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## The Education of the Military-Connected Student: A Study of the Educational Experiences of a Mobile Lifestyle Parent and Children Perceptions

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The Education of the Military-Connected Student:  
A Study of the Educational Experiences of a Mobile Lifestyle  
Parent and Children Perceptions

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590 Individual Research  
April 3, 2015

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### **Abstract**

Military-connected students have been found to be highly resilient and adaptable, however, they face significant educational challenges due to the frequency of relocation and school transitions resulting from the military lifestyle. The objective of this research was to investigate the possible impact frequent relocation has on the academic experience of military-connected students. Qualitative data for this research was gathered via in-depth interviews with military-connected students who completed high school as well as interviews with the parents of these graduates. The combination of parent and student interviews offers well-rounded perspectives on the unique academic challenges faced by highly mobile military-connected students. In particular, it highlights the difficulties military children experience in achieving academic continuity, their challenges associated with peer relationships, and their development of resiliency. This research provides parents, teachers, and legislators with valuable insight into the unique experience of military-connected students.

### **Introduction**

Although military-connected students have been found to be highly resilient and adaptable (Easterbrooks, Ginsberg, & Lerner, 2013), they face significant educational challenges due to the frequency of relocation and school transitions resulting from the military lifestyle. The average military-connected student relocates every 2.9 years, or 9 times before they complete high school (Esqueda, Astor, & Tunac de Perdo, 2012). These frequent disruptions prevent educational continuity, which is further complicated by the varying educational time-lines and requirements implemented by each individual state. In

addition to academic concerns, military-connected students must also adjust to new peer groups and academic communities each time they relocate.

Small portions of the military-connected students attend Department of Defense Activity (DoDEA) schools, while most military-connected students attend public or private schools near or on military bases. These schools, known as military-connected schools, have a 3% or higher enrollment of military-connected students or at least 400 military-connected students enrolled in the district (Tunac de Pedro, Esqueda, Cederbaum, & Astor, 2014). Department of Defense Activity schools use one unified curriculum around the world, and are managed and funded solely by the Federal government making academic transition a less challenging process (Esqueda et al., 2012). In contrast, military-connected schools, which are funded by a combination of property taxes, state funding, and federal funding, are subject to regional and state learning requirements. It is these differences in curriculum and learning standards that place military-connected students at risk for essential gaps in knowledge (Engel, Gallagher, & Lyle, 2010). In addition to standard funding, military connected schools are also eligible to receive Federal Impact funds that are intended to compensate districts for increased expenses attributed to a high enrollment rate and transition of Federal government-connected children and “to maintain educational standards for all students” (Scott, 2011, p. 1). There are currently no federal requirements placed on districts to report how they use their awarded Federal Impact funds (Scott, 2011).

Throughout my teaching experience, I have worked with numerous students in three different states who have been impacted by their highly mobile lifestyle, including military-connected students and children of migrant farm workers. I have also had the

opportunity, working as a Family Readiness Officer for the United States Marine Corps and as the mother of two military-connected children, to gain personal background about the unique challenges of the military lifestyle. These experiences have taught me that relocation creates a unique set of challenges that can impact learning, extra-curricular activities, and social interaction.

It was after relocating from California to Virginia that I first became personally aware of the differences that exist between the various states in regard to education. My daughter had started Kindergarten in California when she was four years old because she met that state's age requirements for beginning school. When we arrived in Virginia, we discovered that she did not meet the age requirement for first grade in Virginia. We were offered the opportunity to sign a waiver and enroll her in first grade, where she would be much younger than the other students, or we could choose to have her repeat Kindergarten and all of the content that is covered during that primary year of school.

My son, who began third grade that same year in Virginia, was required to complete the third grade Standards of Learning examinations (SOL). The SOLs given in third grade are a cumulative evaluation of the previous elementary grade levels. Consequently, my son, who did not attend school in Virginia until the third grade, was tested over many standards that were not a part of his California educational experience. I attribute his success on the exams to the amount of time and practice that was used within the classroom to review for the tests.

My son and daughter have attended school in two different states. With our next duty station move on the horizon, both my children will transition to a new school in a new state, their fourth school in six years. As a family, we are already preparing for any

adjustments we will have to make in order to adapt to new academic standards and expectations. We fully expect that gaps in knowledge will be identified and that some repetitive learning will occur in addition to the social challenges of starting over.

### **Literature Review**

The following is a review of the literature available on the impact that frequent geographic relocations have on the education of students, and particularly military-connected students. The majority of the literature can be categorized into two major topics: challenges associated with transitions, and school reform and interventions designed to ease transitions. The information gained from this literature review was utilized to guide the formation of my research questions and the protocol for my in-depth interviews. It also provided background information on the current support and laws in place to help military families navigate academic relocation challenges.

### **Challenges Associated with Transitions**

Frequent relocation and other high-stress triggers impact both the social-emotional well being of military-connected students and their academic performance (Tunac de Perdo et al., 2014). Interviews conducted by Tunac de Perdo et al. (2014), with 31 educational stakeholders who worked closely with military-connected students, revealed that participants believed frequent school relocations presented a major challenge for military-connected students. Adjustments to new academic standards, social situations, new teachers, and extracurricular activities were identified as some of the major challenges (Tunac de Perdo et al., 2014). A qualitative study conducted by Bradshaw, Sudinaraset, Mmari, and Blum (2010) indicated that frequent relocations resulted in elevated stress levels for military-connected students. In this study, 3 parent

focus groups, 4 faculty and staff focus groups, and 4 military-connected students focus groups were interviewed to determine if frequent school transitions had an effect on the coping and stress of military-connected students. Focus group discussion revealed that high stress levels of transitioning military-connected students were attributed to varied school academic requirements, school policies and procedures related to matriculation, and extracurricular activities (Bradshaw et al., 2010). While parents in the study expressed greatest concern over the quality of education their child received, students expressed academic concerns over missed critical topics, high academic expectations from teachers, parents, and peers, varied graduation requirements, and the challenges of being able to actively participate in extracurricular activities (Bradshaw et al., 2010).

Current estimates suggest that there are presently almost 900,000 school-age children of active duty military members (Office of Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense, 2012) and that the majority of this highly mobile population attend military-connected schools which do not keep track of military student enrollment, their academic success, or their unique needs (Esqueda, Astor, & Tunac de Perdo, 2012). A study conducted by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) in 2011 of 118 of the 154 schools receiving Federal Impact Aid, found that only 20 percent of the participating school districts separately tracked how they spent their portion of the 1.3 billion dollars distributed annually for Federal Impact Aid designated to assist with the costs associated with military-connected students (Sparks, 2011). None of the schools interviewed tracked how military-students performed at their schools (Scott, 2011). In addition, a qualitative study conducted by Tunac de Perdo, et al., (2014) of district, school, and community members associated with military-connected schools concluded that military-connected schools

often lack the adequate awareness and the responsiveness necessary to provide a positive educational experience for military-connected students.

### **School-Based Approaches for Easing Transitions**

The Global War on Terror changed the tempo of deployments and stress levels affecting military members and their families. In response to this change, numerous academic studies have been conducted on the effects of stress and deployments on military children (Aronson & Perkins, 2012). In response to these studies, the federal government now offers a wide array of services and support for military families (Aronson & Perkins, 2012). Despite this attention, the impact of transitions on military-connected students remains overlooked and absent from education reform, policy, and school-based intervention programs (Tunac de Perdo et al., 2014). In a study conducted by Tunac de Perdo et al. in 2014, interviews with faculty and staff from eight different military-connected schools districts revealed that many military-connected schools have created their own support and transitions programs. These programs, designed to recognize the unique social-cultural norms of the military-connected student, strive to provide transition and stress support (Tunac de Perdo et al., 2014). Included in these programs are after-school activities, on-line tutoring, school-designated spaces where military-connected students and families have an opportunity to build camaraderie and show support, and military specific support groups (Tunac de Perdo et al., 2014). Participants in the study argue that while the emergence of these school-generated programs is a promising development, they remain untested and without empirical data to help determine if they offer appropriate support (Tunac de Perdo et al., 2014).

The challenges of military-connected students continue to move to the forefront, as educators and politicians become aware of the special needs of this population. In a study of civilian highly-mobile student populations, Rumberger (2003) found that the implementation of strategies specifically designed to address the needs of mobile populations could reduce the harmful effects of high mobility. Yet, despite findings such as this, there are currently no standardized, research based programs, procedures, or best practices for military-connected schools to implement. According to a study conducted by Tunac de Pedro et al. (2014), school personnel and community members reported that they believed that public schools have responded poorly to the needs of military-connected students and that frequent school relocations presented a major challenge for military-connected students. Marine Corps School Liaison Officers in the study by Aronson, Caldwell, Perkins and Pasch (2011) also suggested that schools implement programs specifically designed to ease transitions.

Military-connected schools may benefit greatly by taking a closer look at Department of Defense Educational Activity schools (DoDEA) and the academic achievement they have found from embracing high mobility as a lifestyle rather than a problem. Department of Defense Educational Activity schools, who deal exclusively with highly mobile populations, have been recognized for their successful support of military-connected students and the high levels at which their students read and write (Smrekar & Owens, 2003). Through their analysis of 15 DoDEA middle schools located in the United States, Germany, and Japan, Smrekar and Owens (2003) found that faculty and staff in DoDEA schools were not only aware of the academic challenges that military-connected

students encounter, they also had valuable tools like computer-based assessments to help ensure educational continuity.

One particular identified need for military-connected students is the presence of standardized and streamlined policy and procedures specifically designed to ease transition challenges. According to Aronson et al. (2011), Marine Corps School Liaison Officers (SLs) interviewed during a 2009 study commissioned by the United States Marine Corps, reported that schools are often unable to change confusing school rules and regulations in order to make transitions less difficult for military-connected students. One solution by Bradshaw, Sudinaraset, Mmari, and Blum (2010) proposes that schools begin creating military friendly schools by actively sharing communications of school policies and procedures with families in order to eliminate confusion over the transfer of records and academic placement. By removing these obstacles and providing transparent policies and procedures, students and families will be able to better prepare for transition and reduce the stress levels associated with the academic aspect of school transition (Bradshaw et al., 2010).

In addition to transparent policies, Bradshaw et al. (2010) and Aronson et al. (2011) recommend that schools offer professional development opportunities for school faculty and staff regarding the culture and lifestyle of military families. These trainings should provide faculty and staff with an understanding of the unique challenges military-connected children face and equip them with specific knowledge about the cultural norms and strengths of the military families (Bradshaw et al., 2010). The introduction of cultural understanding could then be utilized by faculty and staff to develop school-wide or classroom specific activities that are empathetic to the needs and strengths of military-

connected students (Bradshaw et al., 2010). SLs in the Aronson et al. (2011) study also stressed the need for faculty and staff to participate in professional development opportunities that use materials designed to target military-connected students. In particular, SLs recommend materials from the Department of Defense developed Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness and a variety of nonprofit organizations (Aronson et al., 2011). The Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness provides evidence-based programs intended for professionals working with military families while the various non-profit organizations, like the Military Child Education Coalition, offer educational literature and guides for working with military-connected students and their families.

Specific school based programs and specific school transition procedures may also be a viable option for easing school transitions for military-connected students. Bradshaw et al. (2010) recommended that school psychologists, social workers, and counselors focus on the strengths and positive aspects of the military lifestyle when working with military-connected students. This approach, known as the strength-based approach, is also supported by a 2000 study on how to ease the transition of military-connected students into new schools (Strobino & Salvaterra). In the study the authors recommend that social workers focus on the capabilities of the students rather than the challenges and deficits. They propose that school social workers actively seek out military-connected students to expedite the school integration process at a new school (Strobino & Salvaterra, 2000). Smrekar and Owens (2003) attribute the high level of DoDEA success to numerous factors that include rigorous standards, transition specific assistance and assessment, highly qualified and experienced educators, small school size,

and sufficient staffing. According to Smrekar, Guthrie, Owens, and Sims (2001), upon arrival at the school, students are welcomed by the school counselor and assigned a fellow student as a guide for the day to help ease the transition into a new school. They are also immediately assessed, if no academic records are available, to determine appropriate academic placement. This assessment procedure prevents the students from incorrect placement and represents an immediate response to the students' needs (Smrekar et al., 2001). Full-time registration and records clerks are also staffed in DoDEA schools to ensure that records are processed and transferred efficiently (Smrekar et al. 2001). Schools are also small in size permitting faculty, staff, and students to form more productive relationships (Smrekar et al., 2001). DoDEA schools also actively cultivate a culture of community within their schools that relies heavily on parent and community participation and volunteerism (Smrekar & Owens, 2003). By doing so, DoDEA schools ensure that military-connected students feel supported, safe and included as they transition into a new environment.

Military branches, government, and non-profit organizations are currently working to create military-connected education reform and to ease the transitional challenges faced by military families. The participation of various states in additional programs and collaborations such as the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children and the Joint Venture Education Forum (JVEF) are also beginning to build programs and policies designed to ease transitions for military-connected students (Aronson et al., 2011). The goal of the compact is to provide consistent policies for transitioning military-connected students by providing consistent policy for schools in every state that elects to join (Council of State Governments, 2013). The compact

addresses transition issues including enrollment, placement, attendance, eligibility and graduation (Council of State Governments, 2013). The Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children permits local schools systems flexibility when determining placement, credit transfer, and enrollment for military-connected students enrolling in their school, while the JVEF has promoted military friendly schools in Hawaii (Aronson et al., 2011). Programs like the School Liaison Program (SLP), initiated by each military branch, are actively working to ease the challenges military-connected students and their families encounter as they transition and deal with complex issues such as deployments (Aronson et al., 2011). School Liaison Officers actively work with military-connected students, schools, and the community to educate teachers, faculty, and community members and advocate for military-connected students (Aronson et al., 2011).

Esqueda et al. (2012) suggest that future research include what processes and policies military-connected public schools implement to provide support to this distinctive population. They further argue that detailed research could impact policy change and the development of sustainable educational practices that benefit military-connected students. Bradshaw et al. (2010) support the need for additional research on school-based intervention programs designed to ease the stress military-connected students associate with military-moves.

Based on this review of literature, it is apparent that little specific research has been conducted to determine what effects frequent transitions have on the academic experience and performance of military-connected students. While many schools have responded with school initiated programs to help ease transitions (Tunac de Pedro et al.,

2014), these programs are not research based and no data exists to determine if they are effective. The question remains what specific educational needs military-connected students have and how to best serve this population within the education community.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are high school graduates, who are eighteen years or older, perceptions of their academic and social experiences with school relocation as military connected students?
2. What are family perceptions of their child's overall academic and social experience with school relocations as military connected students?

### **Methodology**

The goal of my research was to determine what possible effects a highly mobile lifestyle has on the education of military-connected students. In this research I used personal perspectives and experiences gathered from in-depth interviews with parents and high school graduates to identify any experiences that limit or strengthen the academic experience for this population. Prior to the initiation of my original qualitative research, I conducted a thorough review of literature relating to this topic, which guided me in the finalization of my interview questions and analysis procedures. Before beginning my data collection, I obtained approval to conduct my research from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). One theme I did not include in my research is the effects that deployments and long-term separations have on the academic life of military-connected students. The omission of this topic did not present a challenge, despite the fact that the military has been engaged in the Global War on Terror for over thirteen years now and many, if not all of my participants, have been affected by these events. The reason I selected to actively omit this topic is because there have been numerous recent academic studies on

the subject that highlight the resilience of military children and the impact deployments have on their academic and personal life. This includes the quantitative study conducted by Engel, Gallagher and Lyle (2010) on the impact military deployments have on academic achievement and the qualitative Chandra et al. (2010) study on the effect Global War on Terror has on social-emotional and academic domains of military-connected students.

The participants in this interview process included four females and one male who were eighteen years of age or older and had completed at least two school transitions prior to high school graduation due to military relocation orders. One student had an active duty parent who was enlisted in the United States Marine Corps (USMC) and the other four had an active duty military member who was an officer in the USMC. The inclusion of the children of both the enlisted and officer ranks was intentionally executed to ensure that the perspectives gathered represent all military ranks and income levels. All five students came from diversified educational backgrounds to include representation from the public, private, DoDEA, international, and homeschool settings.

Each student participant was also required to have a parent who was willing to participate in a separate parental interview. A broad selection criterion permitted parent interview participants to be male or female active-duty military members, civilian parents, or legal guardians, and yet all of the parents who elected to participate were female civilians. The parental perspective provided additional details on the challenges and strengths observed or navigated during their child's education.

The identification of interview participants was initiated through the social media network site Facebook. In particular, I posted a request for participants on a Marine

Corps Officer's Spouse Facebook Group as well as my personal Facebook page. The volunteer request that was posted outlined the criteria for the volunteer participants as well as briefly stated the purpose of the research. All interested parties were then sent a brief set of introductory questions (see Appendix A) designed to ensure they met the criteria. Interview priority was assigned to students who had recently graduated from high school. All volunteers who passed the initial screening process were then provided either an Informed Consent for Recent Graduate Interview (see Appendix B) or an Informed Consent for Parent Interview (see Appendix C).

Due to geographical challenges, participants were interviewed via an online conference call that I initiated using a program called Fuze. Participants accessed the Fuze online conferencing program via an Internet connected computer or smart phone. All interviews conducted via Fuze were digitally recorded video via the program and transcribed to a Microsoft Word document. In conjunction with the recording, I also took notes on participant responses.

The interview process was guided by recommendations on qualitative interviewing from Rubin and Rubin (2012) who described how to conduct a responsive, flexible interview. This type of interview is structured so that the participant rather than the researcher does the majority of the talking. This is accomplished with the use of a few broad, open-ended questions (see Appendix D). The purpose of this interview approach is to reduce the influence of the interviewer's preconceptions or bias. Each interview began with the collection of some basic information to include the number of schools and the types of schools the student attended. They then received the prompt "What are some of the challenges and strengths you faced from frequent school transitions?" Parents were

asked a similar question that inquired about the challenges or strengths they observed relating to their child. According to Rubin and Rubin (2012, p.115-122) it is important to encourage depth and detail during responsive interviews, so it was necessary to follow-up with specific questions designed to encourage detailed responses. These types of questions, known as probe questions, encouraged the interviewee to further elaborate on their experiences, share emotions, explain rationales, and provide clarification (Kennedy, 2006). Based on the literature review, I selected follow-up topics, which included emotional responses to school transitions, social adaptation to a new academic environment, educational continuity, and extra-curricular activities.

Upon completion of the interview, the digital recordings were transcribed and summarized. Following transcription, I used methods recommended by Rubin and Rubin (2012, p. 190-204) to code the interview transcripts. The codes developed assisted in the identification of themes and examples that connected to my literature review. Once the transcripts were appropriately coded, I completed a detailed comparison and analysis of the various interviews to discern patterns and reoccurring or interconnected themes. Any notable quotes were added to a separate computer file for further research or use. The same process was used to analyze the parent interviews.

## **Results**

The data collected, through interviews with military-connected students and their parents, was analyzed to determine what impact a highly mobile lifestyle had on their educational experiences through the completion of high school. During this analysis, seven major themes were identified and studied in detail. The contents of this section include background information on the interview participants, as well as an analysis of

the seven common themes.

### **Background**

Interviews were conducted in five pairs, each pair consisting of one student and one parent. Prior to the interviews, the student and parent pair completed a brief questionnaire, which requested basic background information. The questionnaire was then employed to determine if the candidates met all of the requirements of the study. The questionnaire was also later used to understand the scope of interviewee's educational experience.

Student-Parent Group One consisted of a female student, nineteen years of age, and her mother. Student #1 attended a total of four different public schools in the states of North Carolina, Virginia, California, and Arizona prior to graduation. She also attended two different DoDEA schools, one located overseas in Japan and the other located in Virginia. At the time of graduation from high school her father was an active duty Marine with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. The parent currently resides in Japan and the student is attending college in Texas.

Student- Parent Group Two consisted of an eighteen year-old male and his mother who both currently reside in Virginia. Student #2 was primarily educated at home and in various Home School groups with the exception of the year he attended a Norwegian public school. Student #2, whose father is an active duty Marine with the rank of Colonel, has relocated seven times due to military relocation orders. At the time the interview was conducted, Student #2 was attending college in Virginia.

Student-Parent Group Three was comprised of a nineteen year-old female and her mother. Student #3's father is currently an active duty Marine with the rank of Colonel.

Prior to attending college in Illinois, Student #3 was enrolled in a total of seven different schools, five of which she transitioned to because of military relocation orders. Three of the schools she attended due to military orders were public schools in Virginia, one was a private school in Hawaii, and one was an international school at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe in Belgium.

Student-Parent Group Four was comprised of a twenty-one year old female and her mother. At the time of high school graduation, Student #4 resided in California and her stepfather was a Staff Sergeant in the United States Marine Corps. During the course of her education Student #4 relocated four times due to military orders and she attended the same private school in California two times, a public school in Virginia, and a public school in California.

Student-Parent Group Five currently resides in Australia where the student's active duty military father is stationed and serving as a Colonel in the United States Marine Corps. Student #5 was eighteen years of age and was attending college at a local Australian university at the time of the interview. During the course of her education, Student #5 attended six different schools, of which only four of the school changes were directly related to military relocation orders. The schools Student #5 attended included a private school, a private boarding school in England, a public village school in England, and public schools in both Virginia and North Carolina.

### **Coding**

Close examination of the interview data was conducted and seven major themes were determined to be prevalent in the interview transcripts. These themes included academic challenges, peer interactions, extracurricular activities, enrichment, resiliency, school

support, and recommendations. These themes were then grouped into a total of nine smaller codes, which were used to code the interviews and to compile meaningful quotes.

The smaller codes consisted included academic gaps, academic standards, peer interactions, extracurricular activities, enrichment, resiliency, transition to adulthood, school support, and recommendations.

### **Academic Continuity**

Analysis of the interview data revealed that educational continuity was a common theme, which impacted the student's scholastic experience. The implementation of diverse scheduling, testing, and learning standards across the United States presented unique challenges to all of the students interviewed. For some students, a lack of educational continuity worked in their favor, while other students were negatively impacted. This section, will take a closer look at what impact a lack of educational continuity had on the students.

Depending on where a military-connected student is relocated to, the curriculum, the level of challenge, and even the manner in which credit is earned can vary greatly. Unfortunately, military families do not have control which area they are required to relocate to and that means these families are limited to the school options available in the local area. Parent #1 shared her frustration over this when she stated, "It would have been nice to be able to pick the school system based on the quality of education, instead of moving around and getting what we get." For Student #1, frequent moves and a lack of educational continuity resulted in essential knowledge gaps in mathematics. Student #1 stated "Math is one of those things where you build upon it. I would move and we'd be learning stuff I didn't know how to do because I had never learned (the steps that) we had

to do, to be able to do it. Student #1 also identified that one high school transition resulted in her falling two credits behind her peers for high school graduation. In addition to the challenge of credits and knowledge gaps, Student #1 said that schools varied in difficulty from location to location. One school in particular, was very easy, while another left her struggling to catch-up to her peers. In response to her daughter's challenges with educational continuity, Parent #1 stated, "I just wish that all the schools across the board were equal."

Student # 2 was home schooled with the exception of one year and consequently, had a very different academic experience. Home schooling permitted his mother to select one set of academic graduation standards to build his education around. While the actual classes this student took changed based on the state he resided in, his mother was able to ensure that his academic record met the graduation requirements. In first grade, Student #2 did attend a Norwegian public school where he was immersed in the local language. Upon transitioning back to the United States, Student #2 stated that learning to read and write in English was a struggle.

While some parents, like Parent #2, anticipated standards and planned for graduation, other parents realized later on that academic continuity may be an area of concern. Parent #3 stated, "We realized along the way, that some of those moves had critical criteria that she missed and classes she didn't take." She also shared her frustration with the different requirement from one school to the next. Student #3 illustrated this point well with a number of stories outlining her struggles in English composition, higher-level Mathematics, and History. Her stories all identify gaps in knowledge and repetitious learning. One particular story she shared describes her experience in a class for an

Advanced Placement (AP) History exam. Student #3's AP History teacher told the students that he was not going to review Modern History because they had all already studied it in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. This was not true for Student #3. She had studied United States History leading up to the 1900 multiple times; however, she had never studied Modern History in school up to that point.

When Student #4 relocated from California to Virginia, she discovered that she was behind in Mathematics. While this particular move worked against her, the following move from Virginia back to California worked in her favor. When Student #4 arrived back in California, she was ahead of her peers in Mathematics and was even awarded additional credits towards graduation.

Student #5 initially learned to read and write in the United Kingdom where she attended a public school in a small farming village and later on a boarding school. When she transitioned to school in the United States, she struggled to adjust because of differences in curriculum and writing techniques. Her next transition from a North Carolina school to a Virginia school, was her most challenging. Student #5 transitioned from being a top academic performer in North Carolina to struggling in Virginia. In Virginia, her peers were ahead of her academically; they all spoke at least two languages, and were ready to begin taking college classes during their sophomore year of high school. Student #5 stated "My sophomore year was really hard because that is when you start taking college classes. I almost broke because it was so difficult."

### **Peer Interactions**

Relocation for military-connected students means saying good-bye to old friends and forming new friendships in a whole new location. This aspect of relocation was identified

by many of the parent and student participants as the most challenging portion of relocation. When questioned what aspect of relocation was the most challenging, Student #1 said, “It was definitely making new friends. It’s hard when you have a set of really close friends and then you have to leave.”

While interview responses indicated that making friends at new schools was easier in their primary years, students and parents specifically remarked on the challenges of foraging new friendships, as the students grew older. In particular, military-connected students struggled with establishing themselves within the peer structure and cliques that already existed at new schools. Parent #4 remarked “The biggest challenges for her (Student #4) were mostly when she entered junior high and high school, just making friends and connecting with people.” In addition to the challenges of forming friendships, Student #3 and Student #4 specifically mentioned instances of being bullied by peers because their parent was serving in the military. Student #3 described a particular incident where a peer told her “Your Dad is killing people, he’s a horrible person” and Student #4 explained the trial of being a “Base Kid” in a small community where the local children had attended school together since first grade.

Another area that was only mentioned by Parent #2 and Student #3 was the effect that a highly mobile lifestyle had on romantic relationships. A move for Student #2 forced him to say good-bye to a girlfriend, which Parent #2 explained was a “real challenge” for her son. Student #3 remarked that every time she found out she was moving in high school, she would stop dating. It did not matter if the move was six months away or almost a year away.

**Extracurricular Activities**

One common thread that linked all five students was their participation in extracurricular activities. Some of the extracurricular activities involved school clubs or sports, while others included activities in outside organizations or in the local community. Student #5 explained how she used extracurricular activities to help form relationships at her new schools. This included trying out for the field hockey team her freshman year, despite the fact that she had no idea how field hockey was played, and strategically enrolling in classes that provided opportunities for interaction with her peers.

Despite a desire to participate in extracurricular activities, frequent relocations created obstacles for all five of the military-connected children interviewed. When questioned about her experience with extracurricular activities, Student #1 described how she was not able to participate in the newspaper club because of a required prerequisite that she could not take. Her mother, Parent #1, explained how moving during the summer prevented her daughter from participating in some sports because tryouts were held while they were in the process of relocating. When questioned about his extracurricular activities, Student #2 explained how he stopped playing baseball due to frequent moves and instead became involved with a National Forensic Team and Boy Scouts which both had chapters located around the nation.

Of particular interest were the difficulties that Students #3 and #5 described about their attempts to integrate into existing sports teams at their new high schools. Student #3 explained how she quit playing softball, a sport she enjoyed at her previous school, because she felt “a lot of resistance” from the established team members who had been playing together on various teams since elementary school. Student #5 described how

she abandoned school sports because she “didn’t want to fight for a position on a sports team, because it was exhausting.”

### **Enrichment**

One common theme that existed in all the student interviews was an appreciation for how military relocation provided an opportunity to experience new places and new cultures. Some students specifically mentioned their academic enrichment through the exploration of local area and local history, while other students focused on how relocation increased their understanding of other cultures. As Student #1 stated, “We got to experience the diversity of America, more than people who have lived in the same place their entire lives.”

### **Resiliency**

Student #1 stated, “A big strength is that we (she and her siblings) all learned to adapt quickly to new situations and we are able to handle change very, very well.” This quote perfectly summarizes the resilient nature of the students who participated in this research. All five of the participants specifically mentioned how their highly mobile lifestyle had prepared them for success in adulthood. The four attending college felt confident that their experiences in childhood had left them better prepared to be away from home than their peers and Student #4, who elected to skip college in lieu of a career, explained how her ability to foster new relationships benefited her career as a hairdresser. Parent #5 shared that her daughter had transferred to “an international university without missing a beat. They’re (military-connected children) just so worldly. They have a lot of sympathy and they’re good honest kids.”

### **School Programs**

School programs specifically targeted to assist new students, varied in application and effectiveness. One common type of program was the school orientation or new student welcome. One DoDEA school attended by Student #1 offered a new student orientation, which covered basic information about the school and the classes she would attend. Student #1, however, did not view the orientation as beneficial in her adjustment to the new school. Student #5 had a wonderful transition experience when she was welcomed to her school at a new student orientation. This orientation consisted of student leaders of the school escorting groups of new students around the school and answering their questions. Student #5 explained how this orientation served as a non-threatening opportunity to meet other new students and explore the school.

Another type of program implemented by schools was the use of peer group clubs. When Student #3 transitioned to the International school in Belgium her orientation included a warm welcome by a student club specifically designed to ease the transitions of new students. It was through this group that Student # 3 began to make friends and learn her way around a sprawling campus. Once she adjusted to the new school, Student #3 eventually became a member of the club and used it as a vehicle to continue to meet new friends and make others feel welcome. Student #4 also found support in a small group when she transitioned to a high school in California. At this particular school, military children were invited to participate in a counselor run support group that met once a month. This group was used as a forum for discussion about military specific concerns and served as an opportunity to meet other students who shared a similar transient lifestyle.

More often than not, the interviewees described a general lack of school support during transitions. This lack of support became more of a challenge when transitioning to high school. Student #3 described her transition to a new high school as a very stressful experience. Student #3 said, “I got lost for two weeks, I was never shown around correctly, and one day I started crying.”

### **Recommendations**

When questioned what they would recommend to ease the strain of new school transitions on military-connected children, the interviewees provided suggestions for both schools and parents. One common suggestion for schools was the formation of some type of formal orientation program offered throughout the year for transitioning students. Specifically the idea of a new student sponsorship program was recommended by Parent #1 and Student #3 as a means to provide a school orientation, an opportunity to discuss school procedures and classes, and to perhaps even provide a person to eat lunch with on the first day of school. As Student #3 said, “No kid, on the first day of school, should ever have to eat alone.”

Academically, parents expressed a desire for common educational standards across the nation. Parent #4 was quoted as saying “If everyone could get on the same page, that would be good.” Recognizing that this desire was not currently a possibility, Parent #5 recommended that schools and districts educate themselves about the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunities for Military Children to alleviate obstacles for military-connected students. “The Interstate Compact needs to be truly implemented nationwide, with clear guidelines.

Within the schools themselves, there are also other small changes that were recommended by parents and students for easing transitions. Student #1 recommended an organized new student club to provide an opportunity for peer bonding. Parent #1 recommended that schools review a student's transcripts prior to arrival. This review would help identify any issues with class credit and would permit the student to take steps before arrival to address the areas of concern. Parent #1 also recommended that schools hold positions open on their sports team for students who arrive at the start of the school year and still would like to try out. Student #3 recommended small class sizes, opportunities for group projects, and organized school activities outside the classroom for fostering the formation of friendship and a feeling of belonging.

Recommendations from parents advocated for an informed and proactive approach to school transitions. Parents interviewed recommended that parents research schools and their standards prior to arrival. Excellent school record keeping was highly recommended by Parent #3, since schools often do not transfer records until after a student is enrolled. Parent #5 stressed that parents of students with an Individual Education Plan should begin a dialog between the two schools prior to transition in order to prevent a gap in service. Finally, Parent #4 stressed that parents should "Focus on what their children are good at, remain positive... and communicate with the school and the teacher to make sure that your child is getting everything they need academically."

## **Discussion**

Adjusting to a new environment after relocation is a challenge that military-connected students often encounter. "In each new situation, these students lose their old networks and are required to make new friends, adjust to new residences and military bases, adapt

to new social norms and academic standards, and reestablish teacher relationships, among other adjustments” (Berkowitz, Tunac de Pedro, Couture, & Benbenishty, 2014, p. 1).

The interviews conducted for this study painted a picture of highly resilient students who faced educational challenges due to frequent relocation and school transitions. These frequent relocations and academic adjustments provided the students with both challenges and opportunities for growth. From these areas of challenge and opportunity emerged four major themes. They included challenges with academic continuity, challenges with peer relationships, the impact of school programs, and development of resiliency.

### **Academic Continuity**

Military-connected students who relocate to new schools encounter variations in educational standards, curriculum, and requirements. These variations were universally mentioned by all of the participants in the study. For some of the military-connected students, a lack of educational continuity created major educational hurdles that required substantial effort to bridge gaps in knowledge, while other students experienced minor issues that resulted in repeated curriculum or modifications to schedules. Regardless of the severity of the hurdles, the interviews revealed that military-connected students are at an educational disadvantage due to their frequent moves.

While organizations like the Military Education Coalition and Military Education Children’s Compact Commission are working to reduce and even eliminate educational continuity barriers, the lack of unified standards in the United States continues to provide obstacles to military-connected students. Unfortunately, this lack of educational continuity not only affects military-connected students, it also impacts the institutions

they attend. In a report to Congressional Committees, George Scott (2011) stated “The largest challenge reported by school districts in our survey was the increased academic need of children in military families who transfer to a school with different curricula or academic standards than those in their previous school and thus need additional support” (p. 20).

### **Challenges with Peers**

According to Bradsaw et al. (2010), the challenge of beginning and maintaining warm friendships is a common stress inducing factor for students who frequently relocate. The military-connected students in the study often had to establish new friendships and systems of support as a result of relocation. While many of the students specifically mentioned that this aspect of military relocation assisted in the development of their people skills, they expressed that the emotional impact of transition among friends was difficult. The difficulties with making new friends appeared to have increased as the military-connected students attended high school, especially for students who transitioned during their high school years.

The participants of this study specifically referenced extracurricular activities, classroom group work, recess, and clubs as venues they utilized to discover new friendship and a sense of belonging. These loosely structured activities provided opportunities to engage in conversation and find connections within their new school environment. Storbino and Salvaterra (2000) highlighted the importance of extracurricular activities in their study of transitions and military adolescent children when they wrote about the important integration function extracurricular activities serve for students. While integration into extracurricular activities offered opportunities to form

new relationships, some of the students did find difficulties introducing themselves within established peer structures, obtaining access to activities or sports they wanted to participate in, and having access to tryouts for team sports and clubs.

### **The Impact of School Programs**

Research has established that school support and friendship strengthen the social-emotional adjustment and general resiliency of students transitioning to different schools. (Catalano, Haggerty, Oesterle, Flemming, & Hawkins, 2004). This held true for the military-connected students who participated in this study. The existence of school-based programs, specifically designed to ease transitions, provided meaningful opportunities for the students to integrate into the school culture and structure while fostering a sense of belonging. The depth of these programs varied greatly from school to school while some institutions did not appear to have any programs in place.

### **The Development of Resiliency**

A unifying theme in the research for this project and in the interviews was the belief that resiliency is one of the effects of multiple transitions for military-connected students. According to Easterbrooks, Ginsburg, and Lerner (2013), “Resiliency is sustained competence or positive adjustment in the face of adversity” (p. 100). While only a couple of parents specifically used the term resiliency to describe their military-connected children, the theme of resiliency existed as a common thread in all of the interviews conducted with students and parents. In particular, students and parents highlighted how adaption to new places, new friendships, new cultures, and experiences had prepared the military-connected students for a successful transition into adulthood.

**Limitations**

There are some limitations to bear in mind when reviewing these findings. Four of the five military-connected students participating in this study were the children of military officers. This is important because the social-economic status of military officers and enlisted personnel can vary greatly. In general, military officers and their families have more monetary options in regard to home locations, schools, and resources. These options may influence the educational experience of the student and the overall impact of military relocation. Another limitation to consider is that this research did not include perspectives from teachers or schools directly impacted by military-connected students and their multiple transitions.

**Conclusion**

The challenges associated with frequent relocation have both positive and negative effects on the academic experience of the military-connected student. While a highly-mobile lifestyle offers ample opportunity for exposure to new cultures and places, it can also result in essential academic knowledge gaps, repetitive learning, and disruption of peer relationships. Although there is limited data available on the effects frequent transitions have on the academic experience of the military-connected student, the research conducted for this paper demonstrates a clear need for change. The Federal government, State governments, school districts, and schools should carefully consider the implementation of steps specifically designed to ease transitions for military-connected students and other transitory populations of academic minors.

## **Recommendations**

While multiple relocations encourage the development of resiliency in military-connected students, many of the educational challenges they encounter do not make their journey one of ease. Lack of education continuity and establishment in peer groups make difficult transitions even more trying for military-connected students. Currently, the response from government, schools, and districts lacks coordination in addressing these concerns (De Pedro et al., 2014). This general lack of support requires attention to help mitigate the challenges of relocation for these minors who did not volunteer for the military and the transient life that results from it. As Easterbrook et al. (2013) stated,

The parents of military-connected youth volunteer to serve in our military.

However, their children have, in a sense, been drafted. Our nation owes these children and families an incalculable debt. Funding and carrying out rigorous research that is translated to guide policies and implemented in programs that enhance their lives is but one step in repaying them. (p. 113)

Prior to the creation of sound educational policies and programs, a more robust pool of research data is required (De Pedro et al., 2014). Currently, very little data exists on the performance of military children in schools, the impact their multiple relocations have on their academic and social-emotional well-being (Esqueda et al. 2012), and the effectiveness of Federal Impact Aid in schools with large populations of military-connected students (Scott, 2011). As a result of this study, it is recommended that extensive research be conducted on military-connected students in order to assist in the development of long-term policies and programs that assist military-connected children with academic transitions.

**Parents**

Until more research is conducted, parents of military-connected students will need to continue to be advocates for their children. This means that parents need to take proactive steps to ensure that their children have all of the tools necessary for success and that the school their child attends provides the necessary support. Parents should educate themselves on the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for the Military Child and the nonprofit organizations that currently seek reform on educational policy intended to benefit military-connected students. In the home, parents should embrace change and make transition as positive an experience as possible, perhaps even using it as an enrichment opportunity.

**Schools and Districts**

While more research is being conducted on the impact that multiple transitions have on the academic experience of the military-connected student, schools and districts can begin taking action now. Low cost to no cost programs that are specifically designed to ease academic transition and create a sense of belonging should be put in place, especially in schools with large populations of military-connected students or students from other highly transitory groups. These programs could include appointed school liaisons that assist with assessing academic records prior to enrollment, ready made tests for assessing knowledge and skills for correct course placement, school orientations offered all year long (Bradshaw et al., 2010), peer mentorship/sponsorship programs, support groups facilitated by a faculty or staff member, and training programs designed to educate faculty and staff on the unique challenges that military-connected students encounter (Berkowitz et al., 2014). In addition to the formation of programs designed to

support and ease academic transition, school should also consider participation in established coalitions, which are able to provide multiple resources regarding military-connected students (Titus, 2007).

School Districts in states that have consented to and signed the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for the Military Child should ensure that faculty and staff are educated on the compact and actively implementing the agreement. The responsibility of understanding and ensuring that this compact is appropriately implemented should not fall on the shoulders of the military-connected student nor their family. This is especially important in areas located in proximity to military bases.

Since extracurricular activities provide opportunities for military-connected students to nurture friendships and develop a sense of belonging, it is suggested that schools and districts closely look at their policies for tryouts and participation in extracurricular activities. Some ideas for consideration are leaving space for the addition of student participants who enter school after the designated tryout or enrollment period and having more flexibility in requirements for enrollment in enrichment courses or clubs. More opportunities for involvement in extracurricular activities may help ease transitions for military-connected students.

### **State and Federal Governments**

The lack of continuity between schools, districts, and states creates unnecessary challenges for any child who has to relocate. This lack of continuity also highlights a common perception that student populations are static (Titus, 2007). A common unifying curriculum, provided by the Department of Education, for all United States schools would tremendously assist students who transition during their schooling.

The use of technology to streamline transitions could also greatly benefit military-connected students. The implementation of a unified national electronic school record or portfolio, like the portfolios used for students of migrant workers in Florida and Texas, could be used to ease enrollment issues for military-connected children at their new schools (Titus, 2007). With each move, the student record could be sent digitally, decreasing the time it takes for students to properly enroll in classes at their new location. In addition to electronic records, the possibility of offering web-based online courses, may offer options for students who would otherwise lose credit, experience gaps in essential knowledge, or lack adequate academic rigor at their new school (Titus, 2007).

A close analysis of Federal Impact Aid, currently designated for use by districts and schools to assist with the costs associated with military-connected students, needs to be conducted to determine if these funds are serving their intended purpose. To address this issue, it is suggested that a small portion of these funds be used for school and district programs that ease transition concerns for military-connected children. Possible uses could be a stipend for a faculty member who runs a support club or even a dedicated salary for a staff member who deals with all military-student transfers in schools with large populations of military-connected students.

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**Appendix A**

**Introductory Data Questions**

Name of Student:

Student's Age:

Gender of Student:

Month and Year of Graduation:

Current State of Residence:

Number of Schools Attended Prior to Graduation:

Number of School Relocations due to Military Orders:

Types of Schools Attended (Public, Private, Charter, Homeschool, or Combination):

Name of Participating Parent:

Relationship to Student:

Current State of Residence:

Highest Rank of Military Member while on Active Duty:

## **Appendix B**

### **Informed Consent for Recent Graduate Interviews**

**Name of Investigator:** Julie C. Phelps

**Name of Organization:** University of Mary Washington

**Name of Advisor:** Dr. Laurie Abeel

**Title of Research Project:** The Education of the Military-Connected Child: A Study of the Educational Challenges of a Mobile Lifestyle

**This Informed Consent Form has two parts:**

- **Information Sheet (to share information about the study with you)**
- **Certificate of Consent (for signatures if you choose to participate)**

**You will be given a copy of the full Informed Consent Form.**

#### **Part 1. Information Sheet**

##### **Introduction**

My name is Julie Phelps and I am conducting research as a requirement for my Master of Education degree at the University of Mary Washington. The goal of my research is to gain insight about the possible impact frequent relocation have on the academic experience of military-connected children. I am inviting you to be a participant in this research as an interviewee. Your participation is entirely voluntary. The information below is to inform you of what your participation entails and to give details about how I will use your interview data. You may ask questions at any time about the project. I have been given approval by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at UMW to conduct the research.

##### **Purpose of the Research**

The purpose of this research is to investigate the possible impact frequent relocation has on the academic experience of military-connected children. I have reviewed prior research regarding the academic and social-emotional challenges military-connected children encounter as they transition to new schools. This research revealed that little information has been gathered on the specific experiences of military-connected students in regard to academic transition. Therefore, the purpose of my study is to learn from your experiences in order to provide information that may be used by the government, schools, and parents to ease academic transition challenges for military-connected children.

##### **Participant Selection**

You are being invited to participate in this research because of your experience with academic transitions due to military relocation. Your experience as a military-connected child can contribute much to our understanding and knowledge of what possible academic challenges military-connected children encounter as they transition into new academic settings.

##### **Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate or not. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time and none of your data will be used in the study.

**Extent of Your Participation**

Each interview will last about one hour and involve a face-to-face or virtual discussion between you and the researcher asking questions related to your academic experience as it relates to relocation due to military orders. The discussion will relate to such topics as educational continuity, extra-curricular activities, social-emotional challenges, and any other relevant information that you wish to discuss. The conversation will be video recorded because having an exact record of what was said is important for conducting accurate research. In addition to the recording, I may take handwritten notes of anything such as gestures that may not be recorded. After the interview, if I have additional questions to clarify, I may call you. If this follow-up is necessary, the phone call would be no more than about 15 minutes. The follow-up phone call will not be recorded, but handwritten notes will be taken.

**Confidentiality**

After the interview, the digital recordings and any handwritten notes will be transcribed on my computer and the original recordings and notes will be destroyed. Any data files I create from the transcripts will be stored on my personal computer which is password protected so that no one except myself can have access. I will keep all data relating to your participation in this research on this computer for no more than 5 years, and then it will be permanently deleted. In any reports I make about this research, I will use pseudonyms to identify all participants and others referred to in the interviews. Any description of interview participants, will be given in general terms so that no one can be specifically identified, and I will not reveal any identifying information such as the name of your school, current location, job, etc.

**Risks**

There almost no risks to you as a participant in this research. The only foreseeable risk is that you may not feel comfortable answering specific questions during the interview. However, you do not have to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. If you answer and later feel you would not want that statement included, you may request any statements you make to be deleted from the recordings.

**Benefits**

There will be no direct benefit to you, but your participation is likely to help us find out more about the effects of frequent transitions on the academic experience of military-connected children.

**Whom to Contact**

If you have any questions, you may ask them now or later. If you wish to ask them later, you may contact me, Julie Phelps, at XXX-XXX-XXXX or juliephelps32@XXXX.com. This proposal has been approved by the University of Mary Washington IRB which is a committee responsible for ensuring that research is being conducted safely and that risks to participants are minimized. For information about the conduct of this research, contact the IRB chair, Dr. Jo Tyler, at jtyler@umw.edu.

**Part II. Certificate of Consent**

**To be completed by the participant in the research described above:**

*I have read the preceding Information Sheet describing the research I have been asked to participate in. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it, and all questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I declare that I am at least 18 years of age. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.*

Print Name of Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ (Month/Day/Year)

*I understand that the interview will be audio recorded, and I agree \_\_\_ / do not agree \_\_\_ to be recorded for this purpose:*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\*\*\*\*\*

**To be completed by the researcher:**

*I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability.*

*A copy of this Informed Consent Form has been provided to the participant.*

Print Name of the Researcher \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Researcher \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ (Month/Day/Year)

## Appendix C

### Informed Consent for Parent Interviews

**Name of Investigator:** Julie C. Phelps

**Name of Organization:** University of Mary Washington

**Name of Advisor:** Dr. Laurie Abeel

**Title of Research Project:** The Education of the Military-Connected Child: A Study of the Educational Challenges of a Mobile Lifestyle

**This Informed Consent Form has two parts:**

- **Information Sheet (to share information about the study with you)**
- **Certificate of Consent (for signatures if you choose to participate)**

**You will be given a copy of the full Informed Consent Form.**

#### Part 1. Information Sheet

##### **Introduction**

My name is Julie Phelps and I am conducting research as a requirement for my Master of Education degree at the University of Mary Washington. The goal of my research is to gain insight about the possible impact frequent relocation have on the academic experience of military-connected children. I am inviting you to be a participant in this research as an interviewee. Your participation is entirely voluntary. The information below is to inform you of what your participation entails and to give details about how I will use your interview data. You may ask questions at any time about the project. I have been given approval by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at UMW to conduct the research.

##### **Purpose of the Research**

The purpose of this research is to investigate the possible impact frequent relocation has on the academic experience of military-connected children. I have reviewed prior research regarding the academic and social-emotional challenges military-connected children encounter as they transition to new schools. This research revealed that little information has been gathered on the specific experiences of military-connected students in regard to academic transition. Therefore, the purpose of my study is to learn from your experiences in order to provide information that may be used by the government, schools, and parents to ease academic transition challenges for military-connected children.

##### **Participant Selection**

You are being invited to participate in this research because you are the parent of a military-connected child who has experienced academic transitions due to military relocation. Your experience as a parent of a military-child can contribute much to our understanding and knowledge of what possible academic challenges military-connected children encounter as they transition into new academic settings.

##### **Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate or not. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time and none of your data will be used in the study.

**Extent of Your Participation**

Each interview will last about one hour and involve a face-to-face or virtual discussion between you and the researcher asking questions related to your child's academic experience as it relates to relocation due to military orders. The discussion will relate to such topics as educational continuity, extra-curricular activities, social-emotional challenges, and any other relevant information that you wish to discuss. The conversation will be video recorded because having an exact record of what was said is important for conducting accurate research. In addition to the recording, I may take handwritten notes of anything such as gestures that may not be recorded. After the interview, if I have additional questions to clarify, I may call you. If this follow-up is necessary, the phone call would be no more than about 15 minutes. The follow-up phone call will not be recorded, but handwritten notes will be taken.

**Confidentiality**

After the interview, the digital recordings and any handwritten notes will be transcribed on my computer and the original recordings and notes will be destroyed. Any data files I create from the transcripts will be stored on my personal computer which is password protected so that no one except myself can have access. I will keep all data relating to your participation in this research on this computer for no more than 5 years, and then it will be permanently deleted. In any reports I make about this research, I will use pseudonyms to identify all participants and others referred to in the interviews. Any description of interview participants, will be given in general terms so that no one can be specifically identified, and I will not reveal any identifying information such as the name of the school or school division where individual participants work.

**Risks**

There almost no risks to you as a participant in this research. The only foreseeable risk is that you may not feel comfortable answering specific questions during the interview. However, you do not have to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. If you answer and later feel you would not want that statement included, you may request any statements you make to be deleted from the recordings.

**Benefits**

There will be no direct benefit to you, but your participation is likely to help us find out more about the effects of frequent transitions on the academic experience of military-connected children.

**Whom to Contact**

If you have any questions, you may ask them now or later. If you wish to ask them later, you may contact me, Julie Phelps, at XXX-XXX-XXXX or juliephelps32@xxxx.com. This proposal has been approved by the University of Mary Washington IRB which is a committee responsible for ensuring that research is being conducted safely and that risks to participants are minimized. For information about the conduct of this research, contact the IRB chair, Dr. Jo Tyler, at jtyler@umw.edu.

**Part II. Certificate of Consent**

**To be completed by the participant in the research described above:**

*I have read the preceding Information Sheet describing the research I have been asked to participate in. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it, and all questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I declare that I am at least 18 years of age. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.*

Print Name of Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ (Month/Day/Year)

*I understand that the interview will be audio recorded, and I agree \_\_\_ / do not agree \_\_\_ to be recorded for this purpose:*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\*\*\*\*\*

**To be completed by the researcher:**

*I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability.*

*A copy of this Informed Consent Form has been provided to the participant.*

Print Name of the Researcher \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Researcher \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ (Month/Day/Year)

## Appendix D

### Interview Questions

S=Student

P= Parent

S1: How many times did you transition schools due to military relocation orders?

P1: How many times did your child have to transition schools due to military relocation orders?

S2: What type of schools did your attend?

P2: What type of schools did your child attend?

S3: What are some of the challenges you faced from frequent school transitions?

P3: What are some of the challenges your child faced as a result of frequent school transitions?

S4: Did you develop any strengths from frequent school transitions?

P4: Did you observe your child develop any strengths from frequent school transitions?

S5: Did you encounter any specific academic challenges directly related to school transition?

P5: Did your child encounter any specific academic challenges directly related to school transition?

S6: Did you encounter any specific social challenges directly related to school transition?

P6: Did your child encounter any specific challenges directly related to school transition?

S7: Were you involved in extra-curricular school activities? What was that experience like?

P7: Was you child involved in any extra-curricular school activities? Please describe that experience.

S8: What are your recommendations for steps that schools can take to ease transitions of military connected children?

P8: What are your recommendations for steps that schools can take to ease transitions of military connected children?

P9: What are your recommendations for steps that parents can take to ease transitions of military connected children?

S9: What is your overall assessment of your transition school experience in regard to multiple transitions?

P10: What is your overall assessment of your military child's school experience in regard to multiple transitions?

S10: What was your overall school experience in relation to school transitions?

P11: How would you rate your child's overall school experience in relation to school transitions?