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## Effects of Military Life on Children's Academic Performance

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Senior Capstone

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**Abstract**

Children with at least one military parent are in public classrooms all over the United States. The military lifestyle is one of a kind, and it is essential for educators to understand its effects.

Through use of literature review and interviews with local elementary teachers, this capstone examines the effects of the military lifestyle on their children's academic performance. Military life can cause some emotional, social and behavioral problems among children depending on what they are currently experiencing. It is important for educators to understand what military children are experiencing in order to best support them academically and emotionally.

### **Introduction and Background**

For this capstone project, I will research the different effects that military life has on children. I would like to learn the psychological, social and behavioral effects of military life on children and how that affects their academic performance. I grew up in the military life, and I believe I was affected psychologically, socially, behaviorally, and academically. I am not the only person who grew up in the military lifestyle.

There are nearly 1.2 million children of military service members (Ruff & Keim, 2014), and only about 87,000 are enrolled in Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) schools (Esqueda, Astor, & De Pedro, 2012; Astor, De Pedro, Gilreath, Esqueda, & Benbenishty, 2013). Military children typically attend schools run by the DoDEA, and it consists of two school systems. The Department of Defense Dependents Schools (DoDDS) and the Department of Defense Domestic Dependent Elementary and Secondary Schools (DDESS). DoDDS is the school system outside the United States, and DDESS is the school system in the United States. When overseas, military children attend a DoDDS school that is located on the local military base in a foreign country. In order for military children to attend DDESS in the United States, they have to actually live on the military base (Smreker & Owens, 2003).

A little over 650,000, of the 1.2 million, are school-aged children who live in the United States and fewer than 25,000 attend DDESS schools (Department of Defense Education Activity, 2014). That means around 625,000 military connected children are in our public or private school systems here in the United States. With this many military children attending public schools in the United States, there is a chance that many teachers will have a military child in their classroom. These teachers tend to be unaware of the challenges military children may face.

The effects of military life on a child is not a common topic among many people, let alone teachers. Children with parents in the military experience unique stressors and difficulties that can affect their lives at school (Esqueda et al., 2012; Friedberg & Brelsford, 2011). Engel, Gallagher, and Lyle (2008) found that military children experienced a decline in academic achievement that results from deployments. Not only does deployment affect military children, but mobility affects them as well. Bradshaw, Sudhinaraset, Mmari, and Blum (2010) suggested the move-related stressors experienced by military children affected their adjustment to the new school environment which can then lead to an effect on their academic performance. These types of findings should be concerning to teachers as well as administrators of any school. Military children have a high mobility rate, so military children can attend any type of school around the world. From a societal view point, all teachers and administrators in the United States should be prepared to accommodate the needs of military children because there are over 625,000 military connected children in the public or private school systems.

In order to accommodate the needs of military connected children, my research will focus on the effects of military life on children's academic performance. By answering the following questions, I hope to learn how the military life affects children in the classroom and what teachers can do to help ease those affects.

My primary research question for my capstone project is: *How does military life affect the academic performance of children?* My secondary research questions are: (1) *What does the literature say about the effects of military life on children's academic performance?* (2) *Are there psychological, social, and behavioral effects of military life on children? If there are, how do they impact their academic performance?* (3) *Are there opportunities and challenges for military children in school? If there are, what are they?* (4) *Are there schools in the Monterey*

*area that currently have military children? If they do, how can teachers identify the prevalent educational gaps in military children as compared to those of the civilians? (5) What kinds of services do schools provide to accommodate the educational needs of military children in the Monterey area to improve their academic performance? (6) Are there resources that teachers could use to make it easier for military children to transition into new schools?* My purpose for this paper is to understand the effects of military life on children, and how that can be addressed in the classroom.

### **Literature Review**

Since there are nearly 625,000 military children in the United States, it is important to understand what research has been done regarding military connected children. There has been little research regarding the general academic performance of military connected children. The literature review conducted examined DoDEA schools as well as the two major aspects of military life which can have an effect on the overall well-being of a child. In this section, the effects of both relocation and parental deployment will be examined and discussed. A new piece of legislation, which impacted military connected children, will also be examined. These are important topics to discuss because there are children who are in the classroom facing these military lifestyle related challenges.

The DoDEA schools are a large focus for some researchers because the majority of the school's population are military children. Most of the research on military connected children mainly focuses on two aspect of the military lifestyle and that is relocation and deployment.

One major aspect of the military lifestyle is relocation. Military children are known for high mobility rates in schools, and the average military child will have to move schools 6 to 9 times during their K-12 schooling experience (Esqueda et al., 2012; Astor et al., 2013). School

transitions can be tough on a child especially when they are transitioning from one public state school to another. Moving to a different public school could mean different states standards, staff lack the ability to understand the “military culture”, and staff lack the “capacity to respond to military life issues” (Astor et al., 2013, p. 234). These transitions to new schools can cause emotional, social, behavioral, and academic challenges for the student. For example, when attending a new public school, the military students can have difficulty developing relationship with peers and teachers because of the lack of military life and culture awareness (Astor et al., 2013).

According to Esqueda et al. (2012), “military students appear to be invisible in many public school districts across the United States” (p. 68) when it comes to identifying military students and their needs. The DoDEA has done a good job of helping ease the transition between their own schools. The DoDEA has a “student population turnover of 37% each school year” (Smreker & Owen, 2003, p. 167-168), and yet they are still scoring above national average on the NAEP. The DoDEA has clear standards for their schools, and the school environment has characteristics that helps drive them towards success (Smreker & Owens, 2003).

School environment research has found that a sense of belonging can reduce emotional problems, and it can increase motivation to be academically successful (Astor et al., 2013). Since DoDEA schools serve only military children, these schools have an understanding of the students’ situation when they are transferred to the school. The staff at DoDEA are trained to help ease the transition to the new school. Smreker and Owens (2003) found that DoDEA schools are successful because they have a “strong and stable teaching force” (p 170), and the teachers can make a stable environment even though they have high student mobility rate. The DoDEA also holds both their students and teachers with high expectations in the classroom

(Smreker & Owens, 2003). All DoDEA schools provide personalized attention to every new student, and they make sure their students' records seamlessly transfer among schools (Smreker & Owens, 2003). A couple other aspects that are worth noting about every DoDEA school is that they provide "sufficient staffing", "small school size", and "a 'Corporate' commitment to public education" (Smreker & Owens, 2003, pp. 172-173). Public schools may provide some of these qualities, but not every single one of these qualities are standards for schools in our public school system.

Many public school systems lack the resources and knowledge that the DoDEA schools have, but there has been some legislation that is geared towards military connected children. The Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children addresses some of the educational challenges that military connected children face when transitioning schools (MIC3, 2019). While the Compact is not fully inclusive in its coverage, it does address the major issues military children encountered such as eligibility, enrollment, placement and graduation. In addition, the Compact provides for a detailed governance structure at both the state and national levels with built-in enforcement and compliance mechanisms (America's Promise Alliance, 2019). This Compact took almost a decade for all states to participate since it is voluntary (America's Promise Alliance, 2019). The Compact can relieve some of the logistical stressors of moving schools, but military children still have to adapt to a new environment with teachers who may not be trained to handle the effects of the military life.

Another major aspect of the military lifestyle is deployment. According to the Committee on the Assessment of Readjustment Needs of Military Personnel, Veterans, and Their Families, the average length of deployments was between "7.7 months - 8.3 months for single deployers and 6.8 months for multiple deployer" (2013, p 40) when looking at all branches and



components. Deployment length depends on the branch of the military as it can range from 4.5 months in the Air Force to 9.4 months in the Army (Committee on the Assessment of Readjustment Needs of Military Personnel, Veterans, and Their Families, 2013). The length and amount of deployments can have an impact on the military member's children.

Deployment frequency and duration has also increased over the past years, and these deployments pose a threat on the academic and emotional well-being of a child (Engel et al., 2010; Park, 2011). Children can physically and emotionally react to a parental deployment. Friedberg and Brelsford (2011) found that children whose parents are deployed can suffer from separation anxiety, grief and ambiguous loss, sleep issues, depression, anxiety, attention difficulties and school difficulties. These physical and emotional reactions reflect the needs of military children. Military connected children may experience difficulties in school when their parents are preparing for deployment or during the time of a parental deployment (Friedberg & Brelsford, 2011).

When it comes to school, staff may have a difficult time accommodating the emotional needs of military children whose parents are deployed. Bradshaw et al. (2010) found that some staff are not fully aware of the stressors military connected children encounter. Sometimes school staff have difficulty determining the "right thing to do and say to the military students regarding their parents' service or deployment" (Bradshaw et al., 2010, p. 93). Each child can have different preferences of the support they want, so it can be hard for school staff to determine how to interact with military children.

Esqueda et al. (2012) found that school staff within DoDEA schools have a better understanding of the military lifestyle, so they know how to support a child who is coping with a parental deployment. Military deployment may seem like a large stressor for military children,

however, there are some positives to this experience. Military children tend to show resilience and grow from a military parent's deployment (Park, 2011). Park (2011) also found that children become "closer to family and friends, and that they are more responsible, independent, and proud" (p. 68).

Military connected children have unique experiences which can cause stress or even trauma. However, military connected children tend to function better than other children in several domains of life and that helps build up resilience (Easterbrooks, Ginsburg & Lerner, 2013). These domains of life include self-regulation, intellectual and academic performance, and emotional wellbeing. Resilience allows children to recover from trauma or simply maintain successful functioning even when they are under stress (Easterbrooks et al., 2013). Since military connected children experience so much stress throughout their lives, they have more resilience as compared to civilian children.

Relocation and parental deployments are two major aspects of the military lifestyle, and those aspects clearly been proven to have an effect on military connected children. The effects of military life still need to be studied and examined. There is little research focusing purely on the academic performance of military children in general. Military connected children could be in any classroom around the world, so it is essential for educators to understand all the effects of the military lifestyle and how that reflects in the classrooms.

### **Methods and Procedures**

To grasp an understanding of the effects of military life on children's academic performance, I first examined the research that has already been done on military connected children. I analyzed academic studies and journals that addressed military children in general. I wanted to gain an understanding of what was known about military connected children. Using

the terms “military children”, “military life” and “academic performance”, I searched the CSUMB Library database to find any articles published in relations to those terms. As I conducted my research, I realized that there was not a lot of educator involvement in the studies I found.

I decided to interview five teachers at two local schools that have a large population of military children. I wanted to interview teachers because they can see the academic challenges that military children may face versus the challenges civilian children may face. I wanted to gain an understanding of the overall effects of military life from the teachers since they can spend six to seven hours a day with military children in an academic setting. I asked the teachers what types of effects they see on the military children that they do not see in the civilian children. I also asked them other questions in order to help answer my secondary research questions (See Appendix A). Each teacher interviewed has almost all military children in their classroom, so these teachers have a first-hand experience with many military children in an academic environment. They see the various challenges military children face, and their insight was essential in order to answer my secondary research questions.

Both the literature review and interviews were critical to answering my secondary research questions. The information gathered was synthesized in order to gain a deeper understanding of the military lifestyle and its effects on military connected children. The results from my literature review and interviews will be discussed in the next section.

### **Results and Discussion**

Through the application of my methods and procedures, I have gathered enough data and information from my literature and teacher interviews. Information obtained will be synthesized and included in this section. If direct statements are quoted from my interviews, the reference

will be made to a pseudonym to protect the subject participant. In this section, I will discuss my results and findings in relation to my secondary questions.

*(1) What does the literature say about the effects of military life on children's academic performance?*

According to Esqueda et al. (2012), students in DoDEA schools tend to score above national average on standardized tests. They found that students in DoDEA schools have considerably high levels of functioning regardless of the moves and stressors associated with the military lifestyle (Esqueda et al., 2012). There are multiple explanations for these above average scores for military connected children.

One explanation for this is that professionals within the DoDEA schools have a better understanding of the military culture (Esqueda et al., 2012). With this understanding, professionals can accommodate the needs of a military child. Another explanation for this is that military connected children build up resilience to the stressors they encounter, and that resilience can help increase or maintain their intellectual and academic performance (Easterbrooks et al., 2013). Also, military communities tend to have more authority, control, structure and high expectations, and those high expectations are emphasized on their children's academics (Bradshaw et al., 2010). With this emphasis and higher expectations on academics, military connected children have higher academic achievements.

Most of these studies were conducted during peacetime or did not account parental deployment. Bradshaw et al. (2010) found that the most common stressors that military connected children encounter are "tension at home, strains on their relationships with peers, adapting to a new school environment, academic challenges, student/teacher relationships, and

becoming involved in extracurricular activities” (p. 90). One part of the military lifestyle is deployment. When military personnel deploy, it could be anywhere from one month to one year. Engel et al. (2008) found that military deployments are associated with a slightly lowered academic achievement among their children. These parental deployments can also impact military connected children’s physical health, behavior, social interaction, school engagement, and emotional well-being (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Park, 2011). These parental deployments can have an emotional impact on a child. Stites (2016) found that teachers saw negative academic and socioemotional effects due to parental deployment. Engel et al. (2008) examined score of DoDEA schools and found “that a parent’s deployment in the past year reduces his or her child’s total test score by 0.42% points” (p. 74). This means that deployment can have a negative impact on military children’s academic achievement.

Another aspect of military life is relocation. These relocations can happen in the middle of the school year for children, and they can run into some problems at school. One logistical problem is that some schools fail to transfer transcripts of students, and this can have an impact on students’ social, emotional and academic performance (Bradshaw et al., 2010). The challenges that students face due to multiple school transitions range from having to repeat classes and lessons to missing critical topics. Sometimes the parents try to help fill in these gaps, but not all parents have the time or knowledge to do this (Bradshaw et al., 2010). School transitions can also mean different school and state requirements for course credits and course materials. These differences in addition to frequent moves can result in academic challenges and delayed graduation (Park, 2011).

Bradshaw et al. (2010) also found that another emotional challenge children face with frequent school transition is the amount of testing the student encounters. With every new

school, comes a new test. This is especially true for children with special needs (Bradshaw et al., 2010). This excessive testing can cause frustration and anxiety for the children, and that can later reflect in their overall academic performance.

Overall, the literature suggests that military children typically function as well as or even better than civilian children in terms of health, well-being, and academic achievement, but there needs to be extra support during certain periods. Through the literature, I found that military life does have an effect on the academic performance of military connected children. However, it does seem like the effect is relatively short. It depends on what phase of the military life the child is experiencing. If they are experiencing relocation or parental deployment, the literature suggests that there is a slight negative impact on military connected children's academic performance.

*(2) Are there psychological, social, and behavioral effects of military life on children? If there are, how do they impact their academic performance?*

Friedberg and Brelsford (2011) found that military connected children can suffer from many different psychological problems which can affect their behavior and social interactions. Due to parental deployments and relocations for the most part, military connected children can suffer from depression, anxiety, separation anxiety, grief and ambiguous loss, secondary traumatic stress, sleep issues, and attention difficulties/school difficulties (Friedberg & Brelsford, 2011). However, the five teachers interviewed (See Appendix A) for this study all agreed that they saw some psychological, social and behavioral effects when military children first join the new school. They noted that school transition seemed to be the hardest on military children.

Once the new student is settled in, the teachers no longer notice these psychological, social or behavioral issues.

During the interview, Teacher A mentioned that “just before a move, or if a parent is deployed, some students may act out or be more distracted or emotional during class” (Teacher A, Personal Communication, 26 March 2019). She currently works in a first grade classroom with about 14 of the 19 in her class being military students. She started off the year with 24 students, but five of them ended up relocating because of the military. Over the past ten years, she has only had two or three students that could not adjust to the new relocation, and she believed that it impacted their academic performance. Overall, she believes that the school community is sensitive to those changes, and they do their best to lessen the classroom impact.

During another interview, Teacher B mentioned that she noticed the more a child moved the less the child wanted to share their story. When they come into her class as a new student, she notices that they may withdraw from the classroom and not want to participate. She mainly notices a social behavior effect from the relocations, and she believes that they “may want to create a new identity so they are trying to find themselves” (Teacher B, Personal Communication, 1 April 2019). Even with the student trying to form a new identity, she does not notice any significant impacts on their academic performance.

Stites (2016) discussed that teachers did not see a behavioral or psychological difference in the military connected children. In fact, Bradshaw et al. (2010) found that military connected students felt more social and outgoing because of the relocations. Military connected children become resilient to the stress they face. Any psychological, social or behavioral problems that may arise, end up having a low impact on their overall academic performance.

*(3) Are there opportunities and challenges for military children in school? If there are, what are they?*

Military children face many different challenges in school. One major challenge that all the teachers interviewed discussed was simply joining the new classroom. Joining the classroom in the middle of the year meant making new friends when friend groups were already established. Teacher A mentioned that it is not just a social challenge they face in school. One major challenge is the consistency in academics. The standard between different states are not necessarily the same, so a child can miss key concepts. It is not just the standards or curricula that is different between states, but the expectations can be different as well. Teacher A stated that “the expectations in Florida are traditionally less than the expectations in California, whereas the expectations in Connecticut are traditionally higher” (Teacher A, Personal Communication, 26 March 2019). In addition to new or different standards, a new student in schools have to endure new testing in order for the school to understand their academic standing. This can be exhausting on a child who is thrown into a new school. With these inconsistencies, it can become a challenge for military children to successfully adjust to a new school in a new state.

Both Teacher B and Teacher C discussed that one challenge they saw military children face was creating new sense of belonging in new community. According to Bradshaw et al. (2010), it can be difficult for military connected children to become involved in extracurricular activities, such as sports and student government associations, at a new school. It can be difficult to begin extracurricular activities at a new school if the student joins in the middle of the school year. Also, adjusting to so many new personalities, new friends, and a new environment can be very difficult for a child. It can be a challenge to start over, and all the teachers believed it is important to ease the transition into the new classroom by having a peer support system.



Aside from these challenges, military children do have unique opportunities. All of the teachers brought up the Elementary Student 2 Student (ES2S) program. This program is designed to increase awareness of and address school transitions affecting mobile elementary school students through a faculty-led and student-engaged model (Military Child Education Coalition, 2019). The teachers also mentioned the extra funding from the military that is used to give resources to military connected children. These resources include the ES2S program, a family liaison, and a Military and Family Life Counselor (MFLC). Also, there is a youth center in the area that is only accepting military children.

Military children have many different programs that helps them cope with the military lifestyle. However, there are other opportunities that military connected children get because of the military lifestyle. One opportunity they get, according to Teacher B, is that they have a “clean slate” when they join a new school (Teacher B, Personal Communication, 1 April 2019). The child may have been a troublemaker or bullied in their old school, but they can start over when they transition to a new school. Teacher B stated that “they can create a new identity when they come to a new school and I believe that is a unique opportunity” (Teacher B, Personal Communication, 1 April 2019). Bradshaw et al. (2010) also noted that several students report found relocations as a positive opportunity. The military connected child gets to live and travel abroad as well as learn new cultures and meet a diverse group of people.

It is clear that military connected children have unique opportunities and challenges. With these in mind, teachers should be able to help military children cope when in stressful situations. It is important for educators to understand these challenges and opportunities in order to adjust to the needs of a military child.

*(4) Are there schools in the Monterey area that currently have military children? If they do, how can teachers identify the prevalent educational gaps in military children as compared to those of the civilians?*

There are two elementary schools, one middle school and one high school in the Monterey Peninsula Unified School District (MPUSD) that have a large population of military children (MPUSD, n.d.). During the interviews, all of the teachers brought up testing. The easiest way for them identify where the student stands academically is to test them on the various subjects.

Teacher B mentioned that it is important to use the parents. Most of them are stay at home parents, and they most likely know what concepts the child has and has not learned. Teacher B lets the parents know how their child is doing in the new classroom, and she also lets the parents know what she has already covered in the school year. This way if the child has not covered that concept, she can give the parent resources to help them catch up. According to Teacher B, “it is important to have clear communication with the parents” because they know what the child needs (Teacher B, Personal Communication, 1 April 2019). Bradshaw et al. (2010) also found it important for teachers and parents to communicate in order to meet the academic needs of military connected children.

*(5) What kinds of services do schools provide to accommodate the educational needs of military children in the Monterey area to improve their academic performance?*

As mentioned earlier when discussing their opportunities, military connected children have the ES2S program, a military liaison, a MFLC, and a local youth center in the area. Another program that one school has for military connected students is Anchor for Life. Anchor for Life

is a program that has the teacher pick one student ambassador from their class. That student is then used to help a new student learn the school environment, make new friends, and simply ease the transition to the new school. This school also has hello and goodbye baskets for new and leaving students. These baskets are made up of small items to help them adjust to the move. These programs are mainly focusing on military children's social and emotional needs.

Specifically catered to academic needs, Teacher A mentioned that teachers "treat any academic concerns the same as any students; we assess and try to build on what the student knows to where we want them to be" (Teacher A, Personal Communication, 26 March 2019). The teachers also mentioned they have Pull Out for every student in order to help close any academic achievement gaps.

After the interviews, I explored the MPUSD website to see if there were any opportunities for military children listed on their website. One resource that is available to military connected children is free tutoring and homework help through Tutor.com (2013). This resource is for United States military families, and it is funded by the U.S. Department of Defense and Coast Guard Mutual Assistance. Tutor.com (2013) is a program that provides on-demand, online tutoring and homework help at no cost to eligible service members and their dependents. It has live and expert tutors available 24/7, so military connected children all around the world can receive academic help whenever they need it.

*(6) Are there resources that teachers could use to make it easier for military children to transition into new schools?*

There are many resources that teachers can use to make the transition easier for military children. One resource that Teacher A mentioned was the community. The military community

does a great job of supporting each other, so it is important to use that community for additional support in the classroom. The teacher uses her other military students to make it feel like a community within her classroom. She also said that more support would be needed if students were placed in a school where they were the only military student or one of a small minority.

There are resources within schools, such as the programs specifically for military children, but also other programs not just for military children. During the interview, the teachers mentioned that they did not know much about programs outside of the school. They felt that information on those resources would be helpful for both educators and the students.

The lack of knowledge of the resources that teachers could use to make it easier for military children to transition into new schools lead me to research different resources. One resource that can be very useful for teachers as well as parents and students is the Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC). Their mission is “to ensure inclusive, quality educational opportunities for all military-connected children affected by mobility, transition, deployments and family separation” (Military Child Education Coalition, 2019, para. 3). The beneficial aspect of the MCEC for teachers is that they offer different forms of professional development that can help teachers understand and respond to the needs of military children. MCEC is a wonderful resource for all professionals who come into contact with military connected children.

After conducting five different interviews with elementary school teachers, I believe that there is an effect of the military life on children’s academic performance. The impact may be little to slight, but there it is still affecting their academics. With relocation and parental deployment, military life can cause some emotional, social and behavioral problems among military children. These problems can then reflect in the classroom, and the teachers have to respond to the needs of military connected children.

### **Recommendation**

My recommendation would be to provide professionals in schools with information on the military lifestyle. I believe that it is important for teachers and staff to understand the effects of military life. If they understand these effects and what a child may be experiencing, then they can understand why they are not performing academically. One resource that education professionals could use is the Military Child Education Coalition for professional development. They offer many different training seminars and programs that help professional understand the needs of military connected children.

Providing resources to teachers that are geared towards helping military children would be very useful, but there are also other ways that educators can support military children. Another resource that could make it easier for teachers to assess their new student would be to develop a standard based checklist. This checklist would show the new students' academic level, and it would result in less testing of the new military child. This would ease the transition both emotionally and academically for the military child. This recommendation was mentioned by Teacher B, and I believe it would be a good resource for the military child's new teacher.

My last recommendation is to provide educators with the resources and strategies they need in order to help military children cope with their everyday stressors. These strategies could be geared towards the emotional and academic needs of military children. There are many strategies that teachers can use, and one that I suggest is creating a community in the classroom. This type of classroom environment can help new military students feel a sense of belonging right when they enter a new classroom.

The main goal of these three recommendations is to provide support and opportunities for both the military child and their teachers. Since teachers have a high chance of having military

children in their classroom, it is essential for them to understand all the unique needs that military children have. With these recommendations, both the teacher and military child will be supported in the academic environment.

### **Problems and Limitations**

One major problem I encountered was that teachers did not reply to my interview inquiries. I sent emails to fifteen different teachers at two different schools, and I only had five teachers email me back agreeing to participate. I also sent interview inquiries to three different principals at three different schools in the area that have a large military population, and I did not receive any replies. I did not conduct as many interviews as I wish I could have for this research project.

One limitation that I had was that the five teachers I interviewed taught first through fourth grade. I did not receive any responses from the fifth and sixth grade teachers, and I think that is another limitation. With such a small range in the age group that the teachers taught, I do not think I received a full interpretation of the challenges that military children face. I had to rely on the limited literature to understand the true challenges that military children in fifth and sixth grade may face.

Another limitation I had during this process was that I only wanted to focus on schools that have a large military population. I felt that the teachers would have more experience with military children, so they would be able to answer my interview questions. Reflecting back on this decision, I believe it would have been interesting to conduct interviews with teachers who only have one or two military children in their classroom. I believe they would have a different perspective of how the military life affects children both academically and emotionally.

### **Conclusion**

The military lifestyle can be seen as both positive and negative for children. This capstone focused on this primary research question: *How does military life affect the academic performance of children?* To answer this research question, I examined the research that has already been done on military connected children, and I also interviewed five teachers at two local schools that have a large population of military children. The information gathered was synthesized in order to gain a deeper understanding of the military lifestyle and its effects on military connected children.

When a military child is settled in their school and they are not encountering any stress, they succeed above average in terms of academics. There are some academic effects when a parent is deployed and relocation is in progress. It can be difficult for a military child to cope with these two main aspects of the military life from time to time, and that can reflect in their academics. Schools can help relieve any emotional or academic challenges military connected children face. With different programs and support systems, schools can help meet the emotional, social and behavioral needs of military connected children.

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## Appendix A

## Teacher Interview Questions

1. What grade level do you teach? How long have you been teaching at your current school?
2. How many students are in your class? How many are military children?
3. How often do military children leave or join your class?
4. How do you assess the academic level of a new incoming military child?
5. Do you see any psychological, social, and/or behavioral effects of military life on children? If so, how do you think they impact their academic performance?
6. What do you see as their biggest challenge in a new classroom?
7. Do you think there are any opportunities and challenges for military children in school? If so, what are they?
8. What do you see that is missing in the education of a military child?
9. How can teachers identify the prevalent educational gaps in military children as compared to those of the civilians?
10. What do you do for a military child to help ease the transition to a new classroom and school?
11. What do you think schools can do, in general, to make these transitions to new schools easier for military children?
12. What kinds of services does your school provided to accommodate the educational needs of military children?
13. Are there resources that teachers could use to make it easier for military children to transition into new schools?