

EXPERIENCES OF PARENTS DURING THE TRANSITION OF STUDENTS INTO A
MILITARY BASE SCHOOL: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

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Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this transcendental, phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of parents during the transition of their student into a military base school. The central research question guiding this study was, “What is the experience of parents whose students have transitioned into a military base school?” Schlossberg’s transition theory, specifically the 4-S transition model, guided this study. The connection between Schlossberg’s transition theory and parents’ perspective of their students’ transition into a new school is how the parents cope using the 4-S transition model. The sample size consisted of 10 participant’s male/female from different parts of the country. Participants represented different branches of service and different ranks of the military. Data collection included interviews, timelines, and advice letters to other parents. Data analysis involved the use of computer-assisted software assisted in the organization of codes that emerged into themes. Parents suggested that transitions for their students were still stressful and resulted in a smooth transition only if detailed planning was conducted along with several moves. The strategies parents used to cope with the stress included planning ahead, organizing for the move, physical exercise, and seeking employment in order to stay busy. Future research could include diversity in the branches of service, focusing on the deployment of family members, and focusing on multiple perspectives on transition.

Keywords: Transition, Third Culture Kids, Department of Defense Dependent Schools, Department of Defense Education Activity, Permanent Change of Station

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List of Abbreviations

Army Community Services (ACS)

Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA)

Department of Defense Education Activity Schools (DoDEAS)

Family Readiness Group (FRG)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Military Dependent Students (MDS)

Morale Welfare Resource (MWR)

Permanent Change of Station (PCS)

Third Culture Kids (TCKs)

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The process of transitioning into a new school is challenging for military dependent students. Military families move frequently and are considered “highly mobile,” meaning that military dependent students “are subjected to frequent geographic relocations” (Weber & Weber, 2005, p. 638). Moving introduces the stress of adjusting to a new school environment without the support of friends (Clever & Segal, 2013; Dong, Anda, & Felitti, 2006; Ryan, Shim, & Makara, 2013). Very few studies have focused on the transition of military dependent students into a civilian public school population (Clever & Segal, 2013), and even less have focused on the transition of military dependent students into a military base school system. Berg (2008) explains how some military families move every, one to four years while, “the average military family moves every three years and nine times over a twenty year career” (Berg, 2001, p. 42). Smrekar and Owens (2003) found the average turnover rate for military dependent student populations was 37% each school year. The constant transition of military dependent families is stressful, which creates tension within the family and at times brings about depression for the military dependent student (Bradshaw, Sudhinaraset, Mmari, & Blum, 2010; Dong et al., 2006; Subramanian & Vinothkumar, 2011). The stress for parents during their student’s transition is a different experience than the stress of their student’s. A qualitative, transcendental, phenomenological approach is needed to explore what parents experience during the transition of their student into a military base school with a fresh perspective using the process of “epoche” to separate out our prejudgment, bias, and assumptions (Moustakas, 1994).

The problem this study addressed involves the lack of information dealing with a parent’s perspective on the transition of their student. Studies on school transition focus on military

dependent students who transition into civilian public schools (Berg, 2008; Bradshaw et. al., 2010) with little research focusing on the experience of parents during the transition of military dependent students into military base schools. Bradshaw et al. (2010) explained how the Department of Defense Education Activity Schools (DoDEAS) provides schools with unique resources for military dependent students with supportive community environments that enable students to interact with other students, families, and support staff within the military base school system (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Clever & Segal, 2013; Phelps, Lyons & Dunham, 2010). At present, there is no known research giving a voice to parents regarding the transition of their student into a military base school.

The purpose of this transcendental, phenomenological study was to describe the experience of transition from the perspective of parents who have experienced the transition of their student into a military base school. The theoretical framework guiding this study was Schlossberg's (1984) transition theory, specifically the 4-S transition model. The connection between Schlossberg's transition theory and a parent's perspective of their student's transition into a new school is how the parents cope using the 4-S transition model. During a student's transition to a new school, parents use the 4-S's of transition which are situation, self, support, and strategy (Anderson & Goodman, 2012; Goodman & Anderson, 2014; Schlossberg, 1984, 2011; Schlossberg et al., 1995; Rodriguez-Kiino, 2013; Taub, 2008). At present, there is no known research focusing on the transition of students into a new school from the perspective of parents.

The sample size consisted of 10 participants from different parts of the country. Participants represented different branches of service and different ranks in the military. Data collection included interviews, time lines, and advice letters to other parents. The transcription of

data collected was used in analysis. Data analysis involved the use of computer assisted software, Atlas.ti, which assisted with the organization of statements or codes. From these codes emerged themes that described what participants' experienced during the transition of their student. Parents suggested that transition for their student was still stressful, but could result in a smooth transition if the parent had a positive outlook. Future research could include diversity in the branches of service, focusing on the deployment of family members and on multiple perspectives of a student's transition.

Background

The life of military families is stressful and challenging. It is filled with constant transition and adaptation to new surroundings (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). As parents' guide their families through transition they will "assess and re-assess the meaning they took away from their experiences" (Anderson & Goodman, 2014, p. 43). Managing a stressful experience of their student's transition is important for the growth of the parent and important for self-improvement. As Goodman and Anderson (2012) stated, "the managing of stress while managing life transitions and other hurdles provides the opportunity to change and grow as necessary" (p. 16). A parent's experience of their student transitioning into a military base school is unique in that it provides a perspective from within a different culture, specifically a military culture. An aspect of military culture is not only the importance of the team, but also the importance of the individual (Anderson & Goodman, 2014; Goodman & Anderson, 2012). It is how parents cope with the stress of their student's transition that determines positive and negative experiences. Parents' perspective of self comes from their personal outlook and also determines decision making (Goodman & Anderson, 2012).

Military dependent students are a sub-set of another category, Third Culture Kids. The term Third Culture Kids (TCKs) was first identified by Useem (1999) and described a population of student who have grown up outside of their parents' home culture and have created their own culture separate from both the host culture and their home culture (TCK World, 2014). There are four subset groups under the TCK description. These categories include the student of military personnel, missionary student, student of diplomats, and the student of parents who work in the business industry outside of the students' home country (Hervey, 2009; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009; Wertsch, 2006). Although some literature used the TCK label as an umbrella for all the categories, individuals in differing sub-categories faced different experiences based on their family environments and the motivations behind their moves (Davis, Suarez, Crawford & Rehfuess, 2013; Gilbert, 2008; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009; Wertsch, 2006).

According to Pollock and Van Reken (2009), there are five stages of transition for TCKs: involvement, re-involvement, leaving, chaos/crisis, and entering. Involvement is the daily routine of everyday living before the move. Re-involvement occurs when TCKs return to their home culture. When families are informed of their move, this begins the leaving stage of transition, the detachment of ties and separation of relationships. During the chaos/crisis process, the actual move begins with the tension brought on by the upcoming departure. The stage of entering involves arriving in the foreign environment and the physical act of unpacking (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009; Wertsch, 2006). For this study, Schlossberg's (1994) transition theory was used, specifically the 4-S model focusing on the how parents cope with these stages of transition.

There are studies that suggest moving frequently leads to stress within the family and behavioral problems for students as well as that moving affects the mental health of student and adolescents (Berndt & Mekos, 1995; Dong et al., 2006; Jindal-Snape & Miller, 2008; Rumbold,

Giles, Whitrow, Steel, Davies, Davies & Moore, 2012; Ryan, Shim & Makara, 2013).

Additional studies found little detrimental effects of frequent moves and emphasized the advantages that occur when the frequencies increase, such as quick adaptability, strength in character, and behavior modification (Berg, 2008; Bradshaw et al., 2010; Norford & Medway, 2002; Shoshani & Slone, 2013; Weber & Weber, 2005). Bradshaw et al. (2010) explained how the Department of Defense Activity Schools (DoDEAS) provide their schools with unique resources to help military dependent students with supportive community environments that enable students to interact with other students, families, and support staff (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Clever & Segal, 2013; Phelps et al., 2010). These studies focused on the difficult transitions of military dependent students (MDS) into a civilian public school system (Berg, 2008; Bradshaw et al., 2010) with little research focused on the experience of parents. The contradictory results of these studies suggested that parents who facilitate transition may play an important role in determining how a military dependent student experiences their transition.

The theoretical framework that drives this research is Schlossberg's (1984) transition theory, specifically the 4-S model of transition. When students transition into a new school, parents experience the 4-S of transition which are situation, self, support, and strategy (Anderson & Goodman, 2014; Goodman & Anderson, 2012; Rodriguez-Kiino, 2013; Schlossberg, 1984, 2011; Schlossberg et al., 1995; Taub, 2008). Schlossberg's (1984) transition theory addressed life changes and how individuals cope with those changes. Therefore, this qualitative phenomenological study focused on the experiences of parents as their student transitioned into a military base school and how they coped with this transition.

Situation to Self

As the “human instrument” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), I have transitioned in both a military base school and a public school as a military dependent student. Although I have experienced transition in both school environments, I have only experienced transition from the perspective of a student. My motivation for this study was my own transition into a military base school and the ease in which I assimilated into a military school environment, unlike my difficult transition into a public school. My parents were my main source of support both physically and emotionally. They prepared me for what to expect by showing me pictures of where we would be living and by touring the new school with me. They helped me to easily transition into a military base school environment.

The goal of my research was to explain what parents experience during the transition of their military dependent student, specifically into a military base school environment. Some assumptions that I brought to this study included: Transition into a military base school is easier for military dependent students, parents provide a stable family structure that encourages easy transition into a military base school, and a school environment immersed in the military-based culture provides added support to the families and students.

The paradigm that shaped this study was the interpretivist perspective that supports the understanding of military parents and the interpretation of their experience with the transition of their student. Thanh and Thanh (2015) defined the interpretivist paradigm as the paradigm that “allows researchers to view the world through the perceptions and experiences of the participants” (p. 24). They also suggested that the researcher that uses the interpretivist paradigm interprets the participant’s experience in order to construct an understanding of the data (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). Using an ontological philosophical assumption, I was conscious of the

differences in realities and used the words of my participants to understand multiple realities (Scotland, 2012). The development of themes that emerged during data analysis allowed for the description of the parent's experience using quotes from their interviews, time lines, and advice letters. Despite using the process of "epoche" to separate my own experiences from those of my participants, I understood that the axiological view of my own biases could influence the outcome of my interpretations. Using an epistemological view that is concerned with, "how knowledge is created, acquired and communicated, in other words what it means to know" (Scotland, 2012, p. 9), I collected the perspectives of military parents while listening to them as they explained their experiences. Listening to participants allowed me to understand the phenomena of student transition from their perspective.

Problem Statement

The life of military families is in constant transition (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Clever & Segal, 2013; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009; Weber & Weber, 2005; Wertsch, 2006). As parents' guide their families through transition, according to Anderson and Goodman (2014), they "assess and re-assess the meaning they took away from their experiences" (p. 43). Managing the stressful experience of their student's transition is important for the growth of parents. As Goodman and Anderson (2012) stated, "the managing of stress while managing life transitions and other hurdles provides the opportunity to change and grow as necessary" (p. 16). A parent's experience of their student transitioning into a military base school is unique in that it provides a perspective from within a different culture, specifically a military culture. An aspect of military culture is not only the importance of the team, but also the importance of the individual (Anderson & Goodman, 2014; Goodman & Anderson, 2012). It is how parents cope with the stress of their student's transition that determines positive and negative experiences. The

problem is there are no studies that describe how parents cope with the stress of their student's transition into a military base school (Anderson & Goodman, 2014; Goodman & Anderson, 2012; Schlossberg, 1994). The studies on school transition focused on military dependent students who transitioned into civilian public schools (Berg, 2008; Bradshaw et al., 2010) with no research focused on the experience of parents during the transition of military dependent students into military base schools. Bradshaw et al. (2010) explained how the Department of Defense Dependent Activity Schools (DODEAS) provided schools with unique resources for military dependent students with supportive community environments that enabled students to interact with other students, families, and support staff within the military base school system (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Clever & Segal, 2013; Phelps et al., 2010). The problem is there are no studies that describe how parents experience the stress of their student's transition into a military base school or how they cope with the stress (Anderson & Goodman, 2014; Goodman & Anderson, 2012; Schlossberg, 1994).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative, transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the experience of transition from the perspective of parents whose student has transitioned into a military base school. At this stage in the research, transition was defined as “anticipated transitions – the scheduled, expected events that are likely to occur for the individual and that can be anticipated and rehearsed – and unanticipated transitions – the nonscheduled events that are not predictable” (Schlossberg, 1984, p. 119). The theoretical framework that guided this study was Schlossberg's (1994) transition theory, specifically the 4-S transition model. The connection between Schlossberg's transition theory and parents' perspective of their student's transition into a new school is how the parents cope with the stress using the 4-S transition

model. There are no known studies that describe how parents cope with the stress of their student's transition into a military base school (Anderson & Goodman, 2014, Goodman & Anderson, 2012; Schlossberg, 1994). During a student's transition to a new school, parents are faced with the 4-S of transition which are situation, self, support, and strategy (Anderson & Goodman, 2014, Goodman & Anderson, 2012; Schlossberg, 1984, 2011; Schlossberg et al., 1995; Rodriguez-Kiino, 2013; Taub, 2008). At present, there is no known research focused on the transition of students into a military base school from the perspective of parents.

A military dependent student was defined as a student with at least one parent in the military who has moved at least once (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Clever & Segal, 2013; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009; Weber & Weber, 2005; Wertsch, 2006). The term, "military brat" (Wertsch, 2006) is often used to categorize student of military personnel; however, for this study the term "military dependent student" was used to describe the participants (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009; Sheard, 2008). There was not a specific setting for participants. Participants were stationed around the US and overseas. The phenomenon investigated was the experience of military parents during the transition of their student into a military base school. The theory that guided this study was Schlossberg's (1994) transition theory, specifically the 4-S model of transition.

Significance of the Study

This study was significant because it contributed to the literature on the experience of parents during the transition of their student into a military base school. While multiple studies have been conducted in the area of transition of military dependent-students into the civilian public school system population (Berg, 2008; Bradshaw et al., 2010; Clever & Segal, 2013; Subramanian & Vinothkumar, 2011; Weber & Weber, 2005), there exists a lack of literature on their transition into a military base school system from a parent's perspective. Researchers have

focused on the issues associated with difficult transitions for military dependent students and transitions that happened within the civilian school population (Berg, 2008; Bradshaw et al., 2010; Clever & Segal, 2013; Subramanian & Vinothkumar, 2011; Weber & Weber, 2005) without focusing on the parent's perspective.

This study was significant because it contributed to the literature on the transition of military dependent students, specifically their transition into a military base school. Researchers have focused on the problems associated with difficult transitions for military dependent students and transitions that happen within the civilian school population (Berg, 2008; Bradshaw et al., 2010; Clever & Segal, 2013; Subramanian & Vinothkumar, 2011; Weber & Weber, 2005). Researchers have not focused on the transition of students from a parent's perspective. This study addressed the gap between what parents experience when their student transitions and how parents cope with the transition of their student through extending Schlossberg's (1994) theory of transition using the 4-S model.

According to Wertsch (2006), an easy transition derives from a structured home life and the commonly-shared military lifestyle. Wertsch (2006) also suggested that military dependent students have adaptabilities that assisted with transitions such as easy recognition of other military students and practiced extroversion even if their personalities were introverted. Wertsch (2006) explained how these adjustment characteristics were common among military dependent students; however, these traits were not enough to overcome the challenges of school transition (Berg, 2008; Bradshaw et al. 2010; Weber & Weber, 2005; Wertsch, 2006). The literature that exists focused on the problems associated with military dependent students' transition into a civilian school. The difficulty of student transition included gaps in academic learning, disconnection with civilian students, and difficulty assimilating into a new school environment

(Berg, 2008; Clever & Segal, 2013; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). School transitions, specifically for military dependent students, require a supportive community and family structure to provide a sense of connectedness to others (Berg, 2008; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009; Wertsch, 2006). Parents play an important role in providing family structure. Therefore, this qualitative, phenomenological study focused on the transition of military dependent students from a parent's perspective.

Research Questions

The central question that drove the purpose of the study was: What is the experience of parents whose students have transitioned into a military base school? The goal of this question was to “reveal more fully the essences and meanings of human experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 105). The answer emerged through understanding the shared experiences of the participants. The participants shared experiences that were “illuminated through careful, comprehensive descriptions, vivid and accurate renderings of the experiences”(Moustakas, 1994, p. 105). In order to reveal the essence of the shared experiences of the participants, each individual perspective was needed to develop an answer to the central question. To fully answer the central question, three sub questions were developed to support the central question. The three sub questions were developed using Schlossberg's (1984) transition theory, specifically the 4-S model of transition which addresses life transitions and how individuals cope with those changes.

The first sub question was, “What positive aspects do parents experience with the transitioning of their student?” This question was developed to better understand the positive aspects of a parents' experience during the transition of their student. According to Anderson and Goodson (2012), the participants' outlook influenced decisions made during the transition process. One of the four major factors of Schlossberg's (1984) transition theory focused on the

aspect of “self.” An aspect of “self” are the participants’ perspective and their view of world, “especially in terms of a sense of optimism and self-efficacy” (Anderson & Goodman, 2012, p. 13).

The second sub question was, “What difficulties do parents experience with the transition of their student?” This question was designed to understand the difficulties that parents face during the transition of their student into a military base school. Change and loss are key aspects of military life (Anderson & Goodman, 2014; Useem, 1999; Wertsch, 2006). According to Anderson and Goodman (2014), the causes behind a specific change has little to do with transition. Anderson and Goodman (2014) stated, “A transition requires letting go of aspects of the self and former roles and moving toward a new emerging identity and roles” (p. 43).

The third sub question was, “How do parents cope with those difficulties?” During a student’s transition into a new school, parents are faced with the 4-S of transition which are situation, self, support, and strategy (Anderson & Goodman, 2014, Goodman & Anderson, 2012; Schlossberg, 1984, 2011; Schlossberg et al., 1995; Rodriguez-Kiino, 2013; Taub, 2008). The 4-S model of transition includes, “What is happening?; the situation; to whom is it happening?; the self; what help is available?; the support; and How does the person cope?; the strategies” (Goodman & Anderson, 2012, p. 11). Parents that cope with the stress of their student’s transition develop strategies to manage that stress. Schlossberg’s (1994) theory divides strategies into three categories: “those that change the situation, those that change the meaning of the situation, and those that manage the stress of the transition” (Goodman & Anderson, 2012, p. 15). This question focused on the strategy used by participants to manage the stress of transition.

Definitions

The following are definitions and abbreviations of technical words used in this dissertation; they are provided here in order to assist the reader.

1. *Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA)* - DoDEA is the school system that provides education services to military dependent students stateside and overseas (Smrekar & Owens, 2003).
2. *Department of Defense Domestic Dependent Elementary and Secondary Schools (DDESS)* - DDESS is the school system for students attending schools in the U.S. (Smrekar & Owens, 2003).
3. *Highly mobile* - Highly mobile describes military dependent students who move frequently. Highly mobile students “are subjected to frequent geographic relocations” (Weber & Weber, 2005, p. 638).
4. *Military base school* - A military base school is a school located within/outside the confines of a military base whose students are student of military personnel (Department of Defense Domestic Dependent Elementary Secondary Schools, 2015).
5. *Military brat* – Military brat is an endearing term used to label student of military personnel (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009; Sheard, 2008; Wertsch, 2006).
6. *Military dependent student* - A military dependent student is a student with at least one parent in the military who has moved at least once (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Clever & Segal, 2013; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009; Weber & Weber, 2005; Wertsch, 2006).
7. *Permanent change of station (PCS)* - Permanent change of station is when military personnel move to a different a different duty station (Powers, 2016).

8. *Family readiness group (FRG)* – A family readiness group informs families within the unit of upcoming events, programs, and resources that can help their move (Pennoyer, 2017).

Summary

The goal of my research was to describe what parents experienced during the transition of their student into a military base school. The purpose of this transcendental, phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of parents during the transition of their student into a military base school. The problem was there are no known studies that describe what parents experience the stress of their student's transition into a military base school or how they cope with the stress (Anderson & Goodman, 2014; Goodman & Anderson, 2014; Schlossberg, 1994). There were studies that emphasized achievement, well-adjustment of students, close knit communities, and high expectations of students, but little is known about the experience of parents during their student's transition (Smrekar & Owens, 2003). The experience of transition as viewed by parents gave insight and individual perspectives of the process of transition. Some studies on school transition focused on military dependent students who transitioned into the civilian population (Berg, 2008; Bradshaw et al., 2010) with little research focused on the transition of military dependent students from a parents view. Bradshaw et al. (2010) explained how the Department of Defense Dependent Activity Schools (DODEAS) provided schools with unique resources for military dependent students with supportive community environments that enabled students to interact with other students, families, and support staff within the military base school system (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Clever & Segal, 2013; Phelps et al., 2010). At present, it is not known how parents experience transition of their student. Therefore, a study of

transitions viewed through the eyes of parents of military dependent students added to this body of knowledge.

A qualitative study was necessary for this research as it explored a specific group of parents and their shared experiences during the transition of their student. I used a qualitative, phenomenological design in order to provide a voice to parents who have experienced the transition of their student into a military base school. A qualitative, phenomenological design best fit my study because it focused on the “essence” of the experience searching for meaning of student transition from the perspective of parents instead of quantitative measurements and explanations (Moustakas, 1994). A phenomenological design also involves first-person descriptions of experiences in formal and informal conversations and interviews (Moustakas, 1994). Multiple perspectives on transition from parents of different branches of the military, different backgrounds, and different areas of the country provided unique perceptions. As Moustakas (1994) noted, “Perception is regarded as the primary source of knowledge, the source that cannot be doubted” (p. 52). I used the steps involved with transcendental phenomenology, focusing on the process of “epoche” to set aside or bracket out my own preconceptions, beliefs, and knowledge of the phenomenon in order to examine the data from a fresh perspective (Moustakas, 1994). A qualitative methodology was used in order to describe the event and perspectives on transition from a parent’s point of view. This perspective helped to describe the positive aspects, difficulties, and methods they used to cope with the transition. A qualitative approach consisted of analyzing the narratives of parents regarding the transition of their student into a military base school. Qualitative research was the best approach when searching for the essence and the meaning of shared experiences rather than measurements and explanations (Moustakas, 1994).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Military families who relocate frequently are considered “highly mobile” meaning they, “are subjected to frequent geographic relocations” (Weber & Weber, 2005, p. 638). Moving introduces the stress of adjusting to a new school environment without the added support of friends (Clever & Segal, 2013; Dong et al., 2006; Ryan et al., 2013). There is little research that focuses on the transition of military dependent students into the civilian public school population (Clever & Segal, 2013) or the transition of military dependent students into a military base school system from a parent’s perspective. There is no known research from the perspective of a parent during their student’s transition. Berg (2008) explained how some military families moved every one to four years while, “the average military family moves every three years and nine times over a 20 year career” (Berg, 2008 p.42). The constant transition of military dependent students is a challenge that brings about stress, creates tension within the family, and at times, brings about depression and substance abuse for the military dependent student (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Dong et al., 2006; Subramanian & Vinothkumar, 2011). The following chapter focuses on the theoretical frame work that drives this study, the related literature that explains what military dependent students are, the issues they face during transition and a summary.

Theoretical Framework

Schlossberg’s (1994) theory of transition played an important role in the development of this qualitative research study. It influenced the research design which played a vital role in choosing a research focus and in the development of research questions (Kelly, 2010; Reeves, Albert, Cooper & Hodges, 2008). Theory also drove the focus of this qualitative research design

by giving “researchers different lenses through which to look at complicated problems and social issues, focusing their attention on different aspects of the data and providing a framework within which to conduct their analysis” (Reeves et al., 2008, p. 631). The theory that drove this study was Schlossberg’s (1984) transition theory, specifically the 4-S model of transition. The connection between Schlossberg’s (1984) transition theory and parents’ perspective of their student’s transition into a new school is how the parents cope using the 4-S transition model. During a student’s transition to a new school, parents use the 4-S of transition which are situation, self, support, and strategy (Anderson & Goodman, 2014; Goodman & Anderson, 2012; Schlossberg, 1984, 2011; Schlossberg et al., 1995; Rodriguez-Kino, 2013; Taub, 2008). This study addressed the gap between what parents experience and how they cope with the transition of their student through extending Schlossberg’s (1994) theory of transition using the 4-S model.

Schlossberg’s Transition Theory

Transition was defined as, “anticipated transitions – the scheduled, expected events that are likely to occur for the individual and that can be anticipated and rehearsed – and unanticipated transitions – the nonscheduled events that are not predictable” (Schlossberg, 1984, p. 119). The theoretical framework used in this study was Schlossberg’s (1984) transition theory, specifically the 4-S model of transition. During a student’s transition to a new school, parents are faced with the 4-S of transition which are situation, self, support, and strategy (Anderson & Goodman, 2014; Goodman & Anderson, 2012; Schlossberg, 1984, 2011; Schlossberg et al., 1995; Rodriguez-Kiino, 2013; Taub, 2008). Schlossberg’s (1984) transition theory addresses life transitions and how individuals coped with those changes. The 4-S model of transition includes “What is happening?, Self: To whom is it happening?, Support: What help is available?, and Strategies: How does the person cope?” (Goodman & Anderson, 2012, p. 11).

For the purpose of this study, participants were interviewed about their experience as a parent of a student who transitioned into a military base school, how they coped with that transition, what strategies they used, and what resources were available to them. Schlossberg (2011) stated that by identifying the common features involved with transition, it will remove the unknown therefore enabling the person to cope with the change.

Related Literature

The student of military personnel are a sub-set of third culture kids who hold similar characteristics of military dependent students (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009; Sheard, 2008). Although studies use the TCK label as an umbrella for all the categories, each sub-category has different experiences based on their family, cultural, and organizational environments. The military dependent student has a unique cultural environment complete with specific expectations of behaviors which encourage academics. The military culture provides a controlled, authoritative structure that supports military dependent students behaviorally and academically (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009; Weber & Weber, 2005; Wertsch, 2006).

It is this connection of the military family with the military culture that nurtures the environment of military dependent students. The location of the military base school fosters a sense of safety and social connectedness, enables students to cope with the stress of a new school environment, and creates a sense of security (Mmari et al., 2010). As a subset of TCKs, the lives of military dependent students are defined by mobility (Gilbert, 2008). High mobility leaves military dependent students vulnerable to the constant state of transition both physically and psychologically (Gilbert, 2008). Transition creates stress which could lead to depression and isolation (Davis et al., 2013).

Stages of Transition

Pollock and Van Reken (2009) explained that there are critical stages during transition. The stages include involvement, leaving, transition, entering, and re-involvement. The important key to a smooth transition is the involvement of parents and caretakers who set the tone for involving student in the moving process and allowing them to be active participants in that moving (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). Transition is the bridge that connects the involvement and leaving with entering and re-involvement. The physical relocation from one area to another area is the transition or moving process (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009; Wertsch, 2006). Pollock and Van Reken (2009) elaborated on the best way a TCK can enter into a new culture. They suggested finding a mentor that gives instruction on new customs and can answer questions about the new environment. The final stage of transition is re-involvement which includes settling into the new culture and acquainting oneself with the surroundings, people, and customs. Pollock and Van Reken (2009) suggested that these stages are a common factor for all members experiencing transition; however they also advised that not all members of the family experience these stages within an equal time frame.

According to Frago et al. (2013), the transition process involves emotional stressors such as anxiety, stagnating between academic and family obligations, and the feeling of guilt. This stage of stagnation conveys the lack of control students feel as they transition (Frago et al., 2013). Despite this lack of control, Frago et al. (2013) argued that positive outcomes result by overcoming the challenges of transition. The frequency of moves, although viewed as a precursor to stress, is also an advantage. Mmari et al. (2010) conducted focus groups with military adolescents, parents, and school staff to gain different perspectives on frequent relocation. The participants described advantages of frequent relocations that enabled military

dependent students to develop their maturity, adaptability, and self-sufficiency (Mmari et al., 2010). From the perspective of school staff, the strengths developed in military dependent students also involved students' ability to develop friendships quickly with other military students, and parents noted that being on a military base provided a sense of safety, support, and a strong sense of trust from other military families (Mmari et al., 2010).

The transitions associated with military dependent students entering a public school proved more challenging. Astor et al. (2013) suggested that "military youth experience more negative outcomes than civilian peers" (p. 234). Those negative experiences during transitions into a civilian school, such as substance use, violence, mental health issues, and bullying, are more likely to occur in military dependent students than in their civilian counterparts (Astor et al., 2013; Cederbaum et al., 2014; Gilreath et al., 2013; Gilreath et al., 2014; McGuinness & McGuinness, 2014). Civilian schools do not provide the community or peer support that military base schools do, which results in the maladjustment and vulnerability of military dependent students (Astor et al., 2013). The inability of civilian, public schools to address the unique transition issues of military affiliated students worsens the transition experience. Transition for middle school students has two stages. The first involves moving from elementary school to middle school, and the second is the transition from studenthood to adolescence (Shoshani & Slone, 2013). Transitions into new schools affect students' motivation for learning and their ability to assimilate into the new school environment, which causes difficult adjustments (Kingery, Erdley, & Marshall, 2011). According to Kingery et al. (2011), peer relationships assist in adjustment for middle school students during their transition. The well-being of middle school students is connected to the way they perceive the support they receive from the people they value most (Kingery et al., 2011).

Negative impact of transitions. Frequent transitions negatively impact student of military personnel. As adults, military kids have difficulty maintaining relationships (Wertsch, 2006) and transitions often lead to the loss of relationships. Osofsky & Chartrand (2013) argued that trust is built upon the development of relationships which are important to the social and emotional growth of student. The stress of transitions impedes the creation of new friendships needed for cognitive development, and according to Bradshaw et al. (2010), “One common stressor associated with frequent relocations was the challenge of initiating and sustaining close friendships” (p. 91). The process of transitioning also inhibited the emotional well-being of military kids. Many associated their transition with feelings of powerlessness, fear, and feeling lost and alone (Bikos et al., 2009). With the loss of peers and community, military dependent students have a disadvantage during their transition from one school to another. During their transition into a military base school system, they are able to transition quickly and learn independence. This phenomenological study focused on transition of dependent students from a parent’s perspective.

Substance Abuse

The needs of military dependent students may be associated with the reoccurring issues that influence their ability to relate to their peers. Youth affiliated with the military are more likely to abuse substances and suffer emotional stresses due to the stress of either frequent transition or the deployment of a parent (Gilreath, Astor, Cederbaum, Autel, & Benbenishty, 2014; Gilreath et al., 2013). Their coping mechanism is substance abuse when situations such as the possibility of the injury or death of the parent and the uncertainty of their return lead to the inability to cope or grieve. According to Gilreath et al. (2013), “theories of uncertainty (eg., injury or death, changes in duration of deployment/service) and ambiguous loss indicate that a

loss (lack of physical presence of a loved one) combined with uncertainty and ambiguity slows the ability to cope or grieve” (p. 153).

Although adolescents understand the reasons behind deployment and feel proud of their parent, the absence of a parent is overwhelming, placing them at higher risk for substance abuse and mental health issues (Cederbaum et al., 2014). The issue of substance abuse among military dependent students is a result of coping with the stress of deployment and the added responsibilities of the household (Gilreath et al., 2013). The results of this substance abuse study (Gilreath et al., 2013) supported the higher rate of substance abuse among military dependent students and that stress levels are high despite the absence of the parent or loved one who is deployed. Gilreath et al. (2013) focused on the peripheral issue of sibling deployments and found that stress was still a factor, resulting in substance abuse of the military dependent student. Although parents are the main caregivers, peers tend to be the influence of choice for military dependent students. Therefore, the sibling is an additional stressor for military dependent students if those siblings are deployed (Cederbaum et al., 2014; Gilreath et al., 2013).

Safety

A basic need for military dependent students is safety (Phelps et al., 2010; Mmari et al., 2010; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009), which a military base school provides. The probability that military dependent students are victimized in a public school setting due to their vulnerability is high (Gilreath et al., 2013; Gilreath et al., 2014), and the instance of weapons being carried on school grounds was high among military youth due to their feeling of insecurity. The schools’ location provides safety, security, and added support of the military community (Phelps et al., 2010; Mmari et al., 2010), therefore fostering a sense of trust among families who reside on base. Within a military base school, military dependent students are able to assimilate easily when

there were others with similar backgrounds and “making friends with fellow military youth is easier because they tend to know what each other is going through” (Mmari et al., 2010, p. 361). When military dependent students feel unsafe, specifically when a parent is deployed, it brings about higher stress levels. Feeling unsafe within a new school environment may lead a military dependent student to carry a weapon in order to ensure their safety (Gilreath et al., 2013; Gilreath et al., 2014).

Adjustment Issues

Emotional support is an additional need for military dependent students, specifically during the deployment of a parent. McGuiness and McGuiness (2014) described how the levels of anxiety in student rises during the deployment or during the absence of a military parent. The high level of anxiety in student of deployed military personnel is a result of the uncertainty of their parents’ safety (Lester et al., 2010). Lester et al. (2010) argued that military dependents’ maladjustment issues are more prevalent than that of civilian students and becomes increasingly worse when the parent suffers through the psychological distress accompanied with an increase in deployments. In addition, there are higher rates of behavioral and emotional anxiety disorders among military dependent student (Cederbaum et al., 2014; Chandra et al., 2010; Lester et al., 2010). According to Cederbaum et al. (2014), military affiliated student are more likely to experience depression and suicidal thoughts, and the absence of the parent during deployment or due to other circumstances directly affects their mental health. Cederbaum et al. (2014) also found that “Adolescents with parents in the military may also experience instability in the home, such as frequent relocation, the stress of the left behind parent, the reintegration of the deployed parent and connectedness to other military families” (p. 673). Cederbaum et al.’s (2014) focused on the well-being of military youth and how deployment affected mental health. They

found that military youth were more likely to suffer from poor mental well-being than their civilian counterparts. With the onset of parental deployment, military dependent students found themselves overwhelmed with additional responsibilities which resulted in higher rates of behavioral and emotional difficulties (Cederbaum et al., 2014, Gilreath et al., 2013; McGuiness & McGuiness, 2014).

Stress Factors

The stress factors associated with military dependent students' maladjustments during frequent transitions and relocations are the deployment of a parent or caregiver and where the transition takes place during the move or the parent's deployment. The location of a military school provides safety in which a stable, supportive environment is provided and provides an environment where peers with similar experiences are available (Cederbaum et al., 2014, Gilreath et al., 2013; McGuiness & McGuiness, 2014).

Deployment and Academic Achievement

Although Marchant and Medway (1987) described that the academic achievement of military students is not affected by frequent relocation, Phelps et al. (2010) suggested that the deployment of a parent affects the academic achievement of students, specifically during the deployment of a parent. Phelps et al.'s (2010) study was focused on the academic achievement of elementary school students during deployment. The results supported the argument that deployment did negatively impact academic achievement. The academic achievement scores of elementary school student were monitored during the deployment of a parent and then studied when those parents were stateside. Despite meeting the national score averages, military dependent students' academic scores dropped during the deployment of a parent (Phelps et al., 2010). However, during peacetime, frequent transition did not show an effect on academic

achievement (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Marchant & Medway, 1987; Weber & Weber, 2005).

According to Ryan et. al (2013), academic achievement declined for students transitioning to middle school. The transition faced by middle school students was complex and involved a myriad of issues that included academics and self-development. Despite students facing a decline in academics and having difficulties adjusting to a new classroom environment, their self-worth improved (Ryan et al., 2013).

The stress associated with transition impacts military dependent families, but the impact of parental deployment during wartime affects academic achievement and has a direct negative impact on the mental health of adolescents (Cederbaum et al., 2014). Therefore, transition, although stressful, does not influence military dependent students' academic achievement as substantially as deployment (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Phelps et al., 2010; Weber & Weber, 2005). Transition does impact the mental health, well-being, and delayed cognitive development in military dependent students (Cederbaum et al., 2014; McGuinness & McGuinness, 2014; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). Cederbaum et al. (2014) focused on the mental health of military dependent secondary students. According to Cederbaum et al. (2014), adolescents have a better understanding of the consequences of frequent moves and parental deployments. For military dependent adolescents, understanding what could happen to their family leads to depression, anxiety, and for some, secondary post-traumatic stress disorder. The findings of Cederbaum et al.'s (2014) study showed that military dependent adolescents were more likely to suffer from feelings of hopelessness and sadness, and they tended to have suicidal thoughts when responsibilities became overwhelming and stressful situations were more frequent during a parent's deployment (Cederbaum et al., 2014)

Third Culture Kids

The term “Third Culture Kids” or TCKs was first identified by Hill-Useem (1999), and Hill-Useem described a population of student who have grown up outside of their parents’ home culture. These students have learned to both embrace different cultures while simultaneously accepting none (TCK World, 2014). There are four subset groups under the TCK description. They are the student of military personnel, missionary student, student of diplomats, and the student of parents who work in the business field (Hervey, 2009; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009; Wertsch, 2006). This phenomenological study focused on military personnel whose military student had transitioned into a military base school. A military dependent student is defined as an unmarried student of a military service member, under the age of 21, incapable of self-support and dependent on the member for more than one-half of the student’s support (National Military Family Association, 2005).

Adjustment to Civilian Public Schools

Pollock and Van Reken (2009) used the TCK label as an umbrella for the four sub-categories: student of business personnel, foreign service, missionary, and military personnel. The student in these subcategories each have different experiences with different sets of issues based on their organizational structure, culture, and family environments. The military family lifestyle is unique in that it consists of constant moving and periods of maladjustment for military students (Berg, 2008; Bradshaw et al., 2010; Clever & Segal, 2013; Weber & Weber, 2005). The issue of adjustment affects all TCKs, but for the military dependent student, stress during transition is more frequent and can be detrimental to the mental health and well-being of the student and their family. Lagrone (1978) labeled this stress-related transition as the “military family syndrome” which is a pattern of stressful behavioral and adjustment difficulties faced by

military families that includes a predictable family dynamic of an authoritarian father, student with behavioral issues, and mothers suffering from depression (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Clever & Segal, 2013; Jensen, Xenakis, Wolf, & Bain, 1991; Weber & Weber, 2005; Wertsch, 2006). Jensen et al. (1991) conducted a study involving 236 families located on a military post. The perceptions of the behaviors of student were assessed by parents using a Student Behavior Checklist. The results of Jensen et al.'s (1991) research found that the absence of the parent, either during long stretches of training or deployment, contributed to the stress of the military family (Jensen et al., 1991). However, Jensen et al. (1991) explained that the results of their study did not find evidence to substantiate the "military family syndrome." Jensen et al. (1991) emphasized the supportive culture and quick adaptability of military dependent students. Weber and Weber (2005) contradicted the patterns of maladjustment associated with "military family syndrome" and argued that military families, especially student, adjusted quickly to their new environment with few behavioral or mental disorders. According to Weber and Weber (2005), the rate of behavioral problems among student lowered as the moves increased due to the consistency and familiarity of the moving routine. Norford and Medway (2002) described a conflicted perspective on how frequent moves do not prove detrimental to highly mobile adolescents, nor did it demonstrate a negative social outcome. Although adolescents preferred not to move so frequently, the authors argued that students did not suffer any negative social outcomes from the frequent moves (Norford & Medway, 2002). The contradiction of these studies call for more research in the area of transition involving military families, specifically from a parent's point of view.

Department of Defense Education Activity

Clever and Segal (2013) explained that active duty families include 1.2 million dependent student. The Department of Defense Educational Activity system (DoDEA) school system provides the necessary school services for military dependent students. This department operates 194 K-12 schools stateside and schools in 12 foreign countries including the United States territories of Puerto Rico and Guam. In 2011, the average student population enrolled in the DoDEA system was 86,000 students, and 96 percent were active duty dependent students (Clever & Segal, 2013). The difficulty of transition for military dependent students occurs during the frequent moves of military families. The disruption of routine school interactions, friendships, and community connections can bring about stressful school transitions (Astor, Tunac De Pedro, Gilreath, Esqueda & Benbenishty, 2013; Berg, 2008; Bradshaw et al, 2010; Clever & Segal, 2013; Subramanian & Vinothkumar, 2011).

School Location

A successful transition into any school requires the assistance and support of family, peers, the community, and ultimately, the student themselves (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Jindal-Snape & Miller, 2008; Mmari, Bradshaw, Sudhinaraset, & Blum, 2010). In addition to the support needed for school transitions, the location of the school played a significant role in helping students cope with the stress of frequent moves. The location of the school, according to parents and students, provided safety, security, and added support of the military community (Phelps et al., 2010; Mmari et al., 2010), therefore, fostering a sense of trust among families who reside on base. Military dependent students assimilated easily into the military base school when there were others with similar backgrounds, “making friends with fellow military youth is easier because they tend to know what each other is going through” (Mmari et al., 2010, p. 361). The

location of a military base school provided the social support needed by military dependent students in order to foster connections with peers who had similar life experiences (Mmari et al., 2010). Mmari et al. (2010) also explained that most prominent stressors for military dependent students involve the frequency of relocations and the ability to secure new friendships. The frequency of moves led to behavioral issues and could be so traumatic that it disrupted the emotional, social, and physical well-being of the student (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Qin, Mortensen, & Penderson, 2009). The more frequent the moves, the higher the incidence of attempted suicide (Qin et al., 2009).

Civilian versus Military Transitions

Multiple relocations may affect social behaviors in adolescents (Norford & Medway, 2002). The stresses involved with moving result in school adjustment issues such as poor academic performance (Bradshaw et al., 2010). The social support structures for highly mobile students are also disrupted during frequent relocations (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Dong et al., 2006; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009; Weber & Weber, 2005). Military dependent students sometimes have difficulty developing close relationships due to frequent relocation which may lead to developmental issues (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009; Subramanian & Vinothkumar, 2011). Transitions are brought about by the stress of assimilating into a new school environment without the support of friends and community (Clever & Segal, 2013; Mmari et al., 2010). The transition of military dependent students differed from the transition of civilian students because the support of other military students acted like a safety net providing a connection to other students who are experiencing or have experienced the same frequent moves (Clever & Segal, 2013). Civilian students also move for different reasons than military dependent students. According to Clever and Segal (2013), civilian families, unlike military

families, move due to loss of employment, poverty, a change in occupation, or abuse within the family. Military base schools provide support through diffusing stressors associated with school transitions, and “supportive military environment can alleviate some of the stresses associated with frequent moves by connecting student to other military student in their communities” (Clever & Segal, 2013, p. 29).

There are few studies that focused on military dependent students and their transition into a military base school system because it is difficult to track students who move so frequently (Chandra & London, 2013). Subramanian and Vinothkumar (2011) suggested that developmental problems among students that attend military schools include anxiety, depression, fatigue, and psychological illnesses, although the focus of their study centered on students who attended military training schools and not DoDEA schools. The data collection stage of Chandra and London’s (2013) study focused on the transition of military students, and insufficient support was the researchers’ foremost concern. Chandra and London (2013) found “One result of this work is the worry that military student and youth receive insufficient support during periods of transition” (p. 191). Despite this worry, military base school systems managed to provide a high quality, educational environment (Berg, 2008; Phelps et al., 2010).

Student Perspectives

The act of transition from a student’s perspective is difficult, as “transition can be legitimately considered a challenge of living” (Jindal-Snape & Miller, 2008, p. 217). Jindal-Snape and Miller (2008) argued that the interpretation of personal and social experiences for student must be focused on in order to assist them in coping with school transitions. Successful transitions need supportive structures that include family, peers, and supportive community networks (Jindal-Snape & Miller, 2008). According to Dong et al. (2006), the frequency of

moves mimics serious dysfunctional symptoms of studenthood abuse and neglect, yet this does not apply to military dependent students who move frequently. However, the results of Dong et al.'s (2006) research found that high mobility directly affects a student's neurodevelopment, and frequent moves led to adverse studenthood experiences. Dong et al. (2006) found that

Moving eight times or more was associated with having grown up with multiple serious household dysfunctions, as well as studenthood abuse and neglect compared with respondents without these exposures. (p. 4)

In addition, student in highly-mobile families are placed at greater risk for poverty, single parent households, depression, substance abuse, and teenage pregnancy, which interferes with their quality of life (Dong et al., 2006; Jindal-Snape & Miller, 2008; Mmari et al., 2010).

The transition to a new school is a major life change that requires social support (Martinez et al., 2011). A successful transition relies on the support of family, the community, peers, and the student's ability to cope and adapt to a new environment (Jindal-Snape & Miller, 2008). A student's psychological well-being depends on his or her perception of social support from those who play an important role in their lives (Martinez et al., 2011). Transitions disrupt social connections, academic routines, and peer relationships of students which could lead to isolation, behavioral issues, and low academic achievement (Ryan et al., 2013).

Positive Attitude

Adapting to any new school environment requires a positive outlook. Transition causes stress in students (Davis et al., 2013), especially if that student is military affiliated (Cederbaum et al., 2014; Gilreath et al., 2013; McGuinness & McGuinness, 2014). Sheridan and Dunne (2012) suggested that a positive view when entering any level of educational leads to quick and positive adaptation to a new environment. High mobility leaves military dependent students vulnerable to

the constant state of transition both physically and psychologically (Gilbert, 2008). Transition creates stress which may lead to depression and isolation (Davis et al., 2013). Morton, Mergler and Boman's (2014) study focused on the transition of high school students to a university. They suggested that students who were optimistic did not experience the same level of stress as those who were not. When levels of depression and anxiety are high, the ability of a student to cope with stress during the transition to a university raises stress levels making the transition more difficult. For military dependent students, an optimistic view is difficult to maintain, specifically when a parent is deployed.

According to Cederbaum et al. (2014), military affiliated students are more likely to experience depression and suicidal thoughts, and the absence of the parent during deployment or due to other circumstances directly affects their mental health. As Cederbaum et al. (2014) stated, "Adolescents with parents in the military experienced instability in the home, such as frequent relocation, the stress of the left behind parent, the reintegration of the deployed parent and connectedness to other military families" (p. 673). Therefore, the ability of military dependent students to maintain a positive outlook regarding transition simply adds to the stress associated with depression and mental anxiety.

Mental Health

Although transition is not detrimental to the behavioral development of student, frequent relocation can affect their future mental health (Rumbold et al., 2012). According to Fröjd et al. (2012), depression is prevalent in adolescent mental health during the transition if there are changes in the presence of the caregiver. During adolescence, depression among military dependent students occurs during the absence or the deployment of their parent or caregiver (Cederbaum et al., 2014; Chandra et al., 2010; Lester et al., 2010). Frequent transition disrupts

the family structure and increases stress, “moving disrupts family routines, and can be especially stressful for all family members if the move is not voluntary” (Rumbold et al., 2012, p. 9).

Bradshaw et al. (2010) examined the stressors associated with military transitions. The stressors involve peer relationships strains, adapting to a new school environment, academic challenges, interactions with teachers, and the challenge of participating in after school activities. Although transition did not influence academic achievement, it did increase stress and tension within the family (Berg, 2008; Bradshaw et al., 2010; Phelps et al., 2010; Subramanian & Vinothkumar, 2011). The stress associated with peer relationships causes both anxiety and grief at the loss of friendships. The cycle of transition becomes more difficult as mobility becomes more frequent (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009; Wertsch, 2006).

Difficult Relationships

The difficulty in losing close relationships is compounded by the difficulty in establishing new friendships with peers and relationships with teachers (Bradshaw et al., 2010). Military dependent students cope with loss by distancing themselves and hesitating to establish new relationships for fear of loss. This social delay leads to delays in other areas of development, such as emotional and psychological developmental tasks (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). This delay in emotional and psychological development is labeled “delayed adolescence” and is defined as “when it takes longer to complete emotional and psychological tasks that move us from infancy to adulthood” (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009, p. 146).

The methods used to establish emotional and psychological development include: developing strong relationships, developing self-identity, and competent-decision making skills along with developing independence (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). The interruption of developmental tasks such as establishing relationships delays the cycle of

transition for military dependent students. The cycle takes longer to complete, therefore, creating stress for military dependent students attempting to assimilate into a new school environment (Bradshaw et al., 2010). Transition has no effect on the academic achievement of military dependent students. However, the academic learning gaps left by frequent mobility impedes the transition process. According to Bradshaw et al. (2010) and Berg (2008), the delay in academic learning affects the self-image of military dependent students who transition, and they could not catch up, leaving them to repeat a grade. Despite this delay in filling academic learning gaps, military dependent students continue to adapt quickly in other transition stages such as adaptability and maturation (Bradshaw et al., 2010).

Summary

Transition for military dependent students and their military families is stressful (Clever & Segal, 2013). I focused on military personnel parents and who were stationed stateside. The military family lifestyle is unique in that it consists of frequent relocation and periods of maladjustment for military students (Berg, 2008; Bradshaw et al., 2010; Clever & Segal, 2013; Weber & Weber, 2005). We know that military base schools transition military dependent students easily due to a strong authoritative structure, continuity, and the culture of military communities that support military base school systems (Weber & Weber, 2005). The gap between what we know about base schools and what dependent students experience involves what parents experience during the transition of their student. There is very little research regarding what parents experience during the transition of their students into a military base school. Weber and Weber (2005) argued that patterns of maladjustment associated with military family syndrome (Jensen et al., 1991; LaGrone, 1978; Mmari et al., 2010; Wertsch, 2006) are attributed to frequent moves. Weber and Weber (2005) described the frequency of relocations

and how they increased the rate of behavioral issues. While, Norford and Medway (2002) explained how frequent relocations are not detrimental to highly-mobile adolescents, and they do not demonstrate a negative social outcome. Although adolescents preferred not to move so frequently, the authors argued that students did not suffer any negative social outcomes from the frequent moves (Norford & Medway, 2002). However, the experience of parents was not included in Norford and Medway's study. Active duty families include 1.2 million dependent student that attend school (Clever & Segal, 2013). Transition difficulties for military dependent students occur due to the frequency of relocation. The disruption of routine school peer interactions and community connections brings about stress for military dependent students (Astor et al., 2013; Berg, 2008; Bradshaw et al., 2010; Clever & Segal, 2013; Subramanian & Vinothkumar, 2011).

A transition into any school requires the assistance and support of family, peers, the community, and ultimately the students themselves (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Mmari et al., 2010; Jindal-Snape & Miller, 2008). The location of the school plays an important role in coping with the stress of frequent moves for military families. When the location of the school is on a military base, it provides safety, security, and added support from the military community (Phelps et al., 2010; Mmari et al., 2010), which fosters a sense of trust among families who reside there. Military dependent students are able to assimilate easily into the military base school when there are others with similar backgrounds; Mmari et al. (2010) stated, "making friends with fellow military youth is easier because they tend to know what each other is going through" (p. 361). Mmari et al. (2010) argued that stressors for military dependent students involve the frequency of relocations and the ability to secure new peer relationships. The frequency of moves leads to behavioral issues, which makes transition so traumatic that it

disrupts the emotional, social, and physical well-being of the student (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Qin et al., 2009). In addition, the more frequent the moves, the higher the incidence of attempted suicide (Qin et al., 2009).

Although multiple relocations may not affect social behaviors in adolescents (Norford & Medway, 2002), the stress involved with moving results in adjustment issues including academic performance (Bradshaw et al., 2010). The social support structures for frequently mobile (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009) students are also disrupted during frequent relocations (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Dong et al., 2006; Weber & Weber, 2005). Military dependent students have difficulty developing close relationships, which is an additional stressor (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009; Subramanian & Vinothkumar, 2011). Transitions bring the stress of assimilating into a new school environment without the support of friends and community (Clever & Segal, 2013). The transition of military dependent students varies from civilian students in that the support of other military students acts as a safety net, providing a connection to other students who have experienced the same (Clever & Segal, 2013). Civilian students also move for different reasons than military dependent students.

According to Clever & Segal (2013), for civilian families, unlike military families, moves were due to loss of employment, poverty, a change in occupation, or abuse within the family. Military dependent students move due to military re-assignment. Military base schools provide support through diffusing stressors associated with school transitions; “supportive military environment can alleviate some of the stresses associated with frequent moves by connecting student to other military student in their communities” (Clever & Segal, 2013, p. 29). There are few studies that focus on military dependent students and their transition into a military base school system due to the difficulty in tracking students who move frequently (Chandra &

London, 2013). Subramanian and Vinothkumar (2011) suggested that developmental problems among students that attended military schools include anxiety, depression, fatigue, and psychological illnesses, although the focus of their study centered on students who attended military training schools and not DoDEA schools. Adjustment for military dependent students during the period of transition continues to be of foremost concern, and Chandra and London (2013) stated, “One result of this work is the worry that military student and youth receive insufficient support during periods of transition” (p. 191). Despite this worry, military base school systems managed to provide a high quality educational environment (Berg, 2008; Phelps et al., 2010).

Instances of weapons being carried onto school grounds were more likely to happen among military youth within a public school environment. However, military dependent students who attend a military base school do not demonstrate the same behaviors. A basic need for military dependent students is safety (Phelps et al., 2010; Mmari et al., 2010; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009), which is provided by a military base school. The location of a military base school provides safety and security and adds support of the military community (Phelps et al., 2010; Mmari et al., 2010), which fosters a sense of trust among military families. Military dependent students are able to blend easily into the military base school environment when there are others with similar backgrounds; “making friends with fellow military youth was easier because they would tend to know what each other was going through” (Mmari et al., 2010, p. 361).

When a parent is deployed, this stresses and threatens the sense of safety of a military dependent student. Therefore, the victimization of military dependent students and the carrying of weapons is more likely to occur (Gilreath et al., 2013, Gilreath et al., 2014) than if that student is attending a public school. Military dependent students need, emotional support, specifically

during the deployment of a parent. McGuiness & McGuiness (2014) explained how the levels of anxiety in student rose during the deployment or during the absence of a military parent. High anxiety in student of deployed military personnel is a result of uncertainty of their parents' safety (Lester et al., 2010). Lester et al. (2010) argued that a military dependents' maladjustment issues are more prevalent than that of civilian students and become increasingly worse when the parent is suffering through psychological distress accompanied with an increase in deployments.

There are higher rates of behavioral and emotional anxiety disorders among military dependent student (Cederbaum et al., 2014; Chandra et al., 2010; Lester et al., 2010). According to Cederbaum et al. (2014), military affiliated student are more likely to suffer depression and have suicidal thoughts. The absence of the parent during deployment or lengthy training exercises or deployments directly affects mental health. According to Cederbaum et al. (2014), "Adolescents with parents in the military may also experience instability in the home, such as frequent relocation, the stress of the left behind parent, the reintegration of the deployed parent and connectedness to other military families" (p. 673). Cederbaum et al. (2014) focused on the well-being of military youth and how deployments affect their mental health. They found that military youth are more likely to suffer from poor mental well-being than their civilian counterparts. When parents are deployed, military dependent students find themselves overwhelmed with additional responsibilities which results in higher rates of behavioral, emotional difficulties, and depression (Cederbaum et al., 2014, Gilreath et al., 2013; McGuiness & McGuiness, 2014). The stress factor associated with military dependent students' adjustment issues rise during frequent transitions/relocations or the deployment of a parent or caregiver and when the transition took place during the move or the parent's deployment. The location of a military base school provides safety, stability, and a supportive environment.

Academic Achievement

Although Marchant and Medway (1987) suggested that academic achievement of military students is not affected by frequent relocation, Phelps et al. (2010) suggested that military deployment does affect the academic achievement of students, specifically during the deployment of a parent. Phelps et al.'s (2010) research focused on the academic achievement of elementary school students during the deployment of a family member. The results supported the argument that deployment negatively impacts academic achievement. The academic achievement scores of elementary school student were studied during parental deployment and then studied when the parents were stateside. Despite meeting the national score averages, military dependent students' academic scores dropped during the deployment of a parent (Phelps et al., 2010). The timing of frequent transition did not show an effect on academic achievement (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Marchant & Medway, 1987; Weber & Weber, 2005).

The stress associated with transition impacts military dependent families, but the impact of parental deployment affects academic achievement and has a negative impact on the mental health of adolescents (Cederbaum et al., 2014). Therefore, transition, although stressful, does not influence military dependent students' academic achievement as negatively as deployment (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Phelps et al., 2010; Weber & Weber, 2005). Transition impacts the mental health, and well-being and delays cognitive development in military dependent students (Cederbaum et al., 2014; McGuinness & McGuinness, 2014; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). Cederbaum et al.,(2014) focused on the mental health of military dependent secondary students. According to Cederbaum et al. (2014), adolescents understand the reasoning behind the consequences of frequent moves and parental deployments. For military dependent adolescents, understanding the possible results of deployments leads to depression, anxiety, and for some,

secondary post-traumatic stress disorder. The findings of the study conveyed that military dependent adolescents are more likely to suffer from feelings of hopelessness and sadness and tend to have suicidal thoughts when responsibilities become overwhelming and stressful situations become more frequent (Cederbaum et al., 2014).

Military Culture

Military families are immersed in the military culture (Wertsch, 2006). Whether overseas or stateside, the military family found support within the military culture and community (Berg, 2008; Phelps et al., 2010; Weber & Weber, 2005). The location of the community in which a military family lives enables them to easily find support. Gorman (2010) suggested that a connection between culture and the individual is needed in order to meet basic needs. The connection of meeting the basic needs of military families and the military culture is the basis for successful transition for military dependent students. The military culture provides structure that encourages support for military families. When the basic needs of families are met, then the basic needs of the military dependent students are met. Therefore, the connection lies within the military culture meeting the military family's basic needs to provide ease of transition for military dependent students within a military base school system.

The term third culture kids or TCKs was first identified by Useem (1999), but Pollock and Van Reken (2009) explained TCKs as accepting of a "third culture," or a culture created to bridge both the host and home culture. This phenomenological study focused on the parents of military dependent students also known as military brats (Wertsch, 2006). The term military brat is a term of endearment often used to categorize student of military personnel; however, in this study, the term military dependent student was used. A military dependent student is defined as an unmarried student of a military service member, incapable of self-support and dependent on

the member for more than one-half of the student's support (National Military Family Association, 2005). Although studies used the TCK label as an umbrella for all the categories, each sub-category has different experiences based on their family, cultural, and organizational environments. The military dependent student has a unique cultural environment complete with specific expectations of behaviors and discipline. The military culture provides a controlled, authoritative structure that supports military dependent students behaviorally and academically (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009; Weber & Weber, 2005; Wertsch, 2006).

It is this connection of the military family with the military culture that nurtures the environment of military dependent students. The location of the military base school fosters a sense of safety and social connectedness, enables students to cope with the stress of a new school environment, and creates a sense of security (Mmari et al., 2010). As a subset of TCKs, the lives of military dependent students are defined by mobility (Gilbert, 2008). High mobility leaves military dependent students vulnerable both physically and psychologically (Gilbert, 2008). Transition creates stress, which leads to depression and isolation (Davis et al., 2013). According to Fragoso et al. (2013), the transition process involves emotional stressors such as anxiety, stagnating between academic and family obligations, and the feeling of guilt. This stage of stagnation conveys the lack of control students feel as they transitioned (Fragoso et al., 2013).

Stress for Adolescents

Transition from an adolescents' perspective is difficult, as "transition can be legitimately considered a challenge of living" (Jindal-Snape & Miller, 2008, p. 217). Jindal-Snape and Miller (2008) emphasized that the interpretation of personal and social experiences for student must be the focus in order to assist them in coping with school transitions. Successful transitions need supportive structures that include family, peers, and community networks (Jindal-Snape &

Miller, 2008). According to Dong et al. (2006), the frequency of moves may demonstrate serious dysfunctional symptoms of studenthood abuse and neglect; yet, this did not apply to military dependent students who moved frequently. However, the results of Dong's et al. (2006) research found that high mobility directly affects a student's neurodevelopment, and those frequent moves lead to adverse studenthood experiences. Dong et al (2006) stated, "Moving eight times or more was associated with having grown up with multiple serious household dysfunctions, as well as studenthood abuse and neglect compared with respondents without these exposures" (p. 4). In addition, student in highly mobile families were placed at greater risk for poverty, single parent households, depression, substance abuse, and teenage pregnancy, which interferes with their quality of life (Dong et al., 2006; Jindal-Snape & Miller, 2008; Mmari et al., 2010).

Transition causes stress in students (Davis et al., 2013) and more so if the student is military affiliated (Cederbaum et al., 2014; Gilreath et al, 2013; McGuinness & McGuinness, 2014). Sheridan and Dunne (2012) suggested that optimism, when entering any level of education, leads to quick and positive adaptation to a new environment. High mobility leaves military dependent students vulnerable to the constant state of transition both physically and psychologically (Gilbert, 2008). Transition creates stress, which leads to depression and isolation (Davis et al., 2013). Morton, Mergler and Boman (2014) focused on the transition of high school students to a university. They suggested that students who were optimistic do not experience the same level of stress as those who are not. High levels of depression and anxiety interfere with a student's ability to cope with stress during the transition to a university. The stress of transition raises anxiety levels, making the transition more difficult. For military dependent students, an optimistic view is difficult to maintain, especially when a parent is deployed.

According to Cederbaum et al. (2014), military affiliated students are more likely to experience depression and suicidal thoughts. The absence of a parent during deployment or training directly affects a student's mental health. Cederbaum et al. (2014) stated, "Adolescents with parents in the military may also experience instability in the home, such as frequent relocation, the stress of parent that is left behind, the reintegration of the deployed parent and connectedness to other military families" (p. 673). Therefore, the ability of military dependent students to maintain a positive outlook regarding transition simply adds to the stress associated with depression and mental anxiety.

Outsider mentality. Military dependent students have a unique perspective when entering a school environment. Their perspective involves the "outsider mentality" (Wertsch, 2006). The outsider mentality is defined as the feeling of isolation accompanied by the inability to relate to peers and the difficulty in fitting into their home culture (Wertsch, 2006). However, the military dependent student fits well into the military base school system. There is a shared sense of values, beliefs, and expected behaviors (Chandra & London, 2013; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009; Wertsch, 2006). The outsider mentality only applies during transitions into the civilian public schools; however, the importance of this mentality supports the differences in military and civilian cultures. According to Pollock and Van Reken (2009), the cultural differences for TCKs include embracing a third culture separate from their home culture and the foreign culture in which they currently live. Military dependent students live within the military culture, different from that of the civilian culture they were born into and separate from the foreign culture they temporarily embrace. Pollock and Van Reken (2009) explained that there are critical stages during transition. The stages include involvement, leaving, transition, entering, and re-involvement. The important key to a smooth transition is the involvement of

parents and caregivers who set the tone for involving the student in the moving process and allow them to be an active participant in the moving experience (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009).

Bradshaw et al. (2010) examined the stressors associated with military transitions. According to Bradshaw et al. (2010), stressors involve strain on peer relationships, adapting to a new school environment, academic challenges, interactions with teachers, and the challenge of participating in after-school activities. Although transition does not influence academic achievement, it does increase stress and tension within the military family (Berg, 2008; Bradshaw et al., 2010; Phelps et al., 2010; Subramanian & Vinothkumar, 2011). The stress associated with peer relationships causes both anxiety and grief at the loss of friendships. The cycle of transition becomes more difficult as the mobility becomes more frequent (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009; Wertsch, 2006). The difficulty of losing close relationships affects how military dependent students establish future friendships.

Pollock and Van Reken (2009) explained how grief is reoccurring, and for every transition, there is loss in order to accommodate what is gained. Losing close relationships is compounded by the difficulty in establishing new friendships with peers and relationships with teachers (Bradshaw et al., 2010). Military dependent students cope with loss by distancing themselves and hesitating to establish new relationships for fear of loss (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). Social delays lead to delays in additional development areas such as emotional and psychological developmental tasks (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009). This delay in emotional and psychological development is considered “delayed adolescence” and is defined as “emotional and psychological tasks that move us from infancy to adulthood” (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009, p. 146). The methods used to establish emotional and psychological development are developing

strong relationships and self-identity and acquiring competent decision-making skills independently (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009).

The interruption of developmental tasks delays the cycle of transition for military dependent students. The cycle takes longer to complete, therefore creating stress for military dependent students attempting to assimilate into a new school environment (Bradshaw et al., 2010). Transition has no effect on the academic achievement of military dependent students unless deployment is involved (Phelps et al., 2010). However, the academic learning gaps left by frequent mobility also impede the transition process. According to Bradshaw et al. (2010) and Berg (2008), the delay in academic learning affects the self-image of military dependent students who transitioned and could not catch up, which led them to need to repeat a grade. Despite academic learning gaps, military dependent students continued to adapt quickly in transition stages such as adaptability and maturation (Bradshaw et al., 2010).

The military dependent student faces many difficulties that are different than the difficulties civilian students face. The difficulty begins when military dependent students step away from the supportive military culture into a foreign, civilian world. Despite their ability to cope and adapt quickly, military dependent students still experience difficulties that a military base school may be better prepared to address. Factors that assist with a smooth transition into a military base school include a supportive military community, strong military culture with high expectations, peers they could share similar experiences with, a positive outlook, and the support of parents and siblings during the transition from one place into another (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Clever & Segal, 2013; Phelps et al., 2010). When these systems of support are unavailable, the results are substance abuse, stress, anxiety, and even secondary post-traumatic stress disorder (Cederbaum et al., 2013, Gilreath et al., 2013, 2014). The needs of military dependent students

include the feelings of safety in both their community and school environment. A military base school immersed in military culture provides a support system that encourages a smooth transition for families and their military dependent student.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

Military dependent students transition more frequently than civilians. Military dependent students are three times more likely to transition into a new school (Military Student Education Coalition, 2015) than their civilian counterparts. Transition, for the purpose of this study, was defined as “anticipated transitions – the scheduled, expected events that are likely to occur for the individual and that can be anticipated and rehearsed – and unanticipated transitions – the nonscheduled events that are not predictable” (Schlossberg, 1984, p. 119). Chapter Three discussed the design and the research questions that drove the focus of this study. The participants, the setting, the researchers’ role, and the procedures used to collect data were also addressed. Lastly, the analysis of the data, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations of the study were followed by a summary of all topics discussed.

Design

A qualitative, transcendental phenomenological design was used in this study to best describe the experience of parents during the transition of their student into a military base school. A qualitative phenomenological design encapsulates the wholeness or essence of the parent’s experience of their student’s transition rather than quantifying numerical measurements (Moustakas, 1994). In a transcendental phenomenological study, Moustakas (1994) suggested that researchers separate their own experience from those of their participants through the use of the epoche process. The epoche process requires the researcher to set aside what they know in order to listen to the experience of their participants without their own preconceived judgements. In this way, the experience of the participants are not influenced by the experiences of the researcher. This leaves the researcher “completely open, receptive, and naïve in listening to and

hearing research participants describe their experience of the phenomenon being investigated” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 22). In this study, the phenomenon investigated was a specific population of military affiliated parents and their shared experiences during the transition of their student into a military base school.

Research Questions

Central question (CQ): What is the experience of parents whose students have transitioned into a military base school?

Sub question (SQ1): What positive aspects do parents experience with the transitioning of their student?

Sub question (SQ2): What difficulties do parents experience in the transitioning of their student?

Sub question (SQ3): How do parents cope with those difficulties?

Setting

Although the participants were all military affiliated, a specific setting was not chosen for this study. Military parents were chosen from different parts of the country. Participants throughout the country provided a large recruiting area. There are different school systems under the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA). The organizational structure of the DoDEA begins with the DoDEA director who oversees the three different area directors for the DoDEA regions in Europe, Pacific, and the Americas (US Department of Defense Education Activity, 2016). It is the area directors for the DoDEA regions who oversee the district superintendents. For example, the area director for the Americas oversees the district superintendents for Kentucky (12 schools), Fort Stewart/South Carolina/Cuba(10 schools), New York/Virginia/Puerto Rico(nine schools), Fort Bragg (nine schools), Georgia/Alabama(10

schools), and Camp Lejeune (seven schools). Each of those schools has a principal, teachers, and support staff. According to the DoDEA website, (US Department of Defense Education Activity, 2016) students must have one parent in the military and live on-post regardless if their parent is deployed or stateside in order to attend military base school.

Participants

Participants were military affiliated parents with student who had transitioned into a military base school system. Participants represented the Army, Air Force, and Marine Corp branches of the military with a variety of ranks within those branches. A total of 10 participants were invited to participate. Participants were approached using Facebook, email, and phone calls. Parents were added if the parent participants were relocated or deployed. Participants were those who experienced the transition of their student for a year or more (Pollack & Van Reken, 2009; Wertsch, 2006). The participants were identified from the population through their military affiliation and if they had student who transitioned. They were military parents who had students that transitioned into DoDEA schools. The participants were selected from various friends from work and those with ties to the military. Participants were also briefed on the details presented in the consent form of the study once their interest in participating was confirmed verbally through email or through a phone call. After the participants read and signed the consent form, they were asked if they had any further questions about the study. For the purpose of maximum variation in sampling (Ploeg, 1999), the participants were racially diverse, of different rank, and from families representing different branches of services. Snowball sampling was used in order to find participants that would be interested in taking part in this study (Heckathorn, 2011). After completing the required activities, I asked participants if they knew others who would be interested in participating in this research study.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Service Branch</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Number of Moves</i>
Jennifer	Caucasian	Army	E – 6	4
Diane	Caucasian	Army	E – 5	6
Daron	Caucasian	Army	E – 7	4
Erin	Black	USAF	E – 8	10
Shannon	Caucasian	Army	Captain	6
Michael	Hispanic	Marine Corp	Gunnery Sgt	9
Ernie	Hispanic	Army	E – 6	6
Alison	Caucasian	Army	E – 5	4
William	Pacific Islander	Army	Colonel	15
Melody	Caucasian	Army	E – 5	5

Procedures

I attained Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from Liberty University’s IRB (see Appendix A). Participants were recruited through the use of the Facebook page, Brats: Our Journey, and referral by other participants. The process of attaining informed consent involved meeting the participant either in person or discussing the details of the study in emails and Facebook messages (See Appendix B). I obtained informed consent after I explained the requirements of the study and answered every question each participant had. I then asked the participants to sign and date the consent form if they agreed to participate. I conducted interviews with participants and recorded them for future data organization purposes. I provided

an anonymous personal data sheet for participants to fill out in order to convey demographics such as rank and to filter out those participants who did not fit the criteria of the study.

The interviews consisted of open-ended questions that focused on the parents' experience with the transition of their military dependent student. Schlossberg's (1984, 2011) theory of transition guided the interview questions, timelines, and advice letters. I created a timeline for participants so they could describe the frequency of their transitions. I also created an advice letter template so that participants could advise future parents on the transition of their student. In addition, I also developed a questionnaire in order to attain demographics of participants. I also used social media such as Facebook, emails, and instant messaging to contact perspective participants and to provide data collection.

Table 2

Participant Roles

<i>Name</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Role</i>	<i>Marital Status</i>	<i>Current location</i>
Jennifer	Female	Spouse	Married	Virginia
Diane	Female	Soldier	Married	Tennessee
Daron	Male	Soldier	Married	North Carolina
Erin	Female	Airman	Single	Germany
Shannon	Female	Spouse	Married	North Carolina
Michael	Male	Marine	Married	North Carolina
Ernie	Male	Soldier	Married	South Carolina
Alison	Female	Spouse	Married	Minnesota
William	Male	Soldier	Married	North Carolina
Melody	Female	Spouse	Married	North Carolina

The Researcher's Role

A qualitative study requires researchers to explain their role as the human instrument (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In a transcendental phenomenological study, Moustakas (1994) suggested that researchers separate their own experience from those of their participants through the use of bracketing. In this way, the experience of the participants is not influenced by the experiences of the researcher. I was a military dependent student through my primary, elementary, middle, and secondary schooling. My family moved a total of eight times during my time in school. I attended both civilian and military base schools. It was during my family's move overseas to a DoDEA school that I became more aware of the transition experience. I attended junior high and high school in Darmstadt, Germany. I fit in very quickly, and I was able to make friends due to the friendliness of other students and the help of my parents. My parents played an essential role in my ability to assimilate into school quickly. They prepared me ahead of time by showing me pictures of the school I would go to, by introducing me to the school before I registered for class and allowing me time to adjust to my new home before I began classes. They also introduced me to the student of their friends so that I would know other students when I started school. I was curious to know if other parents prepared their students the way my parents prepared me. My motivation for this study was to understand the experiences of parents who transitioned their student into a military base school.

Data Collection

The goal of this study was to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences and perceptions during the transition of their student into a military base school. Triangulation increases data validity through using different methods of collection to study a phenomenon and is defined as "the combination of two or more theories, data sources, methods or investigators in

one study of a single phenomenon” (Yeasmin & Rahman, 2012, p. 156). Triangulation addresses credibility and dependability. Yeasmin and Rahman discussed triangulation by saying, “validation in the social sciences might be achieved by the collection of corroborating findings from the same respondents and on the same topic but using different methods” (p. 155). There were three forms of data collection used to address triangulation: interviews, time lines, and advice letters. Triangulation occurred during the analysis of all three forms of collected data.

Interviews were conducted face-to-face or through a phone call with additional follow up emails to clarify any transcript discrepancies. Interviews were then transcribed and shared with the participant so that any mistakes or omission were corrected. After the collection of the revised transcription, the timeline and advice letter was distributed to the participant. The timeline and advice letter forms were sent to the participant via email, which they could complete at their earliest convenience. After completion of the timeline and advice letter, the information was again reviewed by the participant in order to correct errors or to make additional comments. I developed the sequence of the interviews, timelines, and advice letters to fit the convenience of the participants. I conducted interviews first during a time when the participant was most comfortable and had the time to sit down face-to-face, while the timelines and advice letters were completed either after the interview or during a later date. In this way, the perception of the participant could be observed during the face-to-face interview. As Moustakas (1994) stated, “Perception is regarded as the primary source of knowledge, the source that cannot be doubted” (p. 52).

Interviews

Below is a subset of interview questions that provided insight into the transition of military dependent students. A description of each question, along with supportive literature,

elaborated on the transition itself, the interaction of parents, and the schools all from the perspective of the military dependent student.

The following questions aligned with the following central question, “What is the experience of parents who students have transitioned into a military base school?”

1. What was your experience when your student transitioned into a military base school?
2. What do military dependent students need to experience a positive school transition?
3. Please describe your student’s last school transition.
4. Please describe how you helped your student make the transition from their old school.
5. How did your student’s old school help them transition?
6. Were there any programs that assisted you with your student’s transition into a military base school?
7. Why did your family move? Orders? Deployment?
8. How did you cope with the stress of the move?
9. How did you prepare your student for the transition into a military base school?
10. Thinking about your student’s past transitions, what were the positive aspects and the difficulties?
11. Is there anything you would like to add about your experience with your students’ transition to a military base school?

The purpose of the questions pertaining to transition referred to parents’ experience while their student transitioned into a new school. Questions one through four focused on the perspective of the parents’ experience of their student’s transition (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Gilbert, 2008; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009; Wertsch, 2006). Questions five through seven emphasized the response of participants to the student’s transition in order to provide much-

needed community support perspective (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Pollock & Van Reken, 2009; Wertsch, 2006).

The questions that focused on parental perspectives, such as questions one, two, and eight, provided insight from parents and their experience of their student's school transition (Davis et al., 2013; Gilbert, 2008; Jindal-Snape & Miller, 2008). Transition literature described how vital families and schools are to transition from one school to another with schools being "a stabilizing force in the lives of adolescents" (Berg, 2008, p. 46). Transitions have an effect on an individual through change and how that individual relates within their social context (Crafter & Maunder, 2012).

Time lines

A time line (See Appendix E) template was given to parents to complete in order to gain insight into how many times they had experienced the transition of their student. Timelines also aligned with the following research sub-questions: "What positive aspects do parents experience during the transition of their student?" and "What difficulties do parents experience during the transition of their student?" In this way, I could understand how parents coped with the transition of their student. Participants were required to complete a timeline that detailed their experiences with moving and the frequency of those moves. Timelines also described the process of transition by giving a chronological order of the steps taken to begin their student's transition.

Advice Letters

Parents completed advice letters in order to give advice to other parents that will experience the same transition of their student. Advice letters also give other parents insight into what worked for the parent participant and what they did to improve and make the transition of their student smoother (see Appendix F). The advice letter aligns with the sub-question, "How

do parents cope with those difficulties?” Advice letters allowed readers to visualize the experience of parents with the hopes of assisting other parents in the same situation.

Data Analysis

I followed Moustakas’ (1994) recommendations for data analysis for a transcendental phenomenological study. First, my own experiences as a military dependent student were bracketed out using a process referred to as epoche. I used epoche to set aside prejudgments, preconceptions, beliefs, and knowledge of the phenomenon from prior experiences and to be completely open and receptive to the experiences of participants (Moustakas, 1994).

Next, I transcribed the data and analyzed the data from interviews, timelines and advice letters to other parents. The use of computer-assisted software, Atlas.ti, provided data organization of the narratives derived from the analyzed sources. Significant statements began to emerge and repeat throughout the narratives. After identifying 135 significant statements, I began to code those statements and develop clusters of meaning. I then synthesized those statements into themes “into the textures of the experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 122). After analysis of those statements, I developed four significant themes with the support of each statement. Themes that developed described what the participants experienced or the textural descriptions (Moustakas, 1994). The difficulty with description is identifying the “what” or the phenomenon parents experience during the transition of their student (Moustakas, 1994). The, “what” of the descriptions involved, “What is the nature of the phenomenon? What are its’ qualities? What appears at different times under various conditions?”(Moustakas, 1994, p. 78). The textural descriptions lead to the structural descriptions or how a participant experienced the transition of their student into a military base school. Structural descriptions involve “conscious acts of thinking and judging, imagining and recollections in order to arrive at core structural

meanings.” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 79). The textural and structural descriptions of participant narratives are needed together in order to understand the essence of the phenomenon or experience (Moustakas, 1994).

Trustworthiness

Strengthening construct validity of a phenomenological study requires the use of multiple sources. The following four sources were used in this study: member checks, audit trail, triangulation, and thick descriptions (Moustakas, 1994). The use of audit trails also assisted in strengthening credibility and supported construct validity by eliminating errors and bias. Three methods of triangulation were used: interviews, timelines, and advice letters. These three methods ensured credibility and dependability. Member checks were conducted with the use of transcripts that were sent back to the participants for verification purposes. Mistakes made during the transcription process were addressed and corrected by the participants and researcher. Transcriptions of participant interviews, timelines, and advice letters provided thick descriptions of parents’ experiences with the transition of their student. The essence of the parent’s experience was described through the detailed transcriptions shared of parents’ feelings about the transition of their student, the steps they used to help their student transition, and their perspectives on how well their student adjusted to their military base school (Moustakas, 1994).

Credibility

Member checks took place throughout the research process. The transcripts from interviews, timeline narratives, and advice letters were sent back to the participants in order to check for accuracy. Participants were included in the analysis and were informed of the results of the study. Concerns were addressed during the participants’ review of transcripts, and I

sought suggestions in order to correct mistakes in the transcripts and clarify answers given during data collection.

Dependability and Confirmability

I maintained a clear and accurate audit trail during research for the purpose of dependability and confirmability. I included examples of interview transcriptions, timeline descriptions, and audit trails in the appendices along with the documentation of research steps. I kept all documents pertaining to this research study, such as interview transcripts and analysis results, in a locked file cabinet. I kept all computer files and transcripts password protected. In addition, I consulted an expert reviewer with a doctoral degree during the review of this phenomenological study.

Transferability

Triangulation is another aspect that assists with transferability. The four sources used to ensure triangulation in this study were: interviews, timeline narratives, and advice letters (Moustakas, 1994). Transcriptions of participant interviews, timelines, and advice letters provided thick descriptions of parents' experiences with the transition of their student. The essence of parents' experiences was described through the detailed transcriptions of parents' shared feelings about the transition of their student, the steps they used to help their student transition, and their perspectives on how the parents coped with their transition (Moustakas, 1994). The transcripts of participants provided a parents' perception of their student's experience during their transition. In this phenomenological study, perception was defined as, "regarded as the primary source of knowledge, the source that cannot be doubted" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 52).

Ethical Considerations

I obtained approval from the Liberty University IRB. I reviewed the ethical conduct requirements and followed them in order to prevent harm of the participants involved. When participants conveyed interest in participating, they were asked to read over a consent form that described the required activities of the study. I also encouraged them to ask questions, and I informed them that their participation was strictly voluntary and anonymous. I also reminded them that they could withdraw from the study at any time. I thoroughly briefed the participants on the research objectives and purpose of this study to support full disclosure and to protect vulnerable populations (Moustakas, 1994). After I informed participants of the requirements and activities, I then asked them to sign the consent form. I protected the privacy of participants through the use of pseudonyms within the study and the use of computer password protection concerning interviews, timelines, and advice letters. I kept all hardcopy documents in a locked filing cabinet.

Summary

A qualitative, transcendental phenomenological study was the best design to use to describe the experience of parents during the transition of their student into a military base school. The use of a qualitative, phenomenological design provided detailed, thick descriptions from participants. The research questions focused on what parents experienced when their student transitioned into a military base school. Data collection included the use of interviews, timelines, and letters of advice that provided the triangulation needed to establish consistency of findings. To set aside prejudgments, preconceptions, beliefs, and knowledge of the phenomenon from prior experiences, I used epoche to remain open and receptive to the experiences of participants (Moustakas, 1994). Data analysis began with the transcription of interviews. The

use of computer-assisted software, Atlas.ti, provided data organization of the narratives derived from the transcribed interviews, timelines, and advice letters. Significant statements emerged and were repeated throughout the narratives. Statements were then synthesized into themes “into the textures of the experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 122).

After analysis, I developed statements and four significant themes emerged with the support of each statement. I briefed participants thoroughly to prevent emotional harm, support optional participation, and to protect the vulnerable student population. I used an audit trail, triangulation, member checks, and thick descriptions (Moustakas, 1994) to support credibility, dependability, and transferability. Participant privacy was an additional concern that was protected through the use of computer password protections of all documentation and pseudonyms for participants, and hardcopies were locked in a filing cabinet. The analysis concluded that the experience of parents determined the outcome of their student’s transition and that parents were able to find positive experiences despite the stress of the transition through using different strategies to cope with their move.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental, phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of military parents whose student have transitioned into a military base school. The data needed in a phenomenological study must be rich, descriptive data that fully describes the experience of parents (Moustakas, 1994). Through the use of interviews, timelines, and letters of advice to other parents, synthesized analysis of the participants' words was accomplished. Chapter Four includes a brief introductions of each participant. The themes that evolve from the statements are supported by the words of the participants and presented for analysis with each research question answered. The following sections provide descriptions of parents' experiences through quotes used from their interviews, timelines and advice letters. Theme development emerges using the transcribed data, research question responses are answered, and a summary of the sections is provided.

Participants

There were 10 participants in this study. All the participants were military affiliated parents with student who had transitioned into a military base school. Participants were recruited through the use of Facebook, specifically the Brats: Our Journey Facebook page and referred by other participants. Participants represented the Army, Air Force, and Marine Corp branches of the military with a variety of ranks within those branches. All participants have student who have attended or were currently attending DoDEA schools. The participants' families moved more than once in their military careers. Table 1 describes the demographics of the participants such as race, service branch, rank, and number of moves they had experienced.

Jennifer

Jennifer is the mother of two teenage daughters who have both transitioned into DoDEA schools. Her husband was an E-6 and a recruiter in the Army. Their family has moved a total of four times to different duty stations stateside and overseas. Jennifer's family found out about their first move through the military's use of an assignment notification system. Jennifer had a routine set for each move. First, her husband would receive orders for their move. As a family, they spent time packing what they needed so the movers could pick up their household goods. When they arrived and their items followed, they began the enrollment process of their daughters into school. When asked what she experienced when her student transitioned into their new school and how she coped she said:

I felt a little helpless. I felt a little isolated. I did not know who to go to. Most of the people I was meeting had been there awhile and developed their little cliques and routines. I take my time at developing relationships. For the first six months, I kept the kids super close to me. I got a job at the elementary school, and that seemed to help curb some of their anxieties as well as my own.

Jennifer also described the experience she and her daughters had with their old school. She explained a very positive send off from her daughter's old school. They were stationed in Mannheim, Germany, during the time of their transition:

The post in Mannheim, Germany, was closing and they did a huge celebration for the students and families that lived there. It was a wonderful thing to witness. Our family loved living there and besides that, social media has kept all my daughters' friends in touch. They still share memories and stories almost six years later. We didn't have that

when I was growing up. I think the farewell celebration on post really helped put closure on a goodbye that was hard for many families.

When asked to describe her student's last transition, Jennifer described the transition as one of the most difficult she experienced. She explained how her husband was retiring just as her daughters were transitioning into middle and high school:

The last one was the toughest. My husband was retiring. The kids were entering high school and middle school. We all remember those days; it was tough trying to fit in during those times. Kids are far more cliquy. We were in the process of buying a house, and I was commuting them from one city to another to attend school. I will say that my youngest had matured socially far more than my oldest and she made friends quicker and fell in a routine quicker...even though there were some rough spots. I think moving from post to post really set her up in the better. My oldest is like me though...she takes her time with relationships.

When I asked Jennifer about the positives and the difficulties of transitioning into a new area she explained:

The positives were traveling to wonderful places that I otherwise would have never been to and meeting people that I would have never met. Getting out of a small town and out of small town thinking; there is a whole world out there. The difficulties were we bought our first house at the age of 38 and we will be dead before we pay it off.

Jennifer now lives in Virginia with her family. Her husband has retired from the service and her family is happy to be stable.

Erin

Erin is a service member and single mother with one daughter who attended DoDEA school overseas. She is an E-8 in the US Air Force and has moved 10 times over the course of her military career. Erin used the Airman and Family Readiness center to help her in the process of moving and the school liaison at the base to help her with her daughter's transition. When asked how she helped her daughter with her transition, she explained how she involved her with the move and did her best to prepare her for what to expect, "I just tried to sit and talk with my daughter about the move and what to expect as much as possible."

During the completion of the parental advice letter, when asked what Erin experienced when her daughters transition, she explained what she learned from observing her daughter's transition:

That my transition doesn't affect me the same way it will affect my daughter. I've moved around a lot more than her, and I'm a little more resilient in that aspect, so I have to be cautious of how I handled her feelings and emotions.

Erin also explained how she was mindful to consider her daughter and made her feel as if she were part of the move:

Just be mindful of their feelings because it's a big transition for you but it's an even bigger one for your student as well. Make them feel like it's a family move, not just a move for you and make sure you find things that they're interested in doing to try to make life a little less stressful for them as well.

Erin described how she did her best to think of her daughter during transitions. She detailed how she improved her daughter's transition into a military base school:

I made sure that I spoke with her teachers to make sure they knew I was invested in my student's education so they would know that if there's an issue that I would be there for her and the teacher. That made life a little less complicated. Then I tried to find ways to get to know her new friends' parents so that we could have play dates and my daughter would feel more comfortable and not so alienated.

Alison

Alison is the spouse of an E-5 and has moved with her family six times over their military career. Alison expressed what her family felt during the process of transition. "We were a bit hesitant, scared, and excited at the same time." Just as Jennifer had a routine, Alison had a sequence she followed during each move, including orders, packing, arrival, and enrollment of her student. Although Alison did her best to prevent the unexpected, she noted in her parental advice letter specific things she wanted to share with other parents:

Always make sure your student feels they are a part of the move. Involve them according to age in some decision-making processes for the move. Remember they are uprooting their life as well. Ensure they know you are there for them.

Alison expressed her concern for her student's wellbeing during her face-to-face interview. She described how she communicated with her student and assured them that she was there for them:

I made sure I was always there for them to talk to. Made sure she knew I understood. I tried to get them involved in extracurricular activities to meet people outside of school. They needed to have something other than school. Since I recognized that school was the stressor, I made sure they had a way to keep in touch with old friends via FaceTime and Skype.

Shannon

Shannon is the spouse of a captain in the Army. Their family moved six times with each move planned by them. Shannon felt most of their moves were good for their family because it would bring them closer to family members. The moves that were difficult occurred during their student's teenage years. Their student began school in DoDEA schools overseas. Shannon was able to enroll her student into an on-post school, and she felt it made the transition easier for her student. She explained how "It took six months for her students to become acclimated to their environment, to feel comfortable, and to find activities that they enjoyed doing." Shannon also described how she coped with her families multiple moves:

I think that if you are a military person or a spouse of a military person, you have to learn to kind of roll with the punches, and you get better as you are dealing with that longer. I just think if you can learn to see the positive in the experience and make the best of it, that's what you can do for yourself.

Shannon explained the positives she witnessed in her student during their last transition into a DoDEA's school:

My oldest son wishes that he had been more open to what he did see over there and realizes the opportunity he did have. I mean how many times do you get to see Pompeii and Rome, you know all those things that he actually did see but really didn't appreciate at the time.

Shannon continued to explain that the positives, "may not reveal themselves until later, but in the moment you focus on the positives of the move and do the best you can."

The chart below displays the gender and roles of the participants and the location of their last duty station.

Michael

Michael was a Gunnery Sergeant in the US Marine Corps. He and his family moved nine times both overseas and stateside. Michael found out that his family would experience a permanent change of station (PCS) when the Marine Corp informed him of his orders. Michael discussed how he always made it seem like an adventure for the kids each time they moved to a new duty station. Michael prepared his students with as much information as he could, “We always had booklets and pamphlets, and we would look forward to getting pictures you know because then you look forward to getting there.”

In his advice letter to parents, Michael described additional advice he wanted to give other parents:

Kids are kids whether they are in kindergarten or high school. Their life experiences are limited as is their experience and exposure to the things they will encounter later in life. Never expect them to understand issues the way you do as a parent and one who has a lifetime of experience.

As a Marine, Michael found different ways to cope with the stress of transition. He described his approach to transition as positive and goal-oriented. Michael liked to present transition to his student in a positive light, making it a fun adventure. He loved his job as a Marine and enjoyed sharing that joy with his family:

Well for me, I’m one of those types of guys that gets up in the morning and asks what do we have to do, then let’s do it. I don’t try to think about how much trouble this is going to be. Okay, we’re not getting out of this, so let’s do this and let’s make it fun. I always tried to make life fun for my kids and I use to tell them you know if you’re doing something and it’s not fun, if you get a job and you don’t love getting up in the morning and going

there every morning you need to get another job. You need a job that you would do for free, and I used to tell them if you get a job that you wouldn't do for free then don't do it at all. I loved the Marine Corp, I loved what I was, and I loved what I was doing.

When asked about the positives, Michael found that the transition of his student into a DoDEA school was a positive experience for them and for him. He viewed the transition of his student as an introduction to high expectations and discipline. He described how his student were ahead of other students because of the discipline they were accustomed to within the military culture.

In military schools, the positive thing about that was the discipline and the expectation level there and kids will meet the expectation, kids will meet the lowest expectation you give to them, and the military schools understand that. And they expect a lot from them, and they hit it and that's the positive thing.

Ernie

Ernie is a 1st Sergeant, E-6, in the US Army. He and his family of six have moved six times stateside. Ernie made the moves sound exciting, and his student eventually took on the feelings of excitement for the change. He described how his student fell into a routine within a month and made friends shortly thereafter. When asked if he had anything he wanted to add about his experience with his student's transition he responded,

I viewed all the transitions I put my kids through as a mission. Something I had to accomplish without getting too emotionally involved. I learned that overall it can hurt the student or make them stronger depending on their personality. All six kids went through the same ordeal, but they all took it slightly different or they all developed differently

because of it. Some of the kids developed to be outgoing, and some shy away from change.

When asked how he coped with the stress of his student's transition, Ernie explained how being organized helped him to handle their move: "You have to write out a plan that is in sequence with all the things that need to happen, and it has to make sense. That was the key; putting the plan on paper." Ernie's experience included his involvement with his student. During their transition into a military base school, Ernie would walk them through the school and show them where their classrooms were. He was careful to communicate with his student and made sure they knew what to expect, "I walked my student to all her classes before school started, and I made sure my kids were comfortable in their new school and that they knew where they were going."

Diane

Diane is the spouse of an E-5 in the US Army. They have moved four times and have two student. Diane always included the kids in family moves. Diane suggested, "being open and being, 'there' for your student." She described how she prepared her student for their transition into a military base school:

We tried to keep things as normal as possible. I helped them by researching on the next move to make it easier for them so they had a picture of how are and what kind of things they would be able to do like the after school programs and close plans like the parks and movie theaters.

Diane's spouse deployed three times to Iraq and one time to Korea. The stress of deployment added to Diane's experience with transition. Her spouse began to display symptoms of PTSD, which created difficulty for her family, specifically with their transition:

Their last transition to a military base school was harder being that they were either in high school or middle school. It seemed to take them longer to transition because some other students were not used to transitioning as much and they weren't as friendly. My son is much more outgoing than my daughter, which made it quicker for him but my daughter was set in a different way and took way longer.

When asked how she coped with the stress of her student's transition, Diane responded, "Oh I did what I could to stay busy then I wouldn't have to think about it as much, and finding a job helped too."

Daron

Daron was a sergeant 1st class, E-7 in the US Army. He has three students, and his family has moved four times. He focused on planning the move and compared it to a battle. Daron planned and organized his family's move along with how each step of the transition was executed. He also admitted that his wife was the one that he depended on the most:

I was too busy worried about transitioning in my military job so my wife, being a stay at home mom, she was the one that basically transitioned the kids and kept them going and kept them focused on what they had to do and helped to prepare them on what to expect from school.

Daron's experience with his student's transition into a military base school was positive. He described a safe and secure environment where parents are held accountable for their student's behavior and the soldiers are held accountable for their involvement with their student:

The biggest thing to transition into a DoDEA school what I liked about it is the secure atmosphere behind it. Where you read in the headlines about public schools, shootings, and all this other stuff seem to be non-existent with a DoDEA school because they had to

go through different points of security just to get to school. They had to go through the outer gates if the post then you had to get into the school door so the security of it was a blessing and two, the discipline of the student and the rest of the class was much better. Well, we thought was because if your student acts up in school, the sponsor which was the service member is held accountable for everything that his dependents do. Same, if the student acts up in school the sponsor faces repercussions with his unit and the school itself so you had two different people holding the people accountable for their actions, so the discipline level was a little high at that time.

William

William was a colonel in the US Army. He has two student, and his family has moved a total of 15 times during his military career. Some of the positives that William described included the involvement of parents within the DoDEA school system and how his unit encouraged involvement in student activities:

A positive about my daughter's transition was parental involvement was encouraged by my unit. Parents were encouraged to attend school activities and to stay involved in their kids' school events. In a DoDEA school, teachers understand the moving process because they have experience with moving too.

When asked how he coped with the stress of his student's transition, William explained how his daily exercise routine with the Army made him feel better, "The exercise every morning helped me a lot. The routine helped me focus." William also described his deployments and how stressful they were for his family. During one of his deployments, William suffered a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) that required rehabilitation. Transitions became more difficult for his family after his injury. William explained how the DoDEA system made his student's transitions easier:

The DoDEA system helped my student's transition easier because of the teachers. The DoDEA school teachers understand the moving process, and they have information and experience with moving themselves. They could relate to what the students' were experiencing.

Melody

Melody is a military Army spouse. Her husband is an E-5. They have two student in the DoDEA school system. Melody's family has moved a total of five times. Melody emphasized research and being organized as the main tools she used for her students' transition. She found the Army Community Service (ACS), Morale Welfare Resource (MWR), and Family Readiness Group (FRG) as the main sources that were the most helpful for her family's transitions. When asked about the positive aspects of her student's transition into a military base school, she responded:

My son has Attention Deficit Disorder and the DoDEA school teachers and counselors were very accommodating to his needs. I asked if he could sit up front in the classroom and they moved him up front. They made an effort to keep his attention by limiting his distractions.

Melody also described her experience with her student's transition as positive, focusing on how the teachers accommodated students, "Teachers in DoDEA schools were accommodating when dealing with students, especially special needs students. They often had an open door policy for parents with counselors easily accessible."

Results

After completion, each data instrument was collected and transcribed. The instruments included interviews, timelines and advice letters, and with each data instrument, significant

statements were identified. Each statement was coded and four themes emerged. Those themes were: parents' perception determined positive outcome of transition, parents viewed transition for their student as good for their growth, parents expected difficulties, and parents used multiple strategies to cope with transition. Moustakas (1994) recommendations for a transcendental phenomenological study were followed during data analysis. A qualitative, transcendental phenomenological approach required a fresh perspective using the process of epoche to separate prejudice, bias, and assumptions (Moustakas, 1994) from the phenomenon being studied.

There were 10 participants and all were military affiliated parents with student who transitioned in to a military base school. Participants represented various ranks and military branches of the Army, Air Force, and Marine Corp. The participants' families had moved more than once in their military careers. Each participant provided detailed descriptions of their experiences throughout their military transitions stateside and overseas. The results of the data collection began to show a pattern of repetition from the transcriptions of the participants. After the eighth participant, data saturation occurred. During the coding process, themes began to emerge. The four themes that emerged from the transcribed narratives are included in the next section.

Theme Development

Table 3

Themes from Codes

<i>Codes</i>	<i>Themes</i>
Experience different cultures Secured environment Present transition as positive Welcoming teachers	Parent's perception determined positive transition

Open communication Helped them grow Made student's open to new experiences Acceptance of different views	Parent viewed transition as growth
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Adjusting to new environment Getting students involved w/school Homesick/emotional toll Finding new friends Stressful move	Parent's expected difficulties
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Planning/Organizing Staying busy/focus on move Finding a job Social media use Keeping the routine	Parent used multiple strategies to cope with transition
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Data collected was transcribed and analyzed from interviews, timelines, and advice letters to other parents. The use of computer-assisted software, Atlas.ti, provided data organization of the narratives derived from the analyzed sources. Significant statements began to emerge and repeat throughout the narratives. After identifying 135 significant statements, I began to code those statements and develop clusters of meaning. I then synthesized those statements into themes, "into the textures of the experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 122). After analysis of those statements, four significant themes developed with the support of each statement. Themes that developed described "what" the participants experienced or the textural descriptions (Moustakas, 1994). The difficulty with description is identifying the "what," or the phenomenon parents experienced during the transition of their student (Moustakas, 1994). The "what" of the descriptions involved, "What is the nature of the phenomenon? What are its' qualities? What appears at different times under various conditions?" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 78). The textural descriptions lead to the structural descriptions or "how" a participant experienced the transition of their student into a military base school. Structural descriptions involved "conscious acts of thinking and judging, imagining and recollections in order to arrive at core

structural meanings” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 79). The textural and structural descriptions of participant narratives are needed together in order to understand the essence of the phenomenon or experience (Moustakas, 1994).

Parent’s perception determined positive outcome. The first theme was a parent’s perception determined a positive outcome of transition. Parents did their best to present transition as a positive experience to their student. Although most parents saw the experience as stressful, they did their best to present the transition in a positive light. Shannon believed that focusing on the positive of the transition helped her, “Learn to see the positive in the experience and make the best of it that’s what you can do for yourself.” During his interview, Michael described how he presented a new transition to his student,

I would go home and I would make it a positive. You know a lot of people go home and act like we get to go climb a mountain. I would go home and say guess what, we got orders, we get to move again! I would make it the greatest thing that ever happened and you know your student feed off of your energy.

During the process of transition, parents emphasized that the stress of the transition was temporary and that their student did eventually adjust. Participants also described their individual processes of how to execute a successful transition for their student, focusing on organization, listening to the needs of their student, and the influence that teachers had on the positive experience of their student. In Shannon’s advice letter, she explained how she made it easier for her student’s transition, “I planned and organized the move. I also, talked about what was going to happen with the student as soon as possible allowing them to get used to the idea and more excited about the move.”

Parents viewed transition as growth. The second theme was parents viewed transition for their student as good for their growth. The participants described how their student would experience different cultures and view different parts of the country or the world. When asked what a student needed to have a positive transition into a military base school, Michael responded,

As much as we think kids are wild, they love order, they love to know what's expected of them. In a military school on base that's never a question, there they know exactly what's expected of them and they are treated with respect by people who obey those kinds of parameters.

Participants expressed little concern for the safety of their student while they attended school on a military base. They felt confident that teachers would provide a safe learning environment for their student. During his interview, Daron described his experience with on post school security,

I like the secure atmosphere behind it. Where you read in headlines about public school shootings and all this other stuff seemed to be non-existence with a DoDEA school because they had to go through different points of security just to get to school. They had to go through the outer gates of the post then you had to get into the school door so the security of it was a blessing.

Ernie's perspective on his student's transition was also dependent on their personality. Ernie explained, "I learned that overall it can hurt the student or make them stronger depending on their personality."

Parents expected difficulties. The third theme was that parents expected difficulties. The participants focused on the issues facing their student during transition into a military base

school. Parents understood that their student would have difficulties leaving their old friends, making new ones, and adjusting to a new school. Erin described difficulties when helping her student transition:

A difficulty was she had to leave her friends, which affected her more than I thought as she got older. And also, adjusting to the schools and teachers and getting over those learning curves. It took her about three to four weeks, and initially it was very rough on her because she left everything she knew and came to a location where she had to start all over again making new friends.

Jennifer explained in her advice letter, “Stress and tears are to be expected, even anxiety for a few months. Everything your student is comfortable and secure with is gone, and they have to form new bonds.” Participants described how they felt horrified at moving again and how transition took an emotional toll on the family, specifically an emotional toll on their student. In her parental advice letter, Debra explained that, “Each student and each move will be completely different. Sometimes it will be smooth and the student will adjust and other times you will think they feel moving was the end of the world. It is difficult for everyone.”

Parents used multiple strategies to cope. The fourth theme was that parent’s used multiple strategies to cope with transition. Participants coped with the stress of their student’s transition by using coping strategies. Shannon made sure to plan and organize, and that helped her cope with the transition:

I planned and organized the move. It helps a lot if you’re in a mess and you just don’t have the steps set out and you’re not organized in what you’re doing then that’s going to make it even more difficult.

Ernie suggested writing out a plan to help cope with the stress of his student's transition, "You have to write out a plan that is in sequence with all the things that need to happen and it has to make sense. That was the key, putting the plan on paper." During her interview, Diane explained how she coped by keeping in contact with her friends,

I had to just deal. I had my friends that I could call and chat with. Plus there were many people that were like family because of the deployments. We would talk and just get each other through it.

A reoccurring activity of each participant was to conduct prior research on the upcoming duty station. In her timeline, Melody described how she made lists to make it easier to cope with her son's transition, "I made lists to organize what I had to do. It helped me stay focused." Parents also coped with the stress of their students' transition by focusing on other activities. Finding work, keeping in touch with family via Facebook, and supporting their student through their presence helped participants cope with their own stress. During her interview, Diane explained how she coped with the stress of her student's transition, "Making friends is so important. I did my best to stay busy then I wouldn't have to think about it as much and finding a job helped too."

Research Question Responses

The purpose of the central question (CQ) was to address the purpose of the study: What is the experience of parents whose students have transitioned into a military base school? This question was best answered by the descriptions given by the participants in their interviews, timelines, and advice letters. The perception of each participant began to repeat specific patterns, as "Perception is regarded as the primary source of knowledge, the source that cannot be doubted" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 52). During data collection, after the 10th participant, specific

answers began to repeat, which led to data saturation. The codes emerged from the repetitive narratives provided by the participants. As the codes began to repeat, the themes began to emerge from the codes. Using Atlas.ti, the participants' responses were then organized and categorized under branch families or themes. The experience of parents during the transition of their student was best described by Shannon, who made seeing a transition as a positive, "If you can learn to see the positive in the experience and make the best of it that's what you can do for yourself." In Michael's advice letter he agreed with Shannon as he explained how he took a stressful transition and made it into a positive experience for his student,

I always tried to make life fun for my kids and I used to tell them you know if you're doing something and it's not fun, if you get a job and you don't love getting up in the morning and going there every morning you need to get another job.

The purpose of sub-question one was to address the positive aspects of transition: What positive aspects do parents experience with the transitioning of their student? The participants identified the instances when they felt secure when their student's transition was positive. Daron described how he liked the secure atmosphere of the location of his student's military base school:

What I liked about it is the secure atmosphere behind it. Where you read in the headlines about public schools, shootings and all this other stuff seem to be non-existent with a DoDEA school because they had to go through different points of security just to get to school.

During William's interview he explained how his Army unit played a role in his involvement with his student's transition and acclimation into the new school setting,

A positive about my daughter's transition was parental involvement was encouraged by my unit. Parents were encouraged to stay involved in their kids' school events.

William also described how teachers played an intricate role in students' transition, "In a DoDEA school, teachers understand the moving process because they have experience with moving, too." Daron and William agreed that DoDEA teachers helped his student's transition; "Teachers could relate to the kids because they'd been through transition too and knew how to help." Melody, whose son had special needs, experienced the same positive confidence with DoDEA teachers, "They made an effort to keep his attention by limiting his distractions. The teachers were accommodating, especially to special needs students." Jennifer and Shannon expressed positive experiences involving their student's last transition. Jennifer explained how during her student's transition there was a farewell celebration on post that helped them with closure:

The post in Mannheim, Germany was closing and they did a huge celebration for the students and families who lived there. It was a wonderful thing to witness. I think the farewell celebration on post really helped put closure on a goodbye that was hard for many families.

Shannon described her son's regret as a positive display of maturity, "My oldest son wishes that he had been more open to what he did see over there and realizes the opportunity he did have." She went on to say that positives "May not reveal themselves until later, but in the moment you focus on the positives of the move and do the best you can." The participants agreed that a key positive aspect of transition was that it broadened their student's perspective of the world. Diane explained her view of her student's transition, "The positive aspects were that they realized there is a big world out there. They know there is more to life than what was

outside your door.” Every participant found something positive in their student’s transition, and it was the positive aspects of their transition that they focused on in order to make the transition process less stressful.

The purpose of sub-question two was to address the difficulties that parents experienced. Parents learned to expect difficulties during stressful transitions. Diane described the difficulty she would often hear from her student, “They moved so much because of PCSing they didn’t have a place they could say they were from. They are from everywhere.” The issue of not being from any particular place is a common issue for third culture kids (Wertsch, 2006). When a student cannot tell you where he or she is from exactly, it is an indicator that he or she is a TCK (Wertsch, 2006). Diane also described how she felt when they found out they would be moving again, “It was stressful for me. I always worried they would not adjust. However, they always did.” When asked in their advice letter what transition taught them to expect, Ernie and Diane explained how each of their student’s experiences were completely different. Diane expected there would be difficulties during her student’s transition, “Sometimes it will be smooth and the student will adjust and other times you will think they feel moving was the end of the world.” Her advice to other parents was to “Keep an open line of communication. In doing this, you can make it easier for them.” In Diane’s timeline she was asked how she felt about the move, and she described it as bittersweet but still an adventure:

We all felt the move could be described as bitter sweet. I was leaving my family and longtime friends yet again. The kids were sad to leave their friends; however, they were ready for our family to be back together again. Our first move was near Seattle, Washington. That was clear across the country. It was an adventure.

During Alison's interview, she described the difficulties her student went through making new friends during their last transition:

Their last transition to a military base school was a little harder being that they were either in high school or middle school. It seemed to take them longer to transition because some other students were not used to the transitioning as much and weren't as friendly. Making new friends got harder and longer after each transition.

The purpose of sub-question three was to address the coping strategies parents used during the transition of their student. The theoretical framework used for this study was Schlossberg's (1984) transition theory, specifically, the 4-S model of transition which addresses life transitions and how individuals cope with those changes. During a student's transition to a new school, parents are faced with the 4-S of transition which are: situation, self, support, and strategy (Anderson & Goodman, 2014, Goodman & Anderson, 2012; Schlossberg, 1984, 2011; Schlossberg et al., 1995; Rodriguez-Kiino, 2013; Taub, 2008). The 4-S model of transition includes, "What is happening?; Self: To whom is it happening?; Support: What help is available?; and Strategies: How does the person cope?"(Goodman & Anderson, 2012, p. 11). For the purpose of this study, participants were interviewed about their experience as a parent of a student who transitioned into a military base school and how they coped with that transition and what strategies they used. Schlossberg (1984) stated, through transition theory, that by identifying the common features involved with transition, it will remove the unknown, therefore, enabling the person to cope with the change.

The results of this study showed that participants developed multiple strategies to cope with transition. Diane and Jennifer both attained jobs close to their student's school. Diane explained how she attained a job to keep herself busy, "Oh I did what I could to stay busy then I

wouldn't have to think about it as much and finding a job helped, too." A job kept their mind off of their own stress while helping their student feel more secure in their new environment.

Jennifer stated, "I got a job at the elementary school and that helped curb their anxieties as well as my own." Daron, Ernie, and William used their military training to cope with their student's transition. Each used different strategies to combat their stress. Ernie explained how he coped with his student's transition by using his military training, "I viewed all the transitions I put my kids through as a mission." Ernie also used organization and planning as an additional strategy to help him cope, "You have to write out a plan; that was the key putting the plan on paper."

Daron suggested a plan of engagement, "The best way to do it is call ahead to whatever region you're going to and let them understand and get them acclimated as soon as possible to the culture and the area that they're about to go to." William explained how his routine of physical training helped him to cope with his student's transition, "The exercise every morning helped me a lot. The routine helped me focus."

Summary

The purpose of this study was defined by the central research question: What is the experience of parents whose students have transitioned into a military base school? Using in-depth interviews, descriptive timelines, and advice letters, I was able to identify four main themes. Those themes were: a parent's perception determined positive outcome of transition, parents viewed transition for their student as good for their growth, parents expected difficulties, and parents used multiple strategies to cope with transition. The data gathered answered the three sub-questions. The summary of the findings answers the purpose of the study; what is the experience of parents during the transition of their student?

The textural descriptions emphasized the experience of the participants. The participants expressed that the transition of their student into a military base school needed a positive presentation. They felt supported by their military unit and the teachers of the military base schools. Although the participants experienced stress, they emphasized to their student that the stress of the transition was temporary. They described how their student experienced different cultures and developed discipline within a secure atmosphere of a military base school. They described the different services available to their student such as school counselors, after school groups, and youth activity centers that helped with their student's adjustment to the school setting. The narratives of the parents supported that the experience of being a parent of a student transitioning into a military school is a stressful ordeal.

The research for this phenomenological study was driven by the research questions. The research questions provided focus and answers to the experience of parents whose student transitioned into a military base school. There was a centralized question with four sub-questions that provided answers to address parents' experiences with their student's transition and the strategies they used to cope with that transition.

The purpose of the central question was to address the purpose of the study: What is the experience of parents whose student have transitioned into a military base school? This question was best answered by the descriptions given by the participants in their interviews, timelines, and advice letters. The perception of each participant began to repeat specific patterns; "Perception is regarded as the primary source of knowledge, the source that cannot be doubted" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 52). The transcriptions with repeated patterns led to data saturation.

The purpose of sub-question one was to address the positive aspects of transition: What positive aspects do parents experience with the transitioning of their student? The participants

identified the instances when they felt secure when their student's transition was positive. The purpose of sub-question two was to address the difficulties that parents experienced. Parents learned to expect difficulties during stressful transitions. The purpose of sub-question three was to address the coping strategies parents used during the transition of their student. The theoretical framework used for this study was Schlossberg's (1984) transition theory, specifically the 4-S model of transition, which addresses life transitions and how individuals cope with those changes. For the purpose of this study, participants were interviewed about their experience as a parent of a student who transitioned into a military base school, how they coped with that transition, and what strategies they used. The results of this study indicated that participants developed multiple strategies to cope with transition.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Overview

This chapter provided insight on the conclusions drawn from the study. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of military parents as their student's transition into a military base school. Research questions guided the research and focused on the experiences of the parents during their student's transition. This chapter begins with a summary of the findings, which describe the themes that emerged from coding the transcriptions of participants. The discussion of the study including theoretical and practical implications and recommendations for support services and for the support of other parents will be provided. Lastly, delimitations, limitations, recommendations for future research, and a summary will also be provided.

Summary of Findings

Moustakas' (1994) recommendations for a transcendental phenomenological study were followed during data analysis. The transcriptions of 10 participants including interviews, timelines, and advice letters were used to develop themes. Those themes were: Parents' perception determined positive outcome of transition, parents viewed transition for their student as good for their growth, parents expected difficulties, and parents used multiple strategies to cope with transition.

The first theme was a parent's perception determined positive outcome of transition. Parents did their best to present transition as a positive experience to their student. Although most parents saw the experience as stressful, they did their best to present the transition in a positive light. During the process of transition, parents emphasized that the stress of the transition was temporary and that their student did eventually adjust. Participants also described

their individual processes of how to execute a successful transition for their student, focusing on organization, listening to the needs of their student, and the influence that teachers had on the positive experience of their student.

The opinions about transition varied among participants. Parents often expressed a positive outlook on their student's transition into a military base school. They emphasized the trust they felt with the teachers within the DoDEA and DoDEA schools. Parents described how the teachers helped them to transition their student into a military base school with ease. The participants explained how the DoDEA and DoDEA teachers were also accustomed to the transition process themselves. Parents' described how this shared experience with teachers made the transition easier for their student. The participants of the study shared the positive aspects of transition for the student. Parents described how their student would experience different cultures and view different parts of the country or the world. Participants expressed that their concerns for the safety of their student while in a military base school were minimal, and they knew that teachers would provide a safe learning environment for their student.

The military culture also added to the safety of the school environment. Access to on-post schools is restricted. Parents viewed transition for their student as a positive experience for that would allow them to grow. The participants described their experiences with the resources that assisted them during their student's transition. For example, the Family Readiness Group keeps spouses and student up-to-date on the events of the unit. Some parents explained the services provided to both parents and students which included, the youth activity center, school counselors, and the housing office. However, not every participant of this study made use of these resources. Married participants sometimes relied on each other for support, while single parents' reached out to the resources provided by the military. Each participant understood that

they were not alone in their transition and would have the support they needed to accomplish the move to the next duty station.

The second theme was that parents viewed transition for their student as good for their growth. The participants explained how transition was good for the growth of their student. Each participant expressed pride in their student's ability to adapt to new surroundings. Parents described how transition created an environment of open communication within the family. Osofsky & Chartrand (2013) explained how trust is built upon the development of relationships, which are important to the social and emotional growth of student. The experience of transition helped student and families open up to new experiences, and enabled them to be accepting of different views. Participants viewed the transition of their student as an opportunity to teach tolerance of those different from themselves.

The third theme was that parents expected difficulties. The participants focused on the issues facing their student during transition. Parents understood that their student would have difficulties leaving their old friends, making new friends, and adjusting to a new school. Participants described how they felt horrified at moving again and how transition took an emotional toll on the family, specifically, an emotional toll on their student. Some participants expressed their feelings about the hardships their student encountered. Participants empathized with their student, focusing on their emotional state as they transitioned. Parents were concerned with their student's homesickness and nervousness at being introduced to a new school.

The fourth theme was that parents used multiple strategies to cope with transition. Participants addressed the stress of their student's transition by using coping strategies. One of those strategies involved planning and organizing. A reoccurring activity of each participant was to conduct prior research on the upcoming duty station. They researched information that helped

them to educate their student about the area, school, and activities in which they could become involved. Participants also established a routine process used for consistent transition. Parents were highly organized and prepared to reach their new duty station. They also coped with the stress of their student's transition by focusing on other activities. Finding work, keeping in touch with family via Facebook, and supporting their student through their presence helped participants cope with their own stress. Presenting the transition as a positive experience also helped their student adjust to their new surroundings. Parents were present, supportive, and listened to their student's concerns about transition.

Discussion

The purpose of this chapter was to provide insight on the findings drawn from the study. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe what parents experienced when their military dependent student transitioned into a military base school system. Transitions was defined as, "what happens when we move from one place to another" (Pollock & Van Reken, 2009, p. 66). Transition of military families is a challenge that brings about stress, creates tension within the family, and at times, brings about depression and substance abuse for the military dependent student (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Dong et al., 2006; Subramanian & Vinothkumar, 2011). Researchers who focused on military student transitions described how vital families and schools are to a move from one school to another (Wertsch, 2006).

While studies have been conducted about the transition of military dependent students into the civilian public school system population (Berg, 2008; Bradshaw et al., 2010; Clever & Segal, 2013; Subramanian & Vinothkumar, 2011; Weber & Weber, 2005), there exists a lack of literature about school transition from a parent's perspective. Wertsch (2006) suggested that an

easy transition may derive from a structured home life and a shared military lifestyle. Wertsch (2006) also explained military dependent students are quick to adapt to their new surroundings. However, the insight from parents suggests that transitions for their student are still stressful and resulted in a smooth transition if detailed planning was conducted. Participants described how they were able to cope with the stress of their student's transition into a military base school after several moves. Schlossberg's (1984) transition theory, specifically the 4-S model, was used as the framework to gain insight on how parents experience and cope with their student's transition. The research questions for this study were as follows:

Central question (CRQ): What is the experience of parents whose student have transitioned into a military base school?

Sub-question 1 (SQ1): What positive aspects do parents experience with the transitioning of their student?

Sub-question 2 (SQ2): What difficulties do parents experience with the transition of their student?

Sub-question 3 (SQ3): How do parents cope with those difficulties?

The experience of parents during the transition of their student

Implications

The theoretical framework used in this study was Schlossberg's (1984) transition theory, specifically, the 4-S model of transition. During a student's transition to a new school, parents are faced with the 4-S of transition which are situation, self, support, and strategy (Anderson & Goodman, 2014; Goodman & Anderson, 2012; Schlossberg, 1984, 1995, 2011; Rodriguez-Kino, 2013; Taub, 2008). Schlossberg's (1994) transition theory addresses life transitions and how individuals cope with those changes. The 4-S model of transition includes, "What is happening?;

the Self: To whom is it happening?; Support: What help is available?; and Strategies: How does the person cope?”(Goodman & Anderson, 2012, p. 11). For the purpose of this study, participants were interviewed about their experience as a parent of a student who transitioned into a military base school, how they coped with that transition, what strategies they used, and what resources were available to them. Schlossberg (2011) stated, through transition theory, that by identifying the common features involved with transition, it will remove the unknown, therefore enabling the person to cope with the change. The participants understood their impending PCS and began to prepare their families and themselves for the move. Parents also explained how this transition would not only affect themselves, but also their student during their transition into a military base school. Participants also described the assistance they received from their unit and the family support services provided by the military. The single parent participant was not aware of all the resources provided during the transition of their student. The single parent did not have the additional parent to attend the briefings while they worked. They also did not have the ability to travel with their student and at times left their children behind with relatives so that they could travel ahead to establish a home at the next duty station. An added support structure was the military base school itself. The teachers played an intricate role in the support of parents and their student during their transition into a new school environment. Participants developed coping skills that involved detailed planning, the execution of those plans, and research of the future duty station. Overall, the participants viewed their student’s transition as a positive experience for them.

From the findings in the study, there are recommendations made to those who provide support services to military personnel and their families. First, recommendations to the support

services are provided. Second, recommendations are provided for other parents who will experience the transition of their student into a military base school.

Recommendations for Support Services

During the transcription of interviews, timelines, and advice letters, I found that similar themes began to develop and repeat. The services provided to military personnel and their family was an invaluable resource in which they could draw support. The difficulty that occurred was the knowledge of those support services was not widely known. Many participants learned of FRG's and community services by word of mouth from other personnel, and a few single-parent households did not receive the message about these services. For that reason, the following recommendations are given to directors of support services.

Reach out to single parents. The military single parents did not always have that extra support they needed to keep track of information regarding transition. They often missed vital meetings because they did not have a spouse to attend certain events in their place. Single parent participants also found the transition of their student stressful and had little time to reach out to others for assistance. Participants also explained how they could not take their student with them during certain duty station assignments, and therefore had to leave their student behind with family.

Recommendations for Other Parents

While conducting interviews and reading timelines and advice letters, a reoccurring word began to emerge from the descriptions. Participants emphasized planning as the key to a successful transition to a new duty station. Each participant stressed planning in their interviews, timelines, and advice letters. Planning involved research on the next duty station and research on the school their student would be attending. The location was also researched along with the

culture and customs of the area. Participants learned that each transition for their family became easier when planning was involved.

Delimitations and Limitations

The limitations of a study refer to criteria that may have impacted the results of the study and limit the ability to generalize the findings. The limitations in this study presented little variation of military branch representation. Only three branches were represented, the Army, Air Force, and the Marines. An additional limitation involved the transient nature of military families that led to some participants leaving before their information was gathered. A total of 11 participants completed the information, but one participant moved, leaving only 10 participants to complete data collection. Another limitation involved the process of snowball sampling. Each participant suggested an additional participant for the study. Despite their willingness to participate, the additional participant did not always fit the criteria for the study, which led to lengthy searches for more participants.

The delimitations included the location of the parents, who lived in different parts of the country. Participants were made up of a diverse group that represented the Army, Air Force, and Marines. The goal of my research was to explain what parents experienced during the transition of their student into a military base school. Assumptions that emerged from researching parents of military dependent students and their transitions included transition into a military base school is easier for military dependent students, parents have unique resources available to them to assist military dependent students, parents provide a stable family structure that encourages easy transition into a military base school, and a school environment immersed in the military-based culture provides added support to the families and students. The phenomenological design presented limitations to this study. The first limitation involved the transient nature of military

families that led to some participants leaving before their information was gathered. Another limitation involved the process of snowball sampling. Each participant suggested an additional participant for the study that did not always fit the criteria needed for the study. At times those suggested participants did not want to participate, which presented another difficulty.

An additional limitation involved the recruitment of participants from different parts of the country. The distance between the participants and the researcher made it difficult to collect data. The technology needed to collect data did not always work when the weather was poor. Although data collection was completed, it did take longer to collect due to the distance and the lack of technology on the part of some of the participants.

Recommendations for Future Research

The research for this study focused on the experiences of parents during the transition of their student into a military base school. Future research may include more diversity in the branches of service. Future research could also focus on the deployment of family members, which would help focus on the issues associated with stress during the transition of student during the deployment of their parent. An additional recommendation for future research on student transition would be to focus on multiple perspectives. Future research on the experience of teachers during the transition of a student or the experience of the students themselves may differ from their parent's perspectives and is recommended. Future research could also focus on the marital status of military affiliated parents, specifically single parents. The perspective of single parents may differ from married parents regarding the transition of their students into a military base school.

Summary

The purpose of this study was defined by the central research question: What is the experience of parents whose student have transitioned into a military base school? After using the following research instruments that included in depth interviews, descriptive timelines, and advice letter transcriptions, four main themes emerged. Those themes were: a parent's perception determined positive outcome of transition, parents viewed transition for their student as good for their growth, parents expected difficulties, and parents used multiple strategies to cope with transition. The data gathered answered the three sub-questions: What were the positive aspects of your student's transition, what difficulties did parents experience, and how do parents cope? The summary of the findings answers the purpose of the study: the experience of parents during the transition of their student.

The theoretical framework used in this study was Schlossberg's (1984) transition theory, specifically the 4-S model of transition. During a student's transition to a new school, parents are faced with the 4-S of transition which are situation, self, support, and strategy (Anderson & Goodman, 2014; Goodman & Anderson, 2014; Schlossberg, 1984, 1995, 2011; Rodriguez-Kino, 2013; Taub, 2008). Schlossberg's (1994) transition theory addressed life transitions and how individuals cope with those changes. The 4-S model of transition includes, "What is happening?; the Self: To whom is it happening?; Support: What help is available?; and Strategies: How does the person cope?"(Goodman & Anderson, 2012, p. 11). For the purpose of this study, participants were interviewed about their experience as a parent of a student who transitioned into a military base school, how they coped with that transition, what strategies they used, and what resources were available to them. From the findings in the study, there were recommendations made to those who provide support services to military personnel and their

families. First, single parents suggested recommendations to the support services for single parent military personnel. Second, recommendations were provided for other parents who will experience the transition of their student into a military base school.

The limitations of a study refer to criteria that may have impacted the results of the study and limited the ability to generalize the findings. The limitations in this study presented some variation of military branch representation, but not all the branches were included. Only three branches were represented, the Army, Air Force, and the Marines. An additional limitation involved the transient lifestyle of military families that led to some participants' departure from the study. A total of 11 participants completed the information, but one participant moved, leaving only 10 participants to complete data collection. Another limitation involved the process of snowball sampling. Each participant suggested an additional participant for the study. Although they were willing to participate, the additional participant did not always fit the criteria for the study, which led to lengthy searches for additional participants. Future research may include more diversity in the branches of service and a focus on the deployment of family members, which would also help focus on the issues associated with stress during the transition of students during the deployment of their parent. An additional recommendation for future research on student transition would be to focus on multiple perspectives including teachers, students, and support staff.

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Appendix A

Liberty University IRB Approval

March 24, 2016

Maria Moran IRB Approval 2460.032416: Experiences of Parent During the Transition of Students into a Military base school: A Phenomenological Study.

Dear Maria,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases are attached to your approval email.

Your IRB-approved, stamped consent form is also attached. This form should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document should be made available without alteration.

Please retain this letter for your records. Also, if you are conducting research as part of the requirements for a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, this approval letter should be included as an appendix to your completed thesis or dissertation.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School

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Appendix B

CONSENT FORM

Experiences of parents during the transition of students into a military base school system: A phenomenological study

Maria Moran
Liberty University
School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study about transition into a military base school from a parent's perspective. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a parent of a military dependent student. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Maria Moran, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to describe the experience of parents whose students have transitioned into military base schools.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Complete a 5 minute questionnaire that asks rank, branch of service and questions about the transition of your student.
2. Participate in individual interviews using face to face or Skype application that will focus on open ended questions about the transition of your student into a military base school. This will take 30 minutes to complete.
3. Time-line activity: Participants will identify key points and individuals involved with the planning of their student's transition, the experiences of the parent during the transition and the results afterwards. This will take 20 minute to complete.
4. Participants will compose a letter of advice to other parents who have or are in the process of transitioning their student into a military school. This will take 20 minutes to complete.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

The risks involved may be the recollection of prior moves and remembering stressful instances that involve transition. The risks remain minimal and will not harm the participants. The risks are no more than the participant would encounter in everyday life.

There are no direct benefits to participants, but there may be benefits for other parents involving the transition of military dependent students. Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from their involvement in this study.

Compensation:

Participants will not receive payment or incentives for taking part in this study.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records.

All identification of participant data collected will be confidential, pseudonyms will be used or names will be coded to ensure privacy. Research records will be stored securely, password protected and only the researcher will have access to the records.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study:

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the following email address mlmoran3@liberty.edu . Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Maria Moran. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at mlmoran3@liberty.edu or 910-630-7199. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact Dr. Cristi McClendon at cjmccclendon@liberty.edu or the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Carter 134, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C

Date: July 7, 2016

Dear Participant:

My name is Maria Moran. I am a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University. I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctorate in Educational Leadership. The purpose of my research is to describe the experiences of parents during the transition of their student into a military base school. If you are a military affiliated parent of a military dependent student who is transitioning into a military base school please complete the brief questionnaire below. This questionnaire will help me gather demographic data such as, age, branch of military affiliation, rank and questions associated with transition for research purposes only and will not be shared. Completion of this questionnaire will take 5 minutes.

Questionnaire for parents:

- (1) What is your rank? _____
- (2) How many times have you moved? _____
- (3) What branch of the military do you serve? _____
- (4) Do you have school age student? _____
- (5) Are you interested in participating in this study? _____

If you have any further questions, please contact Maria Moran, mlmoran3@liberty.edu . I appreciate your time and thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Doctoral Candidate

Appendix D

Parent Interview Questions

Greeting	Hello. Thanks for allowing me to interview you. Tell me briefly about your student's transition into a military base school.	CRQ, SRQ #1 & 4
Initial question:	How do you view the transition of your student into a military base school?	SRQ #1 & 2
	How does a school transition influence a military dependent students' assimilation into a military base school?	CRQ, SRQ #4
	What do military dependent students need to experience a positive school transition?	SRQ #1 & 2
	Please describe your student's last school transition?	SRQ #4
	Please describe how you helped your student make the transition from their old school.	CRQ, SRQ #3 & 4
	How did your students' old school help them transition?	SRQ #3
	Were there any programs that assisted your student with their transition into a military base school?	CRQ, SRQ #2 & 3
	Why did your family move? Orders? Deployment?	SRQ #3
	How was this transition different from others you've experienced?	SRQ #2 & 4
	How did you prepare your student for the transition into a military base school?	CRQ, SRQ #3 & 4
	Explain which you prefer for your student, transition into a civilian or military base school?	SRQ #2 & 4
Closing questions	Thinking about your student's past transitions, How would you describe their transitioning into a military base school?	SRQ #2 & 4
	Is there anything you would like to add about your students' transition to a military base	CRQ, SRQ # 4

	school?	
	Would you like to ask me any questions?	

Central Research Question: *What is the experience of parents whose students have transitioned into a military base school?*

Sub Research Question #1: *What positive aspects do parents experience with the transitioning of their student?*

Sub Research Question #2: *What difficulties do parents experience during the transition of their student?*

Sub Research Question #3: *How do parents cope with those difficulties?*

Transcript for RB

5/17/2016

Me: Again, I just want to thank you for your time this morning. So I don't waste your morning, I know you have much more important things to do today so I'll start right away with a question.

RB: No problem...I'd do anything to help support this. I am ready when you are!

Me: Tell me briefly about your student's transition into a military school?

RB: Very teary...they both had trouble adapting to new surroundings. It was made worse with the fact that their father was also deployed 3 weeks after arriving to the new duty station. They had trouble focusing in the beginning. This went on a few months.

Me: What was your own experience when your student went through the transition?

RB: I felt a little helpless. I felt a little isolated. I did not know who to go to. Most of the people I was meeting had been there awhile and developed their little cliques and routines. I take my time at developing relationships. For the first 6 months I kept the kids super close to me. I got a job at the elementary school and that seemed to help curb some of their anxieties as well as my own.

Me: Having gone through it, what do you think students need to make the transition a positive one?

RB: Your full support. Listen to them when they are feeling anxious. It is okay to tell them that what they feel is normal and that everyone who has moved has felt that way. Everyone has been the "New kid" before.

Me: Please describe your student's last transition?

RB: The last one was the toughest. My husband was retiring. The kid's were entering high school and middle school. We all remember those days, its tough trying to fit in during those times. Kids are far more clique-y. We were in the process of buying a house and I was commuting them from one city to another to attend school. I will say that my youngest had matured socially far more than my oldest and she made friends quicker and fell in a routine quicker...even though there were some rough spots. I think moving from post to post really set her up in the better. My oldest is like me though....she takes her time with relationships.

Me: Please describe how you helped your children make the transition easier? Did you do anything special?

RB: While we were at our last duty station, before moving back to the states, I was emailing the school district and talking with the teachers. My husband had already found a new job post retirement and we knew the area we would be moving to....so I was talking to a realtor. It was

Appendix E

Time line activity

Most of us know that military families move frequently. What we want to know more about is a parent's experience, specifically when they have a student transitioning into military base school. Please explain what your first move was like for you and your student. This should take 20 minutes to complete.

How did you find out about your first move?

Who helped you plan the move? (You, family, resources?)

How did you and your family feel about the move?

When you arrived at your next duty station, did you enroll your student into school right away?

How long did it take for your student to get use to his/her new school?

How long did you stay in this new location?

When you received your orders for your next duty station, did you follow the same steps you used with the first move?

Thank you for answering these questions. Your time is greatly appreciated. If you have further questions, please contact me, Maria Moran at the following number 910-514-8214 or email:

mlmoran3@liberty.edu

Time Line Activity

1) My husband was stationed at Fort Bragg, N.C. - (91-98). He came down on orders to become a recruiter for the Army in Raleigh, N.C.

2) We moved some of our household goods ourselves, mostly things that we would need right away: clothes, toys, pots and pans, some bed linens. The Department of the Army sent a moving company to pack furniture and other items.

3) We were excited about the move. Our daughter, who is blind, was a student at the school for the blind near our new home. Before the move to Raleigh, we would drive an hour and a half to get her to school. Also, we were thrilled to move to the "big city". There are lots of museums, restaurants, night clubs, etc. So much to do.

Appendix F

Parental advice letter

Dear Parent,

If you are a parent of a military dependent student and he/she is or will be transitioning into a military base school, I want to share my experience with you. I hope that what I share with you in this letter will help you plan for the unexpected and enjoy the successes of your student's transition.

When we first learned we were moving, I found

was very helpful in planning for the move.

It made it easier for us when I:

The following people helped me when we

moved: _____

My experience with my students' transition taught me to

expect: _____

What I didn't expect from my student's transition into a military base

school: _____

This is how I improved the transition experience for my

student: _____

Some additional advice I'd like to give you about your student's transition:

Even though we moved quite a bit, we found comfort in connecting with other military families going through the same experience. I hope this letter helps your family.

Thank-you and good luck with your move,

Fellow Parent

Parental advise letter:

1) Prior planning. Usually you get orders a few months til you arrive to your next duty-station. This will allow you more time to find a place to live, enroll in school, find a pediatrician, etc.

2) find all school, shot, medical records prior to packing out and keep them separate from your household goods. You're going to need these. Also passports if you're moving over-seas.

3) friends, parents, in laws, your ERG group - (Family Readiness Group) - very helpful.

4) Stress and tears are expected. Anxiety for a few months. Anything your child is comfortable and secure with is now gone. They have to form new bonds.

Appendix G

Audit Trail

Date	Task	Reflective Notes
<i>July 28, 2015</i> <i>December, 2015</i>	Proposal Defense	Feedback was given and a second proposal defense was done successfully. Submitted for IRB approval after 2 nd proposal defense.
<i>March 24, 2016</i>	Received IRB approval	The process took three and a half weeks with one revision required
<i>May 1 – June 1, 2016</i>	Contacted parents through Facebook, Emails, IM	Progress was slow, but picked up after first two participants using snowball sampling.
<i>June 2, 2016</i>	Continued with follow-up emails for parents	It was difficult to find participants over the summer. Some were reluctant to give of their time.
<i>June 10, 2016</i>	Sent out consent forms to participants	Two participants signed consent forms during interviews, two were sent snail mail and the last four via email and fax.
<i>June 12 – 30, 2016</i>	Conducted Individual interviews	Robin's interview took place online via instant messaging. The rest occurred at my place of employment and FB Messenger.
<i>August 1 – 9, 2016</i>	Collected Time lines and Advice Letters	Had some difficulty following up to receive participant's documents, but they came through after a week of persistent emails.
<i>August 10 – 28, 2016</i>	Transcribed interviews	No issues with transcriptions. Followed up with two participants to clarify answers to interview questions.
<i>September 7 – 30, 2016</i>	Data Analysis and data findings	Revisions needed for themes
<i>October 16, 2016</i>	Submitted to chair	Approval by chair
<i>March 13, 2017</i>	Submitted to committee members	Approval by committee

<i>March 20, 2017</i>	Submitted to research consultant	Approval by consultant
<i>April 6, 2017</i>	Final Dissertation Defense	Passed with additions requested.