Understanding the Experience of Immigrant Veterans Making the Transition to Higher Education

A thesis presented

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Abstract

This study uses Interpretive Phenomenology Analysis (IPA) to understand the transitional experiences of immigrant veterans. The United States has an incredible history of immigrants serving and dying for their adopted country since WWII. The trend continues for immigrants in hope to achieve the American Dream. Transition Theory of Schlosberg was used to shape the research question and helps to conceptualize the research findings. To participate in the study, the participants must be an immigrant, a veteran of US Armed Forces who served honorably, and now college students. Four immigrant veterans participated in semi-structured interviews. Three themes emerged from the interviews: 1) Pre-higher Education: Examining Military Service; 2) Higher Education: Beginning the Transition Process; and 3) Higher Education: Coping Within an Institution of Higher Education Resources. The research findings have implications for educational stakeholders who want to understand transitional challenges of immigrant veterans and create a more conducive environment for success.

Keywords: Immigrants, Transition, Veterans, Adult Learners, College Adjustment, Transition Theory.
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“You can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make it drink”. I wrote that quote on my high school yearbook when I graduated in 1998. I was given a new life when I migrated to the United States in 1995 and I knew that I had to make the most of it. I joined the military in 1998 and served in the U.S. Navy that offered me an experience of a lifetime including the GI Bill and allotted access to higher education.

While I have worked very hard to get this far, there were many people along the way that opened doors for me and gave me opportunities. At times, when I felt that I didn’t even deserve the shot, I felt the responsibility of doing my best. I did not want these door openers be disappointed in me. I would like to thank Jerry Puinti, Dawn McElaney, Phil Sisson, and Dr. Kathleen Schatzberg for being my door openers.

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Chapter I: Introduction

For immigrants and other marginalized groups, serving in the military of their adopted country has always been an opportunity to show loyalty and seek greater political and social legitimacy. From the Revolutionary War to the current conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, immigrants have made significant contributions to the United States by serving in the military (Stock, 2009). As of February 2008, there were 65,033 foreign-born individuals on active duty in the US military (Migration Policy Institute, 2012). This number includes both naturalized citizens and noncitizens.

In 1944, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed into law what has often been called the most significant piece of legislation ever produced by the U.S. government: the GI Bill of Rights, also known as the Serviceman’s Readjustment Act (Bennett, 1996). It is credited with changing the face of institutions in the United States and expanding post-secondary opportunities for the men and women who have served in the military since World War II (Michael, 2009). Due in large part to the GI Bill, millions of World War II veterans chose to pursue higher education. The recent military conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan are similar in that regard. As the United States concludes wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, colleges and universities are experiencing a steady increase in the enrollment of student veterans (O'Herrin, 2011).

There is limited information available on immigrant veteran students because Veterans Affairs (VA) doesn’t track veteran retention or completion rates (O'Herrin, 2011). Therefore, the transition experiences of immigrant veterans following military war zone deployments within the past 11 years have not been closely investigated (Lokken, Pfeffer, McAuley, & Strong, 2009). Some research has been conducted regarding veterans’ transition to higher education (DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchell, 2008; Rumann & Hamrick, in press; Rumann, 2010), yet none of them
focused on the needs of immigrant veterans. As a result, higher education professionals may not possess the information necessary to assist these students effectively.

**Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this research is to increase awareness of the needs of immigrant veterans and ultimately inform effective institutional practice and policymaking. This phenomenological study will raise awareness of the challenges and could produce useful information about how higher education institutions are responding to the growing enrollment of veterans. Furthermore, it could offer insight into ways in which immigrant veterans could be assisted in their transition to ensure retention and graduation. The topic of veterans’ services on university campuses is multifaceted and complex. The added layer of immigration and their ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) statuses, however, make the topic even more intricate. With the understanding that not all cases and experiences of immigrant veterans can be generalized, the practical goals are to provide an opportunity for them to share, examine, and understand their experiences. The study may have implications for other students who may experience similar circumstances transitioning to higher education. Other stakeholders include, but are not limited to the following groups: student support services personnel, educational administrators, and faculty. Ultimately, it is anticipated that this study will produce results that could contribute to the improvement of advising practices, student life, and support services which will aid in the retention and persistence of immigrant veterans.

The intellectual goals of this study are to gain a better understanding of the different challenges immigrant veterans face and how institutions are responding to their needs. This knowledge is essential in helping to achieve the practical goal of improving support services to immigrant veterans, which may lead to retention and graduation. Understanding of students’
needs and lived experiences are essential to creating a strong supportive system. Therefore, the insights gained from this study may enhance understanding of recently returning veterans and their needs as they seek to rejoin civilian society as educated, fulfilled, and contributing members.

**Research Question**

The study intends to understand the lived experiences of immigrant veterans in higher education. This study will offer insights about the needs of immigrant veteran students. It may also have implications for how colleges can better support these students. The research question guiding this study is as follows: “What are the experiences of immigrant veterans transitioning to higher education?”

**Content and Organization**

There are many complex factors that play a significant role in immigrant veterans’ transition to higher education. The next section will provide an overview of Schlossberg’s transition theory, which is the framework that has been selected to guide this study. The current study draws on the adult transition work of Schlossberg on student veterans. This theoretical framework will guide the literature review, and help define the research methodology. The literature review will pertain to veterans’ experiences in higher education and college adjustment of immigrant students. It will look at the research that has been done and synthesize those elements that are similar or most pertinent to immigrant veterans. Chapter three will describe the research methodology that will be used in this study.

**Theoretical Framework**

Nancy Schlossberg’s transition theory offers a conceptualization of the transition process and provides a theoretical framework in which to examine the experience of immigrant veterans
transitioning back into higher education. This theory facilitates examination of a student’s progress through the transition process. It also discusses the provision of a support for transitions and the opportunity to eliminate barriers to transitions, whether a student is preparing for transition, moving through it, or ending the transition and looking forward to what is next (Harper, & Quaye, 2009). Life transitions may also be the reason for an individual to seek higher education.

Classified as a psychosocial theory of student development, it was established by Nancy Schlossberg in 1981 and later revised by Schlossberg, Waters, and Goodman in 1995 (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). Psychosocial theory examines personal and interpersonal lives (Evans, 1996). Building on the work of Erik Erikson, Schlossberg argued that development is based on the resolution of specific, crucial issues (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). In relation to the traditional body of college student development theory, Schlossberg’s work can be viewed as psychosocial and as a counterpoint to age/ stage perspective (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). Transitions provide opportunities for growth and development, but a positive outcome for the individual cannot be assumed. While transitions differ, the individual differ, but the structure for understanding individuals in transition remains stable within the framework (Schlossberg et al, 1995).

Schlossberg (1988) defined transitions as the psychological processes that humans undergo when accommodating significant changes in their lives. Late on, Schlossberg et al, (1995) defined transition as any event, or non-event, that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles. When properly managed, transitions can provide a positive opportunity and the role of student affairs education is to enable this to occur (Schlossberg et al, 1995). According to Schlossberg (1995), the transition model has three major parts:
Approaching Transition: Transition identification and transition process

Taking Stock of Coping Resources: The 4 S System

Taking Charge: Strengthening Resources

Approaching Transition: It identifies the nature of the transition and provides an understanding of which perspective is best for dealing with it. Transition identification asks what change is impending? Is it a new baby, a job change, a personal change, a relationship change? Schlossberg and her colleagues identified three types of transitions: anticipated, unanticipated, and nonevents. Knowing more about the transition, and being able to describe it, helps get the discussion moving about what is troubling or challenging the individual student. Even more important than the mere identification of the change is the specifying of the degree to which the particular transition changes the client’s life (Schlossberg et al., 1995). For instance, three people describing a similar transition-job loss- may not experience the same events. To understand its significance, the higher education professionals need to see how the job loss has changed each individual’s roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions (Schlossberg et al., 1995).

Taking Stock of Coping Resources: The 4 S System provides a way to identify the potential resources someone has to cope with the transition. Schlossberg et al. (1995) informed the concept of transitions consisting of a series of three phases they called “move in,” move through,” and “moving out”. The transition theory suggested four factors that help people cope with transitions: situation, self, support and strategies (the 4 S’s) (Goodman, Schlossberg, & Anderson, 2006)

Figure 1: The Coping Resource Model- The 4 S’s (Schlossberg, Waters, & Goodman, 1995, p. 48)
The diagram above shows that one’s areas in each of these 4 areas are relevant and interrelated at every step of the transition. Furthermore, these four sets of variables can be regarded as potential assets and/or liabilities. Therefore, these assets and liabilities are critical at all stages of a transition. Schlossberg (1995) argued that understanding of assets and liabilities, examining their interrelationships, and a self-appraisal was significant in cognizing transition.

**Situation**

In order to cope with the *situation* the individual considers the following factors:

**Trigger:** What precipitated the transition?

**Timing:** Is the transition occurring at an “on time” or “off time” in terms of one’s social clock? Is it viewed as happening at a “good” or a “bad time”?

**Control:** What piece(s) of the transition is (are) in the individual’s control?

**Role Change:** Has a role been changed? If so, is it looked at as a gain or loss?

**Duration:** Is the transition seen as short-term, permanent, or uncertain?

**Concurrent Stress:** What other stresses are happening in the person’s life?

**Previous experience with a similar transition:** How effectively did the person cope then, and
what are implications for the current transition?

Assessment: Who or what is seen as responsible for the transition, and how is the individual’s behavior affected by this perception?

**Self**

The two areas under Self to consider classified into two categories: personal and demographic characteristics and psychological resources. Personal and demographic characteristics are described as affecting how an individual views life. This category includes socioeconomic status, gender, age, state of health, and ethnicity.

**Support**

Support refers to social support including intimate relationships, family units, and networks of friends, communities, and institutions. The function of support is to affect, affirm, aid, and provide an honest feedback.

**Strategies**

The fourth “S” is Strategies. Schlossberg et al. (1995) suggests that there are 3 main categories for coping with transition: responses that change a situation, responses that control the meaning of the problem, and those that aid in managing the stress in the aftermath. In relations to the differing goals reflected by these categories, individuals may also employ four coping modes: information seeking, direct action, inhibition of action, and intra-psychic behavior. Schlossberg et al. (1995) emphasized that effective copers demonstrate flexibility and use multiple methods (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998).

The 4 S model employs a ratio of assets to liabilities and allows for changes in the ratio as individual situation changes rather assessing a person’s mental condition in terms of health or sickness (Schlossberg, Waters, & Goodman, 2006). This approach partially answers the question
of why different individuals react differently to the same type of transition and why the same person reacts differently at different times. The difference may be that the assets-liabilities balance has changed (Schlossberg, Waters, & Goodman, 2006).

Taking Charge: Strengthening Resources demonstrates the use of new strategies. Even though some transitions are out of our control, we can control the way we manage them, and strengthen our resources, our 4 S’s. Most military personnel know when their military commitment ends, therefore, coming home and enrolling to access higher education as a civilian is considered an anticipated transition. Once enrolled in higher education veterans experience unscheduled and unanticipated transitions as they try to acclimate to a new environment. While the transition is anticipated, how transition will be experienced may not always be anticipated.

There are significant cultural differences between military and civilian life. Veterans making the transition to higher education may process such change differently. The myriad issues that veterans face include academic reentry, contractual and financial matters, and needs for advising and counseling assistance (Rumann, & Hamrick, 2009). The transition process will allow higher education professionals to locate where these students are in the transition. Did the student just learn of the financial changes? Is the student in the first week of the transition? Or is it a year after? Reactions to any transition change over time depending on whether one is moving in, through, or out of the transition (Schlossberg et al, 1995). Nonevents are those that are anticipated but they do not occur, thereby, altering his or her life. For example, while transitioning to civilian life anticipated marriage that never occurs, a job that doesn’t materialize, and friendships that were lost etc.

The main use of Schlossberg’s transition theory is with adult learners and their return to higher education. Schlossberg identified “operationalizing the notion of variability” as a primary
goal of her development theory (Schlossberg, 1984). There was an attempt to facilitate an understanding of adults in transition and lead them to help they needed to cope with “ordinary and extraordinary process of living”. The research in support of early theory development included studies such as Schlossberg and Leibowitz’s study (1980) of men who lose their jobs at NASA and the resulting impact of a support program (Schlossberg, 1984). Schlossberg (1984) conducted interview with NASA employees one week after they had lost their jobs due to a reduction in force. Follow up interviews were conducted six months later. Participants were asked about their perceptions of the transition, available supports, and their coping styles. The importance of intuitional support, in case counseling workshops and placement assistance was endorsed. The interviews also reinforced that the transition process often has both positive and negative components for the same individual (Schlossberg, 1984). Schlossberg (1981) also conducted a pilot study of transitions related to geographical mobility. Interviews were conducted with couples that had recently relocated. The most important factors related to coping were sex and sex-role identification, perceived duration of the move, interpersonal supports, and degree of control. The results also reinforced the concept that transitions often involve both positive and negative aspects for the same person (Schlossberg, 1984).

Using Schlossberg’s theory of transition, Swain (1991) conducted a study of athletes withdrawing from sports. Swain (1991) found support for aspects of the transition model, including the “process over time” concept, the similarity and variability of individuals’ transitions, and the significance of the different coping resources (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). Swain suggested adding education, skills, activities, and interests to the list of coping resources (Swain, 1991). Schell (1995) and Wheeler, Malone, Van Vlack, Nelson, & Steadward (1996) also used transition theory for examining, and understanding experiences of
athletes especially life after sports.

Rumann & Hamrick (2010) applied Schlossberg’s transition theory to assess student veterans in transition, reenrolling in higher education after war zone. Using the theory, Runman & Harmick (2010) recommended that Colleges create supportive environments for veterans by offering student led organizations. Professional development was also recommended to for staff, and administrators were also recommended in assessing transition challenges for veteran students, along with recognition of transition context.

Compared to traditional students, immigrant veterans are generally at many different points in their life due to the various types of transitions they have undergone. The entire transition process of moving in, moving through and moving out can be used as a guide in student affairs to facilitate all stages of college student development including immigrant veterans. In any transition, the first stage can be conceptualized as either moving in or moving out. People who move into a new transition such as marriage, a new job, or high education have some common agendas and needs. They need to become familiar with new rules, regulations, norms, and expectations of the new system. Schlossberg et al. (1995) stressed the role of perception in transitions, noting that a transition exists only if the individual experiencing it defines it. Furthermore, the larger the transition—either good or bad— is perceived, the more it will pervade the individual’s life.

This theory is ideal in understanding the transitional experiences of immigrant veterans because it allows the individuals’ interpretations to define their college experiences and use that knowledge to further develop. “The transition framework is designed to depict the extraordinarily complex reality that accompanies and defines the human capacity to cope with change” (Schlossberg, Waters, & Goodman, 2006, p. 55).
Because military experience can be very different from one individual to another and it would be unjust to generalize about the experiences of all immigrant veterans. Returning home from combat is a major transition because it disrupts existing relationships and lifestyles. Therefore, Schlossberg et al. (1995) emphasized that the relationship of the individual to the event or nonevent (context) resulting in change is central to our understanding of transition. Was the transition a choice and the event started with the individual or the person was forced into a transition by certain situations or because of someone else? For example, a veteran might be suffering from PTSD or other health issues and no longer fit for duty requiring a transition to civilian life or the veteran chose to become a civilian to pursue his or her education.

College students, whether traditionally or nontraditionally aged, face many changes that can have short and long term effects on their lives. However, most immigrant veterans that served in combat bring additional layers of challenges to higher education institutions. Nancy Schlossberg’s transition theory provides insights into factors related to the transition, including the environments that are likely to determine the degree of impact a given transition will have at a particular point in time. Furthermore, the theory provides strategies that can be used to assist this cohort.

The framework is comprehensive in scope and highly integrative of other theoretical contributions and provides a way of organizing the immigrant veterans transitional knowledge base which is constructed on the premises that adult continuously experience transition. Their reactions to transitions depend on the type of transitions, the context in which they occur, and their impacts on their lives. Because the theory emphasizes individual’s perspective on their own transition, Schlossberg’s theory allows for individual and cultural differences (Schlossberg, Waters, & Goodman, 2006). The transitions have no end point; rather transitions are a process
over time, which include phases of adaptation and continuous assessment.

**Chapter II: Literature Review**

Higher education and the military have been linked throughout history in the United States. The military service provided access to higher education to immigrants, their children, and other marginalized groups. As the war concludes in Iraq and Afghanistan, veterans are transitioning to higher education. This literature review will analyze the transitional challenges of immigrant veterans in the United States. This analysis is framed with transition theory.

Transition theory was classified as a psychosocial theory of student development and was established by Nancy Schlossberg in 1981 (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). Schlossberg (1995) argued that transitions provide opportunities for growth and development, but a positive outcome for the individual cannot be assumed. The structure for understanding individuals in transition remains stable within the framework regardless of individual situations.

Such transitions include service members who enrolled in institutions of higher learning for the first time, as well as those whose military obligations during times of conflict interrupted or delayed their collegiate pursuits. The following question leads into a discussion of two bodies of literature that inform the problem of practice of this study: What are the experiences of immigrant veterans transitioning to higher education? The first body of literature to be reviewed is the literature associated with adjustment issues of immigrant students in higher education. The second will be literature associated with specific issues veterans have transitioning to higher education.

**Immigrant Students in Higher Education**

For hundreds of years, immigrants have come to the United States in pursuit of freedom and prosperity. One of the greatest challenges for immigrants is the experience of immigration
itself. These new residents believe that, through hard work and perseverance, they can achieve better lives for themselves and their families. According to the Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP), in today’s world, realizing the American Dream is now almost impossible without some postsecondary education (2007). At the same time, many immigrants face significant barriers in gaining access to and succeeding in higher education. These prospective and current college students must struggle with limited finances, work and family responsibilities, varied academic backgrounds, limited English proficiency, and a lack of knowledge about the American system of higher education (IHEP, 2007). These factors affect their ability to navigate the complex postsecondary admissions and financial aid processes, and the equally challenging process of earning a postsecondary credential.

Past experience shows that the integration of immigrants into American life has been a multigenerational process (Ellis & Almgren, 2009). The early immigrants to colonial America were from England, France, Germany, and other European countries. They came in search of economic opportunity and political freedom. The second and third generation descendants moved successively farther up the economic ladder from the humble rungs occupied by their immigrant parents or grandparents (Ellis & Almgren, 2009). After the civil rights movement of 1960s, college campuses witnessed greater racial heterogeneity related to dramatic increases in immigration in the number of Latino and Asian second generation immigrant students (Ewing, 2012). Under such conditions of rapid immigration, along with the access to the GI Bill, higher education institutions experienced a stringent boost in college enrollment.

According to the American Immigration Policy Center (2013), approximately one in eight U.S. residents today is an immigrant, while nearly a quarter of all of the nation’s children are the children of immigrants. These children make up approximately 30 percent of all low-
income U.S. children. Postsecondary attainment rates of young people who come from low-income households, and regardless of income or immigration status, whose parents have no college experience, are also low across the board (Baum & Flores, 2011). The sharp rise in demand for skilled labor over the past few decades is requiring the immigrant population to access higher education (Vega, 2010). A higher level of educational attainment is closely correlated with higher income in the general U.S. population. The success of all immigrants and their descendants in higher education would not only improve prospects for both economic and social mobility for individuals but it would also confer benefits on society as a whole (Baum & Flores, 2011). There are several characteristics that help to determine success in higher education such as the following: parental education, age at immigration, and academic preparation.

Baum & Flores (2011) argued that lack of familiarity with the U.S. postsecondary education system is a challenge for immigrant students and especially those who do not attend U.S. high schools and whose parents are not proficient in English. The American Association of Colleges and Universities (AASCU) listed the top ten issues of higher education today, which included boosting college degree productions, increasing college access, and immigration (AASCU, 2013). The ability of immigrant students without proper residency requirements to receive in-state (resident) tuition rates at public universities will again be debated in many statehouses in 2013. These policies have been hotly contested for the past several years, with no clear trend toward either expanded or restricted access to public higher education for this population (AASCU, 2013).

Research has shown that two-thirds of immigrant students are also first generation and low income (Vega, 2010). Therefore, immigrant students experience difficulty preparing academically and socially for college, including college access, student engagement, and
personal development. These students lack sufficient support networks, such as family, peers, or mentors that understand the various challenges that college students face (Phinney & Haas, 2003). In particular, these students may lack the knowledge and skills needed to obtain educational resources, scholarships, and advice (Harper & Quaye, 2009). Parents who have gone to college tend to transfer such knowledge to their own children, such as information about school or the types of credentials needed for specific careers (Vega, 2010). Stormquirst (2012) informed that families play a crucial role as a support network as students prepare for college. Since immigrant students may not be able to request help from their families, they lack their resources and must look for alternative forms of support. When students do not have a family support network that helps them prepare for college, then the information burden shifts from the adults as givers to the students as collectors, a role these students are ill equipped to play (Benderson, 1988). The immediate challenges of collecting information on colleges and financial aid can force them to place their educational plans on hold.

In lieu of parental support, these students must turn to college counselors, teachers, and student peers to help them navigate the process of applying to college. Although these substitutes for parental support are useful in guiding students through college and financial aid, they cannot fully address issues of college aspirations (Harper & Quaye, 2009). A lower level of aspirations for college forms another barrier for immigrant students. Finally, these challenges can create difficulty to build a sense of self-efficacy regarding academic performance and the college and financial aid application process (Harper & Quaye, 2009).

Vega (2010) argued that the low income and first generation status of most immigrant students’ higher education creates a financial burden on students and their families. If immigrant students are forced to work to meet the cost of attending college, then they lose valuable
opportunities to engage with other students, faculty, and staff on their campus (Harper & Quaye, 2009). According to the Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP) (2007), lack of financial aid information and awards are also key barriers to student engagement. Students from low-income families often find it hard to afford the expenses and declined earnings associated with pursuing a college education, and immigrant families are considerably more likely than the general population to be living in poverty (IHEP, 2007). More than a third of Latin American immigrants, for example, earn incomes below 150 percent of the federal poverty level (IHEP, 2007). The low-income status of many immigrants may be compounded by the need to send remittances back to their countries of origin.

Some immigrants may find that they are not adequately prepared for college level work in the United States, even if they have graduated from high school or previously attended college (IHEP, 2007). While others may find that they have to repeat courses that were considered secondary level in their own countries. Moreover, in recent years, an increasing number of teenage immigrants have been arriving in the United States with little formal schooling and with literacy levels, even in their native languages, below their grade level (IHEP, 2007).

Limited English proficiency is a significant barrier that prevents immigrant students from graduating from high school and moving into postsecondary education, especially immigrant students who come to America as teenagers and have only a few years to learn English (Valverde & Castenell, 1998). Limited English proficiency may also be a concern for older immigrants who wish to attend college because they are more likely than young immigrants to speak a language other than English (IHEP, 2007). Among immigrants age 24 and older, for example, 18 percent reported that they spoke no English or did not speak English well, compared with only 5 percent of immigrants age 18–23 (IHEP, 2007).
According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2011), which is a part of the Department of Education, immigration within the U.S. population has increased in recent decades. From 1970 to 2007, the U.S. foreign-born population more than tripled to more than 37 million, or one in eight U.S. residents (U.S. Census Bureau 1997, 2008). Immigrants’ overall education attainment rates, however, lag behind those of the U.S. born population (Vega, 2010). Postsecondary enrollment and attainment rates differ among immigrants depending on their country of origin and age at immigration, and among individuals born in the United States, whether they had parents who were immigrants or were born in the United States (Patten 2012; Baum and Flores 2011; Erisman and Looney 2007).

IHEP (2007) conducted a study in California regarding immigrants in higher education. The foreign-born population in California was 9.6 million in 2005, which is the largest in the nation, and an estimated 2.8 million (29 percent) of these residents were undocumented (U.S. Census Bureau 2005a). The state shares a border with Mexico and has a number of major ports, making it easily accessible for immigrants coming from overseas.

The population of immigrant undergraduate students in California does not reflect the racial and ethnic distribution of the overall immigrant population (IHEP, 2007). According to the study, disparities in college enrollment based on race and ethnicity have been the subject of considerable debate in California. The passage in 1996 of Proposition 209, which banned the use of race as a criterion for admission to the state’s public universities, led to a drop in the entry rate of Hispanic students at both the University of California and California State University systems (IHEP, 2007). Immigrant students in California characteristically enroll at community colleges.

In 2003–04, about 70 percent of all immigrant undergraduates were pursuing degrees at public two-year institutions, compared with 62 percent of non-immigrants in the state (IHEP,
2007). In addition, 57 percent of immigrant undergraduates in California were attending college only part time, compared with 50 percent of nonimmigrants in California and 41 percent of immigrant undergraduates nationally (NCES 2004). Community colleges are an obvious choice for many immigrant students as they offer low tuition and fees, open admissions, and programs that target language acquisition and workforce development. The rigid higher education systems can create problems for immigrants, who are often clustered in low-income areas with low-performing high schools, and who may not be aware of the steps they need to take to gain admission to a state university (Vega, 2010).

To help improve access to state four-year institutions, organizations in California are supporting outreach and early intervention programs, which attempt to remedy the low enrollment rates among disadvantaged state residents, including immigrants (IHEP, 2007). The study suggested that most students benefit greatly from such intervention programs, and program evaluations suggest that immigrant students who participate have high transfer rates from community colleges to four-year institutions. In addition to inadequate academic preparation, immigrant undergraduates face the barrier of not being able to afford higher education in California. As in the case with national data, immigrant students typically come from poorer families (Vega, 2010).

For the first time in several years, 2013 may present a rare window of opportunity for Congress to come together in a bipartisan manner around comprehensive immigration reform. Potential federal legislation could include elements of the DREAM Act (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors), first introduced more than a decade ago, which would provide conditional permanent residency for undocumented residents who meet certain criteria, including completion of two years of college or military service.
The most important conclusion to be drawn from this literature review is that there is no one-way to overcome the barriers immigrants face in gaining access to higher education in the United States. The transition theory of Schlossberg facilitates support for transitions and the opportunity to eliminate barriers to transitions, whether a student is preparing for transition, moving through it, or ending the transition and looking forward to what is next (Harper, & Quaye, 2009). For immigrant students, life transition is a reason to seek higher education. The 4 S System provides a way to identify the potential resources students to cope with the transition. Compared to traditional students, immigrants are generally at many different points in their life due to the various types of transitions they have undergone. Like all low-income college students, many immigrants would benefit from an expansion of state and federal financial aid programs. Outreach programs aimed at increasing educational attainment for all Hispanic Americans are likely to benefit the growing Latino immigrant community as well.

**Veteran Students in Higher Education**

American veterans have a long history of returning from war, overcoming personal and emotional hardships, and using their collection of unique experiences to become dedicated students, professionals, family members, and community leaders. According to American Council on Education (ACE), the United States is in the process of welcoming more than 2 million veterans as they return from Iraq and Afghanistan (ACE, 2012). In the fall of 2010, over 210,000 veterans used their Post-9/11 GI benefits to attend college (Miles, 2010). There has been limited research on veterans’ adjustment to college life (Elliott, Gonzalez, & Larsen, 2011). There was some research conducted on WWII era veterans and Vietnam veterans. For example, a study conducted by Barnes & Harvey (2000) concluded that WWII veterans gained much more pride serving during combat as compared to Vietnam War veterans. The study concluded that
WWII veterans felt good about what they did in their service time, including gaining respect from people back home, becoming a leader, becoming a man, and learning to make decisions and survive (Barnes & Harvey, 2000). Patriotism was at the core of their experience. The Vietnam veterans, however, emphasized long-term negative impacts more often than WWII veterans (Barnes & Harvey, 2000). The Vietnam War was not popular at home and while people may disagree with recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, returning veterans are mostly celebrated.

The lengthy and multiple deployments combined with arduous combat conditions comprise a legacy of stress exposure with far-reaching effects on student veterans’ daily lives (Elliott, Gonzalez, & Larsen, 2011). Military combat has similarities to stressors, such as being in a violent relationship or living in a dangerous neighborhood because it entails physical, cognitive, emotional, social, and spiritual challenges (Elliott, Gonzalez, & Larsen, 2011). It is difficult to know whether the veteran has had a positive or negative experience while in the military or what their current experience is now that they are home and have had time to think about their service (Slusser, 2010).

Being out of the military often takes away the support system that helps to justify actions in combat (Slusser, 2010). Exposure to harsh physical conditions, threat of attack, compulsion to attack others, and proximity to death and dismemberment comprise a virtual minefield of stressors that service members may be exposed to for months at a time (Elliott, Gonzalez, & Larsen, 2011).

Elliott, Gonzalez, & Larsen (2011) concluded that because some have protected each other to the point of literally saving lives, however, when lives are lost, emotions may have to be suppressed to attend to the immediacy of battle. That curbed sentiment learned while serving active duty might prevent them from seeking help on campus.
Unresolved emotions from military service often continue for years in the lives of some veterans. The National Survey of Student Engagement interviewed thousands of veterans who were either first-year or senior students at four-year schools, concluding that veterans were less likely to participate in study abroad programs or interact with professors and fellow students (Slusser, 2010).

As the United States continues to draw down its forces in Iraq, unemployment remains high in the United States, leading college enrollment to surge (Fry, 2010). The current economic trends reflect the likelihood that there will be continuing growth in the representation of military veterans on U.S. college campuses (Rumann & Hamrick, 2010). The Association of Private Sector Colleges and Universities (APSCU) released a report, *Best Practices for Military and Veteran Students*, highlighting guidelines for serving military and veteran students to ensure their success (2013). The report argued that military or veteran students share many of the same characteristics as other first generation, low income, and adult learners that institutions have been serving for years (APSCU, 2013). Immigrants also have been eligible to enlist in the U.S. military since the Revolutionary War and have served in times of war with great distinction (Stock, 2009).

The veteran students try to balance their academic pursuits with family and job responsibilities, and they have a seriousness of purpose that comes with maturity and financial independence (ACE, 2012). Some have been to college before, while many haven't. Some are married, with families; others are only a few years older than the "traditional" freshmen they sit next to in class (ACE, 2012). The U.S. government has traditionally shown its commitment to veterans through investment in higher education and providing access to the GI Bill. It remains
the most transformational piece of legislation that made college accessible for more than 2 million veterans in the 10 years following the end of World War II (DiRamio & Jarvis, 2011).

In 1947, exactly half of American college students were veterans (Sander, 2012). Today, Post-9/11 GI Bill recipients are a tiny minority in an expansive college universe, making up only 3 percent of American undergraduates (Sander, 2012). The Pew Research Center recently found that only one half of 1 percent of American adults has ever served on active duty (Sander, 2012). The veteran students claim that sometimes such minority status breeds stereotypes about why they enlisted, their political or ideological beliefs, and what they did while in uniform (Sander, 2012).

Veterans returning to civilian life are often challenged by the adjustment in moving from a command and control environment to the openness of a college campus (Radford, 2009). They often feel isolated as one among many. Since they are no longer in uniform, they are not readily identified as military members (Brown & Gross, 2011). The veteran students commonly report feeling isolated, from both fellow veterans and anybody remotely familiar with military culture (Sander, 2012). Veterans who served in combat may experience social and cognitive dissonance as they adjust to the civilian college environment (ACE, 2012). Some veterans return from combat with physical or psychological readjustment challenges and require academic and disability accommodations to successfully reintegrate (ACE, 2012). Although they are the beneficiaries of a new GI Bill that mitigates the financial burden of college attendance, some veterans struggle to overcome bureaucratic, information, or enrollment hurdles as they transition into the higher education community (ACE, 2012). Furthermore, they often feel at odds with younger classmates because the maturity gap can lead to awkward or tense exchanges (Sander,
2012). The question they resent most is: "Did you kill anyone?" But research shows that they've learned to brace for it (Sander, 2012).

Despite the long history of veterans’ education benefits and the presence of veteran students on campuses, relatively little research has been conducted on effective campus programs and services that successfully aid veterans in their college transition (ACE, 2012). Aside from the adjustment to civilian life and to the new role of student, military students, and veterans often find institutions of higher education lacking in understanding of their educational status as transfer students (Brown & Gross, 2011). In order to become more responsive to military and veteran students, higher education institutions needs understanding of their needs that may lead to serve them well.

In the 2009, a survey conducted by ACE, more than three-fourths of colleges and universities reported that financial aid and student retention/persistence toward degree completion were the two most pressing issues facing military/veteran students (ACE, 2012). A third issue recognized by nearly 48 percent of all postsecondary institutions involved veterans’ health care needs (ACE, 2012). Financial aid issues are still considered a problem by institutions, but health care and student retention/persistence toward degree completion issues have increased (ACE, 2012). The veteran students are often placed at the lowest academic level, even when their training and experience should place them at a much higher level (Brown & Gross, 2011). A pilot study by the Pat Tillman Foundation and Operation College Promise, of veterans at seven public institutions with large veteran enrollments, found that their retention rates and grade-point averages were higher on average, than those of their traditional peers (Sander, 2012). The VA meanwhile began collecting veterans' graduation rates from colleges in 2011(Sander, 2012). The inconsistencies in the recognition of valid learning while serving active duty often leave students
taking courses far below their competency levels and being required to take courses that cover
the same or nearly the same material they have already mastered through their training schools
(Brown, & Gross, 2011). The lack of academic challenge and seemingly irrelevant curricular
requirements are a significant deterrent for military students, and often a major factor in
noncompletion (Brown & Gross, 2011). So far, most veterans like most students of any stripe
have landed at public institutions, and many are at community colleges (Sander, 2012).
However, another large chunk are at for-profit colleges, which draw about 13 percent of all
college students nationally but have attracted far higher proportions of veterans (Sander, 2012).
In California, for instance, which has the largest number of Post-9/11 GI Bill recipients in the
country, half of student veterans attend community colleges, while a third attend proprietary
institutions (Sander, 2012). According to a study conducted by ACE, most institutions report that
the most common challenges they see facing their military and veteran students are finances,
retention/degree completion, and social acculturation to campus (2012).
There is no national level systematic effort in higher education to assist student veterans,
but research has found that connecting with other veterans on campus helps student veterans’
transition to college life (DiRamio et al., 2008). A study conducted by Elliott, Gonzalez, &
Larsen (2011) at a medium sized public university in the western United States concluded that
faculty had a larger role to play in easing transition to veterans. The faculty’s willingness to
disregard teaching and embrace hateful soapbox political speeches was cited as one of the major
challenges for veterans (Elliott, Gonzalez, & Larsen, 2011).
Schlossberg’s theory of transition is a useful tool for understanding veterans’ complex
transitions because of multiple transitions veteran students go through. While Schlossberg’s
transition theory is often grouped with adult development theories, it is also relevant to veterans
because of their non-traditional aged status. Schlossberg’s theory helps to conceptualize their transition experiences from “moving in,” moving through,” and “moving out” of the transition. For example, Schell (1995) and Wheeler, Malone, Van Vlack, Nelson, & Steadward (1996) used transition theory for examining, and understanding transitions of athletes especially life after sports. The study suggested adding events, activities, and other social measure to the coping resources.

A Special Case for Immigrant Veterans

There are several limitations to the current body of literature that this study seeks to improve. One of the limitations found in the literature is the neglect for veterans’ minority, racial, and ESOL status. There is little literature on transitional challenges of such cohort and particularly on how such climate affects their adaptation to higher education institutional environment. With the knowledge of immigrants’ long history of service the military, it is inauspicious to find very limited information on immigrant veterans in the literature. Veterans Affairs (VA) doesn’t track veteran retention or completion rates (O'Herrin, 2011). Therefore, the transition experiences of immigrant veterans following military war zone deployments within the past 11 years have not been closely investigated (Lokken, Pfeffer, McAuley, & Strong, 2009).

It is appropriate to use Schlossberg’s theory of transition to understand the challenges and successes of immigrant veterans as they progress through the transition process. Schlossberg’s theory of transition provides a reasonably comprehensive framework from which to investigate the transitions of the participants, regardless of where they are in the transition process of accessing higher education. This study also highlights the need to explore strategies, coping mechanisms and support systems that the participants utilized to deal with the positive and negative aspects of enrolling in college.
Scholarly work focused on the returning veteran with immigrant status as a college student is limited (DiRamio & Jarvis, 2011). The information on the transition experiences of immigrant veterans returning to college is scarce. Using Academic Search Elite, ERIC, Professional Development, and Google Scholar and the search terms like immigrant veterans, university transition, veteran and transition resulted in only a few articles or reports focused on the transition experiences of immigrant veterans returning to college. The majority of studies pertained to the post-World War II era, including Vietnam era, and much of that work dealt with the scholastic achievements of veterans, retention, and graduation rather than transitional challenges in higher education.

Although there is much research that endorses professional development for staff working with minority students, along with first generation and low-income status, the transitional challenges for such cohort are rarely discussed. Immigrant veterans meet that status often and may have similar needs; however, some feel that there is little empirical research or evidence that veterans feel supported or have confidence that the institutions understand their challenges (DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchell, 2008; Rumann & Hamrick, in press; Rumann, 2010). Rumann & Hamrick (2010) conducted a research on veterans’ transition suggested that there is little research to show transitional challenges of immigrant or minority veterans, or the use of professional development initiatives by the institutions, even though all the components related to first generation and low income students were discussed. The research regarding transition challenges of immigrant veterans is therefore minimal.

Based on this literature review, the researcher has concluded that there is no one-way to overcome the barriers immigrants face in transitioning to higher education. Compared to traditional students, immigrant veterans are generally at many different
points in their life due to various types of transitions they have undergone. Furthermore, as indicated by Elliot et al (2011), the lengthy and multiple deployments combined with arduous conditions comprise a legacy of stress exposure with far-reaching effects on student veterans’ daily lives. As such an exploration of the challenges of immigrants migrating to the United States, trying to access higher education coupled with an in-depth look at veterans’ transition to higher education is warranted.

**CHAPTER III: RESEARCH DESIGN**

This chapter outlines the research method that will be used to understand the transitional experiences of immigrant veterans in higher education.

**Research Focus**

This study will focus on how immigrant veterans experience their transition to higher education. Using a qualitative methodology, the researcher seeks to understand this phenomenon through interviewing participants and analyzing the data obtained through these interviews.

This study emerges out of the existing literature on transition of veterans, minorities, immigrants, and other marginalized groups to higher education. It is understood that every immigrant veteran will have a different experience. According to Schlossberg’s transition theory, the immigrant veteran’s transition would be dependent on their country of birth. For example, immigrants from other English speaking countries would not share the same challenges in higher education as the students that were born in non-English parts of the world. This study is intended to better understand and illustrate the participants’ transition experiences to higher education made possible by the GI Bill.

**Qualitative Research**
According to Danzin & Lincoln (2000b), qualitative research methods refer to a broad class of empirical procedures designed to describe and interpret the experiences of research participants in a context-specific setting (as cited in Ponterotto, 2005). It is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2009). Ponterotto (2005) argued that qualitative findings are generally presented in everyday language and often incorporate participant’s own words to describe a psychological event, experience, or phenomenon (p.128). In this situation, the researcher seeks to establish the meaning of a phenomenon from the views of the participants. It allows the researcher to identify a culture sharing group and study how it develops shared patterns of behavior over time. Therefore, it introduces a range of strategic, ethical, and personal issues into the research process.

Unlike quantitative research that is based on the precise definition, measurement, and analysis of the relationship between a carefully defined set of variables, qualitative research commences with a question, problem, or issue that is rather broadly defined (Stringer, 2007). Arghode (2012) argued that reality couldn’t be comprehended as it is constantly shaped through social interactions. The researcher has chosen the interpretivist paradigm, for the basis for this qualitative research. Schwandt (1994) argued that the interpretivism adheres to a relativist position that assumes multiple, apprehendable, and equally valid realities (as cited in Ponterotto, 2005). Thus a distinguishing characteristic of interpretivism is the centrality of the interaction between the investigator and the object of investigation (Ponterotto, 2005). The proponents of interpretivism emphasize the goal of understanding the “lived experiences” from the point of view of those lived it. In qualitative research, the researchers cannot detach themselves form the researched phenomenon as they bring in their subjective experiences. The researcher will look to
create and co-construct findings from the interactive dialogue and interpretations (Ponterotto, 2005). Therefore, interpretivist paradigm provides the basis and the primary foundation for this qualitative research method.

**Methodology**

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis is a qualitative approach that is concerned with the detailed examination of personal lived experience, the meaning of experience to participants and how participants make sense of that experience (Smith, 2011). Husserl developed the descriptive phenomenology, and Heidegger, one of his students modified and built on Husserl’s work to develop the interpretive phenomenology analysis (Connelly, 2010). Phenomenology is the philosophical movement concerned with lived experience and phenomenological philosophers converge on the need to conduct the detailed examination of experience on its own terms (Smith, 2011). This method requires an intensive qualitative analysis of detailed personal accounts of a small number of participants (Moustakas, 1994). The most common method of data collection is in-depth, semi-structured interviewing, while these questionings are audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim (Smith, 2011). Furthermore, the sample size for such study needs to be small to gain the true potential of IPA.

Qualitative researchers try to be aware of any presuppositions they may have about the phenomenon before they begin the study (Stringer, 2007). The descriptive phenomenologists try to bracket or put aside these presuppositions or biases so they do not affect the study, however, interpretive phenomenologists do not believe these ideas can be put aside because they are a part of the person; the researcher only can be aware of them and any effect they have on the study (Pringle, Drummond, McLafferty, & Hendry, 2011).
IPA studies are conducted on small sample sizes (Smith, 2004). The detailed case-by-case analysis of individual transcripts takes a long time, and the aim of the study is to say something in detail about the perceptions and understandings of this particular group rather than prematurely make more general claims. Smith (2011) argued that the best IPA studies are concerned with the balance of convergence, and divergence within the sample, not only presenting both shared themes but also pointing to the particular way in which these themes play out for individuals (p.10).

IPA researchers realize that people often struggle to express what they are thinking and feeling. Furthermore, there may be reasons why they do not wish to self-disclose, and the researcher has to interpret people’s mental and emotional state from what they say (Smith, 2004). Fox (1980) held that the success of such phenomenological research question depends on the extent to which the questions touch lived experiences distinct from theoretical explanations. Exploring transitional experiences of immigrant veterans taps into a personal experience of this cohort that has not been previously studied.

**Site and Participants**

This study took place in Boston, Massachusetts. Each participant was interviewed at a time and location that was convenient for all involved. A location such as a library at a university offered an environment that was comfortable and allowed complete privacy as participants discussed their experiences. The researcher used criterion sampling to obtain participants for this study. Participants were self-identified as immigrants, as well as veterans now, and college students who may be considered adult learners at the time of the study.

Four to six participants is small enough to allow for an in depth analysis of each case as well as large enough to compare super ordinate themes across participants. Smith (2004, 2011),
argued in favor of having such small number of participants for such study to get in-depth analysis and highlight the phenomenon being studied.

Many techniques were used to recruit participants. The researcher planned and contacted Veterans Affairs offices of all 9 state universities in Massachusetts, and request if an email (see Appendix A) can be sent to all veteran students currently enrolled, inviting eligible veterans to participate in the study. This email also provided the researcher’s contact information.

The emails explained the scope of the research and invited potential participants to respond to the researcher if they were interested. The veterans’ offices at these institutions forwarded my email to all veteran students. This approach avoided the researcher from having access to veterans’ lists at different institutions and only moved forward if students chose to initiate the contact. In this research, the veterans’ services staff was not asked to identify immigrant veterans or conduct any outreach to potential participants. It may be unfair to assume that a veteran is an immigrant based upon their name, race, religion, etc.

There were no financial benefits to the subjects for participating. The researcher was able to develop a trusting relationship with the participants over the span of the interviews. From this relationship, the researcher had the opportunity to establish an environment where the participants felt safe to reflect on their supports and challenges. Due to strict criteria of being an immigrant and a veteran, anticipated response of veterans to researcher’s inquiry was not higher than 6 participants.

**Participants Profiles**

*Anton* was born in Matanzas, Cuba in 1967. He lived with his mother, father, a younger brother and uncle until May of 1980. They left Cuba in the Mariel boatlift at the arriving in Miami. He was 13 years old. They did not stay in Miami for long and came to Boston to live
with his father’s sister, who provided them with housing. Anton attended the local public school system and claims that did not have a positive experience in the beginning. Anton stated that his brain was still brainwashed from communism, so he hated America, and hated everything that had to do with America. Learning English did not take into effect until a couple of years later once their minds started changing about being here in the United States. He said, “In 1982 I went to Jamaica Plain High. I did not graduated. Did the four years but did not graduated. Did obtain my diploma in 1999 - Not the GED, but the actual high school diploma”. He joined the US Navy in September of 2004. He was not a U.S. citizen when he joined at the age of 36 and his immigration status remained so for the first 3 years He has been deployed twice. First activation was in 2007, he served in Kuwait to support the Iraq war. Second deployment just happened in 2011 to 2012. Anton is currently a student at Fitchburg State University working on a degree in Criminal Justice.

 Marcus is a 24-year-old male, born in Columbia. He moved to the United States in 1993 at the age of 4. His sisters were already U.S citizens but because his parents were traveling back home, he says that he “got stuck” being born in Columbia. His first stop was Queens, New York once he migrated to the United States. He said that he was a “problem child” at first for which he got kicked out of high schools. He was getting in too many fights in school. He left his family at the age of 15, moved out and relocated by himself to Massachusetts.

 He decided to join the military after high school. “I had all this anger problems and anger management issues”. He joined the service in the 2007 as a non-US citizen and remains so today. He is working on getting his citizenship. After leaving the military in 2012, he decided to pursue his education. Today, he is a full time student at Worcester State University.
Rita was born in Argentina and has three siblings. She informed that her dad came to America to find a job and once he was settled down here, he sent for his family to come over. She was 6 years old at the time of migration. They came to Boston and she started going to school. She did not know any English and it took her some time to get used to of the life style and overcome her language barriers. While she was in high school she took the ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery) test. The test score resulted in recruiters calling her and sending her letters all the time. They also visited her at school and at home. Eventually, she signed up and went to boot camp in 2001. She was only 17, therefore, her mom had to sign papers so she could go to boot camp in the summer.

“Obviously 9/11 happened and everything and then I was deployed a couple of months after. I didn't even start college after high school. I went straight to Iraq. I was 18 years old.” She has been a part time students and she hopes to finish within 2 semesters. Her contract with the military ended in 2008. She is now working towards a bachelor’s degree at Worcester State University.

Monica was born in South Korea and lived at an orphanage after being abandoned by her biological mother. She was adopted by an Anglo-American couple and brought to the United States at the age of 1. Her parents also adopted a boy from South Korea and another girl from South America. She grew up in a highly diverse household. She said, “I feel like a white American in the inside but my outside is Korean.” She finished high school and started going to community college. She had trouble adjusting earlier, so she decided to quite school and work instead. She joined the Navy at the age of 26 and spent four years serving the country. She was deployed once to Asia and traveled to Hong Kong, Japan, and Thailand. She enrolled at Westfield State University and hopes to finish by December 2013.
Data Collection

To understand the transitional challenges of immigrant veterans, this study used semi-structured interviews, lasting approximately 90 minutes. The participants were interviewed once, however, an exception was made for further clarification as certain comments needed to be explained. The researcher followed a simple series of open questions, principally about how each subject experienced transition to higher education and what was happening in their lives at the time. Smith et al., (2009) argued that during the interview phase of the research project, the researcher is leaving his/her research realm and stepping into the participant’s world (p.64). Therefore, the researcher needed to be attentive and focus closely on the participant’s words.

The participants were immigrants, veterans, who served honorably, and college students at the time of study. Face to face interview method was chosen for this research. Not all veterans experience combat, or suffer from PTSD, or other service related disabilities. The questions were mostly regarding transition and vulnerability to PTSD or other disabilities was not expected. When notified of the participants’ interest in the study, the researcher met with the participants to discuss the scope of the study and the rights and responsibilities of the researcher and participants found in the consent forms (see Appendix B). In addition, the time and place for the interviews was also discussed. At that point, participants signed an informed consent form and completed a brief demographic survey (see Appendix C) used to profile the participant. Each of the participants were asked to participate in an interview of approximately 90-minute that was recorded on two audiotapes, in case one audiotape malfunctions.

The information gathered from such small participants allow for a saturation of data and a thorough analysis in order to discover how the participants made meaning of their experiences. A transcriptionist transcribed the information gathered in the interviews and signed a
confidentiality agreement (see Appendix D). To protect the anonymity of the participants and the schools, the information was held confidentially in a locked drawer during and after the study and each participant will be assigned a pseudonym. Any electronic information will be saved on the researcher’s work computer.

**Protection of human subjects**

The researcher does not believe that this study posed any significant risk to the participants, although risk was possible. The study planed to highlight the transitional challenges of immigrant veterans. It did not seek to impose any treatment upon the participants. Involvement in the study was voluntary, and the participants were selected based on strict criteria. Because the participants were selected from different institutions, the risk of being exposed is minimum. Because of the personal information that was presented, the identity of the individuals remained confidential at all times. The researcher used pseudonyms to aid in anonymity during data collection and documentation. The researcher presented the study to the subjects and gave them the opportunity to remove any potential harmful information from the study. It is a fundamental responsibility of the researcher to do all in his power to ensure that participants in a research study are protected from physical or psychological harm. All subjects were assured that any data collected from or about them was held in confidence.

It is possible that the participants suffered from psychological harm by discussing their service during combat and stress related events during their lengthy deployments. If participants experienced any emotional stress due to the interview, the researcher allowed the participants to take breaks as needed by the participants. In addition, the researcher checked in with the participants after the interview to assess the participants’ exposure to trauma.
The proposed study was performed based on the statutes prescribed by the Institutional Review Board of Northeastern University. The researcher ensured that information remains confidential and private and that an informed consent form is signed by the participants. Throughout the study, the researcher accommodated considerations of ethics by obtaining informed consent forms from the subjects, disclosing the nature of the study, and ensuring that the data remains confidential (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012).

On occasion, based on previous knowledge of a population and specific research, investigators use personal judgement to select a sample (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). In this study, the researcher chose a population for study that represents the immigrant population transitioning to higher education after serving in the military. In addition, because the researcher is an immigrant and a veteran himself, the researcher employed a second reader to reduce any biases that may have influenced how the study is performed and how the researcher deduced the findings.

**Data Analysis**

Much of human activity is not directly observable or measurable, nor it is always possible to get information from people who might know of such activity from firsthand experience (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). Light, Singer, & Willett (1990) argued that examining recorded data and trying to generalize across studies is not easy and findings may vary considerably. The researcher makes an attempt to use conflicts between different transitions of veterans to examine the effects of methodology (Light, Singer, & Willett, 1990).

Maxwell (2009) argued that qualitative research could never be fully objective. The researcher chose to acknowledge his experiential knowledge and views. The researcher chose to conduct this study because of his experiences while serving as an immigrant and a non-US
citizen in the military transitioning to higher education. Therefore, personal objectivity is embraced in collecting, analyzing, and interpreting the data.

The researcher will describe personal experiences with the phenomenon under study. The analytical approach of Smith, Flowers, & Larkin (2009) was utilized for interview transcripts. The researcher began with a full description of his experience in an attempt to set aside personal views. By doing so, the focus was directed to the participants in the study.

The researcher conducted initial recording of descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual comments (Smith et al., 2009). Then, IPA analysis included the following characteristics: (a) movement from what is unique to a participant to what is shared among the participants, (b) description of the experience which moves to an interpretation of the experience, (c) commitment to understanding the participant’s point of view, and (d) psychological focus on personal meaning-making within a particular context (Smith et al., 2009). Following the IPA process,

At step one of analysis, the researcher of IPA developed a set of descriptive comments on the interview transcript. The purpose of descriptive comments is to describe the content of the data. In making descriptive comments, the researcher identified key phrases, explanations, descriptions, and emotional responses.

At step two, the researcher focused on how the transcript reflected the content and how it was presented linguistically. The researcher’s interpretation was also included. In making linguistic comments, the researcher paid particular attention to pauses, laughter, pronoun use, functional aspects of language, repetition, and metaphor use (Smith et al., 2009). For example, some veteran student used military terminology to explain their path to higher education.
At step three, the researcher moved into a more interpretive stage of analysis in making conceptual comments. This stage of analysis included the development of questions about meaning. The questions (or tentative language used in conceptual annotation, such as “seems” or “may”) indicated key concepts the researcher felt that were emerging from his analysis of the data (Smith et al., 2009).

After completing initial noting on each participant’s responses, the author searched for emerging themes across all participants by examining discrete sections of the transcripts and simultaneously recalling what he learned during their analysis up to this point. The themes mentioned in the next chapter not only reflect the participants’ original words and thoughts but also the researchers’ interpretations (Smith et al., 2009). In the development of themes, the author supported each theme by descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual comments made by each of the participants.

Validation and Reliability in Qualitative Research. A great deal of attention was applied to validation and reliability to this research because without rigor the research is worthless. To establish the “trustworthiness” of a study, Lincoln and Guba (1985) have used alternative terms that, they contended, adhered more to naturalistic research, such as credibility, authenticity, transferability, dependability, and conformability.

For validity and reliability, Maxwell (2005) cautioned that theory should not dominate or constrict phenomenological designs. Instead, researchers should continually test theories as they search out a variety of ways to analyze and interpret the data gathered. Although existing theory informs and focuses interpretive phenomenological research, theory should not act as a limiting agent to new ideas and clusters of meanings that may be discovered during data analysis (Maxwell, 2005).
Smith et al., (2009) recommended specific strategies be used to attain trustworthiness such as negative cases, peer debriefing, prolonged engagement and persistent observation, audit trails and member checks. The characteristics of the investigator/s, who must be responsive and adaptable to changing circumstances was also emphasized (Smith et al., 2009).

In order to alleviate any problems with authenticity and reliability in this study, the interview questions were reviewed by a number of qualified people. The researcher then discussed possible revisions to the questions with second and third qualified readers and then made appropriate changes to the questions. Because this research study was performed in a particular setting with unique participants, it was not possible to attain the reliability that is commonly understood in experimental research.

Furthermore, validity and reliability was also an internal measure whereby the findings of the study were judged as reasonable given the data. The question then is not whether findings will be found again but whether the results are consistent with the data collected (Merriam, 1998). It was imperative to the researcher to ensure that the findings adequately describe their overall experience.

Polkinghorne (1989) argued that the researcher must ensure that the general structural description provided an accurate portrait of the common features and structural connections that were manifest in the examples collected. Levering (2006) believed that the significance of a phenomenon should not be sought in the relation between the phenomenal world and the actual reality behind it, but in the inter-relationships between the phenomena in the phenomenal field (Levering, 2006). Investigating or measuring the validity and reliability of phenomenology data was difficult because of the subjective nature of the information. The assessment of validity is complicated by the fact that experiences assessed using IPA, such as “I felt alone,” may not
necessarily have behavioral expressions, or other visual evidence which makes them difficult to verify (Oorschot, Kwapil, Delespaul, & Myin-Germeys, 2009).

Another reason investigating the reliability of data may be complex if it lacks consistency among participants. Because immigrant veterans transitioning to higher education may vary as well as their military experience due to their role while serving active duty. It was ultimately the researcher’s responsibility to ensure rigor with feedbacks, revisions, and interviews that offered participants anonymity, including open, warm and welcome environment.

**Limitations of the study:** Although measures were taken to ensure rigor and precision, there might be some limitations to the study. The first limitation to the study is the self-selection of the participants. This selection is a possible limitation because the potential participants in the study may not be qualified, and those who are qualified may not be willing to participate. Every effort was made to recruit veterans with gender, age, religion, culture and social differences to cover a broad range of transitional challenges. Attention was also given to their branch of service and time served on deployments.

Second, the research goal was not to generalize about all immigrant veterans. There may be other immigrant veterans whose experiences and perspectives are different from the participants who are ultimately selected. For example, European immigrant veterans with English as their first language may not have the same experiences as immigrant veterans from Cuba or Egypt, as culture or religion brings different transitional challenges. There were no participants from Europe or the Middle East.

The third limitation of this study is that it may not be transferable to other immigrant veterans depending on their age of migration to the U.S, their current immigration status, and current financial issues which may make transferability impossible.
Conclusion

It is imperative that the researcher stated his experience as an immigrant veteran and his transition to higher education made possible by the GI Bill. The researcher exercised rigor in research. Validity and reliability was at the forefront of this qualitative study. The researcher was led to pursue this topic based on his life with both positive and negative transitional experiences. This has ultimately shaped his interest in understanding how immigrant veterans experience transition, how their quest of accessing higher education is made possible.

IPA researchers realize that at times, they have to interpret people’s mental and emotional state from what they say because people often struggle to express what they are thinking and feeling. Furthermore, there may be reasons why they do not wish to self-disclose. Finally protection and privacy of participants remained a top priority and it led to participants sharing their transitional experiences with little hesitation.

Chapter IV: FINDINGS

This study employed an interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) to investigate the lived experiences of immigrant veterans in higher education. Through a qualitative design, this research attempted to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomena of immigrant veterans’ transitioning to higher education. This study sought to fully understand how immigrant veterans make sense of their transitioning process to higher education and how, if in any ways, colleges can better support these students. The research question guiding this study is as follows: “What are the experiences of immigrant veterans transitioning to higher education?”

Three themes emerged from an analysis of the data. The themes are: 1) Pre-Higher Education: Examining Military Service; 2) Higher Education: Beginning the Process; and 3) Higher Education: Coping Within an Institution of Higher Education Resources. This section
details each theme and demonstrates how it connects to the theoretical framework and extant literature, the significance and implications for practitioners in higher education.

The first theme provides insight into the participants’ lived experiences prior to entering college and attempts to understand their different expectations, prospects and assumptions they had about going to college. The second theme relates to the transition process itself which focuses on “moving in”, moving through” and “moving out” of transition to a higher education institution. The third theme discusses coping with transition and the availability of social and cultural support system after they had made while they were within the higher education setting.

Pre-higher Education: Examining Military Service

Transition to higher education was challenging for participants in the study. They all shared the excitement and eagerness of seeing their families and friends when leaving the military. Most participants did not attend college right after high school and took some time to settle in. These participants reported on how they decided to join the military. All felt that their options were limited after high school. After serving in the military, starting college was a daunting task partially because most of the participants were first generation and coming from low-income families.

The discussion of their transition and conversations of their military service prompted distinctive emotions and sentiments among participants that are described below chronologically. The Pre-higher Education begins with exploring their explanations and motivations of joining the military, which seems to emerge from lacking a sense of direction. The discussion then leads to the matter of sexism and racism that was highlighted consistently in their reflections while serving in the military. As they attempted to pursue higher education, the issue of sexism and racism seems to have a categorical impact on their transition. Finally, their discussions explore
lacking pupil skills. As first generation students, they looked to their institutions for additional support instead of their families. The difficulties of their transitions escalated and had major influences on their conversion in higher education.

**Lacking sense of Direction.** Transitioning to lifestyle of the military was traumatic for Marcus. He felt that education was not for him and his options were limited with what he could do. He had a difficult time in high school. He said that he did not learn a lot and had a lot of fights with fellow students. He informed that he had anger problems but was looking for a career where his anger could be used towards something positive. College seemed unattainable and undesirable at the time. He emphasized that even though joining the military was a difficult decision, especially post-9/11, however, he expected the challenges he faced. He informed that everyone in the military seemed to have similar problems, such as, leaving family and friends behind. He had to gain a new perspective on life. All participants understood that they had to go away because it was part of the job.

They were told what to wear, what to eat, and when to do all of the assigned tasks. Anton stated that in the military their superiors constantly told them “you are not paid to think, you are paid to do as you are told”. They were assigned in teams and every team had to work together to accomplish the same goals. They were able to relate to one another and seek comfort.

Rita used the word “harassed” when speaking of military recruiters. She said that they showed up to her house and work and would not leave her alone until she signed up. She took a couple of years off after high school and did not have a sense of direction for her future. She did not know what else to do with her life and decided to join the Army. She said that although she feels like an American, she is reminded of being a foreigner due to her accent. She also has many uncles, aunts, and cousins back in Argentina and even though she has not visited in a while, she
feels a strong bond towards people of her birth country. Her Argentinian culture and diets are very important to her. She claims to carry the best of both worlds. She also recognized that the opportunities in this country are vast compared to the life back home.

Monica enrolled at a community college after high school but dropped out after one year. She took a couple of years off and worked as a waitress. Military seemed the only option after feeling at a loss with what to do with her life at the age of 25. She also felt that she needed money for college or else going to college would be very difficult. Other participants agreed that college was not an option without the GI Bill. Monica feels like an American and gets frustrated when people want to know where she is from. She did not want to be associated with other Asians in the military because somehow she felt that it would take away her American identity.

Their discussions and shared stories confirm a common theme of lacking a sense of direction leading them to join the military. Service to the country was not the first choice after high school for all of participants. Rita argued that Immigrants come to this country for a better way of life and joining the military was one of the ways she was able to become independent. These veterans were not in this country by choice. Their parents had brought them here at a young age and believed that getting acclimated was easier for them at a young age compared to their parents.

Anton emphasized the importance of giving back to the country that had given him freedom. Anton joined the Navy at the age of 36 during difficult financial times. He was struggling to find a job. He wanted to join the Army but his age became a barrier. Navy offered him a job and he accepted. He did not think that he would be deployed but he was sent to Bahrain. College was never an option for him until he had access to the GI Bill. His family had escaped a communist regime in Cuba. He claimed that he was brainwashed early on and hated
the United States but he still wanted to enjoy the benefits of living in this country. He also did not want to learn the English language as if he carried some resentment towards the United States for having unfriendly policies towards Cuba. It took him years to get out of such mindset. He attended high school in the United States but eventually dropped out. He didn’t want a GED and it took him over 10 years through an evening program to earn his high school diploma.

Marcus carries resentment for the U.S. government and feels that his service to the country has not been recognized. He remains a non-citizen. He says that he has applied “every which way, but the birth certificate doesn’t exist and was lost during transition to the United States”. Even though he is married to an American woman and he can apply through that option, however, he feels that he should not have to. He applied for citizenship before joining the military, and he feels that the government gave him a weapon to fight for the country and possibly die but would not recognize him as a citizen.

Racism/ and Sexism. The experience of racism and sexism seemed to take a toll on the participants in transitioning to higher education, especially the female participants. Getting used to military life required turning a blind eye to some of the most outrageous and egregious examples of sexism and racism during their deployments. Rita seemed to carry the burdens of inappropriate comments and approaches of their male counterparts from her military days as she transitioned to higher education. She claimed that even some of the high-ranking officers were guilty of making women feel uncomfortable. However, transitioning to higher education was much easier task in that regard.

The high level of diversity and increased ratio of women to men in higher education institutions had made that transition much easier. Rita stated that while she was in Iraq, a couple of her colleagues were raped. While the military investigated and tried to deal with the
perpetrators, women were further punished because they were required to use a buddy system everywhere they went. They were not allowed to go anywhere alone. Rita began to believe that if it can happen to others, it could happen to her as well. She followed guidelines, and surrounded herself with that she felt were trustworthy.

Monica stated that there were plenty of examples of sexism in the military that affect her today. Her male subordinates sometimes did not want to take orders from her at time because she was a female.

“There is another learning experience in itself, just to get people to do what you need them to do in an efficient manner and not make life any harder than it already is on the ship”.

She did not experience racism from military colleagues. However, she admits to experience plenty of it from locals while she was deployed in Asia. She said, “When I was overseas, I experienced more racial slurs against myself being Korean American. Being Asian American versus being Asian off the boat per se.”

Asian immigrants come to the United States for the same reasons as other immigrant groups but because Monica was adopted at the age of 1 and raised by Caucasian parents, she is perceived to be lazy by other Asians. She said,

“People come up to me and say things like, “you speak good English” or “people will come up and start speaking Korean with me and get upset that I don’t speak Korean”. “That’s why I don’t like Asians.”

She feels like an American but every time she looks in the mirror she is reminded that she is Korean. She experienced similar issues at Westfield State University as a student. Monica’s last name is Irish and on the first day of class her faculty couldn’t believe that her last name is
Irish because of her Korean looks. According to Monica, the faculty member asked her to prove her identity by displaying her student ID card. Monica is convinced that such attitudes and thoughts seem to question her patriotism and portray her as an outsider and a foreigner.

Anton believed that the military does not understand different cultures. He said that Cubans are very passionate people, especially when discussing issues. But, they always think that I am this “angry Cuban”. “We move our hands, we talk a little bit loud, but it’s because we are passionate”. He was not a U.S citizen when he was first deployed. He didn’t get his citizenship till 2007. The process of becoming a citizen while serving in the military was discouraging for him. Before he could deploy for the second time, his commander wrote a letter to Senator Kennedy requesting to expedite Anton’s citizenship request. He needed to have a security clearance for his job and citizenship was necessary to do that.

Anton has not been back to Cuba for thirty years and has served this country honorably. Yet, he is still conflicted when it comes to feeling like an American. He believes that there is still a war going on between the United States and Cuba and for now United States will not allow him to travel to Cuba due to his security clearance. Secondly, he is afraid to go in case the Cuban government comes retaliates against him due to his service in American armed forces.

Anton believes that there is strong discrimination against immigrants in the military. “Not too many people report it but its there. Immigrants and other minorities have to do three times or four times as much work to get recognized.” He believed that you have to fight for your rights in the military or “they (the military) will walk all over you.” He felt that there were a lot of good servicemen and servicewomen from diverse background such as African American, Latino, and Pilipino that should reenlist and are good for the military, but many finish their contract and just
want to go out. Anton suggested that if military could improve the treatment of immigrants and other minorities, more individuals would reenlist and continue to serve the country.

**Lacking Pupil Skills.** Most participants emphasized the effects of being first generation students and the elevated risk of academic failure. Even though transition to higher education was a choice and they believed that this was a positive transition. Marcus talked about serving in the military and how his career came to a halt when he injured his leg in Iraq. A few months later, he was a civilian enrolling at Worcester State University. He said, “I thought my life was over”. Higher education never appealed to him, no one in his family had ever gone to college, but now he felt that he was running out of options. “They tell you everything to do in military and out here (education) they tell you nothing”. He believed that lacking a structural environment in college was the biggest barrier towards success.

Serving active duty with families had its benefits. Anton’s family had full medical coverage and military housing. “Knowing my family was protected was the best”, he said. Monica and Rita agreed that it was helpful to know that military would pay them through direct deposit bi-weekly. They were able to plan their lives accordingly and access other military benefits. They argued that transitioning to a civilian and a student life carries certain level of uncertainties and worrying about all areas of life and to be able to perform as a student had been challenging. Monica and Rita felt that they needed additional advising from the institution on overcoming these challenges because they were unable to rely on their families for such assistance.

One of the benefits of serving in post 9/11 era for Monica was the constant gratitude and appreciation she attains for service to the country by people she meets every day. She informed
that such appreciations bring her a certain level of pride and satisfaction. “I feel that I am accepted a lot more as an American because of my military service.”

Most participants felt that there was no such recognition for them as college students. They found it difficult to enroll in college, paying the bills, and raising a family at the same time. Participants believed that transitioning to college life from the military was nearly as difficult as transitioning in the military and often higher education institutions and the VA systems lack communication to support veterans and while they may appreciate military service, they are not as helpful as they should be.

**Higher Education: Beginning the Transition Process**

The transition is a process and not necessarily a matter of change, but the individual’s own perception of the change. Therefore, this section explores the different stages of participants’ lives at the moment of transition. Furthermore, it identifies the type of transition that has happened for each individual and how the participants understood and processed their transition. The transition process for immigrant veterans is explored in three phases. The first phase is “moving in”. The second phase is “moving through” and the third phase is “moving out” of transition.

The onsets of a transition for participants in this study are due to their departure from the military and the availability of the GI Bill. Transitions are really a process over time because a person may feel differently about their transition before, during, right after and/or a couple of years after the transition. Participants, therefore, were at different stages of their transition. Anton and Marcus left the military in 2012. Sarah and Rita transitioned in 2010 and 2008 respectively. Participants agreed that they had a different view of their transition now as they were asked to think back and revisit those moments.
Moving In: All participants had to learn to leave the military culture behind and become familiar with the rules, regulations, norms, and expectations of the new system. The participants felt that higher education institutions need to devote a great deal of time to orientation, a process designed to help individuals know what is expected of them. In the military, the participants were given clear instructions and there were guidelines about what was in store for them. They were expected to socialize into the explicit and implicit norms, roles, and culture of the military. Transitioning to a civilian life was challenging partly because instructions were not there and the options were too many.

Marcus first regretted joining the Army because of the difficult life style of the military. He found it grueling to live in such highly controlled environment. After leaving the military, he was responsible for providing for his family because military benefits such as family housing and healthcare were no longer available to him. He had second thoughts about reenlisting but he had no choice but to get out due to a leg injury. He was extremely concerned about raising a son and starting all over in his career. Now that he has been out over a year and he feels that things are finally falling into place, his view of his transition has changed. While he has not forgotten the difficult times, he recognizes that he is capable of meeting all challenges of life and in providing for his family.

Anton was 36 when he enlisted in the Navy. With a wife and two kids, he wanted to provide for them and joining the Navy seemed to be the best option at the time. He said, “I am not a young man anymore. Coming to college in 40’s is very difficult. I didn’t know if I could learn with these young kids who don’t have a clue about anything. They haven’t faced any real challenges in life”. He believed that there were not enough resources for adult learners among traditional age college students. Anton had additional challenges because English is not his first
language. He felt that faculty was not as helpful. He tried going to the tutoring center but it was not enough. However, he shared his satisfaction with the VA system and he feels that he was able to get the individual attention that he needed. He hoped that there would be a better connection between the VA and his university.

As Rita made her transition to higher education and began to confront similar issues, she claimed that it became difficult for her to balance her activities. Transition to higher education was highly unexpected for her. She had joined the Army because she didn’t think she could go to college but wanted to get out to have a family. She recognized that she wanted to take advantage of the GI Bill. She needed a lot of help early on and she didn’t know how to ask. She said, “I didn’t know how I would feel supported”. She had trouble relating with any of her classmates. She talked about having a difficult upbringing and transitioning to the United States and coping with a new environment. She also remembered her transition to the Army but stated that transition to higher education was the toughest. “Its like we were all one in the Army, going through the same challenges together. I never felt that I was competing with anyone. We were all just trying to get through some difficult time and serving in Iraq. In college sometimes…even in a crowd you feel alone sometimes because I felt like no one there had the responsibilities I had. The teacher didn’t care either… you have to perform no matter what is your life like at home and compete with everyone in your class.”

Monica seemed a little more prepared for her transition. That’s partly because she had gone to a community college before joining the Navy. Even though she had a negative experience in a community college the first time around. She believed that it would be different the second time at a four-year institution. She said that she knew exactly what to expect the second time and she was a little more prepared. She had credits not only from her community
college but also from the military and she believed that it was hard for her to fit in as a transfer student. She claimed that most students knew each other by sophomore year and they were not necessarily looking to make new friends. Monica learned to ignore what she considered the liberal agenda from most faculty members at her institution. “…They (faculty) talked political issues and sometimes I had to hold my tongue and not push the issue. They haven’t seen what I have seen. How can they even talk about things they have no clue about”? She also felt uncomfortable sitting in a classroom at the age of 30 with much younger students.

The participants informed that they were moving in a transition because they were moving out of a different transition, which was the military. The demands of breaking up old habits, routines, and roles made it difficult for them adjust quickly. The beginning of transition to higher education seemed to accentuate the loss of previous lifestyles and the possibilities of a new beginning.

Moving Through. Once moved in a transition, these participant confronted such issues as how to balance their activities with other parts of their lives and how to feel supported and challenged during their academic journey. The process of moving through began once these participants “knew the ropes”, as one participant understood it. Because the participants had been away from education for a while, moving through the transition involved many unexpected experiences.

One of the participants found it strange that some of her faculty did not take attendance and a couple of students came to class late or not show up at all without any consequences at all. The participants needed additional help to sustain their energy and commitment. In the military, they found reasons to get motivated, if not for themselves, then for other around them. Rita felt that in a classroom, everyone was focused on himself or herself in a very selfish way. In the
military, they were taught to work together and accomplish similar goals collectively. Marcus was forced out of military due to injury and it was an unexpected transition for him. Anton is no longer on active duty and remains in reserve force. For Rita and Monica military is a part of their history. However, all of them shared their reasons to second-guess themselves while moving through the transition. Monica said,

“...Have I done the right thing by getting out of military. When I was struggling to find a job and nothing was happening. I had moved back in with my parents. Because I was in college, it made it easier to process the fact that I was in my 30’s living with parents.”

Anton spoke about his father and said that he still remember his father from early 1980’s when they had first moved to the United States. “He (father) would wake up in the morning, eat breakfast, work all day, come home to take a shower and eat dinner and head out again to school to learn English. From there he would go to his second job and work till midnight. ...Every time I got tired and annoyed about my challenges, I thought of him and everything became easy”.

Rita questioned her decision making during the first semester in college where she struggled in math. As a first generation student, she had always doubted her abilities to succeed in college and she had the option to remain in the military. However, she decided to get out because she didn’t want to deploy again and go away from her 15-month-old child. She understood the benefits of having a college degree and the possible increase in career opportunities for her. It kept her motivated while moving through her transition to high education. She said that she didn’t know anything about financial aid. These concepts were foreign for her as a first generation student. She found out about FAFSA during her first year in college. She thought about working and going part time to college to avoid debt.
Rita shared her concern regarding the lack of outreach to minority, immigrant and veteran students. She believed that students in her situation need the most support to be successful in higher education, however, the institution does not outreach. She felt comfortable asking for help and assistance and she got it from her institutions. She was concerned about other students that are rather shy and would not seek help easily. She felt that she fell behind due to her deployment to Iraq. She was also offered a scholarship but then lost it because she was deployed. She was disappointed with the lack of communication, and could not understand how her scholarship could be taken away. Furthermore, she had to move back with her family because as a student, she could not afford housing off campus, which was a challenge for her.

Anton said that he was scared, as he was moving through his transition to higher education. For every class he feels that there is a project that will finish his quest to earn a degree but every time it seems to work out. “Either I find someone to help me or connect with students to show me what I suppose to know… you know… it has been working out so far and I hope it continues.” He found it encouraging that the staff is helpful at his university. He shared his dissatisfaction with certain VA policies that were not clear regarding some of the benefits. He thought that he was eligible for certain financial benefits as a veteran towards his education, however, they denied his claim. He found it difficult to manage his new life as a student and the denial of financial benefits he was counting on.

Secondly, he believed that faculty did not know how to work with students with English being a second language. He said, “I knew the material but sometimes I had trouble expressing it in my writing and it effected my grades. I wish my teachers understood that.” He went on to say, “going through the transition in school was like having a first child. You don’t know how to take care of it, but you keep doing it everyday and eventually it becomes easier”.
Marcus had a difficult time *moving through* his transition because he was not eligible for financial aid. “There is no record of me being a citizen of this country. My birth certificate got lost in Columbia. I can’t believe I joined the Army and put myself at risk. My wife and son went through a lot because I was deployed; yet I can’t seem to have the attention of these people to fix my citizenship issue.” Because he wore the uniform, his citizenship status didn’t matter much early on. As a civilian, his citizenship status affected his financial aid, and possible job prospects when he finishes college.

Some of the participants made it clear that higher education system was foreign to them and initially they found it arduous to visit different offices for their questions. Most of them desired a one-stop center that may address all of their concerns. Marcus said that he felt like being “born again” and starting everything from scratch. Monica knew that she wanted to go to college and believed that she was more prepared to go to college after serving in the military. She felt that unlike other students she did not have to worry about how to pay for college. “I just go to my classes and study and not overwhelm myself with having a job as well to pay my bills. I have the GI Bill I can rely on”. All participants agreed that transitioning to higher education was complex and there was so much fear of failure. They felt that they could succeed in higher education because they had been through so many challenges in the military. They experienced racism and sexism and either witnessed or experienced bias towards their race or accents. They informed that they did not have to worry about such issues higher education. With some additional support these participants believed that could move through the transition.

**Moving Out.** Moving out can be seen as ending one series of transition and beginning to ask what comes next. Anton and Marcus believed that they are still “moving through” the transition. They have not fully found their comfort level as students. Rita and Monica are moving
out of their transition and looking at new challenges of graduations and employment prospects. Leaving familiar surroundings and people, as well as ways of functioning and interacting to which these participants had become accustomed, they experienced disequilibrium.

These participants quit their full time job (military), moved from their duty stations and returned to higher education. These are all examples of transitions in which these adult learners have mourned the loss of former goals, friends, and certain structures. Moving out of a transition required that these veterans begin to think about a life beyond their educational institution and start planning their next move, whether it’s a graduate education or employment. Rita and Monica seemed very concerned about that. They felt they had a better chance to employing military skills if they had entered the workforce soon after military service. While they value higher education, time away from workforce was considered a barrier. Monica said that there was a lot of anxiety about moving into a new transition of their life. These transitions disrupt old roles, relationships, assumptions; changes routines and new ones evolve. The participant felt that, grander the transition either good or bad, the more it will pervade their life. They all considered transitioning to higher education as one of the most prevalent transitions of their lives.

Overtime, the sharp awareness of graduation and new challenges and opportunities becomes one of the many transitions to come. Immigrant veterans and other adults continuously experience transitions. The participants reacted and experienced their transition differently. Transitions for Anton, Marcus, Rita, and Monica seem to have no end point; rather, their transition is a continuing process over time that includes phases of assimilation and continuous appraisal as they move in, through, and out of their transitions.

Higher Education: Coping Within an Institution of Higher Education Resources
In order to have a successful transition, the participants needed to rely on their available resources. This section attempts to understand the accessible resources of participants in the study. For example, some of the participants were concerned about providing and nourishing their families, dealing with healthcare issues for them due to injury from military service as well as concerned with providing healthcare for their families. Their need for resources was different than some of the other participants that were single, younger, and unconcerned with such issues. Every transition is unique and participants’ reaction to their transitions depended on the severity of the transition. Furthermore, the personal needs varied for participants on their individual ability to cope with their transition and manage the pressure of new beginnings.

In order to understand transition coping resources for participants in the study, this section is divided in four sets of variables. These variables can be regarded as potential assets and/or liabilities. These variables are identified as: Situation, Self, Support, and Strategies.

One of the participants did not perceive his transition a positive one because he was not ready to leave the military but was forced out due to injury. Therefore, he perceived some of his available resources as liabilities. This section of data analyzing examines their interrelationships and how each participant went about appraising his or her coping resources.

**Situation.** The participants in this study had voluntarily joined and withdrew from the armed forces. Anton and Marcus explained that they did not have much of a choice but to join the military because it seemed that there was nothing else available for them.

After leaving the military, GI bill made the decision easy for them to access higher education. Anton transitioned to higher education over the age of 40 while Marcus was 24. Anton became a U.S. citizen in 2007 while serving on active duty and Marcus is still
struggling to get his citizenship. Marcus believed that his citizenship status was a barrier in acquiring additional financial aid that was available to other veterans.

Both participants were not academically prepared for college. Anton struggled in writing classes because English is not his first language. Marcus was a little more comfortable in writing but struggled in Math. Their transition happened at different stages of their lives. Marcus was forced out of military due to an injury, thus, the transition was undesired but required, leading higher education to quickly become and unplanned event. Anton plans to remain as reservist and retire after 20 years of service.

All four participants shared their fears about the time once the decision was made to leave active duty and choosing on their next challenge and what it may look like. As first generation students, they knew that they could not rely on their family much for information, however, military does offer one week of training called TAP (Transition Assistance Program), where they attended career workshops, college fairs, and job fairs. They found the information to be very useful.

Monica, Anton, and Marcus felt that some of the experiences in the military such as violence, sexism, and racism had a psychological impact on their transition. Strong relationships usually emerge from serving in the military with fellow soldiers. Monica said,

“I knew it was time to say good bye but I didn’t realize how difficult it would be. But I was ready… this is why I joined in the first place to have some financial support for college and now I had it.”

Sarah believed that everyone has a personal way of being in the world and everyone may have a unique situation. Furthermore, everyone uses some sort of coping strategies to deal with their challenges. She felt that one of the ways to deal with financial concerns
of going to college was the military service. Anton and Marcus felt that it would be foolish not to take advantage of all the educational benefits. Marcus a father of 1 said “…I never did well in high school and I knew that I will have a rough time in college… but I didn’t want the money to waste. I had to give college a shot to be able to provide for my family… and I know that I made the right decision.”

The oldest participant in his 40’s and the youngest in his mid 20’s recognized that they didn’t have much in common with traditional age students but believed in the power of education and its impact on their lives. Rita talked about a role change in her life from making such a transition. They had to put aside their military culture because it is very different from a classroom. Discipline and duty; well-defined hierarchy; center on mission; hard work and high stress are a significant part of a military culture.

“…The regular students don’t even know what it means”, Monica argued. She went on to say, “we have a chain of command and we follow orders or lose our promotion. I had to look at my grades the same way.”

These participants had heavy demands on their work schedule with astronomical stress. Anton had two children and Marcus had one as they were transitioning to higher education. They had housing concerns, along with healthcare access for themselves and their families and being able to provide for them knowing that the reason they had joined the military in the first place because they did not believe that they belonged in college. All participants, however, considered this transition a positive one from all other pervious ones. It was a controlled transition in the sense that they chose to access higher education.
Self. The self refers to what each individual brings to the transition. It is part of assessing assets and liabilities of each individual. Each person is different and what others may see something as strength, other may consider it a weakness.

Monica, for example, considered it strength to be an adult learner. She said that she was lost as a young college student. It was important for her to go away, see the world, serve in the military and try to come back to college when she was ready. Rita felt the opposite. Rita believed that time away from education put her behind. Now it was a challenge being among young college students. She has trouble relating with them and finds it rather complex to work on group projects because “I have a different way of thinking now at 30 and as a mother with actual responsibilities… rather than some young 19 year old.”

Anton and Marcus also believed that their military experience was an asset. They believed that they would not be in college unless it was because of the military service. “There is no way I will be in college without this GI Bill,” said both men. Anton has two children and Marcus has one. Anton felt that he had to lead by example. “How can he expect his kids to go to college if he doesn’t go himself”… said Anton. While being deployed was not easy for these participants, it had given them a new perspective on life.

The female participants felt that their gender might have been a barrier in the military due to the treatment of females by some, but in an institution of higher education they feel appreciated for their service and they are the majority on most campuses in America. They do feel like a minority when it comes to race and their status as an adult learner. The effects of an individual’s racial and ethnic background on his/her ability to navigate transitions are probably mediated through other factors such as value orientation and cultural norms. Monica, as a Korean born, was adopted and raised with Irish parents. She has revealed that
she does not feel comfortable in Asian communities because she doesn’t feel like she is one of them.

Because Marcus was asked to leave the military due to an injury while serving active duty, his health was also a barrier while going through transition. Anton felt that another complication for him was the process of aging itself. It constituted a series of events that require adaptation on his part as his parents were getting older requiring more of his time. His children were beginning their teen years requiring him adhere to their needs as well.

Monica always knew that she wanted her degree but as a traditional 18 year old, she had a difficult time at a community college. She said that she lacked maturity at the time. Monica said, “How do you suppose to know what you want to study and what career do you want at that age. It was best that I go away for few years and give myself some time.” Marcus went as far to say that he is still not sure if college is for him. The only reason he felt that he was going to college was because of the financial benefits to him and his family for just going to school. He felt that he was going to college for the wrong reasons and now takes his experience in college one day at a time.

All participants shared a positive view of earning a college degree and agreed that optimism and believing in themselves was a key to any endeavor including transitions. Rita informed that for a long time she was pessimistic about math and she did not believe that she had the capabilities of going through and being successful. She had to rely on life experiences to get through the course. Anton struggled in writing after being away from school and was not sure if he could make the transition to higher education after taking the initial assessment in writing and math. Marcus said, “In a way, it was easy for me to make transition to higher education because the GI Bill would cover the cost of this experiment and
even if I don’t make it… I don’t owe college any money but if I can get through, a better career awaits for me… so it was a win win”.

One of participants stated that for any successful transition to occur, people must believe in themselves and rely on their strengths to overcome their weaknesses. While not every participant believed in their ability to have a successful transition, most felt that they had nothing to lose by “giving it a shot.” Rita was excited about how things turned out for her and said that she surprised herself with success she had in college. “I was not very successful in high school because I know now that I didn’t apply myself back then. That’s partly the benefit of being an older student. You know yourself a little better”.

It helps when individuals feel that they are in control of their destiny. Marcus appeared pessimistic about the future because he feels that he is not treated like an American by the government that is still holding his citizenship. But he felt at calm about higher education. He said that he recognizes that he will get what he puts in it. He said, “There are no surprises here… if you do the work, you can be successful.”

The participants that believed that their transition was a good one and remain optimistic seemed to move through it easily. These participants felt that they were in control of this transition and there effort will affect the outcome of a particular course of action. However, there were others that had a tougher time transitioning.

**Support.** Social support is a major key to overcoming stress and transitioning smoothly. Anton and Marcus are married with children and they spoke of their spouses being extremely supportive. Even though their supposes don’t have a college education, according to the participants, their spouses recognize the importance of a college degree. They also felt
supported by their children and one of them said, “Because now my children pull out their homework when I am doing mine and it is a good quality family time.”

Marcus does not have a good relationship with his mother and in fact, holds her responsible for many shortcomings in his life. He believes that she did not care for him, did not help him become a U.S. citizen, and did not care about his education. He also hoped that there was more support for students like him. He informed that he is aware of the tutoring center, the advising center, and the registrar’s office but he goes once a semester to choose his classes and he wishes that he did not have to ask. He believes that he has been independent for too long and sometimes finds it “embarrassing” to seek help. All participants shared their dissatisfaction with the lack of communication between the VA and their university.

Rita claimed that she did not even know that there was a veterans representative on campus. She remembers attending the student orientation before starting school and no such support was mentioned. She found out from another student that there was additional help available on campus for veterans transitioning to higher education. Now she uses the veterans’ office all the time and has a positive relationship with her veterans’ representative and other veterans. That has become her strongest support system. She does not have much support from her family and she had to find all the support she needed on college campus. “There is plenty on campus to help you but you have to want to and you have to ask for it,” says Rita. An outreach program for veterans would be very helpful. After having a child, she became an evening student. She felt that a lot of veteran friends were in college but were going through “night school” because of their jobs and family responsibilities and she felt that there did not seem to be any support available for students in evening programs.
Anton was not sure why his university did not have a veterans club. “There is a person in
financial aid office that processed my GI Bill but that’s it. There is no other communication
or support available for veterans.” He also showed a desire to start an adult learners group.
He believed that there are many like him that may feel lost or have the feeling that they do
not belong. Anton stated that having a strong support system could help them succeed. For
Anton, his teachers have been his biggest support system while he shared his dissatisfaction
with the tutoring center on campus. Even after being in the United States for nearly 30 years,
he shared his struggles with the English language and in courses that required a lot of
writing.

Monica felt that she had been a student for too long and military service interrupted her
education. She argued that may be there was too much support available. It is good to have
veterans’ services on the campus but not everyone needs all the support. They need to
identify which veterans need the support and bring that support to their doorsteps. She had a
negative experience with a couple of her faculty telling her “you are not going to make it”…
“Well I am making it”, she said. She felt that teaching should be more than about delivering
information. It should also be about being supportive to students especially when they are not
coming from an average background.

**Strategies.** This section discusses different strategies participants applied to cope with
their transition. Married participants stated that discussing their challenges with their spouses
helped. They were going to college to take advantage of the VA educational benefits but also
to have a chance at better employment and career advancements for the future. Anton and
Marcus believed that going to school affected their wives because they needed time to study
and prepare for exams and sometimes they were unable to spend time with their families.
Their spouses had to adjust their jobs to accommodate participants so they could focus on education.

Most participants believed that they had to remain optimistic especially for the first couple of years. Anton said that after being away from school for 20 years “nothing came easy”. Sometimes, he doubted himself and felt that he should quit to make rooms for others that may take advantage of these resources. He said, “but I remain positive”. It takes him longer to process information. Because these participants have been through multiple transitions in life, they understand the complexities of new environments, and recognize that end result is definitely worth it.

The participants talked about being self-reliant and taking initiative. Monica described it as “knowing herself”. She informed that she knew which courses would be tough for her before even signing up for them. She would sign up for help in advance and did not wait till the last minute to prepare for an exam or a test. She said that it was a very different skill and sometimes even discouraged in the military. In the military you are expected to follow direction and do not ask too many questions. She said, “in college you are in charge, you are the captain of the ship and you can take it anywhere you want it”.

Rita agreed that going over the syllabus in advance and seeking help earlier on was the strategy that worked for her. She said, “If you wait for it to come to you, it might be too late. You just have to go for it and be prepared early”. Anton and Marcus gave similar responses and seeking help early and taking the initiative was one of the lessons they believed they had learned early on.

Another strategy these participants utilized is considered exercising potency. The concept of knowing that they don’t control everything and there are some things in life they just have
to work around. For example, some of the participants believed that certain faculty would not change their teaching style. Anton said, “this teacher told me to take an “F” and retake the course with someone else. Anton claimed to do his best but obviously he was failing to fulfill requirements of a writing teacher. He had to drop the course and retake it with another teacher.

Marcus stopped asking his mother for citizenship help and decided to apply for himself. His citizenship status is a barrier in accessing certain types of financial aid and he could no longer wait for his mother to go with him and get all the paperwork squared away. Rita was unable to continue with day school with the birth of her child and continued her degree through an evening program instead. She believed that evening school lacked many aspects of support that was available to day students but she felt that she did not have a choice on the matter.

Monica and Rita felt that they had to be over-achievers. Military is a “man’s world” according to the female participants of the study and had seen many challenges. Rita said, “We had to show the boys that we were just as competent, so we would work harder and longer hours sometimes than the boys. I had to bring the same attitude to classroom”. Even though all participants agreed that serving the military was the hardest thing they had ever done. However, it took them a while to get used to relaxed environments such as higher education.

Anton said that military to go to college is very different and he felt that if he can make it in the military, then he could make it in college. They just had to learn to overcome hesitation that was driven by their high school experiences.
Another strategy that helped these participants was to look for a peer mentor. Another veteran, adult learner, or someone with a similar background that was academically stronger than they were. Participants agreed that students that are doing well in classes are very easy to spot. Their body language, punctuality, and their ability to ask the right questions speak to how well they are doing in these classes. Rita shared her ability to make friends in class to maximize her learning experience. She was able to share her notes with fellow classmates to ensure she had written down the important materials. Most of the participants felt comfortable enough to outreach and connect with other students as needed.

**Key Findings**

Chapter Four presents three themes that emerged from this study. The research question guiding the interview was: What are the transitional challenges of immigrant veterans? These themes represent the participants’ struggles as they transitioned to higher education. The themes emerged from the semi-structured interviews and were supported by the participants’ statements. The first theme spoke to what the transition was and it meant to each individual participant. The second theme highlighted the transitional process of participants’ moving in, moving through, and moving out of transition. The final theme illustrates the Coping Resources for participants.

The essential finding of this study informs that most immigrant veterans come to the United States because of their parents or other adults in their lives. Also, many immigrants join the military as non-U.S. citizens. Often, immigrant veterans are first generation and low-income students. They earn college credits in the military; making them transfer students by the time they enroll in college, as well as adult learners. They are also more likely to enroll through a continuing education or an evening program due to their family and employment commitment during the day.
Many of these students are not college ready or had a poor experience in high school and some even dropped out, which is the reason they had joined the military in the first place. There also seems to be a correlation between participants that are forced out of military due to injury or other reasons and the difficulties they face during transitions. Others that planned their exit from military service and chose to enroll in higher education systems seem to fair much better.

The access to the G I Bill makes it possible for them to transition to higher education. While the enrollment numbers are encouraging, these students carry the burden of raising children, providing for families often as single parents, working, and more. Evening programs are often attractive due to their day commitments with their families and work and most have complained about the lack of institutional resources for evening students.

For these participants, military culture remains male dominant and female participants either witnessed or experienced sexism. All participants claimed to witness bias, and racism against minorities, immigrants and other marginalized group that affects them today. Such experiences remain part of the transitional process and had made them extra sensitive as they transitioned to higher education.

The data pointed out that there is a critical need to ensure that these students are informed about all of the available resources. Most of the participants in this study informed that they did not know that certain services existed for them and they heard about them from other students. The study concluded that the most valuable information about available resources did not come to them from their assigned advisors.

All participants valued their experience in the military and they felt that because of military service they were more prepared to meet the challenges of higher education. The last
finding that may require additional research is the experiences of immigrant female veterans. The females’ experiences appear to be very different from their male counterparts.

They shared their dissatisfaction about female treatment in the military and its impact on their ability to trust anyone even long after transitioning out of military. Such information is beyond the scope of this study but there is an opportunity to understand such challenges so the institutions can be better prepared to serve this cohort. Their birth country, its culture, norms and traditions are deeply rooted and it affects their approach in dealing with such challenges including ignoring or not reporting cases of harassments or accepting it as a “military culture”. Each participant had to analyze whether the biological and physiological changes that occurred over time were an asset or a liability to his or her transition. They also needed to understand their personal psychological resources. This includes the level of maturity, optimism, self-efficacy, and commitments and values.

This chapter is the prelude to the fifth and final chapter, which reviews the findings that address the driving question of this study. The final chapter, Chapter 5, discusses potential policy and practice changes that this study uncovers and calls for more research.

**Chapter 5: Discussion and Implications for Practice**

The purpose of this study was to understand the transitional experiences of immigrant veterans in higher education. Qualitative methods were used in order to identify the perceived barriers of migration, culture, language, and military life style and to determine how immigrant veterans have overcome those obstacles to cope with transition in higher education. The findings from the study are discussed as they relate to the research question. Additionally, the implications for practice and policy and further research are discussed.
Four recent college students were interviewed about their transitional experiences in higher education. These individuals were not born in the United States and migrated to the United States at a young age. They also served the country honorably. The findings from these interviews helped highlight how immigrant veterans experienced their transitions in higher education. The research question that guided this study was:

1.) What are the experiences of immigrant veterans transitioning to higher education?

Transition Theory was used as a theoretical framework to better understand the transitional experiences of these immigrant veterans. This theoretical framework was ideal for the study because it allows one to explore, understand, and cope with what is happening in the participants’ lives (Schlossberg, 1995). The examining of theoretical framework is critical in Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to clarify views and assumptions about transitional challenges of participants in the study. The exploration of transitional experiences of immigrant veterans through the lens of transition theory allows illuminating and contextualizing the ordinary and extraordinary process individual challenges of each participant.

Three themes emerged from data collection. The themes were: 1) Pre-Higher Education: Examining Military Service; 2) Higher Education: Beginning the Process, and 3) Higher Education: Coping Within an Institution of Higher Education Resources. These themes relied on participants’ own words as well as the researcher’s interpretations about participants’ experiences. These themes were divided into subthemes to understand how each individual participant viewed his or her transition, the way they processed their challenges, and what kind of resources were available to each participant.

Discussion
Schlossberg’s theory of transition (Goodman, et al., 2006) provided the theoretical framework for the study. Schlossberg et al, (1995) defined transition as any event, or non-event, that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles. The transition process is explained in three phases: “moving in”, “moving through”, and “moving out”. This model also describes transition events in participants’ lives as anticipated, unanticipated, or non-events. Immigrant veterans’ transition to higher education could be composed in all three types, depending on their circumstances.

The participants in this study seemed to be at different phases of their transitions. Some were “moving in”, others “moving through”, and still others “moving out” of their transition in higher education and looking for new transitions such as jobs and or graduate education. Furthermore, the theoretical framework also confirmed that participants experienced other transitions in the midst of transitioning to higher education. Some were taking on additional responsibilities of growing families, while others grieving the loss of loved ones.

**Pre-Higher Education:** Baum & Flores (2011) informed that lack of familiarity with the U.S. postsecondary education system is a challenge for immigrant students and especially those who do not attend U.S. high schools and whose parents are not proficient in English. The study confirmed that immigrant veterans are often confused and in need of assistance when transitioning in higher education.

The study’s theme of pre-higher education helped illuminate specific personal and demographic characteristics, socioeconomic status, gender, age, health, and state of life. Vega (2010) informed that two-thirds of immigrant students are also first generation and low income. The current study established that all participants were first generation and low income. Therefore, immigrant students experience difficulty preparing academically and socially for
college, including college access, student engagement, and personal development. They can often identify the issues that trouble them. Even though the participants come from various backgrounds and family structures, they showed a similar sense of pride for their cultures, countries of birth and their drive for success.

The study also confirmed the findings of Sander (2012) that participants’ minority status breeds stereotypes about why they enlisted, their political or ideological beliefs, and what they did while in uniform. The participants did share dissatisfactions on occasions their loyalty and/or reason for enlistment in the military was questioned. The study further established from transition theory and literature review that the participants are “burned out” and often feel discriminated against as well as pressured and overwhelmed when changing jobs, moving back home, and carrying the stress of new beginnings.

Stormquist (2012) informed that families play a crucial role as a support network as students prepare for college. Since immigrant students may not be able to request help from their families, they lack their resources and must look for alternative forms of support. The study of immigrant veterans confirmed the observation compelling the institutions to assume the burden and responsibilities of their successful transition. The subthemes of pre-higher education also indicated that immigrant veterans lacked a sense of direction, experienced racism and sexism, and did not possess pupil skills.

Higher Education: Beginning the Process. The work of Ellis & Almgren (2009) had demonstrated that the integration of immigrants into American life had been a multigenerational process. The college campuses witnessed racial heterogeneity after the civil rights movement of the 1960s and dramatic increase in immigration in the number of Latino and Asian second generation students (Ewing, 2012). The literature confirmed that immigrant veterans felt
encouraged by diversity initiatives on campuses including different student clubs to access support.

Similar to Barnes & Harvey’s (2000) findings of Vietnam War veterans lacking pride in their military service, some participants had negative feelings towards their experiences especially the ones that are yet to be recognized as U.S. citizens. The study indicated that veterans with positive military experiences were optimistic about their transition. Others had difficulties trusting civilians after leaving the military. They felt that there was a negative perception of veterans from the Vietnam era and the negative ways media can portray military service during war. Trusting their environment was highly discouraged when they were deployed and they had to transition out of such mentality after leaving the military.

The study also confirmed the findings of Elliott, Gonzalez, & Larsen (2011) that the lengthy and multiple deployments combined with arduous combat conditions comprise a legacy of stress exposure with far-reaching effects on student veterans’ daily lives. However, not all veterans experience combat or lengthy deployments and the difference in their experiences may require different healings and recuperations. Most of the participants lacked high expectations of themselves and did not believe in their ability to be successful in college.

While this could be explained as a natural reaction because of their life situation, it would be beneficial to these veterans if institutions of higher education had high expectations of these students. Furthermore, these institutions could also provide this cohort with the resources that will allow them to meet these expectations with success.

**Higher Education: Coping within the Institution.** The literature examined placed a great emphasis on lack of familiarity with the U.S. postsecondary education system. It is a
challenge for immigrant students and especially those who do not attend U.S. high schools and whose parents are not proficient in English.

Radford (2009) informed that veterans returning to civilian life are often challenged by the adjustment in moving from a command and control environment to the openness of a college campus. The current study confirmed that veterans feel abandoned and often lonely in such uninhibited environment. Furthermore, they often feel at odds with younger classmates due to their experiences and their age.

The current study also contradicted the findings of Brown, & Gross (2011) that the veteran students are often placed at the lowest academic level, even when their training and experience should place them at a much higher level. Brown, & Gross (2011) maintained that the lack of academic challenge and seemingly irrelevant curricular requirements are a significant deterrent for military students, and often a major factor in noncompletion. While this may represent common veterans transitioning to higher education, however, immigrant veterans in the study were mostly overwhelmed due to the lack of academic preparedness, and struggled in writing, science, and mathematics.

The study confirmed that in lieu of parental support, students turned to college counselors, teachers, and their student peers to help them navigate through the system. Harper & Quaye (2009) had found that lower level aspirations for college were a barrier for immigrant students. The current study, however, contradicted such assertions as the participants shared high ambitions and goals for college for themselves and their children.

The study also suggested that immigrants that serve in the military are more likely to go to college. The impact of the GI Bill seemed to have the similar effects on indigenous and immigrants alike. Furthermore, the study confirmed the findings of Harper & Quaye (2009) that
lack of financial aid information and awards were key barriers to student engagement as most participants lacked knowledge and skills needed to obtain educational resources, advice, and scholarships.

Most participants endorsed an additional “student orientation” for non-traditional students including veterans, adult learners, immigrants, commuters, and part time students. The study documented and recognized the responsibilities of participants outside the classroom and it may be beneficial to have students discuss and understand the scope of challenges as a first generation, low income, adult learner, single parent and ESOL student.

**Implications for Practice**

The findings from this study may provide practitioners with insight into how immigrant veterans experience higher education. The themes that emerged from the study may provide a foundation for further research. The study suggests that higher education administrators, faculty, and staff could be proactive in their efforts to reach out to veterans on their campuses.

Discussion with participants indicated a desire on their part for college staff to be more aware of concerns of immigrant veterans. They also recognized the value of having staff with diverse backgrounds with prior military service. Furthermore, participants acknowledged that most college employees might not understand the complexities of applying for citizenship and not having access to equal benefits and rights after wearing the uniform and being deployed in harms way.

The study indicated the importance of the sacrifices of spouses when students were serving in the military and the important role the families play in their lives. As such, college could seek ways to provide opportunities for family members to get involved in academic life. The study confirmed that family involvement could have a major impact on easing the transition
of immigrant veterans. As such, orientation could focus on additional resources within and outside of the institution to support student learning. Additionally, including the family members of these veterans to such orientation programs may be useful.

The current study also indicated that institutions could identify veterans and ask them to get involved on campus, or have veterans take on the leadership roles in student clubs and student government. The study held that leadership experience from the military service could help many young students, yet participants informed the researcher that they have not been contacted or communicated to get involved. Opportunities could be made available for these veterans to engage with traditional students to share appropriate stories to motivate other students. The study informed that some veterans may not like to share their stories, however, most participants enjoyed sharing their journey and staff and administrators could be encouraged in asking these students to engage in these discussions.

Some of the participants were not eligible for certain financial aid because they were not U.S. citizens. College faculty and staff could seek ways of changing this policy to make financial aid available equally to all veterans regardless of their citizenship status. Opportunities could be created for immigrant veterans to actively lobby local, state, and national legislators in order to ensure that their voices are heard. Faculty and staff may encourage such students to raise issues and increase awareness of challenges that have troubled them during their transition.

The study indicated that participants had a desire to become role models and serve as peer mentors to new veterans joining the institution. Due to their leadership experience in the military, there is an opportunity for higher education institutions to invest in creating veterans leaders on campus as peer mentors. It could provide an opportunity for them to take care of each other. The study indicated that the participants did not expect the government alone to address
their concerns and believed in self-reliance. Therefore, there is an opportunity to allow veteran students to support each other as well as help them develop camaraderie and fellowship in the college environment.

The study also indicated that many of the participants’ institutions were not celebrating or recognizing Veterans Day. Some were not aware of any ceremony or event that was held in celebration of Veterans Day. Such events are an opportunity to commemorate and observe the sacrifice of many veterans. Similar consideration can be given to diversity events, and other cultural events that celebrate the various backgrounds and societies of all students, including veterans.

Important days such as Cinco de Mayo, festival of colors (Indian holi celebration), or the month of Ramadan could help create an inclusive environment for immigrants, veterans and students from different cultures backgrounds. Such events may be student driven to ensure that collaboration and the opportunity to learn takes place among students. Support to immigrant veterans can be shown in many ways. Some of the participants also argued that institutions should consider giving a scholarship to veterans or offer some sort of priority of service on campus. Their military service could also be considered when applying for work-study or other student positions on campus.

Collaborating with other local community colleges and universities to invite other immigrant veteran students for fellowship and camaraderie is also recommended. The current study suggests that the participants could work together to increase awareness about the experiences of immigrant veterans. The study informed that many universities have not taken the initiative in getting veterans together to adhering to their concerns.
While there are plenty of nationally recognized student veterans advocacy groups such as Student Veterans of America (SVA) and Veterans Students Organization (VSO), this study did not indicate that any of these groups are working or advocating on behalf of immigrant veterans specifically, and trying to address their concerns. There are a few groups that are advocating for immigration reform using immigrant veterans as poster children to advertise and promote pro-immigrant policies. However, there is no evidence that the VA, veterans’ organizations, local veterans representatives, and higher education institutions communicate, or collaborate on the issues of immigrant veterans.

An outcome of this study could be creation of a national organization that advocates on behalf of immigrant veterans in higher education. Such organization can be concerned with creating opportunities for immigrant veterans to transition smoothly and possibly offer scholarship opportunities to students that are ineligible for financial aid due to their residency or citizenship status. Such organization may work with other veterans advocacy groups to increase awareness of the challenges and sacrifices of immigrant veterans and bring to light its contributions to America today.

Finally, the study informed that the first two or three semesters were the most challenging as they “transition in” higher education. Surveys and interviews may be conducted to find out what is lacking in terms of academic preparedness and from their personal support systems in terms of financial and emotional. The survey responses can serve to inform challenges of each immigrant veteran and how they may cope with their transition, thus leading the institutions to create an inclusive and a welcome environment for immigrant veterans.

**Self-advocacy.** The study concluded that immigrant veterans needed assistance and guidance to begin to process of self-advocacy. This is especially important in context of the
above recommendations because students often found themselves at the mercy of policies and practices for which they have had no input. These policies and practices have been constantly changing since 9/11. Today, as veterans continue to return, the VA and higher education systems have seen a flux and a growth in veterans on campus, thus constantly changing and/or creating new rules to accommodate veterans. Such constant changes have created additional challenges for participants in this study due to their social challenges, as first generation and low-income status, including frustrations with accessing their military benefits including such as educational and healthcare benefits. One way in which they can advocate for themselves is by questioning the policies and practices that negatively influence their experiences. It is imperative that institutions encourage such dialogue and conversations on campus.

For example, the study indicated that many student veterans were not given a space or a center for camaraderie and fellowship with other veterans. While there was a process to request such space, participants felt that their institution and student council had made it difficult for them. Therefore, exposition and encouragement is needed for immigrant veterans in utilization of available resources.

Another example is the experience of being subjected to ineffective teaching strategies by many of the teachers. Valverde & Catenell (1998) informed that English proficiency is a significant barrier in moving into post secondary education for individuals that migrate to the United States in their teen years. Sander (2012) also concluded that veterans often feel at odds with younger classmates because the maturity gap can lead to awkward or tense exchanges in classrooms. Because English is not the primary language for most of the participants and they are much older than most college students, the pedagogy needed investigation to ensure that students were given the opportunity to learn.
Such conversations may take place at department meetings though, the participants recognized the importance self-advocacy. By advocating for themselves, they not only show that they are aware of their rights and responsibilities as students, but they also hold faculty and staff partially responsible for the education that they receive. In addition to self-advocacy, immigrant veterans that are in the process of “moving out” of their transition process need to take on a leadership role as they had done in the military. They felt the responsibility to look after and take care of other veterans coming behind them and provide mentorship to guide and provide support. As such, they may make an effort to actively engage their peers and encourage them to utilize institutional resources and provide feedback for improvements.

Second, it would be helpful, in terms of self-advocacy, if these veterans begin to form positive relationships with those who can provide them with a positive network of academic, social, and emotional support. A positive relationship has the ability to improve their achievement, behavior, and overall academic experience. Students that are unyielding and committed to their education are often visible due to their behavior in class and the type of questions they ask in classrooms.

Similarly, immigrant veterans could be encouraged to form positive relationships with their faculty as well as other school staff. Most faculties want to help and accommodate their students. The faculty members with prior military service may have the best understanding of challenges for participants in this study. Veterans should be encouraged to ask about the experiences and background of their faculty members and share their personal struggles.

**Recommendations**

This study sheds new light on the extent to which cultural differences, military service, institutional policy and a new educational environment affects how immigrant veterans process
and cope with their transition. The study shows that these factors are important and they all contribute to the possible successful transition of these individuals. The findings from this study indicate that immigrant veterans need additional support while transitioning in higher education. The study indicated that participants had experienced poverty as most of them recalled their parents working 2 or 3 jobs with minimum ability to speak the English language. They seem to understand what is like to work for low wages but not giving up with a hope that they will do better than their parents and their kids will do better than they have done. Serving in the military and then transitioning to higher education is one of the ways they can fulfill their dreams.

The essential finding of this study stresses the need to provide immigrant veterans with role models that have successfully “moved in, moved through, and moved out” of transition in higher education. As first generation students, they are unable to find people with college degrees in their families and look to their university for such prototypes for influence, inspiration, and encouragement. These role models or peer mentors should be introduced early on for consistent and constant advice and fellowship.

This study also found that these participants did not feel prepared for college level math, science and writing. Most had scored low on their assessment tests as well. One of the main reasons for lack of preparedness for college is the time served in the military while away from classroom environments. Secondly, lack of academic preparedness was one of their primary reasons to join the military in the first place. Their ability to perform inadequately, therefore, seems to relate with their high school experience than with military service. The challenges of immigrants in high school are beyond the scope of this study and need investigated.

The findings from this study point to a number of specific activities that may be helpful to prepare immigrant veterans to transition in higher education. In order to change the bias for
military service, veterans’ challenges, marginalization of immigrant students, here are some of the steps the institutions may undertake:

1. Provide information on diversity, disability, accessibility, and veterans in higher education to make faculty and staff aware of the nature of immigrant veterans’ (i.e. first generation, low income, adult learner, transfer, and often part time students) learning needs. Furthermore, provide these students with targeted orientation programs that will offer them hope, peer mentors, and additional resources to be successful.

2. Provide opportunities for academic advisors, tutors, and other staff in working with immigrant veteran students and assist them in understanding the transition process of, “moving in, moving through, and moving out” transition.

3. Learn about the veterans’ educational and other benefits, and increase communication with other veterans advocacy groups and organizations to ensure the consistency in providing services.

4. Provide support for veterans clubs on campus. Unlike other clubs such as diversity clubs, gay straight clubs, and/or women rights, participants often do not want to talk about personal experiences in the military or draw attention to their service and their challenges moving forward. Higher education institutions would need to be creative in encouragement of getting veteran students to connect for support and inspiration.

5. Establish policies on campus that give faculty the time and resources needed to develop instructional methods that include more hands-on activities, including creative ways to teach math and writing courses.
It is important to note that equity improvement is not the sole responsibility of faculty members. There is a great deal that can be done by administrators and legislators to ensure that inclusive pedagogy becomes integrated into the teaching to support immigrant veterans. The findings from this study help to highlight several important implications for state and federal policy makers. Institutional, state, and federal emphasis could be placed on two levels.

Administrators and legislators could develop new ways of thinking about inclusion. This new perspective on inclusion has multiple meanings that apply to this issue. First, create a friendly environment for immigrant veterans by hosting cultural events possibly with the support of the Office of International Education. Secondly, be creative in informing the institutional community about veterans’ issues in higher education and overcoming the bias. Policy makers should become more sensitive, cognizant, and knowledgeable about the existence of immigrant veterans the importance of inclusive learning styles.

Second, initiatives and budget resources that directly enhances the ability to persist in higher education. Immigrant veterans should have access to financial aid like any other individual applying to college. At the institutional level, colleges could recruit and hire qualified immigrants and veterans to support these students. These policies would begin to set an institutional tone that clearly recognizes the importance of supporting immigrant veterans.

**Limitations and implications for further research.** The topic of immigrant veterans transitioning in higher education has not been thoroughly researched. This study is one small step, and only an early step, in closing the research gap. This study focused on the experiences of immigrant veterans who have followed a journey that is not typical of university students across America. Their discussions and insights can help focus future research. Transition of female immigrant veterans needs to be investigated separately as this study informed that men and
women experience transition differently. The male participants in this study had a difficult time asking for help and utilizing their support systems. The female participants appeared to discuss their challenges with much ease. They were also able to locate support systems.

A quantitative study would be beneficial. This study could address factors such as the numbers for immigrant veterans serving in the military and transitioning to higher education in the United States. Survey could determine why they serve in the military, their reasons for leaving military service and their transition to higher education and, some of the challenges they face to access their benefits, citizeships, and how to cope with transitional challenges. In order to understand and provide targeted support to each individual immigrant veteran, there first must be some sense of the actual numbers.

Once the baseline study is accomplished, and then professionals in the field can take on the hard questions about creating an understanding of challenges for veterans in education with different cultures, languages, religions, gender biases, and gender preferences. For example, what are the cultural and linguistics barrier of immigrant veterans transitioning in higher education? How do female veterans experience transition in higher education? What are the experiences of Muslims in the military and its impact on their transition in higher education? What are the experiences of minority veterans and other marginalized groups in higher education?

It is understood from this study that if immigrants, females, minorities, or other marginalized groups feel that they must transition out of military and access higher education becomes of their experiences in the military, then it is not a transition of choice but a transition of necessity. Such transitions are difficult to cope with.
A second important area of study needs to be considered. Is there some underlying socio-economic bias, image, or stigma or are there social class issues that come with becoming a veteran? Does this stigma or image impact transitions and how veteran students experience it and cope with it?

This thematic qualitative analysis was conducted as a very small, focused, research project. Conducting this study required close monitoring of three ethical considerations: respect for veterans and their culture, experiences, participant anonymity, and care for participants’ well being as a result of recounting their experiences. The participants were sharing personal information about private and sensitive periods of their lives. They were informed that every precaution would be taken to protect their identity. Expanded research involving a larger number of participants that accurately represent a cross-section of armed forces would give these results more validity, veracity, and reliability.

Conclusions

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate how immigrant veterans experience transition in higher education. This study is important and unique because there is no evidence of such study conducted in the past. The study informs how immigrant veterans process transition and cope with new environments. Furthermore, study informs different phases the participants are at in their transition. The study demonstrates that many non-U.S citizens wear the uniform and serve the country honorably. They share their stories, struggles, challenges, and opportunities their military service has made available to them. The study highlights the experiences of immigrant veterans, males and females and how sometimes they feel forgotten as military service of immigrants and non-U.S. citizens is rarely discussed on campuses.
The study reveals resilience of these warriors by showcasing their transitions through life. They discuss their reasons for serving in the military, its effects on their families, and how they try to acclimate after deploying overseas. While many Americans may not understand the scope of their challenges, this study offers a unique look at the journey of four immigrant veterans and offers an opportunity to empathize with these brave individuals.

The knowledge gained from the study could be used to spur more research into the importance of understanding their transitional challenges and provide resources for them to successfully transition out. The participants in the study faced similar challenges of leaving military lives behind, moving back home, finding jobs and working to support families while trying to educate themselves and overcoming lack of preparedness for college. The Coping Resources Model, based on work by Schlossberg et al (1995), gives a visual representation of these veterans’ paths to overcome perceived obstacles to carry on a goal of earning a college degree.

This same model could be applied to see whether there are indeed more statistically significant relationships beyond the model that can help educators, policy makers, the media and the populace understand the need to be more inclusive in all fields. The model is not static. Future researchers might be able to use this model as a stepping-stone to a better understanding of the transitional challenges of other populations.

The findings, from which the model is derived, suggest that these perceived barriers are greatly diminished if proper support is available at home or educational institutions. The research, however, showed that lacking support at home was partially the reason for joining the military service. Such finding increases institutional responsibilities to support veterans. Further, role models/mentors can play a crucial role in becoming the support system, these students need.
The findings from this study are merely a first step in explaining how immigrant veterans are experiencing transition and how to better integrate them in student body by providing equitable representation among students through student clubs. Major policy changes could be embraced to create new early educational practices. Improved career counseling practices could be developed to target this cohort and ensure support in this global economy.

United States remains a popular destination for immigrants and it has been a nation of immigrants for decades. There is a long history of immigrants, minorities, and other marginalized groups who serve in the military for economic upward mobility and to gain legitimacy as a contributing member of the society. The institutions of higher education have a responsibility to these veterans that serve the country honorably. If the United States wants to continue to lead the world in all that is good, then it needs to improve higher education system to ensure that it works for all, including the men and women of the armed forces and others who come from multicultural backgrounds.
NOTIFICATION OF IRB ACTION

Date: June 4, 2013
IRB #: CPS13-05-12

Principal Investigator(s): Joseph McNabb
Ammad Sheikh

Department: Doctor of Education Program
College of Professional Studies

Address: 20 Belvidere
Northeastern University

Title of Project: A Phenomenological Study of Immigrant Veterans and Their Transition to Higher Education

Participating Sites: N/A

DHHS Review Category: Expedited #6, #7

Informed Consents: One (1) signed consent form

Monitoring Interval: 12 months

APPROVAL EXPIRATION DATE: JUNE 3, 2014

Investigator’s Responsibilities:
1. The informed consent form bearing the IRB approval stamp must be used when recruiting participants into the study.
2. The investigator must notify IRB immediately of unexpected adverse reactions, or new information that may alter our perception of the benefit-risk ratio.
3. Study procedures and files are subject to audit any time.
4. Any modifications of the protocol or the informed consent as the study progresses must be reviewed and approved by this committee prior to being instituted.
5. Continuing Review Approval for the proposal should be requested at least one month prior to the expiration date above.
6. This approval applies to the protection of human subjects only. It does not apply to any other university approvals that may be necessary.

C. Randall Colvin, Ph.D., Chair
Northeastern University Institutional Review Board

Nancy C. Regina, Director
Human Subject Research Protection
Appendix A

My Fellow Veteran,

Thank you for your service! My name is Ammad Sheikh. I am a doctoral student at Northeastern University. I am conducting a research study about veterans that were not born in the United States. To participate, you must be a veteran who was not born in this country, and you must be a college student. I want to hear your story!

The purpose of this research is to explore the transitional challenges of immigrant veterans to higher education. Findings from this study may have implications on how to better support our veterans, especially minority and immigrant veterans. The researcher will take steps to ensure that any information that could expose your identity will be kept confidential. Contact me to discuss your participation.

In case you are wondering, I served in the military from 1998-2002 and was not born here either. You may be surprised to know that our military has a lot of immigrants. So, if you don't meet the criteria, take a look at your military buddies, double check your Facebook, and tell immigrant veterans to contact me. You can also find me on my web page at my employer, Fitchburg State University: http://www.fitchburgstate.edu/campus-life/student-services/expanding-horizons/meet-the-ehp-staff/

Thank you,

Ammad Sheikh
Northeastern University, College of Professional Studies, Department of Education

Investigators: Dr. Joseph McNabb, Principal Investigator, Ammad Sheikh, Graduate Student

Title of Project: A Phenomenological Study of the Transitional Challenges of Immigrant Veterans to Higher Education

Request for Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Dear potential participant,

I am inviting you to take part in a research study. This form will tell you about the study, but the researchers will explain it to you first. You may ask me any questions that you have. When you are ready to make a decision, you may tell me if you want to participate or not. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. If you decide to participate, I will ask you to sign this statement and will give you a copy to keep.

To participate in this study you must identify as a immigrant who was not born in the United States, and served active duty after 9/11. The purpose of this research is to explore your path to higher education to better understand the transitional challenges of higher education.

If you decide to take part in this study, I will ask you to participate in one 90-minute semi-constructed interview, and participate in additional correspondence that will help to ensure the accuracy of my findings, and to protect your identity. Depending on your preference, you will be interviewed in your office, home, or at a time and place that is convenient for you. In addition, I may contact you by phone or email if I have any supplemental questions regarding your educational experience. I will record the interview and have the data transcribed. The goal of the interview is to explore in detail how you perceived your transitional experience to higher education. I expect these interviews will take place during Summer 2013.

The identity of the participants will be kept confidential, and I will take additional steps to ensure that your identity remains confidential. I will describe the places and the institutions where the
anonymity. I will use pseudonyms and numbers to aid anonymity in the data documentation, and destroy
the audiotapes three years after the study. In addition, I will also use validation techniques that will allow
you to remove any information that you feel may be harmful to your wellbeing.

In addition, it is very unlikely that you will suffer from psychological harm discussing your
transitional experiences. However, should you experience any emotional stress due to the content of the
questions asked, I will allow you to take a break from the interview upon your request to do so. If needed,
I will then ask a different question to move the discussion in a new direction. If you choose to leave the
study due to emotional distress you are encourage to seek help from the Mobile Crisis: TN Dept of
Mental Health Center at 1-855-CRISIS-1 or (1-855-274-7471).

There will be no direct benefit to you for taking part in the study. However, the information
learned from this study may help policymakers, school personnel, and educational researchers understand
issues related to immigrant veterans and their academic experience. Your part in this study will be
confidential. Only the researchers on this study will see the information about you. No reports or
publications will use information that can identify you in any way.

To ensure that the data provided by you remain safe and confidential, audio tape and transcripts
from these tapes will be assigned an number, and the transcripts of the interview will be stored on a
removable jump drive. This information, along with the audio recordings, will be placed in a locked safe,
located in the researchers’ office. In addition, the school names will be assigned a pseudonym, and the
researchers will not discuss the interviewing data with anyone. In rare instances, authorized people may
request to see research information about you and other people in this study. This is done only to be sure
that the research is done properly. I would only permit people who are authorized by organizations such
as Northeastern University to see this information.

No compensation will be provided for participation in this study. No special arrangements will be
made for compensation or payment for treatment solely because of your participation in this research.
want to. Even if you begin the study, you may quit at any time. If you do not participate or if you decide to quit, you will not lose any rights, benefits, or services that you would otherwise have as a student or employee of the university.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns about participating in this research. You may contact me at sheikh.a@husly.neu.edu or (508) 274-9589. You can also contact Dr. Joseph McNabb, the Principal Investigator at (617) 373-6602 or j.mcnabb@neu.edu. If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: irb@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

Please indicate your consent by signing below.

______________________________  __________________________
Signature of person agreeing to take part  Date

______________________________
Printed name of person above

______________________________  __________________________
Signature of person who explained the study to participant above and obtained consent  Date

______________________________
Printed name of person above
Appendix B

Interview Consent Form

1. I agree to be interviewed for the purposes of the research.
2. The purpose and nature of the interview has been explained to me, and I have read the assignment and/o
   information sheet as provided by the researcher.
3. I agree that the interview may be electronically recorded.
4. Any questions that I asked about the purpose and nature of the interview and research have been answere
   to my satisfaction.
5. I agree that my name may be used for the purposes of the research only and not for publication.

Name of interviewee

Signature of interviewee

Date

6. I have explained the project and the implications of being interviewed to the interviewee and I believe th
   the consent is informed and that he/she understands the implications of participation.

Name of interviewer

Signature of interviewer

Date
Appendix C
Demographic Information

Please circle the information that best describes you.

1. Race: Black     White     Latino     Asian     Biracial     Other_________

2. Age: 21-25  26-30  31-35  36-up

3. Did you serve during Afghanistan/Iraq conflict?   Yes   No

4. Are you a disabled Veteran?                Yes   No

5. Were you born in the United States?     Yes   No

6. Are you a U.S citizen?     Yes   No

7. Are you currently enrolled in a degree program?  Yes   No  If yes, where________

8. What is country of birth?  ____________________

9. Why did you join the military, and which branch?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

10. Why did you choose higher education?

______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

11. What is your current status at your institution? Circle all that apply

Full Time     Part Time     Resident     Commuter
First Generation     Low Income

12. Are you currently employed     Yes   NO

If yes, how many hours a week do you work? _________________
Confidentiality Agreement
Transcription Services

I, ____________________________, transcriptionist, agree to maintain full confidentiality in regards to any and all audiotapes and documentation received from Ammad Sheikh related to his doctoral study on transitional experiences of immigrant veterans. Furthermore, I agree:

1. To hold in strictest confidence the identification of any individual that may be inadvertently revealed during the transcription of audiotaped interviews, or in any associated documents.

2. To not make copies of any audiotapes or computerized files of the transcribed interview texts, unless specifically requested to do so by Ammad Sheikh.

3. To store all study-related audiotapes and materials in a safe, secure location as long as they are in my possession.

4. To return all audiotapes and study-related documents to Ammad Sheikh in a complete and timely manner.

5. To delete all electronic files containing study-related documents from my computer hard drive and any backup devices.

I am aware that I can be held legally liable for any breach of this confidentiality agreement, and for any harm incurred by individuals if I disclose identifiable information contained in the audiotapes and/or files to which I will have access.

Transcriber’s name (printed)

Transcriber’s signature

Date

Northeastern University - Human Subject Research Protection
Rev. 6/25/2010
References


Retirement from disability sport: a pilot study

(Journal Article in Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly [APAQ])