1994) described the credit industry practice in the United Kingdom (U.K.) of automatically selling payment protection insurance policies to customers who bought on credit. Credit plan protection insurance was sold under an opt-out system were the consumer had to act (actively indicate no) in order to not be charged the extra insurance fee. Consumers usually had to tick a small box on their credit application in order to opt-out of the payment protection insurance. However, most consumers were not aware of this option and so unknowingly purchased the insurance. This practice was determined inappropriate by the Office of Fair Trade in the U.K. and lenders were told to switch to an opt-in arrangement (Bibby, 1994).

In another example from Canberra, Canada, the practice of mandatory student unionism was abolished for an opt-out union fee system. The opt-out system was selected over an opt-in system expressly for the purpose of keeping memberships and fee revenues at ‘useful’ levels. This change suggests that decision makers believed that an opt-in default would not collect sufficient revenues, and that inertia was counted on to subsidize otherwise unsustainable fee revenues (“Power play a test for O’Farrell,” 2008).

**Estimated Impacts of the Tobacco Surcharge Incidence of Tobacco Product Usage**

The incidence of cigarette smoking has tremendously decreased over the past 50 years (Table 1). In 1965, 51% of males and 33.7% of females smoked, while in 2017 only 15.8% of males and 12.3% of females smoked. In other words, 84.2% of men and 87.7% of females do not smoke cigarettes. However, in recent years other tobacco products, such as E-cigarettes, have become popular as cigarette substitutes. The 2018 incidence of tobacco product usage was 25.8% for males and 14.1% for females. Tobacco product usage in the southern region of the U.S.
averaged 21.4% (Table 2). Therefore, the vast majority (78.6%) of adults in the Southern region do not use tobacco products.

The level of one’s education influences the incidence of tobacco product use. As indicated in Table 2, adults with a GED have the highest rate (41.4%), adults with an undergraduate degree have a lower rate (13.0%), and adults with a graduate degree have the lowest rate (8.2%). As presented in Table 3, 11,599 of 11,851 (97.9%) of the faculty in the USG have graduate degrees and 252 (2.1%) have undergraduate degrees. This data suggests that about 91.7% of full-time USG instructional faculty probably do not use tobacco products: 11,851 total full-time faculty, less 13% of faculty with undergraduate degrees, less 8.2% of faculty with graduate degrees equals 10,867, divided by 11,851 equals 91.7%.

**Estimated Tobacco Use Surcharges**

The present authors have requested that the BOR provide the total amounts of surcharges paid by USG members since the Well-Being Initiative (2020) was implemented and to provide information regarding the number of USG employees covered by a USG health insurance plan. This data has not been forthcoming. Therefore, in Table 4, estimates are provided. These calculations were made using the following assumptions:

1. Total number of full time USG employees at 47,991, which is, per Table 3, composed of 11,851 full time faculty and 36,140 non-instructional employees. “Other instructional faculty” of 1,055 were not included. According to the USG Faculty Data (n.d.) “other instructional faculty” are not full-time faculty and thus are probably not eligible to participate in a USG health plan.

2. Eighty percent of faculty are covered by a USG health insurance plan. This is a very conservative estimate. Perhaps well over 90% of USG full time employees take advantage of the health insurance benefit.

3. Estimated tobacco usage rates of 20%, 15%, and 10%. The top rate of 20% is a rounded estimate based on a weighted average of 20.4% computed using national statistics (Table 2) and the gender of full time faculty (Table 3), which was the only gender information available. A rounded upper estimate of 20% seems to be further supported by the CDC MMWR (2019) data that indicates 21.4% of adults in the Southern Region of the U.S. use a tobacco product (Table 2). The low percentage of 10% is a rounded estimate of tobacco product usage based on the weighted average of 8.3% estimated for full time faculty who have undergraduate or graduate degrees plus an arbitrary addition of 1.7% for staff. The 15% percentage is the midpoint percentage. Again, the actual
percentage of faculty and staff who use tobacco products was not provided by the BOR.

4. Tobacco surcharge amounts are based on one to five covered employees and their dependents.

As shown in Table 4, at a 20% estimated tobacco product usage rate, and depending on the total number of members covered, the total annual tobacco use surcharges range from $9,214,800 for one member covered to $46,074,000 for five members. At an estimated 15% rate, the range is $6,909,600 to $34,548,000; and at an estimated 10% rate, the range is $4,606,800 to $23,034,000. Conservatively estimating that only one to two covered members pay the surcharge and using the three estimated rates provides the following ranges: $4,606,800-$9,213,600 at 10%, $6,909,600-$13,819,200 at 15%, and $9,214,800-$18,429,600 at 20%.

Table 4
Estimated Tobacco Surcharges Paid Under Various Assumptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Estimated Tobacco Usage Rates</th>
<th>Estimated No. of Covered Employees</th>
<th>Total Members Covered</th>
<th>Amount per Month (C = B x $100)</th>
<th>Annual Amount (D = C x 12)</th>
<th>Potential Totals (A x D)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>7,679</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>$1,200</td>
<td>$9,214,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7,679</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>$2,400</td>
<td>$18,429,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7,679</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>$3,600</td>
<td>$27,644,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7,679</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>$4,800</td>
<td>$36,859,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7,679</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>$6,000</td>
<td>$46,074,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15%</td>
<td>5,758</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>$1,200</td>
<td>$6,909,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5,758</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>$2,400</td>
<td>$13,819,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5,758</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>$3,600</td>
<td>$20,728,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5,758</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>$4,800</td>
<td>$27,638,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5,758</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>$6,000</td>
<td>$34,548,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>3,839</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>$1,200</td>
<td>$4,606,800</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3,839</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>$2,400</td>
<td>$9,213,600</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3,839</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>$3,600</td>
<td>$13,820,400</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3,839</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>$4,800</td>
<td>$18,427,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3,839</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>$6,000</td>
<td>$23,034,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Assumptions: Approximately 80% of 47,991 USG employees (Table 3) are covered by a USG sponsored health insurance program: full time faculty (11,851) + non-instructional employees (36,140) x .80 = 38,393; .20 x 38,393 = 7,679; .15 x 38,393 = 5,758; .10 x 38,393 = 3,839.
Potential Windfall to Insurance Companies

The present authors have been unable to obtain data from the BOR regarding the amount of tobacco surcharges paid by USG employees. While we believe that the failure rate (percentage of eligible employees who inadvertently fail to opt-out) is probably small, the total dollar amounts of tobacco surcharges paid by non-tobacco users can still be significant. We have estimated the total dollar amounts using the same assumptions as in Table 4 of 47,991 full-time employees with one to five covered members. In addition, we have estimated failure to opt-out rates (failure rates) of 1%, 0.5%, and 0.25%. The actual rate of USG employees inadvertently failing to opt-out of being tobacco product users has not been provided by the BOR.

The results, as presented in Table 5, indicate that at an estimated failure rate of 1%, the total dollar amounts range from $460,000 to $2,304,000. At a .05% failure rate, the total amounts range from $230,000 to $1,152,000; and at a .25% failure rate the amounts range from $115,200 to $576,000. Of course, the actual failure rate could be higher than 1% or lower than .25%.

Table 5
Estimated Windfall to Insurance Companies of Employee Inadvertent Failure to Opt-Out as a Tobacco User: Estimates Using Various Assumptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Estimated Opt-Out Failure Rate</th>
<th>*Estimated No. of Covered Employees Impacted (A)</th>
<th>Total Members Covered (B)</th>
<th>Amount per Month (C = B x $100)</th>
<th>Annual Amount (D = C x 12)</th>
<th>Potential Totals (A x D)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1%</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$100</td>
<td>$1,200</td>
<td>$ 460,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>384</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>$200</td>
<td>$2,400</td>
<td>$ 921,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>384</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>$300</td>
<td>$3,600</td>
<td>$1,382,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>384</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>$400</td>
<td>$4,800</td>
<td>$1,843,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>384</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>$500</td>
<td>$6,000</td>
<td>$2,304,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.5%</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$100</td>
<td>$1,200</td>
<td>$ 230,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>192</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>$200</td>
<td>$2,400</td>
<td>$ 460,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>192</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>$300</td>
<td>$3,600</td>
<td>$ 691,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>192</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>$400</td>
<td>$4,800</td>
<td>$ 921,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>192</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>$500</td>
<td>$6,000</td>
<td>$1,152,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.25%</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>$100</td>
<td>$1,200</td>
<td>$ 115,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>96</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>$200</td>
<td>$2,400</td>
<td>$ 230,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>96</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>$200</td>
<td>$3,600</td>
<td>$ 345,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>96</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>$200</td>
<td>$4,800</td>
<td>$ 460,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>96</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>$200</td>
<td>$6,000</td>
<td>$ 576,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Assumptions: Approximately 80% of 47,991 USG employees (Table 3) are covered by a USG sponsored health insurance plan: full time faculty (11,851) + non-instructional employees (36,140) x .80 = 38,393; .01 x 38,393 = 384; .005 x 38,393 = 192; .0025 x 38,393 = 96
Estimated Individual Costs
Failure to opt-out of being a tobacco user can result in egregious penalties. Depending on the number of family members covered by a USG insurance sponsored plan, the monthly surcharge is $100-$500, assuming a maximum number of covered members at five (this number could actually be higher). The annual amounts range from $1,200 to $6,000. While these raw amounts appear impactful, the potential negative impact on USG employees is perhaps better illustrated as a percentage of average salaries.

The percentages of average instructional faculty salaries represented by annual tobacco surcharges of $1,200 to $6,000 are presented in Table 6. The higher the faculty’s salary the lower the percentage impact of the surcharge. The lowest is 0.76% for professors at research institutions, while the highest is 12.82% for instructors/lecturers at state colleges.

Table 6
Estimated Tobacco Surcharge Impact on Faculty of as a Percentage of Average Salaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Institution and Surcharge for 1-5 People Covered</th>
<th>Average Salaries*/% of Salary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Universities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1,200 (x1)</td>
<td>$158,190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$2,400 (x2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$3,600 (x3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$4,800 (x4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$6,000 (x5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive Universities</td>
<td>$89,077</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1,200 (x1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$2,400 (x2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$3,600 (x3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$4,800 (x4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$6,000 (x5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Universities</td>
<td>$79,213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1,200 (x1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$2,400 (x2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$3,600 (x3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$4,800 (x4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$6,000 (x5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The present authors have not been able to obtain average salaries for non-instructional employees. Nevertheless, non-instructional members who earn similar salaries would pay the same rates. For example, if an instructional or a non-instructional member earns $50,000, the range of surcharges produce rates of 2.4%, 4.8%, 7.2%, and 12%.

### Discussion

No matter how one looks at the national data presented in Table 2, and assuming that USG member tobacco usage is in accord with national data, the great majority of USG plan members are probably not users of tobacco products. Overall, 80.3%, and by Southern region 78.6%, of adults do not use tobacco products. Breaking the data into the demographic areas of gender and education provides even larger percentages of non-tobacco product usage. By gender, male non-usage is at 74.2% and female non-usage is at 85.9%. By education, for faculty members, of whom 97.9% hold a graduate degree (USG Faculty Data, n.d.; cf. Table 3), non-usage is at 91.7%. Therefore, based on national rates of tobacco product usage, the default position of opt-out (which assumes that all faculty members are tobacco users) is not warranted. Tobacco product usage data thus supports an opt-in rather than an opt-out program.

With group plans, insurance companies use group averages to calculate risk-based premiums (Cogan, 2018). In a given year individuals that do not have claims subsidize the costs of those that do. On average, younger group members subsidize older group members. The tobacco surcharge can be likened to the risk adjustment made by automobile insurance companies based on the individual’s driving record. With the tobacco use surcharge insurance companies have added an individual risk into the member’s insurance premium, which essentially decreases the beneficial effects of group subsidy.

The tobacco surcharge can also be viewed as a punishment for a certain behavior. Tobacco usage is already curtailed by various laws. For example, laws commonly...
restrict tobacco usage to certain areas. Moreover, “sin” taxes have long been imposed on the purchase of cigarettes. Federal and state excise taxes currently account for about half of the cost of a pack of 20 cigarettes. In 2019, Georgia cigarette consumers paid a total tax of $13.76 per 10-pack carton (Cammenga, 2019). The negative consequences imposed are inherently meant to cause behavioral changes that result in less tobacco product usage.

The question arises about other behaviors that lead to negative health effects and the selective targeting of tobacco usage. While tobacco usage has been on the decline, obesity, which was described by McCafferty et al. (2020) as a “... a public health epidemic in the United States...” now affects 39.8% of the population and is expected to affect about 53% of the population by 2030 (p. 1). Sedentary behavior and excessive intake of calories, sugar, and alcohol can all lead to negative health outcomes. Nevertheless, tobacco usage is singled out as a punishable behavior worthy of a surcharge. Why is there not also a surcharge for other forms of health issues that are under the control of the member? By the same reasoning, should a surcharge not also be levied on members based on their self-reported caloric intake, on the number of alcoholic drinks they self-report as consumed each week, or on self-reported levels of exercise?

The tobacco use surcharge provides a substantial benefit to insurance providers. As indicated in Table 4, it is estimated that USG members annually pay millions of dollars in tobacco surcharges. How do these surcharge payments benefit USG members? First, it can be argued that this penalty works to disincentivize tobacco use, which is a major cause of preventable diseases. By decreasing tobacco product usage, both the individual and society benefit. Second, by agreeing to impose this surcharge, the BOR was perhaps able to negotiate lower insurance premiums for non-tobacco users.

While the tobacco surcharge may be considered to encourage a social good (less tobacco product usage), an opt-in program would do the same. Changing to an opt-in program would not eliminate the surcharge imposed on members who use tobacco products. In addition, if the tobacco surcharge was changed to an opt-in rather than an opt-out program, total amounts of surcharges collected by insurance providers should not be lessened. Assuming that members are truthful in reporting their tobacco usage, which is assumed in the current opt-out program, insurance providers would collect the same revenues. Lying in reporting tobacco usage is already disincentivized by the possibility of the member being criminally prosecuted and losing their job. This penalty applies whether or not the member lies to opt-in.
out or lies to not opt-in. Inadvertent errors by non-tobacco users in failing to opt-out produces an ongoing punishment—one that lasts for at least a year—since the election can only be changed during an annual enrollment period and cannot be retroactively corrected. Hence, insurance providers can substantially benefit from member error. Such errors can be minimized by adopting an opt-in program.

Members who are users of tobacco products pay a severe penalty. Since surcharges are fixed amounts, they disproportionately impact members with lower salaries. As indicated in Table 6, the lower the average salary, the higher the percentage represented by the tobacco surcharge—in effect, the surcharge can be likened to a regressive tax. Based on type of institution and employment level, the tobacco surcharge paid by faculty represents 1% to 12.8% of their salaries. Similar rates would also apply to non-instructional faculty with comparable salaries. As previously indicated, a single member without dependents who uses tobacco products and earns an annual salary of $50,000 pays a surcharge that represents 2.4% of their salary. In comparison, the maximum Georgia income tax rate in 2019 was 5.75%. Are the surcharge amounts fair and reasonable? The authors suggest that for USG members with relative lower salaries, the answer is no; at the very least, the surcharge can be characterized as potentially burdensome.

In addition, members who inadvertently fail to opt-out are, without recourse, locked into paying the surcharge for an entire year, and perhaps longer if they miss the next opt-out opportunity. Notably, failure to opt-out results in the surcharge being levied on not only the member but also on all the member’s applicable dependents. As indicated in the above literature review, opt-out programs can benefit the consumer (e.g., pension plans, saving plans) by providing a valuable benefit; or they can be used to take advantage of inertia which results in increased provider revenues (e.g., payment protection insurance, increased union fees). The USG’s opt-out policy is of the latter type. Such surcharge payments—those paid due to member error—create a “windfall” for the insurance companies—what might be characterized as an ill-gotten increase in insurance company gross margins (Table 5). An opt-in program would eliminate tobacco surcharges caused by member error.

Ethics is another consideration that should be taken into account in deciding to change to an opt-in program. As indicated in the literature review, organ donors who may be opposed to donating their organs can be trapped into agreeing to do so by an opt-out program. This adverse effect is often dismissed by using a “greater good” argument.
The tobacco surcharge is different. An opt-out program for tobacco product usage is more like the example of U.K. borrowers being tricked into purchasing unwanted insurance. An opt-out program for tobacco product usage mainly benefits the bottom line of insurance providers. Indirectly, non-smokers may benefit (probably minimally, if at all—it is unlikely that this windfall is passed on to members) through lower premiums from member error in not opting out. Even if this is the case, is this treatment fair and equitable? There is no benefit to non-smokers of being charged a tobacco surcharge. Is it the right thing to do to severely penalize a member for inadvertently not opting out as a tobacco user and by so doing secure a benefit for the good of the many—perhaps, only secure a benefit for the insurance provider? Changing to an opt-in policy eliminates the possibility of this ethically questionable consequence.

Conclusions and Proposals
The opt-out assumption that defaults to all members being tobacco users is not supported by national tobacco product usage data—rather, the opposite is true. Changing from the current opt-out program to an opt-in program would not affect insurance company revenues—the same amounts should be collected under either approach. Alternatively, a ‘sticky’ default could be used where an employee makes a selection once and that selection carries forward automatically until it is changed. An option without a default would also be feasible where a simple yes/no question about tobacco usage would be required to be answered before a member could gain access to the open enrollment portal, essentially eliminating the user error scenario. It appears that a major driver of an insurance company preference for an opt-out program is the collection of revenues from members who unwittingly fail to opt-out. The penalty paid by those who fail to opt-out is severe. Lastly, the ethics of subsidizing premium costs by taking advantage of member error should be considered.

In answer to the research question (RQ), the authors believe that there is ample support for the USG changing their Well-Being Initiative tobacco use policy from an opt-out program to an opt-in program. The assumption should be that the member and their dependents are not tobacco product users unless the member affirmatively declares differently. The non-tobacco preference should become the default for the following health plan year. This is similar to the dependent election. Once a dependent is entered, they remain a dependent by default for each subsequent plan year.

In addition, the authors suggest that policy makers reconsider the levying of the surcharge. Tobacco and cigarette users are already penalized by being restricted in
where they can use the products. Cigarette users already pay high excess taxes—“sin” taxes. Moreover, tobacco users are continually warned by their doctors and through the media about the negative consequences of their bad habit. Does an additional penalty, especially a severe one such as USG’s tobacco surcharge, really decrease the incidence of tobacco product usage? Friedman et al.’s (2016) results regarding the market place implementation of the Affordable Care Act’s ACA tobacco surcharges suggest that tobacco use cessation is not incentivized by surcharges:

Relative to those facing no surcharges, smokers facing medium or high surcharges had significantly reduced coverage (-4.4 to -11.6 percentage points), but no significant differences in smoking cessation. Taken together, these findings suggest that tobacco surcharges conflicted with a major goal of the ACA—increased financial protection—without increasing smoking cessation. (Friedman et al., 2016, p. 1176)

Moreover, should tobacco product users be targeted for a penalty while numerous other potentially health-related behaviors are not? Surcharges in general decrease the beneficial effects of insurance premiums being computed on group averages. The present authors suggest that the imposition of the tobacco surcharge penalty is a slippery slope, which could lead to other surcharges being negotiated by insurance companies. In the opinion of the authors, the best solution is for no surcharges to be imposed.

Even if the tobacco surcharge penalty is not eliminated, policy makers should reconsider the way the penalty is implemented. As currently structured the penalty can be severe, especially to members who earn relatively lower salaries. The fixed amounts of the tobacco use surcharge, like excise taxes (e.g., “sin” taxes) and sales taxes (Tax Foundation, n.d.), are regressive. That is, the less the member earns, the larger the percentage of their income that is represented by the surcharge. As indicated in Table 6, the tobacco surcharge penalty can amount to a significant percentage of a member’s annual salary.

**Limitations**

This research was limited by a lack of access to pertinent data. As of the present writing, the authors have not been able to obtain information regarding the total number of employees covered by a USG-sponsored health insurance plan, the total amount of instructional and non-instructional surcharges paid by year, and various demographic data for non-instructional employees. Therefore, estimates were necessitated regarding the total tobacco surcharges paid by members, the
potential windfall to insurance companies of members indvertibly failing to opt-out, and the tobacco surcharge impact on faculty as a percentage of average salaries.
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Educated: A Memoir (Book Review)


Michelle L. Boettcher (Clemson University)
Julia M. Dingle (Clemson University)
Savannah Lockman (Georgia Institute of Technology)
Kelsey Wilkins (Clemson University)
Nikalette Zina (University of South Carolina)

Educated: A Memoir by Tara Westover is the story of a first-generation college student navigating the transition from a conservative rural community and family into and through higher education, including graduate education. As Westover shares her story and is transparent with her vulnerability, she highlights a number of struggles students often face in college. The book explores the tensions between family/home and college. It also highlights the importance of individual connections and actions in the persistence and success of students. It is compelling and directly transferable to the work of Student Affairs practitioners as highlighted in the review.

Overview of the Book

Students bring their stories and histories with them to our campuses every year. Learning about these stories can help us support them through their educational experiences. Educated by Tara Westover focuses on Westover’s journey as a first-generation college (FGC) student from a rural, Mormon household and community into and through higher education. Issues related to family, educational access, and cultural knowledge are highlighted. Additionally, the way the lives of students are impacted by individuals at key moments are another theme across Westover’s educational experiences.


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The book is divided into three sections—part one focuses on Tara’s life at home in Idaho. Part two focuses on her transition during college and the tension between college and home. Finally, part three focuses on Westover’s graduate education and the end of her relationship with many of her family members. These sections are woven together with a series of recollections but also with Westover’s own vision of what her life was, is, and could be.

*Educated* opens with “My strongest memory is not a memory,” (Westover, 2018, p. 3) where Westover shares a story her father told the family that showcases the power he has over everyone else’s understanding of the world. The second section begins “On New Year’s Day, Mother drove me to my new life” (Westover, 2018, p. 153). This sets the stage for the author’s experience in college and makes a statement to the reader that this transition is the beginning of something permanent—Westover will not be going home again to live there as she had before she started college at Brigham Young University (BYU). Finally, when Westover (2018) closes the book she writes, “You could call this selfhood many things. Transformation. Metamorphosis. Falsity. Betrayal. I call it an education” (p. 329).

This review of *Educated* is designed to identify themes throughout the text of one person’s academic journey. It also includes recommendations for incorporation in student affairs and higher education. Just as each student brings a story with them, this text can help each of us surface our own stories and how they impact our work, our relationships, and students’ abilities to connect with us through our own vulnerability.

**Themes**

**Family**

Family is often at the forefront of a student’s educational experience, even in higher education. As an FGC student, Westover struggled with defining herself when her family had already defined who she was and who she should become. Acknowledging the power her older brother held over her, Westover wrote, “It’s strange how you give the people you love so much power over you… But Shawn had more power over me than I could possibly have imagined. He had defined me to myself, and there’s no greater power than that.” (p.199).

The tensions between the culture of college and the culture of home are highlighted when Westover goes back to Idaho at the end of the spring term. Her father and older brother take offense that she would rather be at college or at least bagging groceries for the summer rather than working with them. Westover writes that the two of them agreed that “my brush with education had made me uppity, and that what I needed was
to be dragged through time. Fixed, anchored to a former version of myself” (p. 176).

Later in her academic career, Westover continues to struggle with the tension between her identity as she defines it and the way that many of her family members define her. This struggle is part of her identity as both an FGC student and a woman from a very conservative family. In the book she asks, "What is a person to do... when their obligations to their family conflict with other obligations—to friends, to society, to themselves?" (p. 317). This struggle and tension is at the center of much of what happens in the book.

Educational Access

Westover’s notions of education are driven and informed by her family. Initially, we see this in her exchanges with her parents who are not supportive of her attending college. They do not see any reason for it because they have another vision for her future. Westover wrote,

I knew how my life would play out: when I was eighteen or nineteen, I would get married. Dad would give me a corner of the farm, and my husband would put a house on it. Mother would teach me about herbs, and also about mid-wifery... When I had children, Mother would deliver them, and one day, I supposed, I would be the Midwife. I didn’t see where college fit in (Westover, 2018, p. 123).

The author sees her life as being the same as her mother’s and grandmothers’ before her and is told repeatedly that any education she needs will come from home and not from college.

However, when her older brother Tyler encourages her to begin to study for the ACTs, Westover gets the books she needs to prepare. With Tyler’s encouragement and Westover’s own initiative – applying after exploring the Brigham Young University (BYU) web site – she begins to see college as a possibility for a different kind of life. While Westover is an FGC, having her older brother to encourage her and model the way was important. Not only was he a resource, he showed that there were other things you could do besides follow in the footsteps of family and continue the patterns of previous generations.

Cultural Knowledge

Another theme in Educated is how important and influential cultural knowledge is. Westover’s transition to college is complex. She notices everything from the noise of the city – “The chirrup of crosswalk signals, the shrieking of sirens, the hissing of air brakes, even the hushed chatter of people strolling on the sidewalk – I heard every sound individually” (pp. 153-154) to the difference...
between the Mormonism she knew at home and the people who identified as Mormon at BYU. One roommate claims to be Mormon, but goes grocery shopping on a Sunday, breaking the Sabbath. Westover is navigating the culture of higher education, but also learning about different religious cultures within her own faith, as well.

On the first day of class, Westover takes a bus going the wrong direction and gets to her first class for the last few minutes only to be told, “You don’t belong here” (p. 155). She responds in classic FGC student form:

I stared at her, confused. Of course I didn’t belong, but how did she know? I was on the verge of confessing the whole thing – that I’d never gone to school, that I hadn’t really met the requirements to graduate – when she added, “This class is for seniors” (p. 155).

After failing her first American history course, she reflects on whether she is prepared for college or not wondering “whether whatever I had in my head by way of education was enough,” (p. 156). Her self-doubt intensifies when she, after seeing other students asking questions in class, dares to raise her hand to ask the teacher to explain what a specific word means. From both his reaction and the reaction of the class she knows she has made an error, but she does not understand what it was. The word she had admitted she did not know was “Holocaust.” When he thinks she is joking, she goes after class to look up the word on her own. After reading about it she writes, “I suppose I was in shock, but whether it was the shock of learning about something horrific, or the shock of learning about my own ignorance, I’m not sure” (p. 157).

This example highlights not only Westover’s lack of knowledge about history, but also her lack of understanding about education. She is trying to adapt to what she sees as educational norms (asking questions in class) and failing (the room goes silent, the professor refuses to answer her question), and not understanding what the mistake is that she has made.

The middle section of the book goes through issues common to most college students: roommate conflicts, financial concerns, and academic struggles, for example. However, throughout her experience, there are moments when she clearly does not have knowledge about college that other students possess: she does not bring a blue book to her first exam, but everyone else knew to bring one. She gets more than halfway through a course before realizing she should be reading her art textbook instead of just looking at the pictures. She does not ask to talk with her faculty because she does not realize that is allowed. Through all of this
Westover knows she wants to stay in college but does not fully understand how to “do” college.

**One Person**

Tara develops a relationship with a church bishop at BYU. It starts with her refusal to date men at college and him directing her to talk with the counseling center so that she can work toward marriage as a part of God’s plan for her. However, their connection quickly becomes something much more significant to her success in college and her understanding of the issues in her family. Over the course of their interactions, the bishop gives her language for what was happening at home – words like “manipulative” and “violent.” Westover acknowledges that the words were not her own, but that, “They had been given to me by the bishop, and I was still trying to wrest meaning from them” (p. 200).

Over time, the bishop’s support of Westover and his encouragement to her to continue in college takes the form of financial assistance so she does not have to go home for the summer – first from a federal grant (which she adamantly refuses) and then from church funds (which she declines) and a personal check to cover a serious health issue (which she also declines). Ultimately Westover’s bishop persists and with the help of her roommate, they arrange for her to get the funds she needs to continue at BYU.

Two other key people in Westover’s higher education experience are Drs. Kerry and Steinberg. Dr. Kerry helps her secure an opportunity to visit the University of Cambridge as an undergraduate. Dr. Steinberg helps Westover attend the University of Cambridge for graduate school on a Gates Fellowship.

In all three cases, these people saw tremendous potential in Westover. They worked to secure her the resources she needed to be successful and persist on to graduate education. They also helped her navigate the hidden curriculum and norms of higher education in different settings. Without any one of them, Westover’s story would be significantly different.

**Applications to Higher Education and Student Affairs**

In reading *Educated*, the role of family and life before college, college access, understanding the hidden curriculum and foreign culture of higher education (especially for FGC students), and the tremendous difference a single person’s investment can make in a student’s life are highlighted. All of these issues are directly relevant to student affairs. We engage with FGC students, but all students have stories and histories they carry with them into education. Different students
need help with different aspects of navigating college. Finally, in many cases it might be a student affairs practitioner who is positioned to be the “one person” who notices, reaches out, and supports a student through a difficulty or crisis.

This text could be used in training, teaching, and other workshops/events for staff and students. In the formal classroom, there are pieces of the text that could be used as case studies for emerging student affairs professionals to explore ethical and legal considerations. Additionally, this text provides an important look behind the curtain of students’ lives. There is always more going on than what we know or see. Reminding ourselves as we engage with students that their lives are rich and complex is essential to serving them in supportive and holistic ways.

There are some additional insights into this text in the current COVID-19 pandemic landscape and how it affects higher education. While talking in the book about her own personal struggles, Westover wrote,

The thing about having a mental breakdown is that no matter how obvious it is that you’re having one, it is somehow not obvious to you. I’m fine, you think. So what if I watched TV for twenty-four straight hours yesterday. I’m not falling apart. I’m just lazy. Why it’s better to think yourself lazy than think yourself in distress, I’m not sure. But it was better. More than better: it was vital (p. 307).

As students find themselves socially and otherwise isolated in an environment where the future of their college and post-college experiences is definitely unclear, how are we attending to them? What are the struggles they are engaged in that they do not see? Not only does this text bridge the gap between the student affairs world and friends and family, it is set in a specific context, provides real-life examples, and encourages the reader (and perhaps the student affairs reader in particular) to look at the bigger picture in this particular student’s life rather than just the four years she was in college.

This emphasizes the fact that as student affairs practitioners, we must constantly remind ourselves that what we know about a student – any student – is not the entirety of who that student is, what they have overcome, and what they have to offer. Each student brings their own background with them to college and that informs the experience they have in higher education.

The impact of the bishop who helped Tara when she could not find anyone else to help was integral to her story. The role of this one person in her life showed the importance of student/faculty relationships. Without that relationship, she would not have studied abroad or ended up in her master’s program.
The same could be said of Dr. Kerry and Dr. Steinberg. Whether faculty or staff, there are important roles for us to play in the support of students. Those relationships require some risk-taking on our part, but often they make all the difference.

Using this text in reading circles as a part of a staff development program, in training with student staff, or in community or student organization reading groups with students could prove particularly effective. Discussing the role formal and informal education has on our students not only on campus and in their future, but in their family relationships and in connection with their home communities is one way to use this text. Teams might use Westover’s work as a case study to understand what knowledge, skills, and insights she brought into her higher education experience and connect that to how all of us can support students and recognize the knowledge they bring to our campuses.

Earlier in the review, we cited Tara’s quote about not knowing what to do when obligation to family creates a tension with higher education. Maybe this is the essence of the book and the core of what we as student affairs practitioners need to reflect on and wrestle with. This is a salient observation that likely resonates with many of the students that we work with—especially first-generation college students. Many struggle while exploring their passions and also navigating what their families expect from them. Being able to put this question into the universe is powerful. Our students do not need to feel or be alone because others are battling this same thing. Student affairs professionals can help them find the resources and communities they need to navigate their struggles. This book shows some key moments where that can happen.
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The Mind of the Leader (Book Review)


Rebecca Cofer (Georgia Southern University)

There are is abundance of books touting the secret to effective leadership, whether through specific trainings, online tools, or techniques guaranteed to produce a more aware and involved leader. Hougaard and Carter (2018) are the authors of one such leadership book, but what sets their book apart from the many others is the human element that remains the focus of their text. Ramus Hougaard is the founder and managing director of Potential Project, a global company providing mindful leadership training to employees from all backgrounds. Co-author Jacqueline Carter also works with Potential Project but serves as the North American Director for the company. Hougaard and Carter have each trained leaders in companies like Google, Cisco, and Microsoft and have a total of 40 years of experience in leadership training.

Broken into the three parts described in its expanded title, The Mind of the Leader discusses the human foundations to the leadership equation as it relates to the leader, their team, and the organization. Within the three parts of the book are recurring sections, each applied to the specific context of that part. These sections within the parts are titled: 1) Understand Your People, 2) Mindful Leadership, and 3) Selfless Leadership. Hougaard and Carter (2018) approach the topic of mindful leadership not from a higher education perspective, but from a corporate frame. However, their experience working with companies across the globe proves valuable in the insights offered, although these insights tend to be business-centric. Higher education operates increasingly like a business, so the corporate approach to mindful leadership provided in the
text should be embraced by Student Affairs professionals. Although the authors’ experience comes from the corporate sector, higher education professionals across the field can find truth in the book’s assertion that employees are “looking for more meaning, happiness, and connectedness” in their work and life (Hougaard & Carter, 2018, p. 3).

After conducting research about leadership across fields like neuroscience and psychology, Hougaard and Carter (2018) found three mental qualities that are critical to successful leadership: mindfulness (M), selflessness (S), and compassion (C). The authors frame their entire text around the MSC leadership approach, insisting that “only internal drivers … can engage employees on the deeper level needed for long-term commitment and productivity” (p. 7). The Mind of the Leader puts the human at the center of the leadership equation and provides interesting real-life examples along with strategies for applying the elements of MSC leadership. Hougaard and Carter agree with Katz’s (1955) skills approach to leadership which asserts that leaders can be developed. Their text encourages the reader that the characteristics that make up a successful leader are traits which can be learned through awareness and practice with the techniques they provide throughout the book.

Perhaps the most important part of the text is one of the early sections titled “The Anatomy of Mindfulness”, which gives the reader the biological details behind neuroplasticity and the brain’s ability to learn new concepts. Through this base knowledge, the philosophy of the authors can be later developed in future chapters, as implementation of strategies stresses the flexibility of the human brain. For the novice science reader, this section is simple, yet descriptive in its review of basic cognitive functions. Explanations about the functioning of the brain are brief, but critical in framing the flexibility of the brain and how it relates to developing leadership qualities. Referencing a novice-friendly figure about prefrontal lobe takeover, this section succinctly explains how trainings like the ones sprinkled through each chapter “increases the density of grey cells in our cerebral cortex, the part of the brain that thinks rationally and solves problems” (p. 9). The Mind of the Leader centers around the idea that mindfulness is both a practice and state of mind; this reframing of mindfulness allows the leader to understand it as a trait that can be learned. Hougaard and Carter (2018) not only reframe this idea but also provide the anatomical reasons behind why mindfulness is possible.

At times, the book can feel abstract and lofty in its approach to mindful leadership, as the authors have topical sections like “Emotions are Universal” and “Interconnectedness”. However, the real value in these sections is the Quick Tips and Reflections
that concludes each chapter. Hougaard and Carter (2018) refer to the appendices and the app available for download to use in conjunction with the book. “Chapter 6: Selfless Leadership” ends with “Training for Selfless Leadership”. The authors ask the reader to “set a timer for five minutes… Now, consider the people who made today possible for you” (p. 141). The chapter ends with tips and reflections, with activities such as having the reader “consider one tangible way you could be of more service to your people” (p. 142). Hougaard and Carter’s book engages its readers in the same way they recognize engagement as key to leadership success.

Another unique characteristic of The Mind of the Leader is its consideration of leadership as it relates to self-leadership. Prior to delving into the theories behind leading one’s people and the organization, Hougaard and Carter (2018) discuss the need to stop the routine functions of everyday life and consider one’s own values and definition of happiness. As is the case throughout the remainder of the book, the chapter is sprinkled with in-the-moment exercises to practice the approaches they discuss, such as being silently reflective for one minute. In leadership the book argues, “only the focused survive. And certainly, only the focused excel” (Hougaard & Carter, 2018, p. 48). Focus is the beginning point of any discussion of leadership, the authors argue, and it should be the continued center of the successful leader’s work. Perhaps the most applicable parts of the text come with the sections on leading your people and leading your organization. These chapters address common leadership topics, such as understanding emotions and unconscious biases, but also offer unique viewpoints on such things as “the dangers of empathy” and wise compassion. Some educational professionals may disagree with the premise of dangerous empathy because this is normally considered a positive attribute, especially for those who work in higher education where so much work involves direct support of students. In contrast to that reality, the text presents the argument that “empathy has some pitfalls that every leader should understand” (p. 109).

The final four chapters of the book, which encompasses Part Three, gets to the crux of what many leaders from various stages want—true guidance on leading their organizations effectively. Beginning from the base of organizational cultures, the chapter opens arguing “Most organizations talk about the importance of people, but few create cultures in which people are truly seen as the core of the company” (Hougaard & Carter, 2001, p. 159). Rather than treat the company’s workers like tools, leaders should inspire their teams to create and innovate through collaboration. This final part of the book provides even more concrete strategies for creating a culture that values people.
Using examples from companies such as Accenture, the authors urge leaders to model distraction-free focus that prioritizes the human first. The leader will finish this part of the text with clear strategies for focus in their organization, such as promoting physical movement, enacting common policies for mindful meetings, and even ways of using healthy food to increase mental performance. Part Three, even more so than the previous parts of the book, uses the knowledge gained in previous chapters and applies them to real-life scenarios leaders face in creating a new people-centered culture.

Overall, Hougaard and Carter’s The Mind of the Leader proves to be both engaging in its real-life examples and useful in the practices and tips each chapter offers. Based on the authors’ research over a decade, the book carries out what it claims when it comes to engagement. Rather than offer unrealistic ideas of how to be a people-centered leader, Hougaard and Carter (2018) reference well-known companies such as Lego and Marriott to examine successful leadership techniques while also pausing chapters to have readers practice their techniques for mindfulness. Each part of the text is a reiteration of the principles guiding the MSC Leadership philosophy, so at times the content can seem redundant between the parts. There are concepts related to self-reflection as a leader that reappear throughout the chapters and can become somewhat redundant when the reader craves more of the tips provided at the end of each chapter. However, The Mind of the Leader is applicable to business and education professionals alike and provides concrete guidance on creating a more people-centered leadership style. Alternatively, the educational leader may desire a theory-based approach to the techniques, which is not something provided in this leadership book.

Outside of the minimal criticisms of its lack of theory and somewhat redundant content, The Mind of the Leader can be a valuable tool for the higher education professional of any level. Student Affairs professionals will find Hougaard and Carter’s (2018) content on cultivating mindful meetings especially relevant, as meetings in higher education can often lack focus or goals. Their tips about disconnection from technology in meetings and even providing healthy snacks are techniques higher education employees can realistically apply to their work. Although sections of the text can be somewhat lofty and abstract in their contents, it is the everyday tips the authors provide that bring value to the Student Affairs professional. Those who serve as administrators in the profession can also directly apply the concepts in Chapter 8, “Selfless Leadership.” Oftentimes, higher education administrators work at such a high level that they forget the perspectives of the employees they supervise. Hougaard and
Carter (2018) emphasize the mentor role of the leader, to serve as “more of a catalyst and less of a manager” (p. 133). As is the case for the other chapters, Chapter 8 concludes with a Quick Tips and Reflections list, which asks the reader to be aware of how they are supporting the growth of their employees; yet another example of the application the text pushes for throughout its pages. Even though The Mind of the Leader was not written from the perspective of the higher education professional, there are multiple chapters and techniques that professionals across the field can utilize in their work to become educational leaders.

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