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RESEARCH REVIEW | ISSUE 268

The Military Separated Me; You Cannot Connect Me

AUTHORS:
Abby K. Kinch, Jared S. Lyon

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RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS:

- This paper critically examines the term "military-connected," arguing that it inadequately represents the distinct identities of veterans, survivors, and caregivers, advocating for more nuanced terminology that respects their unique relationships to the military (Dolan et al., 2022).

- The paper uses Veteran Critical Theory with support from Pragmatic Theory to analyze and deconstruct the labels used for military-connected individuals, revealing the underlying power dynamics and assumptions. This approach critiques the inclusivity and accuracy of current terminology and suggests alternatives that better represent the lived experiences of these groups (Kellner, 1990; Roberts & Zheng, 2022).

- Through their investigation, the researchers concluded that the term "military-connected" inaccurately represents the experiences of veterans, caregivers, and survivors, leading to marginalization and insufficient support. The authors advocate for terminology that respects self-identification and acknowledges the unique challenges faced by each subgroup (Schwandt, 2007; Phillips & Lincoln, 2017).

ABSTRACT:

"Amid the growing population of the term military-connected to act as an umbrella for all who have been in some manner connected to the US Military, this paper sets within Veteran Critical Theory, with support from Pragmatic Theory, an examination of the linguistic constructs within the veteran, Latin American, and LGBTQIA+ spaces. By juxtaposing these seemingly disparate ecosystems, this paper underscores the need for the veteran space to glean insights from the LGBTQIA+ community's journey in developing an inherently inclusive and adaptable lexicon, thereby fostering an environment that more authentically mirrors the lived experiences and unique exigencies of members. The paper discusses the negative impact of the term military-connected and its conceptual misalignment with the US Department of Defense's classification of veterans as separated while discussing the severed connection experienced by survivors. It calls for a reevaluation of the lexicon, emphasizing the importance of accurate and respectful language in addressing veterans' unique needs and experiences."

Implications

FOR PRACTICE

The authors conclusions suggest that organizations and service providers should adopt more precise terminology when referring to veterans, caregivers, and survivors. This can improve the delivery of tailored support services and enhance the overall well-being of these groups by ensuring that their unique experiences and needs are acknowledged and addressed. By adopting more specific and accurate terms, service providers can avoid the homogenization of distinct groups, which often leads to miscommunication and inadequate support. Recognizing the unique identities and experiences of each subgroup allows for the development of more effective and relevant programs and is a critical step toward improving the effectiveness of support services for veterans, caregivers, and survivors.

FOR POLICY

The authors suggest a more nuanced terminology for the term military-connected be provided. That said, policymakers should revise existing legislation and guidelines to incorporate more accurate language that distinguishes between different groups within the military-connected community. This can help ensure that policies are more inclusive and effective in addressing the specific needs of each group. There should be a focus on developing policies that support the self-identification of veterans, caregivers, and survivors. Allowing individuals to define their own identities can lead to more respectful and supportive environments.

FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Further studies should explore the experiences and identities of veterans, caregivers, and survivors in more detail to develop a comprehensive understanding of their needs. This research can inform the creation of more effective support systems and policies. Future work should also investigate the impact of accurate and inclusive terminology on the well-being and support of military-connected individuals as well as understand how language affects their experiences. Future research should also examine the effectiveness of new terminologies and classifications in practice. This can help determine the most appropriate and impactful ways to refer to and support these diverse groups.

AUTHOR INFORMATION

Abby K. Kinch
Student Veterans of America, US
akkinch@gmail.com