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Concordia University—Portland

College of Education

Doctorate of Education Program

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Teacher Perceptions of Parental Involvement With Parents Who are Deployed: A Case Study

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Concordia University–Portland

College of Education

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the College of Education

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in

Teacher Leadership

Jillian Skelton, Ed.D., Faculty Chair Dissertation Committee

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Abstract

The purpose of this research study was to understand how elementary school teachers of military–connected students perceive parental involvement when at least one of the parents is deployed. Currently, minimal literature exists on this phenomenon. The Department of Defense (2014) explained that there are over 3.4 million people serving as military personnel, and of the 1.2 million military–connected children, 80% attend public schools in the United States (American Association of School Administrators, 2016). Thus, a need for research on this population of students exists. Guided by Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems theory and Epstein's (2011) ideas on parental involvement, a qualitative single case study was chosen as the methodology for this research in which semi–structured interviews were conducted. Through topic coding and analytic coding, it was discovered that although perceptions vary from teacher to teacher, six common themes were found in their responses. The six themes are the role of the teacher, the role of the school, the role of the family, the role of the military/military community, factors in the effects of deployment, and communication. These themes were found to be connected with both of the research questions and theoretical frameworks within this study. The implications of this research can be expanded to assist even non–military students whose parent(s) is absent from his/her life.

Keywords: military–connected student, parental involvement, student learning

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to all the brave soldiers in the military–thank you for your service. Moreover, to the family members of those soldiers–thank you for your sacrifice; it does not go unnoticed. You are heroes as well.

Acknowledgements

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the many people who assisted me both directly and indirectly in completing this dissertation paper. First of all, to my Faculty Chair, Dr. Jillian Skelton, thank you for all your guidance and support throughout this journey. To my Dissertation Committee, Dr. Donna Graham and Dr. Nicholas Markette, and Concordia University–the knowledge gained from my education at this university is comparable to none. To Dr. Ellis for not only spending countless hours editing and advising my work but for taking the time to check on my well–being during this process.

Thank you to the dedicated teachers who allowed me to interview them right before the first week of school. I am forever grateful that you all were so gracious with your time. Your students are lucky to have you. Additionally, thank you to the school for allowing me to interview your teachers and contribute to the literature on military–connected students. Thank you to the administrators and instructional coach who took the time to review my interview questions and provide such valuable feedback and input.

To the Dominguez Family–the first family in my teaching career to have a parent on deployment. You all were the inspiration for this work. Thank you for being an amazing military family.

To my beautiful family–Hector, Neenah, & Iris. Because of you, I always strive to be the best that I can be. You all push me, and make me better. Thank you for being so selfless during this journey. I love you so much. To my parents–Martha and Louie–thank you for always making me reach for the stars and for supporting me to believe that anything is possible. To all my beautiful friends and family–thank you for all your support, encouragement, and love. To God and my angels watching over me–none of this would have been possible without you.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

A variety of students with unique needs exist within all general education schools across the United States. Military–connected students are one example of a unique population of students (Park, 2011). Military–connected students are defined as students who have a parent or guardian in the military (Military Child Education Coalition, 2016). Within a school, these students may be part of a small group of individuals or they could make up the majority of the student population. Regardless of the numbers, all military–connected students require special considerations because of their uncommon lifestyle (Knoblok & Theiss, 2012; Ruff & Keim, 2014; Vuga & Juvan, 2013; Waliski et al., 2012).

School–aged children of military families face numerous challenges that their nonmilitary counterparts do not. Challenges include parental deployments, constant relocations, academic and social difficulties, and readjustments to new school settings, curricula, and friends (Military Child Education Coalition, 2016). These challenges make military families' needs distinctive.

Multiple deployments and constant mobility have been shown to be contributing factors to problems related to developing relationships, creation of extra distress, and the academic decline of military–connected students (Knoblock & Theiss, 2012; Ruff & Keim, 2014; Waliski, Bokony, Edlund, & Kirchner, 2012). Statistics from the American Association of School Administrators (2016) revealed that approximately one–third of school–aged military–connected students suffer from psychosocial behavior issues that include anxiousness, excessive worrying, and frequent crying. Many authors expressed the importance and need for more research to be done on military–connected students (Masten, 2013; Park, 2011; Waliski, Bokony, Edlund, & Kirchner, 2012). Thus, there is currently a gap in the literature on this unique population of students.

Vuga and Juvan (2013) found that soldiers are encouraged to place family second to the military. All military family members (wives and children for example) must know and accept that. The wife of a man serving in the Army National Guard said it is like she is the mistress and the Army is his real wife (S. Dominguez, personal communication, December 21, 2014).

Despite the unique stresses surrounding military families (Military Child Education Coalition, 2016), military–connected students have the same performance and behavioral expectations as their non–military connected peers. According to the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, all students across the United States are expected to be held to high academic standards that will assist in preparing for college and career readiness (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). Success is expected from all students regardless of their circumstances. This creates problems for military–connected students, which includes implications that may be related to other populations of students as well, such as students with divorced parents, foster parents, or single parent families. Ensuring that all students are academically successful is a challenge that every educator faces. Hence, if educational professionals are equipped with information on this topic, the possibilities for improving how educators can help all students increases significantly.

Background

Throughout history, military personnel and their families have experienced deployments as a result of the nation's condition. Soldiers are needed when the country is at war. This has been a reality for centuries from prior to World War I to the current war on terrorism. In fact, since the tragic events of September 11, 2001, "approximately two million military children have experienced a parental deployment" (American Association of School Administrators, 2016, para 1).

According to the Department of Defense (2014), there are over 3.5 million people serving as military personnel. There are 1.2 million military children of current active duty family members across the world. 80% of those 1.2 million attend public schools in the United States (American Association of School Administrators, 2016). Park (2011) stated, "A common saying in the military is that when one person joins, the whole family serves" (p. 65). This includes the 80% of the 1.2 million military–connected students attending public schools across the nation. Not only are military personnel experiencing deployments and the effects of serving in the military, but so are their families right alongside them (Park, 2011). There is a need for more research to be done on military–connected students (Masten, 2013; Park, 2011; Waliski, Bokony, Edlund, & Kirchner, 2012).

Conceptual Framework

Two theories were utilized for the conceptual framework of this study. The first was Epstein's (2011) theory on parental involvement. Epstein (2011) theorized that parental involvement is a team effort where parents, teachers/the school, and the community must work together to benefit the child. Following this belief, it is important to closely consider military–connected students with a deployed parent because both parents are not part of the team that Epstein (2011) explained was essential for student success. Military parents throughout the United States are being deployed across the world while, at the same time, increasing numbers of studies are proving that parental involvement is crucial to a child's education (Al–Alwan, 2014; Hampden–Thompson, Guzman, & Lippman, 2012; Karakus & Savas, 2012; Kirkwood, 2016). This creates a problem for educators in their efforts to assist all students but especially military–connected students.

The military–connected student population is important when considering Epstein's (2011) theoretical framework, which explained that parents, school, and community need to work together to benefit the students. In this case, the community portion is specific to the military and differs from the community of non–military connected students. All students are members of a very general community. The neighborhood grocery stores and department stores are a part of the general community. However, a military community is somewhat exclusive because the only way to be a part of that community is to have a family member serving in the military. Thus, that community consists of other military personnel, other military families, and buildings and stores created specifically for military workers, like the base PX for example.

The other theory being utilized for this study is Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems theory. This theory is based on the idea that human development is directly and indirectly influenced by various microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, macrosystems, and chronosystems. Each system describes an example of a person or entity that may influence the development of a person. This is very similar to Epstein's (2011) theory on parental involvement as her theory discussed the influence of family, school, and the community on a child's development and success in school. In fact, Bronfenbrenner's (1994) microsystem included family, school personnel, and peers. The mesosystem included the settings in which those people are found such as the home, the school, and the neighborhood. More information on both theories is provided in Chapter 2.

Statement of the Problem

While there is a preponderance of research showing links between parental involvement and student learning (Al–Alwan, 2014; Hampden–Thompson, Guzman, & Lippman, 2012; Jeynes, 2012; Jeynes, 2016a; Jeynes, 2016b; Karakus & Savas, 2012; Kirkwood, 2016), there is a

need to explore how general education teachers of military–connected students perceive and interpret the influence of parental involvement of students whose parent(s) are deployed on those students' learning. Numerous authors realized the importance and need for more research to be done on military–connected students (Masten, 2013; Park, 2011; Waliski, Bokony, Edlund, & Kirchner, 2012). Thus, there is a gap in the literature on this population of students.

When considering Epstein's (2011) theory on student success through the triangular team of parents, school, and community a fundamental section is missing when a parent(s) is deployed. Since parental involvement is crucial to the academic success of all children, educators must determine the best way to ensure that military–connected students are still being successful despite the absence of their deployed parent(s). Identifying teacher perceptions will lead to insights that can assist educational stakeholders and the military community to help fill the void created by a deployed parent.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore how general education elementary school teachers of military–connected students perceive and interpret the influence of parental involvement on a student's learning when at least one of the parents is deployed. While there is a preponderance of research showing links between parental involvement and student learning (Al–Alwan, 2014; Hampden–Thompson, Guzman, & Lippman, 2012; Jeynes, 2012; Jeynes, 2016a; Jeynes, 2016b; Karakus & Savas, 2012; Kirkwood, 2016), there is a need to explore how general education teachers of military–connected students perceive and interpret the influence of parental involvement of students whose parent(s) are deployed on those students' learning. The conceptual framework for this research was based upon Epstein's (2011) definition of parental involvement and Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems theory on

influences of one's development. This case study was conducted in the southern region of the United States within an elementary school containing students from pre–kindergarten to fifth grade. The elementary school was chosen based on its high population of military–connected students. The sample being utilized for this study had to teach any grade level from pre–kindergarten to fifth grade at the case study school and had to have had a student with a deployed parent between the following school years: 2014–2015, 2015–2016, or 2016–2017. Gender, specific grade levels taught, and number of years teaching were not criteria considered for this study.

Research Questions

The following research questions will be explored in this case study:

RQ1. How do general education elementary school teachers of military–connected students perceive and interpret the influence of parental involvement of students whose parent(s) are deployed on those students' academic learning?

RQ2. According to the general education elementary school teachers' perceptions, how is the child's perceived learning affected by the involvement of the non–deployed parent?

Research Methodology

A qualitative research methodology was utilized for this study. When seeking to answer 'how' and 'why' research questions, it is important that the researcher uses a qualitative design (McMillan, 2012). A single case study design works best for this study based on certain characteristics that include direct data collection, the collection of participant perspectives, and socially constructed meaning (McMillan, 2012). The reasoning for choosing a qualitative single case study is discussed in further detail in Chapter 3.

Population

The population studied was general education elementary school teachers who teach grades ranging from pre–kindergarten to fifth grade. There were two criteria requirements for being a part of this study. The first criteria was that teachers had to have taught at the school in which the study was being conducted within the last three school years (2014–2015, 2015–2016, and 2016–2017). The second criteria was that teachers had to have had a student with a deployed parent within the last three school years (2014–2015, 2015–2016, and 2016–2017). From this population of teachers, a sample of five teachers was utilized. The teachers varied in years of teaching experience and grades taught. One teacher had over 20 years of teaching experience and had taught from kindergarten to middle school, as opposed to another teacher who was beginning her second year of teaching this school year. All teachers interviewed met the general population criteria for this study. Snowball sampling was the technique used to determine the sample for this study. This sampling technique is discussed further in Chapter 3.

Significance

The results of this study provide educators, educational stakeholders, and the military community with information needed to assist in the success of military–connected students in elementary schools while a parent is on military deployment. The information obtained from this study can assist educational stakeholders in creating programs that will be beneficial to military–connected students. Additionally, the implications of this case study are beneficial for other students as they may be related to students who have a parent absent from their lives whether it is because of deployment, other job–related reasons, divorce, or death.

Current literature exists on the two separate topics of parental involvement (De Pedro, Astor, Gilreath, Benbenishty, & Berkowitz, 2015; Gilreath, Cederbaum, Astor, Benbenishty,

Pineda, & Atuel, 2013; Knoblok & Theiss, 2012; Link & Palinkas, 2013; Murphy & Fairbank, 2013; Paley, Lester, & Mogil, 2013; Park, 2011; Ruff & Keim, 2014; Selber, Biggs, Chavkin, & Wright, 2015; Vuga & Juvan, 2013; Waliski et al., 2012) and military families (Al–Alwan, 2014; Hampden–Thompson, Guzman, & Lippman, 2012; Jeynes, 2012; Jeynes, 2016a; Jeynes, 2016b; Karakus & Savas, 2012; Kirkwood, 2016;). However, deficiencies exist within the literature on those topics. While parental involvement studies exist on a variety of different populations of students, there are no studies on the unique needs of military families or military–connected students. Military–connected students are very poorly represented in current parental involvement literature. In fact, there is a need for more research to be conducted on military–connected students (Masten, 2013; Park, 2011; Waliski, Bokony, Edlund, & Kirchner, 2012). Another deficiency is in the type of studies being conducted on parental involvement and military families. The vast majority of literature on these topics are quantitative. Current qualitative studies on the topics of parental involvement or military families are rare. This single case study adds information on these topics using qualitative methodology approaches. Details on the literature search coverage can be found in Chapter 2 in which the diligence to uncover literature on these topics is explained.

Definition of Terms

Military–connected students. This term is defined as the children from pre–kindergarten to young adults enrolled in Trade Schools or Institutes of Higher Learning (two or four–year schools) that are official dependents of someone serving in the military (Military Child Education Coalition, 2016).

Parental involvement. This term is defined as a partnership between educators, families, and the community to work together to ensure the success of students (Epstein, 2011).

Student learning. This term is defined as the ability of a student to show that he/she knows and understands a particular concept.

Assumptions

Assumptions are a part of all studies. Professionals in the field recognize and accept that assumptions are present in every study. An assumption that accompanies qualitative research is that participants will be as honest as possible. However, this assumption does come with limits. The memory of the events may differ from the actual event, making a participant's responses unreliable. However, triangulation will assist in ensuring that responses are as accurate as possible. According to Flick, Kardoff, and Steinke (2004), "triangulation is used to refer to the observation of the research issue from (at least) two different points" (p. 179). This can include "two or more theories, data sources, methods or investigators in one study of a single phenomenon" (Yeasmin & Rahman, 2012, p. 156). Triangulation promotes consistency and understanding in questions and focus of those questions. More detailed information on triangulation can be found in Chapter 3.

Another assumption is that the study reviews one side of the story and one perspective. However, each individual's encounter will be unique from participant to participant. It is that assumption that makes qualitative studies so interesting because, although each participant's experience may differ, it is the researcher's job to find themes and commonalities among their responses.

Delimitations

This study contains three delimitations. The first delimitation is the branch of the military being utilized within this study. Since this research will be conducted in a city that is

home to one of the largest Army bases in the nation, this study will only include deployed parents from the United States Army.

The second delimitation was in the sampling criteria. The criteria to participate in this study were that teachers had to have taught a grade level from pre–kindergarten to fifth grade within the case study school and had a student with a deployed parent within the past three school years, 2014–2015, 2015–2016, and/or 2016–2017. This delimitation will, hopefully, allow for more accurate recollections of events since three or less years would have passed since having the child with a deployed parent in his/her class. Gender of the teachers, years of experience, and specific grade levels taught were not criteria considered for this research, however, they may be criteria in further research.

Another delimitation was in the choice of school. Within the school district there are numerous campuses from elementary schools to high schools in which a high military population exists. The school from which the teachers taught not only possessed a high military population, but also possessed a high number of teachers employed at that school. In fact, 40 teachers taught at that school, which created a likelihood for achieving the sample size needed for this study. An elementary school was chosen due to the fact that the researcher's experience is in elementary education. However, a recommendation for further research would be to explore perceptions of teachers within middle schools and/or high schools.

Limitations

While delimitations are controlled variables within a study, limitations are beyond a researcher's control. The first possible limitation in this study was the choice of using a sample size between five to ten teachers. Perhaps the minimum number for the sample size should have

been greater in order to be more representative of the population. This limitation is discussed in Chapter 5, under the section 'Recommendations for Further Study.'

Another possible limitation to this study was time constraints. Four out of the five sample teachers were interviewed at their school on the Saturday before the first day of school. This may have been a distraction and may have influenced the quality of their responses.

Chapter 1 Summary

Currently, a gap exists in the literature and creates justification for additional research to be conducted on military–connected families (Masten, 2013; Park, 2011; Waliski, Bokony, Edlund, & Kirchner, 2012). This qualitative single case study explored the perceptions and interpretations of general education elementary teachers to generalize the influence of parental involvement of students whose parent(s) are deployed on those students' learning. Chapter 2 of this study will review the current literature on parental involvement and military families as perceived through two theoretical frameworks: Epstein's (2011) parental involvement framework and Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems theory. Both frameworks focus on the effects of others in the development of a person. Chapter 3 will explain in detail the methodology used in this case study. Chapter 4 will include the findings of this qualitative study. Finally, Chapter 5 will explain the significance and the implications of those findings.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This case study focused on teacher perceptions of parental involvement when one parent is on military deployment. The literature searches focused on parental involvement and military families. As a result, this research study unveiled four interlinked key ideas. The first idea is that parental involvement leads to the academic success of children (Al–Alwan, 2014; Hampden–Thompson, Guzman, & Lippman, 2012; Jeynes, 2012; Jeynes, 2016a; Jeynes, 2016b; Karakus & Savas, 2012; Kirkwood, 2016). The second interlinked idea is that military families are unique (Knoblok & Theiss, 2012; Ruff & Keim, 2014; Vuga & Juvan, 2013; Waliski et al., 2012). The third idea is that military deployments have negative effects on military–connected children (Gilreath, Cederbaum, Astor, Benbenishty, Pineda, & Atuel, 2013; Link & Palinkas, 2013; Paley, Lester, & Mogil, 2013). The last interlinked key idea is that effective school programs are needed for military–connected children (De Pedro, Astor, Gilreath, Benbenishty, & Berkowitz, 2015; Murphy & Fairbank, 2013; Park, 2011; Selber, Biggs, Chavkin, & Wright, 2015).

The first idea is that parental involvement leads to the academic success of children (Al–Alwan, 2014; Hampden–Thompson, Guzman, & Lippman, 2012; Jeynes, 2012; Jeynes, 2016a; Jeynes, 2016b; Karakus & Savas, 2012; Kirkwood, 2016). Parents are a child's first teacher and continue to be their child's teacher for the rest of their lives. Parents play a fundamental role in their children's education, so their involvement is crucial and will help determine academic success.

The second idea is that military families are unique (Knoblok & Theiss, 2012; Ruff & Keim, 2014; Vuga & Juvan, 2013; Waliski et al., 2012). In many ways, the day–to–day lives of military families contrast greatly from those of non–military families. One specific difference is

that many military families experience life without the military parent for months at a time when on deployments.

The third idea is that military deployments have negative effects on military–connected children (Gilreath, Cederbaum, Astor, Benbenishty, Pineda, & Atuel, 2013; Link & Palinkas, 2013; Paley, Lester, & Mogil, 2013). Since military deployments may have a negative effect on military–connected students, extra services need to be provided to students who are in this situation. 80% of the 1.2 million military children of current active duty family members across the world attend public schools in the United States (American Association of School Administrators, 2016). Thus, there is an obligation from the general education public school system to provide those needed services.

The last idea is that effective school programs are needed for military–connected children (De Pedro, Astor, Gilreath, Benbenishty, & Berkowitz, 2015; Murphy & Fairbank, 2013; Park, 2011; Selber, Biggs, Chavkin, & Wright, 2015). Many schools containing a high population of military–connected students have a Military Liaison on staff. However, in schools where the military population is low, this service may not be offered. Effective school programs for military–connected students are needed in all public schools, not just those with a high military population (De Pedro et al., 2015; Murphy & Fairbank, 2012; Park, 2011; Selber et al., 2015).

Context

Current military strikes against Syria and bombings in Afghanistan (Griffiths, Starr, & Dewan, 2017; Starr & Diamond, 2017) bring to light the fact that military will be utilized to handle the effects of current situations across the world. This will likely lead to multiple deployments by military personnel. All deployments take a serious toll on the families that are left behind (Gilreath et al., 2013; Link & Palinkas, 2013; Paley, Lester, & Mogil, 2013).

Gilreath et al. (2013) found that military–connected youth are likely to use drugs such as alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, prescription drugs, and other drugs more frequently in comparison with adolescents who are not military–connected. Military–connected youth are also more likely to maintain a drug habit for a longer period (Gilreath et al., 2013). Aside from the likelihood of using drugs, military–connected youth are at high risk of experiencing increased levels of stress and behavioral problems (Link & Palinkas, 2013; Paley, Lester, & Mogil, 2013).

Link and Palinkas (2013) found that a higher number of deployments increases the risk of high levels of stress on the adolescent. High levels of stress are also found among the spouses (Van Winkle & Lipari, 2013). Paley, Lester, and Mogil (2013) stated, "It is important to consider that any time one family member is affected by certain stressors, it is likely that other family members will also be affected" (p. 246).

Significance

Parental involvement plays a crucial role in a student's education. Parental involvement leads to the academic success of children (Al–Alwan, 2014; Hampden–Thompson et al., 2012; Jeynes, 2012; Jeynes, 2016a; Jeynes, 2016b). Al–Alwan (2014) found that achievement is directly and indirectly influenced by parental involvement. The more that parents are engaged in their child's education the less likely students will be disruptive in class, be absent from school, and display aggressive behaviors (Al–Alwan, 2014).

When the family plays such an essential role in the success of a child's education, educators must stop to consider what happens to the academic success of children whose family members are unavailable or are experiencing a great deal of stress. This is where experiences of military–connected students become such a valuable phenomenon to study. Scientific research has proven that parental involvement is important to a student's education (Al–Alwan, 2014;

Hampden–Thompson, et al., 2012; Jeynes, 2012; Jeynes, 2016a; Jeynes, 2016b). Scientific research has also proven that military families are unique in many ways because of multiple deployments and constant relocations and the adverse effects those situations have on the family members (Knoblok & Theiss, 2012; Ruff & Keim, 2014; Vuga & Juvan, 2013; Waliski et al., 2012). However, what scientific research has failed to show is how deployed military parents and non–deployed parents without a present spouse provide parental involvement based on teacher perceptions.

Problem Statement

While there is a preponderance of research showing links between parental involvement and student learning (Al–Alwan, 2014; Hampden–Thompson, Guzman, & Lippman, 2012; Jeynes, 2012; Jeynes, 2016a; Jeynes, 2016b; Karakus & Savas, 2012; Kirkwood, 2016), there is a need to explore how general education teachers of military–connected students perceive and interpret the influence of parental involvement of students whose parent(s) are deployed on those students' learning. When considering Epstein's (2011) theory on student success through the triangular team of parents, school, and community a fundamental section is absent when a parent or parents are deployed. Since parental involvement is so crucial to the academic success of children, educators must determine the best way to ensure that military–connected students are still being successful and learning despite the absence of their deployed parent(s). Identifying teacher perceptions will lead to insights on ways educators and the military community can fill in the gap created by a deployed parent.

Organization

The literature review is organized to explain this study's use of two theoretical frameworks. The first conceptual framework is Epstein's (2011) definition of parental

involvement as a partnership between the school, the parent, and the community. The ways in which other researchers have utilized Epstein's framework is explored and analyzed. The second theoretical framework utilized in this study is Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems theory, which uncovers the various levels of environment from which humans are directly and indirectly influenced. The methodological methods of other research studies relating to parent involvement and military families are investigated, as well as a justification for the methodologies and design chosen.

Theoretical Framework

The importance of parental involvement in education is undeniable. Former President Barack Obama stated, "There is no program or policy that could substitute for a parent" (Obama, 2009). He went on to explain, "Responsibility for our child's education must begin at home" (Obama, 2009, video). As families change, so does the parents' role in their child's education. In fact, Epstein (2011) discussed four recent trends in society that have led to a change in parental involvement theoretical frameworks. The first trend is in the mother's education. In previous years, mothers were less educated than they are today. The educational difference in mothers has influenced communication and perception between teachers and mothers (Epstein, 2011).

The second trend in families is in baby and child care. Epstein (2011) claimed that the popular book written by Dr. Spock in 1950 led parents to become more knowledgeable and involved in their child/children's education. The third trend involves federal regulations and funding for parental involvement. In the 1960s, federally funded programs for disadvantaged students, such as Head Start, began to bring forward the importance of parental involvement in a child's development (Epstein, 2011). In fact, many Head Start programs would encourage

parents to become aides and volunteers in the classroom (Epstein, 2011). Legislation such as The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 mandated that teachers work with parents to ensure the best possible education for all children (Epstein, 2011). The importance of parental involvement for all students rather than just for economically disadvantaged students became apparent.

The final trend that has affected family and school relationships is the change in family structures. The two main changes that Epstein (2011) discussed are the increase in single parent homes and the increase in the number of mothers working outside of home. Mothers who work outside of the home not only need to be concerned about their child's education, but also need to worry about quality child care before school, after school, and during holiday breaks.

Single mothers are even more likely than married mothers to work outside of home (Epstein, 2011). Since single parents are the only caregivers for their child, they are especially sensitive to their child's needs. Although single parents may not volunteer at the school or be able to attend parent–teacher conferences, they can be just as involved in their child's education. Epstein (2011) explained that research shows that single parents spend just as much time as married parents, if not more, assisting their child with school work at home.

Military families possess a unique family structure as the military parent is often away from the home on short or long–term deployments. Thus, although a military–connected child may have married parents, recurrently that child is a member of a single parent household. The Military Child Education Coalition (2016) defined a military–connected child as, "children in P–6 schools, adolescents in Middle and High School and students who are adolescents or young adults in Trade Schools, or Institutions of Higher Education (two or four–year schools) that are official dependents of a Military Service member" (para 6).

Military–connected children face an immense number of struggles that are unique to their family structure. Some of these challenges include separation from a parent/caregiver due to deployments and high mobility rates (Military Child Education Coalition, 2016). Active duty families, who are currently actively serving in the military, move every two to three years (Military Child Education Coalition, 2016). Moving every two to three years is nearly equivalent to six to nine moves during a child's P–12 school education (Military Child Education Coalition, 2016). These frequent moves and deployments make military–connected children more prone to academic and social challenges, difficulties qualifying for and receiving special needs assistance at school, elevated stress, depression, and anxiety (Military Child Education Coalition, 2016). Considering the challenges that military–connected children and their families face, how do military parents stay involved in their child's education?

In a study on the relationship between parental involvement, school engagement, and academic performance of high school students, Al–Alwan (2014) defined parental involvement as the "parents' role in educating and teaching their children at home and in school" (p. 48). In a meta–analysis on the efficacy of different types of parent involvement programs for urban students, parental involvement was defined as "parental participation in the educational processes and experiences of their children" (Jeynes, 2012, p. 717). While these definitions of parental involvement focus on the isolated role of the parent, Epstein (2011) defined parental partnerships instead as, "In partnership, educators, families, and community members work together to share information, guide students, solve problems, and celebrate successes" (Epstein, 2011, p. 4).

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. Epstein's definition of parental involvement (2011) is directly related to Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems

theory. Bronfenbrenner (1994) explored the idea that human development is directly and indirectly influenced by various microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, macrosystems, and chronosystems. A visual representation of his theory typically includes circles within each other representing each system, and the individual is at the center of these circles.

The microsystem is the circle closest to the individual. The microsystem is directly linked to the person and is within the immediate environment of the individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Examples of microsystems would include family, school personnel, and peers. The next circle is the mesosystem. "The mesosystem comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings containing the developing person" (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, p. 40). The relationship between home and school would be an example of a mesosystem. The mesosystem includes the settings from which the individuals within the microsystem are typically found such as the home, school, and the neighborhood.

The next circle is the exosystem, which includes the parents' workplace, the school board, media, and the government. The exosystem includes linkages with at least one indirect source (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The linkage between the parent's work and the influence on his/her home life would be an example of an exosystem. For instance, events that occur at a parents' workplace may have an indirect effect on the child at home. If the parent has a bad day at work, he/she may come home and take it out on his family members so the indirect source affected them directly.

The final and most outer circle is the macrosystem. Bronfenbrenner (1994) explained that the macrosystem encompasses the belief systems found within each of the other systems. For example, belief systems at school, church, or the home would be considered part of the

macrosystem. In terms of military families, often times the belief systems are centered around beliefs and ideologies that have been instilled by the military itself.

The last system of Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems theory is the chronosystem. On a visual representation of Bronfenbrenner's (1994) theory, the chronosystem is often represented in different ways. It is not always shown as an outer circle but rather a continuous arrow that stands beside the other system circles. The chronosystem refers to the "passage of time" (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, p. 40) in terms of its influence on the environment. For example, in recent years, the war on terrorism influences the environment from which we live, especially in the lives of military–connected children. That would be an effect of the chronosystem.

Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems theory coincides with Epstein's (2011) definition of parent involvement being a partnership between the home, school, and community. If environmental systems contribute to the development of people, parental involvement, in terms of Epstein's definition, falls within the first three systems: microsystems, mesosystems, and exosystems, all of which have a major impact on a child's development.

Epstein's theoretical framework. The idea of environmental influences on child development is seen in Epstein's (2011) theoretical framework as well. It is through Epstein's (2011) theory that the current study will define parental involvement. Epstein (2011) discussed five types of parental involvement: basic obligations of families, basic obligations of schools, involvement at school, involvement in learning activities at home, involvement in decision–making, governance, and advocacy. A sixth type, suggested by the California State Board of Education, is collaboration and exchanges with community organizations.

Basic obligations of families include the basics of taking care of their children such as

providing health and safety (Epstein, 2011). Schools can assist parents with this responsibility by providing workshops, home visits, family support programs, and other forms of education and training (Epstein, 2011). Basic obligations of schools are centered on communication with families on school programs and children's academic and behavioral progress (Epstein, 2011). Involvement in school includes volunteering to help in the school and classrooms, but it also refers to parents and family members who support their children by attending performances, sports, and other school events (Epstein, 2011).

Epstein (2011) explained, "involvement in learning activities at home includes requests and guidance from teachers for parents to assist their own children at home on learning activities that are coordinated with the children's classwork" (p. 131). The fifth type of involvement, involvement in decision–making, governance, and advocacy, involves ways in which parents and other community members serve on decision–making committees within the school such as the parent–teacher association/organization (PTA/PTO), advisory councils, and Title I programs (Epstein, 2011). The additional type of involvement, collaboration and exchanges with community organizations, involves connections with agencies, businesses, and other groups that are involved in the responsibility of children's education (Epstein, 2011). Such agencies include after–school care, health services, and other community resources (Epstein, 2011).

A graphic representation of Epstein's (2011) ideas on parental involvement include three circles, all of which are intertwined. Each circle represents the school, family, and community partnerships. The circles are intertwined to demonstrate how parents, the school, and the community work together in a united effort feeding off one another to achieve student success. The parents do not stand alone in their involvement with their child's education. All parties, including the community, are equally important. This framework is applicable to all families,

but is especially important for military families. With the numerous struggles that military families face, it is vital that the community and school work in a partnership with the families of military–connected students to ensure their academic success.

Theoretical frameworks in action. Epstein's (2011) theoretical framework has been utilized in a variety of research studies on parental involvement. Many of the studies utilized quantitative methods. Jeynes (2012) utilized Epstein's (2001) rubric of the definition of parental involvement to determine the efficacy of different types of parent involvement programs being utilized for urban students by developing a meta–analysis of 51 studies. Jeyne's (2012) meta–analysis confirmed a relationship between parent involvement programs and academic achievement in students of all age.

In another quantitative study, the relationships between parental involvement and school outcomes were compared and related to adequate yearly progress (AYP) in urban, suburban, and rural schools (Ma, Shen, & Krenn, 2013). Ma, Shen, and Krenn (2013) utilized Epstein's framework for parental involvement in congruence with its similarity to the NCLB definition of parental involvement, which viewed parental involvement as a partnership between the school community and parents. Ma, Shen and Krenn (2013) discovered that parent–initiated involvement provided considerably positive relationships in meeting AYP requirements across urban, suburban, and rural schools. However, school–initiated involvement displayed negative effects in urban and suburban schools.

Hakyemez (2015) developed a quantitative study in which he sought to discover how Turkish early childhood educators viewed parental involvement and their attitudes toward the four types of parental involvement outlined by Epstein. The four types were communication, home support, voluntary activity, and decision–making. Hakyemez (2015) provided a

questionnaire based on Epstein's model (as cited in Hakyemez, 2015), to 113 Turkish educators. The author found that Turkish educators recognized the importance of parental involvement and possessed a positive attitude toward it. Additionally, similar to what Epstein (2011) had found, Turkish educators felt that the teachers and principals share equal responsibility in creating a connection between school and home (Hakyemez, 2015). Hakyemez (2015) also discovered that the most supported type of parental involvement by Turkish educators was home support and the least was decision–making.

While Hakyemez (2015) focused on Turkish educators, Alvarez–Valdivia, Chavez, Schneider, Roberts, Becalli–Puerta, Perez–Lujan, and Sanz–Martinez (2012) developed a quantitative study to determine if parental involvement is a predictor of positive student outcomes in Cuban schools. Alvarez–Valdivia et al. (2012) discussed how Epstein's six types of parental involvement can be utilized as a useful theoretical framework in understanding parental involvement behaviors. However, the authors additionally applied Vygotsky's theory of child development to compare parents to mediators who contribute a great deal to a child's learning process about his/her culture (Alvarez–Valdivia et al., 2012). Similar to the findings of the Jeynes (2012) study, Alvarez–Valdivia et al. (2012) discovered that students whose parents were more involved in their education were less likely to be at risk for behavioral and academic problems. This supports the importance of parental involvement in a child's education.

Epstein's (2011) theoretical framework has also been utilized in qualitative studies. In a qualitative study conducted by Williams and Sanchez (2012), researchers discovered a link between Epstein's six types of parental involvement and the themes found within their study. The Williams and Sanchez (2012) study utilized in–depth interviews of school personnel and parents from a sample of 25 people with the goal of understanding perceptions of parental

involvement and non–involvement within a predominantly African American inner–city high school. According to Williams and Sanchez (2012), the themes of perceptions on parental involvement included participation at school, being there outside of school, communication, achieve and believe (parental aspirations for their child), and village keepers (a love for their children's friends & involvement in their education as well).

The first four themes are found within Epstein's (2011) framework, but achieve and believe stand alone. Williams and Sanchez (2012) explained that the theme of Village Keeper is also found in the Eccles and Harold's framework of parental involvement (as cited in Williams & Sanchez, 2012) as it included the neighborhood as an element of social support. The non–involvement themes were unconcerned parents, busy parents, and previously involved parents (Williams & Sanchez, 2012). Themes of parental non–involvement were consistent with Hoover–Dempsey and Sandler's claim (as cited in Williams & Sanchez, 2012) that parents' choices to be involved in their child's education is influenced by time, energy, and skill demands (Williams & Sanchez, 2012).

Parental involvement studies that utilize Epstein's framework have all confirmed the critical importance of parental involvement in a child's education. Despite the immense amount of literature on parental involvement, a gap exists specifically for the military population, especially within the realm of qualitative research. The uniqueness of military families, which involves constant moves, long deployments, and continuous change, makes parental involvement difficult. Thus, it is of great importance that research be conducted to understand how teachers perceive the involvement of military members in their students' education during times of deployment.

Review of Research Literature and Methodological Literature

The literature review for this study began by utilizing a Literature Review Search Matrix created by Concordia University. Some columns in the matrix included key concepts, main claims/findings, research method and design, and theoretical framework. The Concordia online library was visited to discover articles related to the topic of this study. The databases visited included ERIC (ProQuest) and Education Database (ProQuest). Through the ERIC Database is an option to select additional databases. This function was utilized to increase the range of articles found on each topic. Keywords used to find articles included parental involvement, military, military families, and deployments. The search only included peer reviewed articles and focused on literature that was conducted no longer than five years ago.

73 articles on these topics were discovered and added to the Literature Review Search Matrix. The articles were color coded based on their topic and sifted through to discover relevance to this case study and reliability of the research. A Rationale Map was created in order to discover themes within the literature as well as literature that may contradict the findings of these themes. The themes discovered through this extensive literature search are included below.

Parental involvement. Current literature has led to the recognition that parental involvement leads to the academic success of children. This theme has been explored in great depth by numerous researchers on a variety of populations and typically utilizing quantitative research. In studies that have discovered contradicting results, an element of the importance of parental involvement to a child's educational success continued to be found.

Parental involvement leads to the academic success of children. Researchers have sought to discover whether a true link exists between parental involvement and student academic achievement. Al–Alwan (2014) utilized a quantitative study to determine how parental

involvement and school engagement are related to the academic performance of ninth and tenth grade students from 59 different high schools. Academic performance was viewed based on a student's cumulative grade point average calculated at the end of the year based only on core classes (Al–Alwan, 2014). This study revealed that academic achievement was indirectly influenced by parental involvement and school engagement was directly influenced by parental involvement, which led to student achievement (Al–Alwan, 2014).

Hampden–Thompson, Guzman, and Lippman (2012) also concluded that parental involvement is important to the academic success of students when they discovered a correlation between parental involvement and reading, math, and science literacy. Similar to Al–Alwan (2014), Hampden–Thompson et al. (2012) used a high school population sample. However, Hampden–Thompson et al. (2012) utilized the 2000 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) data to conduct a cross–national analysis. The information from 21 countries were analyzed in this study including Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, the Russian Federation, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom (UK), and the United States (Hampden–Thompson et al., 2012).

Parental involvement within these countries was analyzed based on students' responses to the frequency in which they eat a meal with a parent; talk about general issues; discuss political or social issues with a parent; discuss books, film, or television with parents; and how often they receive help with their homework from their parent (Hampden–Thompson et al., 2012). Ultimately, the authors discovered that the connection between parental involvement and student literacy in reading, math, and science "cuts across national borders" (Hampden–Thompson et al., 2012, p. 258).

The Karakus and Savas (2012) study also utilized quantitative methods, however, this study was conducted on a population of early childhood teachers. Karakus and Savas (2012) discovered an interesting correlation between trust and parental involvement. Parental involvement led to teachers trusting in parents and students. Similarly, trust between the parents and teachers was also found to lead to an increase in parental involvement (Karakus & Savas, 2012). Thus, one is not independent of the other. Trust and parental involvement appeared to go concurrently.

Although a study by Ma, Shen, and Kren (2013) proved that parental involvement is important and leads to student academic success, their findings also showed a contradiction to the influence of parental involvement when looking at specific types of parental involvement. Ma, Shen, and Kren (2013) developed a quantitative study, which compared parent–initiated involvement and school–initiated involvement and the correlation to positive relationships that led to meeting Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) in schools across urban, suburban, and rural areas. What they found is that a correlation exists with parent–initiated involvement and positive relationships that led to meeting AYP goals, however, school–initiated parental involvement produced negative relationships across urban and suburban schools (Ma, Shen, & Kren, 2013). So, according to this study, for parental involvement to be authentic and truly make a difference in a child's education, it must come from the parent and not from the school. However, this is somewhat contrary to Epstein's (2011) definition of parental involvement being a partnership among the school, parent, and the community.

Also, contradicting the idea that parental involvement is a partnership that leads to academic success were the results found in a quantitative, correlational design study conducted by Niehaus and Adelson (2014). The authors discovered that more parental support was found in

schools that provided more parental support services (Niehaus & Adelson, 2014). In this instance, parental support increased when the schools worked in a relationship with the parents to build parental involvement. However, there was not a direct correlation with parental involvement and academic achievement for English Language Learners (ELLs) within that study (Niehaus & Adelson, 2014).

Niehaus and Adelson (2014) found that, although parental involvement did not lead to greater academic success in ELLs, it did have a positive impact on students' socio–emotional well–being. However, the authors felt that perhaps there was a variable that was unaccounted for which prevented parental involvement from positively influencing academic achievement in ELLs (Niehaus & Adelson, 2014). Although Niehaus and Adelson (2014) were able to control many school–level characteristics in the model, one possibility they suggested is the idea that perhaps a factor in the results of the study is the quality of instruction in the school which has a direct effect on students' academic achievement.

Analyzing the ELL population specifically allowed Niehaus and Adelson (2014) to focus on the uniqueness of that specific population among all elementary students. Karakus and Savas (2012) also focused on an elementary school sample population, but did not specify a particular group within their study. Al–Alwan (2014) and Hampden–Thompson, Guzman, and Lippman (2012) used a sample of high school students, while Ma, Shen, and Kren (2013) obtained a sample from urban, rural, and suburban public schools of all types of students from elementary to high school. Nevertheless, none of the studies on parental involvement focused on a population of military–connected students or their teachers.

Various forms of parental involvement. Parental involvement can be viewed in multiple ways. Al–Alwan (2014) studied how parental involvement and school engagement are related to

academic performance. Specifically, Al–Alwan (2014) measured parental involvement based on the degree to which parents assist their child with homework, attend extracurricular activities, and help with class selection. Hampden–Thompson, Guzman, and Lippman (2012) focused their attention on the correlation between parental involvement and literacy. Hampden–Thompson et al. (2012) placed emphasis on parental involvement within the home by concentrating on social communication, cultural communication, and parental assistance with homework (Hampden–Thompson, Guzman, & Lippman, 2012).

Karakus and Savas (2012) discovered the effects of parental involvement, trust in parents, and trust in students on conflict management strategies used in the classroom. To measure parental involvement, Karakus and Savas (2012) created their own scale. Their scale (Karakus & Savas, 2012) consisted of seven types of parental involvement: parenting, learning at home, connecting, communicating, volunteering, decision–making, and community collaboration.

Wang and Sheikh–Khalil (2014) conducted a study in which parental involvement was viewed as multidimensional. This study examined school–based involvement, home–based involvement, and academic socialization (Wang & Sheikh–Khalil, 2014). Attending school functions and volunteering in school was considered school–based involvement while providing assistance and/or additional resources for homework was considered home–based involvement (Wang & Sheikh–Khalil, 2014). Wang and Sheikh–Khalil (2014) explained that an example of academic socialization was communicating parental expectations for their child's education and making plans for the educational future of their child.

Military. The military–connected students and families are a special population that, in the best interest of educators, requires a great amount of attention. Current research has led this study to identify the following themes regarding military–connected children: military families

are unique, military deployment has negative effects on military–connected children, and effective school programs are needed for military–connected children. The vast majority of these studies have been quantitative in nature. None of the studies within these topics explore the qualitative nature of parental involvement during military deployment.

Military families are unique. A variety of research has supported the fact that military families are unique (Knobloch & Theiss, 2012; Waliski et al., 2012; Vuga & Juvan, 2013). Even popular television shows like Army Wives have shed a light on the distinct issues that encompass military families on a regular basis. For example, constant mobilization and deployments are key characteristics unique to the lives of military families (Knobloch & Theiss, 2012; Waliski et al., 2012).

Constant mobilization. While moving from school to school, city to city, and state to state can be difficult for any person, this constant mobilization is especially difficult for military–connected children. According to the Military Child Education Coalition (2016), active duty families move approximately every two to three years. That is an estimated six to nine moves within a military–connected child's pre–kindergarten to twelfth grade educational career. Hence, a typical civilian may move once or twice within his elementary to high school education time frame, but a military–connected student is forced to experience those changes about three to four times more often.

One of the difficulties associated with constant mobilization among military–connected students is slow transfer of records from school to school (Ruff & Keim, 2014). This is especially harmful to students who receive any special services, such as speech, special education, or gift and talented education. In fact, approximately 10 to 12% of military–

connected students receive services from special education programs (Military Child Education Coalition, 2016). A delay in receiving records is often a delay in services for those children.

Differences in curricula from state to state create another challenge for military–connected students (Ruff & Keim, 2014). Although some families move within the same state, various curriculums are still a concern because the scope and sequence is often determined by the district and not the state. Therefore, military–connected students begin to develop gaps in their learning because the curricula were not aligned and often, when students move, they have missed concepts or constantly repeated learning certain topics (Ruff & Keim, 2014). In addition, each state holds different age requirements to determine grade level placement. This may lead to students repeating a grade level or skipping a grade level that they are not academically ready to skip (Ruff & Keim, 2014).

Another concern for military–connected students who experience constant mobilization is being able to adapt to a new environment and constantly attempt to build friendships with complete strangers (Military Child Education Coalition, 2016; Ruff & Keim, 2014). Military–connected students experience high levels of stress because they are forced to end relationships with their previous school and attempt to begin new relationships wherever they move to, making it extremely difficult to create close friendships (Military Child Education Coalition, 2016; Ruff & Keim, 2014). This may lead military–connected students to experience feelings of loneliness and not belonging.

Deployments. When the idea is considered that military families are unique, it is important to understand that many families experience multiple deployments within a few years of each other. Deployments can be as short as a month or as long as 18 months. The departures and reintegration of those deployments can begin to take a toll on the family. In a quantitative

study by Knobloch and Theiss (2012) a focus was placed on the post deployment experiences of military couples. Knobloch and Theiss (2012) utilized the relational turbulence model, which explained that people often experience turmoil during transition times such as the departure and reintegration of deployed spouses. This occurs due to the fact that changes in relational situations often give rise to uncertainty and feelings of doubt (Knobloch & Theiss, 2012).

When the strain that deployments place on spousal relationships is considered, one must ponder how this affects any children in the relationship. Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems theory explained that our development is directly linked to the various systems within our environment. According to Bronfenbrenner's (1994) theory, the microsystem, which includes one's family, has a direct influence on a person. The mesosystem includes the relationships between two settings such as home and school. Thus, if the parents of a military–connected child are experiencing turmoil, this will have a direct effect on the child (within their microsystem), which then leads to difficulties at school (within their mesosystem).

Vuga and Juvan (2013) conducted a mixed methods research study that analyzed the relationship between the Slovenian Armed Forces (SAF) and the military family. The study dissected the struggle between work and family, which is increased when the work is demanding of the individual (as is the case in the military). Vuga and Juvan (2013) found that service members felt that the military was more demanding than their family and military duties are often placed above the needs of the family. Military comes first and family comes second (Vuga & Juvan, 2013).

Also, interesting to this study was the idea that the military is at its most greedy during deployments (Vuga & Juvan, 2013). Service members did not have any problem adjusting to the demands of the armed forces except while on deployment (Vuga & Juvan, 2013). Military

members are expected to be absent from their home for long periods of time and often frequently. Vuga and Juvan (2013) concluded that, although the military is considered the greedier institution, service members require the support of their family to perform at their best especially during deployments. Therefore, while military personnel may want service members to consider the military mission as being of higher importance than their families, without their family's support the service members may not perform at their best and possibly hinder the success of the mission.

Bowen family systems theory. This idea of connectedness within a family is seen in the Bowen (1974) family systems theory. The family systems theory explains how families become interdependent of one another (Paley, Lester, & Mogil, 2013). Bowen (1974) explained that families are like systems in which each member plays a crucial role to the functioning of the family. The Bowen Center for the Study of the Family (2016) stated, "Families so profoundly affect their member's thoughts, feelings, and actions that it often seems as if people are living under the same 'emotional skin'" (para 1).

Within the family systems theory exists the notion that families need to maintain "homeostasis" (Paley, Lester, & Mogil, 2013, p. 252) or equilibrium. However, transitions within a family's patterns and routines may throw off this state of equilibrium (Paley, Lester, & Mogil, 2013). Many military families live in constant states of disequilibrium in which they are continuously readjusting to the departure of a loved one on deployment and to the reunification of that loved one upon returning from deployment.

Stages of deployment. There are three distinct stages of deployment with common aspects: the pre–deployment stage, the deployment stage, and the post–deployment/reunion stage (Siegel & Davis, 2013). During pre–deployment, service members are informed of their

order to deploy. Sometimes the notice is provided months in advance and other times it is given only days in advance (Siegel & Davis, 2013). This is an extremely difficult time for the family in many ways. Often times, the service member is required to attend out of town trainings to prepare for deployment and is often gone for long periods of time leading up to his/her deployment. Additionally, children have a difficult time understanding why a family member has to leave, which leads to a roller coaster of emotions from anger to worry to sadness (Siegel & Davis, 2013). Spouses being left behind are required to consider finances and child care in addition to the worry of their spouse being deployed.

During the deployment stage, it typically takes a family about six weeks to readjust to life without the service member. The first six weeks of this stage are the most difficult for family members (Siegel & Davis, 2013). However, most families get into a routine with newly established roles for the family. Typically, the service member is given about two weeks during mid tour to go home to their family to rest, however, according to Siegel and Davis (2013), many spouses report that this is an extremely difficult time for families because they have to readjust to life with the service member only to say good–bye all over again.

The third stage is post–deployment, also known as the reunion stage. Siegel and Davis (2013) explained that instant reunification is often the 'honeymoon' period where everyone is happy to see each other and looking forward to spending time with one another. Yet, when a service member returns from deployment he/she is instantly a part of a full functioning family that often possesses different roles from when he/she first left on deployment. Readjustment to this new life takes time and can often be frustrating for all members of the family (Siegel & Davis, 2013).

Military deployment has negative effects on military–connected children. When the Bowen's (1974) family systems theory and the connectedness of family members is considered, it makes sense that a variety of research shows that military deployment has negative effects on military–connected children (Gilreath et al., 2013; Knobloch, Pusateri, Ebata, & McGlaughlin, 2015; Link & Palinkas, 2013; Paley, Lester, & Mogil, 2013; Mustillo, Wadsworth, & Lester, 2016). It is very common for an increase in stress to exist among the family members during times of deployment (Link & Palinkas, 2013; Paley, Lester, & Mogil, 2013). These stresses and negative effects may occur at any stage of the deployment process.

In fact, a quantitative study conducted on secondary school students from military families was used to understand how being a part of a military family influenced an adolescent's mental health. Cederbaum, Gilreath, Benbenishty, Astor, Pineda, DePedro, Esqueda, and Atuel (2014) found that students with military connections were more likely to report feelings of sadness or hopelessness. Additionally, those students reported depressive symptoms as well as suicidal ideation. Military–connected students whose parents were on deployments reported greater associations with depressive symptoms than military–connected students who were not experiencing military deployments (Cederbaum et al., 2014). Not only can the stresses of deployment lead to feelings of depression, they can also lead to an increase in the likelihood of substance abuse as was discovered in a quantitative research study utilizing multivariate analyses (Gilreath et al., 2013).

Link and Palinkas (2013) stated that deployment may be associated with risk factors for long–term family dysfunction such as family relocations, income changes, school moves, changes in family roles, and social support. In addition, there is the risk of the service member returning from deployment with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which can ultimately

affect the other members of the family as well (Link & Palinkas, 2013). Cederbaum et al. (2013) found that current research supports the idea that wartime deployment impacts children of all ages. Military–connected students often experience changes in their behavior, feelings of sadness and worry, and academic problems (Cederbaum et al., 2013). In fact, a large population study noted greater mental health diagnoses among children whose parent(s) had been deployed (Cederbaum et al., 2013).

Although the vast majority of literature proved that military deployment has negative effects on military–connected children, a quantitative study by Mustillo, Wadsworth, and Lester (2016) found no correlation between deployment and problematic social and emotional behaviors in children up to five years of age. Contrasting these findings is a study conducted on preschool–age children who had been affected by current wartime deployments. This study reported higher anxiousness, depression, and withdrawal symptoms from children whose parents had been deployed as opposed to those who had not been deployed (Siegel & Davis, 2013).

Effective school programs are needed for military–connected children. When the uniqueness of military families and the effects of deployments on military–connected students are reflected upon, it is evident that effective programs in schools are needed for military–connected children (De Pedro et al., 2015; Murphy & Fairbank, 2012; Park, 2011; Selber et al., 2015). "There is an urgent need for better understanding of both the challenges and the strengths and assets of military children and families to help them not only survive but also thrive" (Park, 2011, p. 71). Park (2011) went on to explain that high quality research and evidence–based programs are needed for military–connected students.

In an attempt to assist military–connected students, each military branch was provided guidance in establishing a school liaison program (SLP), but, ultimately, each branch was

allowed to tailor their program to the specific needs of the members of that branch (Aronson, Caldwell, Perkins, & Pasch, 2011). School liaison professionals (SLs) were hired to provide military families, schools, and other stakeholders with information, referrals, programming, and outreach to make military transitions as easy as possible (Aronson et al., 2011). The United States Marine Corps (USMC) school liaison program, for example, was established in 2007 with a mission to "mobilize and use community resources to reduce the impact of the mobile military life style on military school–age children and families; to implement predictable support services that assist school–age children with relocations, life transitions, and achieving academic success" (as cited in Aronson et al., 2011, p. 1001).

In a descriptive study, Aronson et al. (2011) sought to discover the perspectives and perceptions of SLs from the USMC. The findings of the study proved SLs to be highly qualified and dedicated workers essential to easing the relocation of military–connected students (Aronson et al., 2011). SLs noted that schools are eager to work with them and are often sympathetic to the difficulties experienced by military–connected students, however, there are often school rules or regulations that make the transitions for military families difficult (Aronson et al., 2011). A need exists for creating additional school programs that will make transitioning to a new school as easy as possible for military families.

Another program currently in place to assist military–connected children is the Families Over Coming Under Stress (FOCUS) program (Lester, Saltzman, Woodward, LCSW, Glover, Leskin, Bursch, Pynoos, & Beardslee, 2012). FOCUS is a tool for military families that provides parents and children with education and skills training for dealing with deployment (Lester et al., 2012). A structured narrative approach is used to allow family members to express and describe their experiences and build a family support system (Lester et al., 2012). In an analysis of the

FOCUS program, Lester et al. (2012) reported that family members expressed high levels of satisfaction with the program and were pleased with the impact on parent–child relationships.

The success of programs like FOCUS and the USMC SLP prove that effective, high quality programs for military families do make a difference in their lives. In a separate study, De Pedro et al. (2015) also utilized multivariate analyses in a quantitative study to discover that components of school climate are associated with a lower likelihood of depressive symptoms and suicidal ideals in military–connected students. Astor, De Pedro, Gilreath, Esqueda, and Benbenishty (2012) explained that a positive school climate has the power to stimulate positive academic, social, emotional results and encourage positive well–being amongst all student populations. If schools embrace the military families entering their doors and create a school culture and climate that keeps the best interest of these families at heart, the military–connected children will have a greater chance of academic and socioemotional success.

In another attempt to ease the transitions of active duty military families transferring from schools across states, the Department of Defense and Council of State Governments created the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunities for Military Children (Murphy & Fairbank, 2013). This compact intended to improve the transfer of credits from school to school across the states, access to appropriate educational opportunities, and increase graduation rates of military–connected students (Masten, 2013). Additionally, the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children led to the creation of the Student 2 Student, which eases the process of starting a new school.

The Department of Defense Education Activity in alliance with university researchers and a group of public school districts have piloted the Building Capacity in Military–Connected Schools program in eight school districts near major military bases (Murphy & Fairbank, 2013).

The purpose of this program is to concentrate on four experiences that are common to military children: family transitions, mobility and school changes, deployment, and traumatic experiences (Murphy & Fairbank, 2013). While the significant strategies of this program include providing student support, making treatment available, providing resources for educators, training for graduate students working toward becoming mental health clinicians, and creating a school–wide, military welcoming climate, the model has not been utilized in school districts with a small military–connected population (Murphy & Fairbank, 2013). Furthermore, the model within the Building Capacity in Military–Connected Schools program has not been studied in controlled trials (Murphy & Fairbank, 2013). Thus, its true effectiveness in assisting military–connected youth has yet to be completely proven.

According to Teleheath and Technology (as cited in Murphy & Fairbank, 2013), an online community known as Military Kids Connect provides military children and adolescents with safe, secure communication with other military–connected children across the world. Some other useful programs and resources for military families include: the Military Child Education Coalition, National Child Traumatic Stress Network, National Military Family Association, National Guard Family Program, and Military OneSource (Murphy & Fairbank, 2013). While these various programs and resources are a great start, it is not enough. More needs to be done within each school to support military families and ensure the academic and emotional success of military–connected students. Lessons learned from military families possess higher implications for the rest of the families and children throughout the nation (Masten, 2013). Research involving military families holds value for all families.

Review of Methodological Issues

There are three possible research designs a researcher may choose: qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods. No single design is better than the other. Each design possesses strengths and weaknesses and advantages and disadvantages unique to that design. It is vital that researchers begin with a research question and then decide which method is best suited to answer such a question (McMillan, 2012).

Qualitative. Qualitative research is utilized when an individual or individuals lived experiences need to be given a voice, and they cannot be studied any other way (Creswell, 2013). Often, research questions that begin with 'why' and 'how' are answered with some form of qualitative research (Yin, 2014). Due to the nature of a qualitative study, there is often some understood researcher bias that is not acceptable within a quantitative study (McMillan, 2012). Some characteristics of qualitative research include natural setting, direct data collection, narrative descriptions, process orientation (focusing on the why and how of behaviors), inductive data analysis, participant perspectives, socially constructed meaning, and emergent research design (McMillan, 2012). Qualitative research is an up close and personal view of a phenomenon.

Quantitative. While qualitative studies provide a close–up look, quantitative research views research from a distance (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). Quantitative research relies on numerical data to answer research questions. There is an understood objectivity that, when a phenomenon is viewed by one, it will be seen in the same way by all who view it (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). Some common characteristics of quantitative research include controlled and uncontrolled variables, predictions of possible outcomes, and correlational analysis (Johnson & Christensen, 2008).

Mixed methods. Mixed methods research utilizes both qualitative and quantitative methods and approaches within one research study. The qualitative and quantitative collections and evaluations may occur concurrently, at about the same time, or sequentially (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). Mixed methods should be utilized in studies in which the use of both methods brings out the strengths of those research designs. Mixed methods can be seen as the best of both worlds, but that does not necessarily mean that it will work for all studies. The research problem and questions will be the determining factors to decide if this approach would benefit the study.

Research methods in this literature. The majority of literature uncovered within this literature review consisted of quantitative studies. There were few articles that utilized mixed methods. There were even fewer studies in which qualitative methods were enforced. The deficit this created in literature is discussed in the 'Critique of Previous Research' section of this chapter.

Synthesis of Research Findings

Within this literature review, two primary topics have emerged: parental involvement and military families. Amongst these topics, different ideas are evident. It is apparent that parental involvement is important to a child's educational success. It is also evident that military families are unique in their everyday experiences. One aspect of that uniqueness is the fact that military families often experience a parent on deployment. This literature review has explained that military deployments may have negative effects on military–connected children. Thus, effective school programs are needed to assist military–connected students, especially in times of deployment, where parental involvement has the potential to decline.

These different ideas can be combined and connected to a common problem. Military–connected children attend public schools across the country, and, with hostile circumstances escalating across the world, it is safe to assume that the United States military personnel will continue to experience multiple deployments in the near future. The possible negative effects on children bring to light the fact that effective programs for military–connected students are a must in our schools. Parental involvement leads to success in a child's education, but during deployment parental involvement is cut in half. However, success in children is still an expectation despite this unique occurrence within military families.

Critique of Previous Research

While the literature on parental involvement and military families is extensive, there appears to be some general weaknesses around the type of methods used to study these topics, which create a gap in the literature. The first weakness is that the majority of studies in parental involvement and military families have been quantitative. Qualitative research allows researchers to study people's perspectives on a particular phenomenon (Key, 1997). The perspectives of teachers are important in assisting with determining which programs are needed in schools to benefit military–connected children. Additionally, because parental involvement does not possess a single definition and is composed of many variables, grasping a qualitative perspective on parental involvement would be beneficial to all educational stakeholders.

While the information within the literature identified various forms of parental involvement as well as looking at it within a wide variety of populations, the parental involvement literature does not have much information on military–connected students. In fact, Astor et al. (2012) stated that school reform research and school policies and procedures at federal, state, district, and school level rarely recognize military–connected students as a unique

population requiring special attention in policy. "Military families live in our neighborhoods. Their children go to our schools. Much can be learned from them" (Park, 2011, p. 71).

While a great deal of literature exists on the uniqueness of military families, only one qualitative study on parental involvement during deployment of military families currently exists. Willerton, Schwarz, Wadsworth, and Oglesby (2011) conducted a qualitative study utilizing focus group methodology to explore military fathers' perspectives on involvement with their children in general. Father involvement is discussed based on three domains of functioning: cognitive, affective, and behavioral (Willerton et al., 2011). An emphasis was placed on deployment separation and reintegration (Willerton et al., 2011).

This research study will not focus on fathers' perspectives, but rather will concentrate on the perspectives of teachers working with military–connected students in which at least one parent is deployed. Additionally, this research study will not look at involvement in general, but rather will focus on parental involvement contributing to a child's educational success. Willerton et al. (2011) utilized 14 United States military installations to gather data from 71 fathers. This study will be taking a more concentrated approach by focusing on a single elementary school in which there is a high population of military–connected students and will utilize a single case study design. Baxter and Jack (2008) explained that a qualitative case study methodology allows researchers an opportunity to examine complex phenomena such as the parental involvement experiences of military parents on deployment. Although Willerton et al. (2011) examined parental involvement perceptions among military fathers; this research study is unique in its methodology and is the only current study to investigate teacher's perceptions of parental involvement when a parent is deployed.

Chapter 2 Summary

Based on this literature review and the review of Epstein's (2011) theoretical framework on parental involvement and Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems theory, there is sufficient reason for determining that an investigation examining the impact of military deployment on parental involvement would yield socially significant findings. The literature review has provided strong support for pursuing a research project to answer the following research questions: RQ1. How do general education elementary school teachers of military–connected students perceive and interpret the influence of parental involvement of students whose parent(s) are deployed on those students' academic learning? RQ2. According to the general education elementary school teachers' perceptions, how is the child's perceived learning affected by the involvement of the non–deployed parent?

Chapter 3: Methodology

This study reports how elementary school teachers who teach students from military families perceived parental involvement when at least one parent is on a deployed assignment. Epstein (2011) viewed parental involvement as a partnership among the school, family, and community. By understanding parental involvement as perceived by Epstein (2011), educators can determine how to actively support the non–deployed parent and help create student success despite the absence of the deployed parent(s).

Examining this phenomenon through the perspective of the teacher provides a clearer perception of the student within the classroom. Educators can observe the successes and struggles of the student as well as those of the teacher educating a student with a deployed parent. Through Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems theory, he suggested that different levels of environment influence human development directly and indirectly. School, home, and the linkage between the two are all found within Bronfenbrenner's (1994) microsystems and mesosystems, which have the greatest influence on a child's development.

Purpose of the Proposed Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore how general education elementary school teachers of military–connected students perceive and interpret the influence of parental involvement on a student's learning when at least one of the parents is deployed. While there is a preponderance of research showing links between parental involvement and student learning (Al–Alwan, 2014; Hampden–Thompson, Guzman, & Lippman, 2012; Jeynes, 2012; Jeynes, 2016a; Jeynes, 2016b; Karakus & Savas, 2012; Kirkwood, 2016), there is a need to explore how general education teachers of military–connected students perceive and interpret the influence of parental involvement of students whose parent(s) are deployed on those students'

learning. Military families and their unique circumstances create a special population of students that may require specific attention to ensure the success of military–connected students. Exploring teacher perspectives will, hopefully, provide educators with additional tools needed to create programs in all schools that will be beneficial to military–connected students and other students in which a parent is absent from their life.

Research Questions

In this study, the research questions were

RQ1. How do general education elementary school teachers of military–connected students perceive and interpret the influence of parental involvement of students whose parent(s) are deployed on those students' academic learning?

RQ2. According to the general education elementary school teachers' perceptions, how is the child's perceived learning affected by the involvement of the non–deployed parent?

Methodology

Quantitative and qualitative methods are equally important and beneficial to a research study. Both provide advantages and disadvantages. In choosing one methodology over the other, a researcher must determine which methodology will provide the most supportable answers to the research questions (McMillan, 2012). Once the best method is determined, the researcher can then choose the design that will provide the most credibility. The literature review revealed that most current literature on parental involvement and military–connected students involved quantitative methods. In fact, based on the literature review, there has not been a study on parental involvement with military families in which purely qualitative methods were employed within the last five years.

Qualitative research methods allow individuals' lived experiences about a phenomenon to be told. As opposed to quantitative data, qualitative research presents data in human terms. Stake (2010) stated that qualitative research "is labor intensive and the costs are high. For many studies, these are labors of love more than the work of science" (p. 28). Qualitative research puts the human truth and heart into science and research.

Some of the characteristics of qualitative research make it suitable for this study. One characteristic is direct data collection where the researcher plays a direct role in the collection of data. This is done through interactions with the participants, setting, and artifacts being studied (McMillan, 2012). Another characteristic of qualitative research is the collection of participant perspectives. Qualitative researchers do not assume how people will react, but rather they investigate and discover participants' perspectives (McMillan, 2012). According to McMillan (2012), another important characteristic of qualitative research is socially constructed meaning. This is based on the belief that there is no final truth in a qualitative study because each participant's "truth" is based on their own unique perception of lived experiences.

Yin (2014) explained that experimentation, history, and case study are appropriate methods to use in order to answer 'how' and 'why' research questions. Histories are useful when it is not possible to directly observe the phenomenon or there are no people to interview who experienced the phenomenon (Yin, 2014). For histories, the researcher must utilize primary and secondary documents as well as various artifacts for data (Yin, 2014). Case studies are like histories in their utilization of documents and artifacts, however, unlike histories, it is possible to either directly observe the events or interview the people involved in the phenomenon (Yin, 2014). Experimentation is an effective approach when behaviors can be directly manipulated, which most often occurs in a laboratory setting (Yin, 2014).

The most appropriate qualitative design for this study, based on the research questions, is a single case study. Case study research was and still is viewed as being an investigational aspect or strategy of a larger exploratory design (Yin, 2014). However, over the years, case studies have proven to be a needed design for answering 'how' and 'why' questions. Yin (2014) explained that the definition of a case study has evolved into what he calls a "twofold definition" (p. 16). The first part of the definition focuses on the scope of the case study. "A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the "case") in depth and within its real–world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident" (Yin, 2014, p. 16). This aspect of the definition allows researchers to decide if a case study is the right fit for their research. A case study may also involve a previously unseen context of the phenomenon that might alter perceptions.

The second component of this definition focuses on the features of a case study, which Yin (2014) explained as,

> A case study inquiry copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge a triangulating fashion, and as another result benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis. (p. 17)

The second part of this twofold definition reveals that the underlying meanings and issues cannot always be discovered solely through contextually viewing the phenomenon so other resources are required to draw conclusions.

McMillan (2012) explained that a case study analyzes a single experience or a single entity. This study identified and explored the perceptions of multiple teachers from a single

school whose basic experiences were the same. A specific event (involvement of a family with at least one deployed parent) was studied from the different perspectives of teachers within one school.

Phenomenological and ethnographic designs were ruled out for several reasons. Phenomenological studies look into a lived experience as it is experienced (McMillan, 2012), but this study sought teachers' perspectives after the fact. Ethnographical studies describe a group or culture (McMillan, 2012), which is not needed for this particular study. A narrative approach was considered as it seeks to understand one's lived experience (Creswell, 2013). However, a narrative design was ruled out because narratives tend to explore the lived experience of an individual (Creswell, 2013), and this research pursued the perceptions of multiple individuals. Additionally, a second research design was determined to be unnecessary in answering this study's research questions. It was decided that a single case study in which inductive reasoning was utilized would be more suitable for this case study. Inductive reasoning allows the researcher to look for trends within the data and generalize the information for the phenomenon (Richey, 2015).

Research Population and Sampling Method

All the teachers who were interviewed for this study teach at the same elementary school in a southwest urban town, which is home to one of the largest Army bases in the nation. The elementary school is part of the largest school districts in the city and about one third of the population of students consist of military families. The study was open to any teachers who taught any grade level from pre–kindergarten to fifth grade at the case study school, specific grade level taught was not a criterion. The teachers' years of experience was also not a criterion considered for this study.

A sampling method similar to snowball sampling was utilized for this case study. Snowball sampling is one of convenience where a researcher asks that other participants in the study recommend others whose experiences are relevant to the study (Kuper, Lingard, & Levinson, 2008). However, participants were not recommended to the researcher. When teachers were first informed of the study, only two teachers volunteered to participate. Those participants who had already signed up were asked to recommend participation to their peers. While information on the study was provided to all teachers from pre–kindergarten to fifth grade within the case study school, utilizing social networks assisted with helping potential interviewees become more comfortable with the researcher. Being more comfortable with the researcher encouraged participation in the study. In fact, it appeared that teachers who did not know the researcher were hesitant to participate until they were encouraged by their peers to do so. Initially, only two teachers signed up for the study and through social networks, the sample size grew to five teachers.

Data Collection

First, the principal of the case study school was contacted via email, and she was asked permission to utilize her teachers within the study. The principal had additional questions in regard to the research. When those questions were answered, permission to utilize her school for the case study was granted. IRB permission was also received. Then, all pre–kindergarten to fifth grade teachers within the chosen elementary school were contacted via their school email and given information regarding the study. Their email addresses were obtained from the school website. Interested participants were contacted individually by email and provided with further details on the study. Because, initially, interested individuals were limited to two participants, those volunteers were asked to encourage their peers to participate as well, similar to snowball

sampling. Social networking helped increase the sample size to five participants. Interview times and locations were set with each individual participant. At the time of the interview, consent forms were issued, reviewed, signed, and participants were given a copy to take with them. Further details on the interview process can be found in the 'Sources of data' section below.

Sources of data. Triangulation is the use of at least two different points from which conclusions may be drawn to ensure validity (Flick, Kardoff, & Steinke, 2004; McMillan, 2012; Thurmond, 2001; Yeasmin & Rahman, 2012). Thurmond (2001) and Yeasmin and Rahman (2012) explained that there are different types of triangulation: data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theoretical triangulation, methodological triangulation, and analytical triangulation. This study utilized two types of triangulation: data triangulation, incorporating more than one type of data from which to draw conclusions and theoretical triangulation, utilizing more than one theoretical framework to interpret data (Yeasmin & Rahman, 2012). In data triangulation, the two types of data utilized were semi–structured interviews and field notes. In theoretical triangulation, the two theories used in this study were Epstein's (2011) theory on parental involvement and Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems theory.

The semi–structured interviews included a set of questions that were covered in a particular order, however, the researcher was allowed to deviate from the set questions when the conversation led to a follow up question that was not listed (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). In conducting interviews for qualitative research, it is important that the interviewer builds rapport and connects with the interviewees (McMillan, 2012). This will allow the interviewees to feel at ease which will make them more willing to answer the questions honestly. Utilizing social networking to obtain the sample within this study assisted in helping the interviewees feel more

comfortable during the interview. Although there was a list of questions that were asked of all interviewees, the semi–structured approach allowed the researcher to delve into the experiences of each interviewee and probe or expand on questions as the opportunities arose.

The interview questions were based upon the research questions. The interview questions can be found in Appendix A. All interview questions were reviewed by three professionals in the education field. The first professional is an elementary school principal who has been in the education field for 26 years. She spent 25 of those years at a campus that served a high population of military–connected students. Additionally, she was raised in a military family and married a military man. The second professional is an assistant principal who has been in the education field for 14 years. She is in the process of obtaining her Ph.D. in Education: Policy, Leadership, and Management. Furthermore, she is married to a military man and has been in a military relationship for six years. The third professional is an instructional coach who has been in education for 12 years. She is currently working on her Master's Degree in Administration. Additionally, for eight years, she has worked at a campus that serves 40% or higher (depending on enrollment) of military–connected students. Each professional reviewed the interview questions and the research questions to determine whether they believed the interview questions would yield the data needed to complete this research study.

Field notes are observations recorded as brief notes (McMillan, 2012). Two types of field notes exist, descriptive and reflective (McMillan, 2012). Both types of field notes were utilized during this research. The descriptive field notes were taken at the time of the interviews. The purpose of the field notes was to note any observations made of unspoken details. Pauses in speech, observations as to the actions of the interviewees, body language, and details such as this were noted during the interviews, as well as answers within questions that seemed to stand out or

summarize the response. These field notes were read and included in the transcriptions after the interviews were transcribed with the transcription app. Descriptive field notes for all interviews are located in Appendix B.

McMillan (2012) explained that reflective field notes "are researcher speculations, feelings, interpretations, ideas, hunches, and impressions–subjective notions related to the research" (p. 290). It is through these field notes the researcher documents any reflections on possible themes or patterns that may have emerged within the interview (McMillan, 2012). The reflective field notes were conducted after the interviews were transcribed and descriptive field notes were added to the transcriptions. Reflective possibilities for themes and patterns were noted on the back of each transcription. The reflective field notes for all interviews can be found in Appendix C. The use of semi–structured interviews as well as descriptive and reflective field notes were used as the data sources within this single case study.

Identification of Attributes

Two of the attributes that defined the phenomenon in this study are parental involvement and a parent on deployment. Epstein (2011) viewed parental involvement as a partnership. An aspect of this partnership includes teacher perceptions. Thus, another attribute that defined the phenomenon in this study is perceptions. This study used qualitative methods to investigate perceptions of parental involvement through the perspective of a teacher. The final attribute that described the phenomenon being studied was student learning. This study sought to discover how teachers perceive parental involvement when one parent is on military deployment in order to ensure student learning.

Data Analysis Procedures

Analyzing case studies is difficult because there is no clear–cut technique which novice researchers can utilize to analyze their data (Yin, 2014). However, Yin (2014) suggested that, when beginning to analyze a case study, researchers should "play" with their data (p. 135). This can be done by creating matrixes or arrays in which interviews are compared to discover patterns or concepts. Creating flow charts and placing information in chronological order can also assist a researcher in discovering insights and themes within their data. Inductive reasoning was used to analyze the data. Inductive reasoning requires that a researcher look for trends within the data in order to generalize a probable conclusion (Richey, 2015). In fact, McMillan (2012) explained that inductive data analysis is typically utilized for qualitative research as opposed to deductive analysis, which is commonly used for quantitative research.

A great amount of time was dedicated to the transcribing of each interview. A transcribing app was utilized in which voices were slowed down and a 15 second rewind button was used to ensure accuracy. Once the interviews were transcribed, the descriptive field notes taken at the time of each interview were read and added to the transcriptions. Thus, the analysis process included two forms of data sources, the interviews and the field notes, all of which were recorded on the transcriptions. Discussion of the transcriptions implies use of the interviews as well as the field notes.

After the transcriptions were read, reflective field notes were conducted and added to the back of the transcriptions. Details on descriptive and reflective field notes as well as semi–structured interviews are included in the 'Sources of data' section of this chapter. The descriptive and reflective field notes are located in Appendices B and C.

After the reflective field notes were completed, topic coding was conducted. Richards and Morse (2013) explained that topic coding is utilized to see what exists in the data and to seek patterns within the topics. This is often the first stage of analytic coding. After topic coding was concluded, a color–coded matrix was created based on the topic coding. The data was "played" with (Yin, 2014, p. 135) through analytic coding. The codes were listed on the matrix, compared, and analyzed across interviews. The color–coding on the matrix is based on similar codes and themes found amongst the interviews. The interview/field note transcriptions were constantly cross–referenced for accuracy and proper labeling throughout the analytic coding process.

After analytic coding was completed, themes were discovered based on the codes within the color–coded matrix. Six themes were revealed that may assist in revealing implications that could possibly be applied to the phenomenon being studied. Those themes are discussed in detail in Chapter 4. To further assist with the analysis of the discovered themes, thematic matrixes were created for each theme. The interviewees were listed and examples from the transcriptions were included for each theme. Thus, transcriptions were read in detail again numerous times for completion of the thematic matrixes.

Although the intent was to utilize inductive reasoning when analyzing the data, it is possible that deductive reasoning was also conducted unintentionally. While inductive reasoning looks for trends in data in order to generalize, deductive reasoning starts with a premise, which leads to another and ultimately will lead to certainty (Richey, 2015). The idea was for this case study to take multiple perceptions and generalize the data toward a particular phenomenon inductively. However, the theoretical frameworks utilized for this study were so closely related to the data conclusions that it is possible the data was viewed from a lens of that theoretical

framework. Thus, there is a chance that inductive and deductive reasoning were used when analyzing the data, although, inductive data analysis was the intent.

Limitations of the Research Design

All research studies come with constraints that may limit the findings. Limitations within a study are beyond a person's control, however, researchers must work to identify those limitations and create ways to work though the effects of those limitations to create credibility in their study. The first possible limitation in this study was the choice of using a sample size between five to ten teachers. Perhaps the minimum number for the sample size should have been greater to ensure that the sample size is more representative of the population. Another possible limitation to this study was time constraints. Four out of the five sample teachers were interviewed at their school on Saturday before the first day of school. This may have been a distraction and may have influenced the quality of the responses.

Delimitations. The delimitations of a study are what the researcher has chosen to control as a way to set parameters for the research. The first delimitation is the branch of the military being utilized within this study. Since this research was conducted in a city that is home to one of the largest Army bases in the nation, this study only included experiences with deployed parents from the United States Army. The second delimitation was in the sampling criteria. The criteria to participate in this study were that teachers had to have taught any grade level from pre–kindergarten to fifth grade within the case study school and had a student with a deployed parent within the past three school years, 2014–2015, 2015–2016, and/or 2016–2017. This delimitation allowed for more accurate recollections of events because three or less years passed since having the child with a deployed parent in their class. Another delimitation was in the choice of school. Within the school district there are numerous campuses from elementary

schools to high schools in which a high military population exists. The school from which the teachers taught not only possessed a high military population, but also possessed a high number of teachers employed at that school. In fact, 40 teachers taught at the case study school, which created a likelihood for achieving the sample size needed for this research. An elementary school was chosen due to the fact the researcher's experience is in elementary education. Some of the delimitations and limitations lend themselves to further research and are discussed in Chapter 5.

Validation. Validity and reliability are the terms most commonly used for quantitative studies. However, in qualitative studies, researchers are required to maintain credibility of their study. McMillan (2012) defined credibility as accuracy and trustworthiness. Accuracy and trustworthiness were accomplished using two types of triangulation.

Triangulation. Triangulation refers specifically to utilizing at least two different points of reference when observing a research issue (Flick, Kardoff, & Steinke, 2004; McMillan, 2012; Thurmond, 2001; Yeasmin & Rahman, 2012). Thurmond (2001) and Yeasmin and Rahman (2012) explained that there are five types of triangulation: data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theoretical triangulation, data triangulation, and analytical triangulation. Within this case study, theoretical triangulation and data triangulation were used. Theoretical triangulation is when a researcher uses "more than one theoretical position in interpreting data" (Yeasmin & Rahman, 2012, p. 157). This study utilized two theoretical frameworks, Epstein's (2011) theory on parental involvement and Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems theory.

Data triangulation involves retrieving at least two different data sources "to form one body of data" (Yeasmin & Rahman, 2012, p. 157). This research utilized semi–structured interviews and two types of field notes–descriptive and reflective. The semi–structured

interviews directly addressed the problem within this study. The interview questions were reviewed prior to interviewing the participants. They were reviewed by two elementary school administrators, one of which is obtaining a Ph.D. in the education field, and an instructional coach. In order to cross reference the data retrieved from the interviews, field notes were also conducted during the interviews. Descriptive field notes allowed for making note of any unspoken messages expressed during the interview and offer validity to the interview responses. After interviews were transcribed and descriptive field notes were added to the transcriptions, reflective field notes were conducted in which the researcher read each transcription and reflected on possible themes and patterns within each interview.

Misconceptions of Triangulation. The "tri" in triangulation often leads to the misconception that triangulation must include at least three different data sources from which to draw conclusions. However, McMillan (2012) stated, "[triangulation] doesn't need three or more sources of data; can be done with two" (p. 303). In fact, Flick, Kardoff, and Steinke (2004), Thurmond (2001), and Yeasmin and Rahman (2012) all agree with McMillan's (2012) definition of triangulation in that a minimum of two sources is required. Thurmond (2001) and Yeasmin and Rahman (2012) explained that there are different types of triangulation. When more than one type of triangulation is utilized, as is the case in this study, the resulting triangulation is known as multiple triangulation (Thurmond, 2001).

Expected Findings

The expected findings are that the results of the study will depend greatly on the non–deployed parent and his or her relationship with the deployed parent. In a personal experience, the student's non–deployed mom was very involved in her child's education and went out of her way to make sure that the deployed parent was also involved. She would ask for copies of

progress reports, report cards, special assignments, etc. The deployed parent was involved through his wife's efforts and as a result, the student was thriving academically and was successful in his peer relationships. Thus, it is expected that similar findings will emerge through this study.

Ethical Issues

All ethical principles were upheld and honored at all times. The IRB standards for conducting research in the social sciences lists five general principles: beneficence and non–maleficence; fidelity and responsibility; integrity; justice; and respect for people's rights and dignity (American Psychology Association, 2017). Teachers being interviewed were respected and all information provided remained confidential. During data analysis, the privacy of all teachers who were interviewed was maintained. This study possessed minimal risks to its participants and potentially benefits the field of education, especially for schools serving military populations.

The researcher utilized semi–structured interviews in which structured questions were presented, but additional questions that arose from conversation were also considered. This type of interview allowed the interviewee to speak about his/her experience without limitations. The research was not conducted in the school from which the researcher was employed, thus there was no personal connection that may have caused a conflict of interest. Participants were fully informed of the type of research study being conducted as well as the purpose of the study. Interviewees were constantly reminded that they may stop the interview at any time and opt out of participating in the study.

Chapter 3 Summary

Epstein's (2011) theoretical framework is focused on parental involvement being a three–entity team consisting of the parents, the school, and the community. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore how general education elementary school teachers of military–connected students perceive and interpret the influence of parental involvement on a student's learning when at least one of the parents is deployed. The participants in the study were determined utilizing a sampling method similar to snowball sampling from a population of teachers working in the same elementary school located in a southwest urban town that is home to one of the largest Army bases in the nation.

Data triangulation and theoretical triangulation were used to ensure that the case study is credible. Semi–structured interviews using field–validated questions provided the main source of data, however, descriptive and reflective field notes were also utilized. The two theories used for theoretical triangulation were Epstein's (2011) theory on parental involvement and Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. Topic coding and analytical coding aided in the analysis of this study. IRB guidelines were followed in all planned and actual participant interactions.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

This chapter is divided into four sections: Description of the Sample, Research Methodology and Analysis, Summary of Findings, and Presentation of Data and Results. The 'Description of the Sample' provides a brief description of the teachers utilized for the study. Besides the basic criteria needed to qualify for participation within the study, other information was not asked of the participants, but seemed to come up throughout the conversational interviews. The 'Research Methodology and Analysis' section reviews the methodology chosen and explains how that methodology led to the analysis used for this case study. The 'Summary of the Findings' is a brief overview of what will be presented in detail within the 'Presentation of Data and Results' section. The 'Summary of the Findings' serves as an introduction to the 'Presentation of Data and Results.'

Description of the Sample

The criteria for participating in this study included that teachers had to be teaching within the same highly populated military–connected school, teachers could be teaching any grade level from pre–kindergarten to fifth grade, and teachers had to have had a military–connected student in class within the last three school years (2014–2015, 2015–2016, 2016–2017) whose parent(s) was deployed. The length of deployment was not relevant, nor was the gender of the teacher nor the years of teaching experience. All participants within this study met the basic criteria for qualification.

The sample for this study consisted of five elementary school general education teachers from the same campus in which at least one third of the population is military–connected. The elementary teachers ranged in experience from over 30 years in education to having completed their first year of teaching. The grade levels in which they taught varied as well. The majority

of teachers possessed experience teaching multiple grade levels. As a unit, their grade level experience ranged from kindergarten to middle school. Interestingly, despite the qualification to have had a military–connected student with a deployed parent within the last three school years, the majority of teachers within this sample had had a student with deployed parents at least once each school year. Hence, meeting this qualification was almost inevitable due to their employment within such a highly populated military–connected school.

Their dedication to the art of teaching was evident. Four out of the five teachers were interviewed on the Saturday before the first day of school during their final attempts to be prepared for Monday morning. The other teacher agreed to be interviewed at the interviewer's home on a Friday night and despite a long first week at work and missing time with her family, stayed to be interviewed until very late in the evening.

Research Methodology and Analysis

The qualitative method used for this research was a single case study. Yin (2014) explained that case study analysis is difficult due to the fact that there is no clear–cut technique to utilize. However, in analyzing this case study, various resources were referred to. Analysis began during interviews; as each teacher was interviewed, patterns and themes began to emerge.

Being able to create triangulation is of importance in any study. Triangulation is defined as the use of two or more different sources to draw conclusions (Flick, Kardoff, & Steinke, 2004; McMillan, 2012; Thurmond, 2001; Yeasmin & Rahman, 2012). This may include "two or more theories, data sources, methods, or investigators" (Yeasmin & Rahman, 2012, p. 156). One type of triangulation utilized in this study was data triangulation in which two or more types of data are used to draw conclusions. The first type of data used was semi–structured interviews and the second was descriptive and reflective field notes. Descriptive field notes were documented

during interviews in which observations of body language and facial expressions that cannot be orally recorded were noted.

After the interviews, a transcribing app was utilized to convert each interview to a word document. A feature on the app allowed for slowing down the speaker's voice if something said was not understood or was spoken too fast. Another feature on the app allowed 15 seconds of tape to be rewound to ensure for accurate transcribing. After transcribing was completed, descriptive field notes were reviewed and observations from field notes were added to the transcriptions. When the transcribing process was complete, reflective field notes were taken immediately following the first read through of the transcriptions to discover a common result, which is the essence of triangulation. Afterward, the interviews were reviewed and coded. Inductive reasoning was used in analyzing the data within this study. According to Richey (2015), inductive reasoning requires that a researcher look for trends within the data in order to generalize a probable conclusion.

When the transcriptions were read through a second time, topic coding began. The topic coding worked in a way similar to adding labels to a document. Each interview was read through two more times, and topic coding was conducted each time in which labels were noted on the document. The interviews were read in detail a total of four times throughout the topic coding process.

In order to engage in analytic coding, a color–coded matrix was created. Codes found within each interview during topic coding were listed and then compared and analyzed across interviews. Interview transcriptions were constantly cross–referenced to determine if the words in the interview were given the proper coding. The color–coding within the matrix was based on

similar codes and themes. Some areas were left without a color because they were unique and did not seem to fit into an existing code.

After the analytic coding was completed, themes were discovered based on the variety of codes present within the matrix. Six major themes were identified by this research. The themes discovered were the role of the teacher, the role of the school, the role of the family, the role of the military/military community, factors in effects of deployment, and communication. Once the themes were found, examples from the interviews were placed alongside the topics associated with those themes to create thematic matrixes. Those matrixes were used to discuss the themes within this chapter under the section, 'Presentation of the Data and Results.' The transcriptions were read through multiple times during this process. Throughout the analysis process, it was discovered that the six themes are directly connected with the two theories in which this research was based upon, Epstein's (2011) theory on parental involvement and Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems theory. That connection will be discussed in Chapter 5, under the section 'Summary of the Results.' Due to the strong link between the theoretical framework and the results of this study, it is possible that deductive reasoning was also utilized within the analysis of this data, even though that was not the intent. Utilizing both theories in order to draw conclusions was how the theoretical triangulation was completed in this study. In Figure 1 it is evident how triangulation contributed to the six themes discovered within this case study. Both types of triangulation, data and theoretical, supported the six themes found within the research.

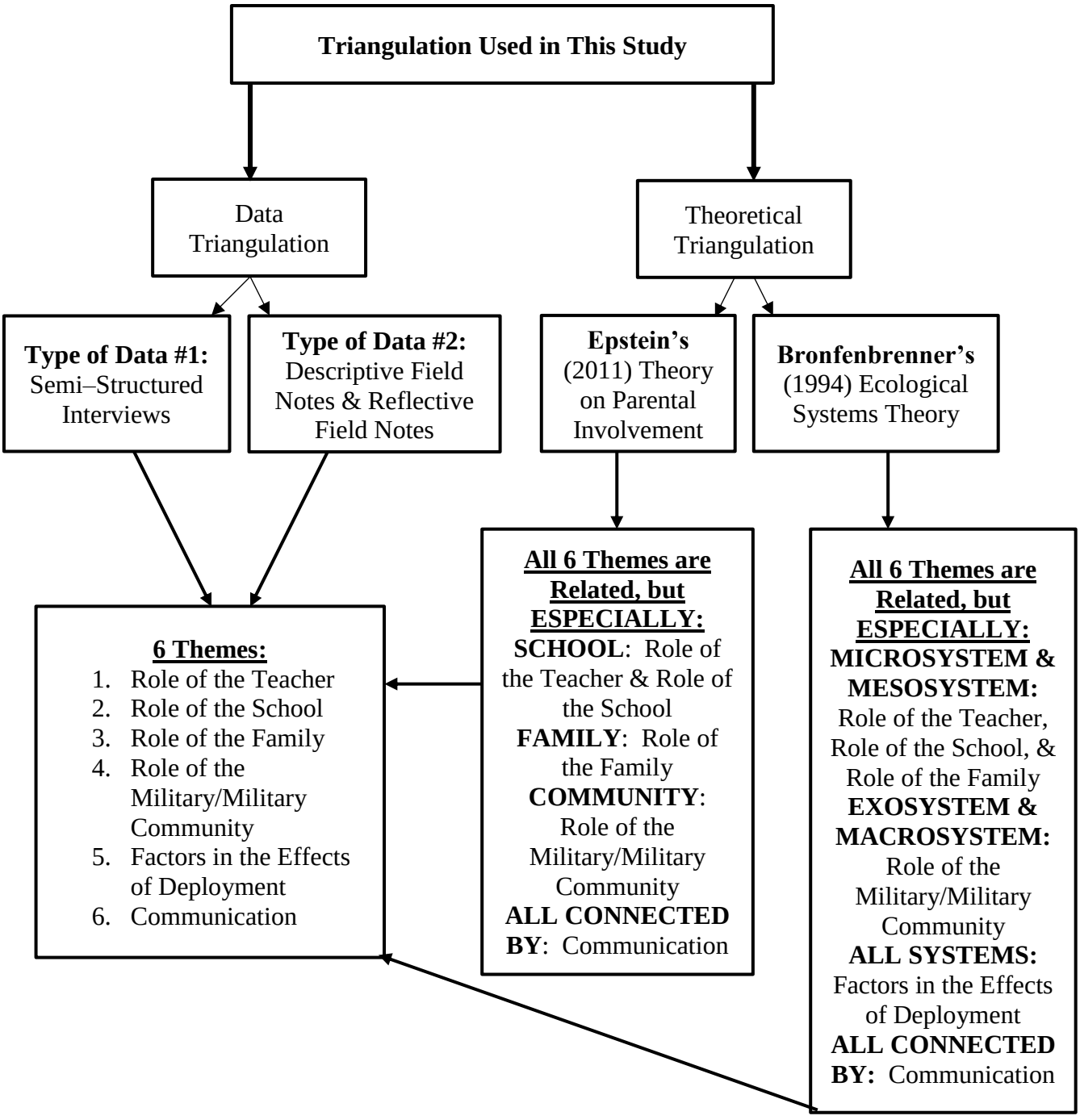

Figure 1. Triangulation Used in This Study

Summary of the Findings

All data uncovered from the data analysis process is linked back to the original research questions of this qualitative case study. The research questions are: How do general education elementary school teachers of military–connected students perceive and interpret the influence of parental involvement of students whose parent(s) are deployed on those students' academic learning, and according to the general education elementary school teachers' perceptions, how is the child's perceived learning affected by the involvement of the non–deployed parent?

Although all the themes are related to each of the research questions, the role of teacher, the role of the military, and communication are themes more associated with RQ1. The role of the school and factors in the effects of deployment are themes more associated with RQ2. The role of the family is a theme strongly associated with both RQ1 and RQ2 as well as Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems theory and Epstein's (2011) theory on parental involvement.

To answer RQ1, 'parental involvement' must first be defined. Although the conceptual framework focused around Epstein's (2011) definition of parental involvement, it was important to discover how each teacher defined parental involvement. There were many commonalities in what the teachers felt parental involvement was. According to the interviewees, one major aspect of parental involvement is that it does not necessarily have to be involvement at school. The majority of teachers interviewed felt that parent involvement could occur just as strongly from home. This involvement means that parents were helping their children with schoolwork and school questions at home in their homework and other projects.

Being aware of their child's behavior and working with teachers to correct inappropriate behaviors was a common factor in what 'parental involvement' meant to the teachers being

interviewed. While the majority of interviewees agreed that parents did not have to be at school to be involved, they also felt that an involved parent makes an effort to attend school events whenever possible. Additionally, involved parents are aware of what is going on in the school and in the classroom and if unaware, work to discover what is happening. Another important factor in the teachers' combined definition of parental involvement is communication. Parents who are involved in their child's education make an active attempt to communicate with the teacher. This does not necessarily mean constant communication, but that line of communication should be set and the ability to discuss any of their child's educational needs should be open.

Keeping this definition of parental involvement in mind, the themes existing within this research support how elementary school general education teachers perceive the involvement of the deployed and non–deployed parent of families when at least one military parent is deployed. The themes affecting those perceptions were the role of the teacher, the role of the school, the role of the family, the role of the military/military community, factors in effects of deployment, and communication. Each theme will be discussed in further detail in the section below.

Presentation of the Data and Results

The role of the teacher. When considering teacher perceptions of parental involvement, the teacher's role becomes an important factor. As stated earlier, each interviewee was a dedicated professional. This was evident in the fact that the majority of interviews were conducted on a Saturday afternoon at their campus as they worked tirelessly to prepare for the first day of school. Working that Saturday was optional; teachers were not paid to be there. One other interviewee used valuable family time to allow for our interview, leaving late from the interviewer's home.

Four characteristics of these teachers, discovered through the data, included empathy, fairness, building relationships, and having a sense of responsibility toward their students. Table 1 listed each interview and the four characteristics that influenced the role of the teacher. Table 1 shows whether or not the interviewee demonstrated or discussed that characteristic within their interviews. An X on the table symbolized that a particular interviewee spoke about that certain subtopic in their interview at some point.

Table 1

Role of the Teacher Theme within Interviews

	Empathy	Fairness	Relationships	Responsibility
Interview 1	X	X	X	X
Interview 2	X	X	X	X
Interview 3	X	X	X	X
Interview 4	X	X	X	
Interview 5	X	X	X	X

All teachers interviewed empathized with the students having a deployed parent or in some cases, both parents deployed. "I cannot begin to imagine what it feels like to have both parents gone" (Interview 2). "I know like God, I can't imagine like both my parents not being with me and moving to my new school, moving to a new state, so yes, I did give them a little bit of slack" (Interview 3).

Interview 1 spoke in detail about a situation she would never forget. She remembered the non–deployed mother coming to the school frantically because she had just received news that her military husband's plane had gone missing. There was no word from the husband for about three days. The children were in disarray, mimicking the worry and behavior of mom who spoke

with the counselor as she held her young baby. During her planning period, the teacher went to see if mom was okay as she spoke to the counselor and asked if she could take the baby for a walk. The teacher wanted to give the non–deployed mom a little break from her parental duties, even if it was only for a few minutes. "Those are the nights as a teacher that you go home with your heart a little heavy. You pray a little longer" (Interview 1).

"and that was another thing I kinda' liked to do, if I knew things were getting a little rough, rather than put it on the parents, I would just say, 'hey, you know I'm here til' four, maybe you don't have to do this at home, let me borrow him'" (Interview 1). The teacher had built a relationship with her students and their families. She would keep students after school (with parent permission) to help her with different projects around the classroom. She would invite all the siblings to help. Her intention was always to give the parents at home some additional time to themselves, especially those non–deployed parents with deployed spouses who were struggling at home. Her relationships with her students were so strong that it was evident when the non–deployed parent was having a difficult time at home.

In one emotional experience, Interview 1 recalled an instance where the kids of a family she taught were banging on her classroom door early in the morning. She explained that everyone knew they could find her already in her classroom very early in the morning. The children were crying and asking the teacher to help their mom and call the police. Interview 1 tried to call the mom, and by this point she had gotten the office involved as well. Since the office was working on locating the mom, she knew she needed to calm the children down. She continued to tell them that it would be okay. She played some soothing music and asked if they wanted to discuss what had occurred.

They told her, “He was beating on her. He was beating on her.” And the siblings were struggling with this as they debated, “but it’s not his fault, he didn’t know who she was” and another said, “but you don’t hit girls.” The counselor came for the kids, and during her prep period, Interview 1 remembered seeing the mom in the office, black and blue with two black eyes. She was crying and telling the office, “What are you going to do? Are you going to call CPS on me? You’re going to try to take my kids away from me too? You don’t think my family’s given up enough? So what, what do you want me to do? You want me to leave him? You don’t believe that he’s sick? You don’t believe that it’s an illness? You really think he would do this to me?”

Interview 1 remembered feeling conflicted. She had known this family for over three years and had multiple siblings in her class. “With everything in me, I don’t think that man would ever do anything to hurt her. It was just so sad.” The connection and relationship she possessed with this family, allowed them to not only know where should would be during their time of need and know that she would be willing to help but also assured them a safe place during this confusing and heartbreaking time.

In fact, building relationships with students and families was a common role of the teacher discovered throughout all of the interviews. Interview 2 possessed many years of teaching experience in various schools throughout the district. But her first or second year at this highly populated military school was the first year she created a Meet and Greet project for parents. That year, in a class of about 22 students, nearly half of them had a parent on deployment and the non–deployed parents remaining did not have any family in the area. This teacher took it upon herself and made it her responsibility to attempt to create a community of support within her classroom.

Interview 2 would hold monthly projects and invite all the families to help. The idea was not to spend extra quality time with their own child, but to actually come into the classroom and help the entire class complete a project. For October, parents came in to help the class carve pumpkins for example. That year, a support group of non–deployed wives developed, and to this day, including the teacher, they all continue to stay in contact via social media.

All interviewees explained that they talked to their students and attempted to maintain that open communication so that students are aware there is always someone to talk to at school. "Sometimes they'll even ask, 'Can we write them a letter while we're at school or make them a card?' and I'm like, 'sure' you know, that makes a difference" (Interview 5). For many teachers, the relationships expanded to the parents as well, and parents knew that the teacher was someone they could talk to.

Interview 1 had a parent email her while the parent was on deployment asking if she could send the school supplies and backpacks to the teacher at school and requested that she divide the supplies up and distribute to each child. The parent not only trusted that Interview 1 would accomplish this task for the student in her class, but felt such a strong relationship with her that she knew she could ask the same be done for the siblings of her student. Not only did Interview 1 oblige the request, but, on the first day of school, she went around to each child's class and took pictures of them to send the mom while she was on deployment.

That same trust was felt by a different family when she had been moved from teaching 2nd grade to teaching 4th grade. Despite the fact that she was now a 4th grade teacher, a parent asked if she could tutor her daughter who was in 2nd grade. And, although this child was not in her class, nor even in her grade level, she took the time to work with the student.

The dedication of these teachers was even extended past school hours. Interview 2 stated that she would invite military families over for Thanksgiving, knowing that they didn't have any family in town. She would also attend sporting events and extracurricular activities of current and prior students as well. "It's so important to have those relationships with them…make connections because those connections are going to last more than whatever you teach them and that's what they're going to hold on [to]" (Interview 1).

In terms of the role of the teacher and their perceptions of parental involvement, fairness and responsibility towards their students were quite important to all interviewees. All teachers explained that they did not give special treatment to students for their situation. All children are held to the same standard. "I empathize, I tend to be more, I don't–they're not entitled to special treatment but when there's melt downs, I know there's an underlying issue" (Interview 2). It was clear from the interviews that these teachers feel it was their responsibility to help a child who is struggling and to provide academic growth no matter what is occurring in their life. "If a child is struggling, I'm going to provide interventions regardless if they're military or not" (Interview 3). Being fair to all students and providing them with the best education possible is an obvious declaration for these teachers. "Even my non–military kids when they're going through things I just try to help them and love them and just try to make sure their needs are being met so that they can come back and learn. It's not really about military and non–military for me when they're in my class. Even civilians have issues beyond their control" (Interview 1).

The role of the school. The role of the school also plays a factor in teacher's perceptions of parental involvement. The role of the school was not as obvious a theme as the other themes, but it still played a part in their perceptions. In Table 2, the role of the school included the following subtopics: information on deployments, examples of school involvement, and the

school military liaison. It is apparent that five out of the five interviewees discussed information given to them by the school on military deployments.

Table 2

Role of the School Theme within Interviews

	Information on Deployments	Examples of School Involvement	Liaison
Interview 1	X	X	X
Interview 2	X	X	
Interview 3	X		
Interview 4	X		
Interview 5	X	X	X

In fact, an interesting aspect of the role of the school is the lack of information the school possesses on military deployments. When asked if the school provided information about deployments, every interviewee explained that information on deployments was provided either by the students or the parents. The school did not provide this information to teachers. In fact, Interview 4 explained that she may have had another student with deployed parents last year, but she was never informed of such so she cannot be sure. That particular student had a dad in the military and the child was living with his grandparents while dad was away.

Due to the high military population, this school employs a military liaison. However, based on the interviews, it appears that the duties are in assisting families as a unit. The military liaison would provide outside resources for parents and families. She would hold counseling sessions for the children with deployed parents. One activity that she coordinated was setting up a group counseling with students who have deployed parents. They would place pictures of the deployed parent on teddy bears and talk about their parents. If the school is not aware that a

military–connected student's parent is on military deployment, then the child is missing out on opportunities provided by the school to assist the child in coping with their parent's deployment. That possible lack of information places those students at a disadvantage from receiving the special care given by the school to students with parents on military deployment.

How active the role of the school is depends strongly on the administration within that school. Interview 2 explained that at another school with a high military population where she previously taught, the school allowed parent volunteers to bring their young children to school. This opened the door to many parents who, otherwise, would not be able to be involved at the school. She also explained that when single parents deployed or both parents deployed and they did not have any family in town, her and the administrator would work to find dependable Day Care for the child during his/her parent's absence.

The role of the family. A very common discussion item throughout all interviews was the direct influence the parents had on their children from prior to deploying to during the deployment to returning from the deployment. This theme is being referred to as the role of the family. All interviewees explained that the children often mimic the behaviors of their parents. If the parents are handling the deployment well (or at least in front of the kids) then the children tend to also handle the deployment well. "It really depends on the child and how the parents have been interacting with them" (Interview 5).

Interview 4 felt that the non–deployed mom of her military–connected student was very involved and always helpful in trying to assist with her son's disruptive behavior. However, Interview 4 also felt that a lot of his inappropriate behaviors were due to being babied by the non–deployed parent and being allowed to get away with certain behaviors at home. "When one

parent is away the other one comments that, 'I feel bad 'cause you know you don't have your dad here so I'll let you do whatever'" (Interview 4).

Interview 3 even forgot about a family in her experience in which the dad was deployed. This particular family was overlooked because the non–deployed mom did such a great job while the dad was deployed. "Mom was on top of it 100%." The student did great behavior wise and academically as well.

Interview 2 was reminded of the group of women who found each other through her Meet and Greet school projects. "That group of women. They were amazing. [The kids were affected by the deployment] but it's the strength that kept their family going. They didn't miss a beat. They just kept their family going." She felt that she had seen it all from one end of the spectrum to the other. From strong support groups holding their families together to parents who break down in front of their children. A student once told Interview 1, "My mom loves me, but I can't make her stop crying."

Table 3

Role of the Family Theme within Interviews

	Pre–Deployment Stage	Deployment Stage	Post Deployment/ Reunion Stage
Interview 1	X	X	X
Interview 2	X	X	X
Interview 3	X	X	X
Interview 4	N/A	X	X
Interview 5	X	X	X

The influence of parents over their children is evident in all stages of deployment. In Table 3, all interviewees are listed. An 'X' is marked if they discussed the role of the family

during that stage of deployment within their interview. All interviewees discussed examples of experiences within all stages of deployment. Since this was Interview 4's first year teaching, she only had one experience with a military–connected student whose parent was on deployment. When that student entered her class, his father was already on deployment. Hence, Interview 4 had not had an opportunity to experience the pre–deployment stage.

Interview 1 remembered a field trip Downtown that she took with her students in which a student was paranoid about all the buildings. "Me, non–military, I didn't make the correlation. I'm thinking, 'look at the structure of the buildings,' you know." The student went on to say, "My daddy got shot from someone on one of those buildings, are you sure there's no one up there?" The paranoia of the father's experience was trickling down to his son. In another example, Interview 1 stated that a student of hers, "just developed the same fears [that his deployed father returned with]." "I think a lot depends on how the non–deployed parent is taking it. If someone told me would you care to take care of the parent or child more, I would almost always say, 'take care of the parent…Frustration, anger, anxiety–they learn it even though they don't have it. 'Cause they mimic their parents, they even speak like them. You can see, especially with the seven–year–olds, you could see exactly what's going on in that house" (Interview 1).

Interview 5 discussed the timeline of parents' deployment and how it has affected the child in her experience. "It has been my experience that the first month is always the hardest for families…If there is family to support them then it seems to make the deployment easier, but it's especially hard when the family doesn't have anyone here." Interview 5 went on to state, "The little ones take it really, really hard and it's usually like the week of the deployment before they're going to be leaving. It's really stressful on the child. They're very emotional; they don't

want to come to school; they don't want to do any work and then, once they leave, the week after as well, it's like [rough] but once they get used to it, they're a little better."

The role of the military/military community. The role of the military and the military community is an important theme present within this research. Part of what make military–connected students so unique is the role the military plays in their life, often times indirectly. Epstein (2011) discussed involvement in one's education as a team effort between the school, the family, and the community. Not only do military–connected students have the basic neighborhood community, but specifically, they also have the military community. Table 4 illustrated three sub–topics common to the role of the military/military community to include military duty, a sense of entitlement, and geography/culture, in which military duty was the topic discussed by the majority of the interviewees.

Table 4

Role of the Military/Military Community Theme within Interviews

	Military Duty	Sense of Entitlement	Geography/ Culture
Interview 1	X	X	X
Interview 2	X		
Interview 3	X		
Interview 4			
Interview 5	X	X	X

It has been the experience of some of the interviewees that some parents reveal a sense of entitlement because they are in the military. Some parents will say, "My husband or wife is over there risking their lives and you could care less" (Interview 5). In Interview 1's experience, many military members come into the school with their uniforms, and they like to introduce their

titles. "I'm not interested in their title; I'm interested in their kids and what I can do to get them to the next level." In one instance, Interview 5 recalled that the father had returned from deployment and wanted to keep his daughter home for three weeks prior to Christmas vacation. It was explained to the parent that his daughter would be missing instruction that she could not get back. The father felt the teacher should stay later when the child returned to catch her up on whatever she missed.

Another aspect of military life is the geographical and cultural influence the military has on students. Interview 5 discussed a training she had attended in which they were told that students with deployed parents in the military had attended 12–13 different schools in their academic life. She went on to explain that this causes a problem because each school district has their own curriculum, and in fact, many of the objectives differ from state to state. Aside from the academic setbacks, this may cause cultural identities to come into play as well.

Interview 1 remembered that a student had asked her, "Why you [guys] always eating rocks?" And she told him, "We don't eat rocks." And the student replied, "Ya'll eat rocks with everything, big brown rocks." It turned out the student was talking about pinto beans. With another student in second grade, Interview 1 remembered that he was going to bring his tools to fix her sharpener. When he got to school that morning, she could tell that he was very upset. When she asked him what was wrong, he responded, "What's up with this place? I was going to bring my tools to school so I could fix the sharpener and my mama said that I couldn't bring no tools to school because here ya'll think screw drivers are weapons." The student remained upset the entire day, not only with the situation but with how unbelievable "this place" was.

Along with the cultural and geographical factors that come with being military–connected there is the influence of military duty in general. Nearly all interviewees discussed

moments in which the duty of the military seemed to take precedence. Interview 3 explained that she was scheduled to have a conference with dad and deployed mom was going to be telephone conferenced in. When dad called her, she said she could not do it right then. Because of her job and the urgency in that moment, she could not be involved with that conference despite the obvious efforts.

Interview 1 spoke of numerous examples in which parents made comments like, "I couldn't pass that up" (speaking of a job that required sudden deployment) or "I need to go." She recalled parents seeming anxious about the fact that they were not in the field with their team. Interview 1 commented that the kids begin to feel unimportant because "I don't think they understand that their parents don't feel like they have a choice."

Factors in effects of deployment. Research question number two asked, "According to the general education elementary school teachers' perceptions, how is the child's perceived learning affected by the involvement of the non–deployed parent?" How perceived learning is affected is a direct result of factors in the effects of deployments. The effects of deployment are extremely situational. However, there are factors within a situation that may lead to certain effects of that deployment. The factors include whether it is mom or dad who are deployed, whether both parents are deployed, the number of deployments vs. the first deployment, and the length of the deployment. Table 5 listed those factors, and each interviewee that mentioned a factor at some point in their interview is marked with an X.

Table 5

Factors in the Effects of Deployment Theme within Interviews

	Mom vs. Dad	# of Deployments & Length of deployment	Both Parents Deployed	PTSD (Included in Post–Deployment Stage of "Role of the Family" Theme)
Interview 1	X	X	X	X
Interview 2	X	X	X	
Interview 3	X	X	X	
Interview 4	X	X	N/A	
Interview 5		X	X	

The interviewees noted some significant differences between when the mom is deployed and when the dad is deployed. "Dad tries but let's just say he tried very hard but it just wasn't mom you know" (Interview 2). In the example she spoke of, the father had little girls. "The girls were okay. A little disheveled some days but they made it to school and that's what I told him, 'as long as they make it to school.'" Interview 3 stated, "Well it just depends on whether it's the female or the male, whether it's the mom or the dad that deployed. If it's the mom that's deployed then grandma or somebody else comes into place, you don't really see much of them. But when it's the dad that's deployed you still see the mom." Similarly, Interview 1 explained that the non–deployed dads don't come to the school as much, they just go with it, and she still considered this actively involved. The non–deployed moms, on the other hand, would come to the school a lot.

There were a number of families that Interview 1 referenced in which it was apparent that the students needed their mom. In some cases, the family was so used to dad being away, that

mom had their routines set. But a lot depended on the parent who was left behind. Determining whether learning is affected depends a lot on "how the non–deployed parent has adjusted to the spouse not being there because whoever is left behind is taking the role of both father and mother" (Interview 2).

With that in mind, another factor that contributes to the effects of deployment is when both parents are deployed. If one parent is supposed to act as both mother and father, who plays that role when both are gone? Children, if they are lucky, get left with family. However, in the military, families are often living far away from any family members, leaving them with minimal choices for child care when leaving their children behind. In some instances, the military does not provide enough time to make appropriate child care decisions as some military parents are required to (in some rare cases) leave instantly. Some military parents have no choice but to leave their kids with a neighbor or a friend.

Interview 5 stated that, when she taught fourth grade, she had a student in which both parents were on deployment at the same time. This student was staying with the neighbor, and they could not discipline the child. He did not want to do any work and was a completely different kid than before his parents went on deployment. Interview 3's experience was that a student's behavior changed when he found out that he was moving to another state to live with his grandmother while both of his parents went on deployment. The student became very needy and would break down for simple things like coloring out of the lines. "He was in a situation where he was trying to be tough about his emotions, and he ended up being mean to other students." When the teacher spoke to him about his behavior, he said he didn't care.

In another instance, Interview 1 had a very social child whose dad was on deployment. However, mom was suddenly deployed as well and the student completely changed. He was

living with neighbors, and Interview 1 began to notice signs of neglect in his hygiene, his appearance, and the fact that there was no lunch money in his account. "But what set me off was that he was a hugger; so every morning he would come in and hug me; so one day when I went to go and like I always put my hands up when they go hug and I'll give them a pat and then they'll keep going and when I went to pat him he, he [cringed her body as an example] and I was like 'oh no' and I just felt like someone hit him." Interview 1 went on to explain that the military got involved and ultimately this student was sent out of state to his grandmother. A few years later he returned. "He's good as long as mom's around. The dad's never around. I remember seeing him only a handful of times. But he needs his mom" (Interview 1).

Not only does it matter which parent leaves or whether it is both parents that leave, another important factor is the length of deployment and the number of deployments vs. the first deployment. Many of the teachers noted a resilience in children when they have experienced multiple deployments. "They do get used to it, adapt to it, when it's happened several times, but, when it's the first time, it's difficult" (Interview 2). "But you do have the other kids who are, they're used to it like they've been deployed more often and they go, 'yea, well we know we're going to see them…that makes a difference where they're like so used to it that it's not such a big deal because they know they're going to see their parent pretty soon" (Interview 5).

In fact, Interview 2 explained to me that, at Meet the Teacher Night prior to school starting, a parent informed her that her little first grader's dad was going to be deployed for the first time the week that school starts and the child still did not know. "I'm glad she alerted me. She's very close to dad so I'm already ready." This child was brand new to the school and the city and dad was leaving. But you can see the impact the role of the teacher has. This teacher

took that information and accepted the responsibility for making sure that the child is okay in handling this huge difference in her life.

"They become desensitized" after multiple deployments. Interview 1 had a group of students in second grade who were experiencing their first deployment and it was difficult for them to deal with this major change. Then, she got moved to fourth grade and had a lot of the same students in her class two years later. That year, many students who experienced their parent's first deployment in second grade experienced it for the second time in fourth grade. She felt that the majority of students did better in handling the deployment that year than they did the first year. "When things turn out okay and their parents come back, then they're fine; they're not scared of it anymore" (Interview 1). Even though the majority did better, Interview 1 felt that an important factor was how the deployed parent returned home.

Communication. Communication is an important characteristic to the definition of parental involvement according to the teachers interviewed for this study. Table 6 listed which interviewee discussed certain aspects of the communication theme. Within the communication theme are the subtopics: technology, laws, and communication when both parents are deployed. The subtopic on communication with both parents deployed was discussed in greater detail with the 'factors in the effects of deployment' theme. Communication laws were only discussed during one interview. However, the use of technology to communicate with parents was an important aspect of communication as four out of the five interviewees discussed communicating with parents using technology in some way.

Table 6

Communication Theme within Interviews

	Technology	Laws	Both Parents Deployed
Interview 1	X	X	X
Interview 2	X		X
Interview 3	X		X
Interview 4	X		N/A
Interview 5			X

Email is one way that teachers have communicated with parents while on deployment. "When a parent emails me and asks, 'How's my child doing' and, if I tell the parent that there's a concern, then the next time the parent talks to the child, the parent will question the child and the child is like, 'how did you know'" (Interview 2). Utilizing email in that way proves to the child that even though his/her parents are not in town, they are still checking in on him/her and are still holding high expectations for their child.

Interview 1 explained that a parent utilized a site provided by the district in which parents are able to view the child's current grades. That parent noticed her child's grades were slipping and emailed the teacher for suggestions on how to assist from where she was. Interview 1 registered the parent for the textbook website so she could see the tutorials of how the information was being taught. The parent would then Skype with her child to assist with his homework.

Class Dojo is a behavior app that allows parents to view how their child is behaving based on a point system. Students are awarded points for good behaviors and points are removed for bad behaviors. There is also a part of the app where parents can send a message to the

teacher, similar to text messaging. Class Dojo was mentioned by Interview 3 and 4 as a way to communicate with parents interactively. Interview 4 explained that although dad was deployed, she gave both parents access to Class Dojo so dad could see how his son was behaving on a daily basis.

Communication becomes enhanced by a variety of technology. "You know what I found, if you make, if I initiate the communication, no one has turned me down" (Interview 2). And now, with technology such as the examples mentioned above, the doors and windows for communication are spread wide open to ensure parental involvement, even across the world.

Chapter 4 Summary

The sample utilized for this study consisted of five teachers from the same highly populated military–connected elementary school. Interviews were conducted and transcribed. Topic coding was used to discover topics present within each interview. Inductive reasoning was used to analyze the data although deductive reasoning may have played a role unintentionally. Analytic coding occurred utilizing a color–coded matrix in which codes were compared across interviews. Six themes were discovered, and thematic matrixes with direct quotes from the interviews were created and utilized to present the data in this chapter.

The six themes discovered to best answer the research questions were role of the teacher, role of the school, role of the family, role of military/military community, factors in the effects of deployment, and communication. These six themes relate directly to the research questions. Additionally, the six themes coincide with Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems theory and Epstein's (2011) ideas on parental involvement. Hence, the data unveiled from this study supports most of the literature. That correlation will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

Chapter 5 links the theories discussed in the literature review to the themes derived from the participants' discussions shown in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 also answers the research questions identified in Chapter 1. Limitations of this study are discussed, as well as recommendations for further research. Implications gathered from this study are described. This research ultimately adds qualitative data that is needed to further explore parental involvement with deployed military families.

Summary of the Results

The qualitative interviews revealed six major themes: the role of the teacher, the role of the school, the role of the family, the role of the military/military community, factors in the effects of deployment, and communication. The experiences behind each theme are very much intertwined and support the two main theories presented in Chapter 2: Epstein's (2011) view on parental involvement and Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems theory. Both theories emphasize the influence that various groups possess over one another, which is very apparent in the data results.

Discussion of the Results

This single case study focused on the following research questions:

> RQ1. How do general education elementary school teachers of military–connected students perceive and interpret the influence of parental involvement of students whose parent(s) are deployed on those students' academic learning?
>
> RQ2. According to the general education elementary school teachers' perceptions, how is the child's perceived learning affected by the involvement of the non–deployed parent?

The first research question asked, "How do general education elementary school teachers of military–connected students perceive and interpret the influence of parental involvement of students whose parent(s) are deployed on those students' academic learning?" What the interviews revealed is that while perceptions vary from individual to individual, the teacher perceptions and interpretations were influenced by similar themes found within the data. Thus, how teachers perceive parental involvement depends greatly on how these themes influenced their perceptions. The themes are the role of the teacher, the role of the school, the role of the family, the role of the military/military community, factors in the effects of deployment, and communication. Although all the themes influence each of the research questions in some way, the role of the teacher, the role of the military, and communication are themes more associated with RQ1, whereas the role of the school and factors in the effects of deployment are more associated with RQ2. The role of the family is strongly associated with both RQ1 and RQ2.

Research question 1. When beginning the interviews, it was apparent that the teacher, herself, played a vital role in the development of his/her own perceptions. Table 1 shows the interviews in which the role of the teacher was discussed. Within the interviews, all teachers' perceptions revealed empathy, fairness, building relationships, and feeling responsible for their students. Three out of the four subtopics within theme one were discussed by all five interviewees. The last topic, responsibility, was experienced by four out of the five interviewees. In fact, the experiences of each teacher depended greatly on the level of interaction with the students and parents within their classroom.

Each teacher interviewed revealed empathy toward the situation of the students within their discussion. They could not imagine what it must be like to be without a parent and, in some cases, be without both parents. As Interview 5 stated, "They're little ones; it's scary." Indeed,

these are children who are having to internalize and deal with very mature, grown–up matters. This empathetic perception appears to be why the teachers felt responsible for the students in their class. While teachers discussed maintaining fairness and not giving special treatment to any students simply because their parent(s) were deployed, they still understood that their job was different than a teacher with only traditional students. When Interview 2 discussed creating a Meet and Greet project every month for the purpose of building a support group for parents, it was evident that the responsibility toward these students was also felt toward the students' parents and families as well.

Teachers' perceptions of parental involvement were influenced by the role the military played as well as the role the military community played. The subtopics within this theme include military duty, a sense of entitlement, and geography/culture. The greatest influence on teacher perceptions was military duty which was experienced by four out of the five interviewees. Table 4 shows that each of the other subtopics were only experienced by two out of the five interviewees. Hence, discussions on this theme are focused on military duty.

In fact, it is the understanding of the military presence that makes this case study so valuable to educational research. How involved parents can be with their child depends on their military duties. Interview 3 spoke of a time in which a deployed parent intended to be involved with a parent conference via telephone, but when she received the phone call, she informed her husband that she just could not partake in the conference at that time. Her military duty literally kept her from being involved with her child's education to the extent that she wanted to be. That teacher's perception of that parent's parental involvement was not altered because the teacher understood that it was the parent's military duty that refrained her involvement at that time.

In many cases, parents are forced to deploy suddenly without ample time to get their affairs in order. Interview 1 spoke of many instances in which parents had to leave suddenly, and, in one case, the dad was already deployed, and mom had to leave abruptly forcing the parents to leave their son with a non–relative. This situation is very unique to military families because they can be stationed nearly anywhere in the world. Thus, going off on deployment or even having to leave for field duty for the weekend leaves them in a problematic situation if they are not close to family members. It was the teachers' experience that when both parents were away, parental involvement was minimized. The communication is not as readily available and privacy laws make it difficult to provide information to non–family members, as was the experience of Interview 2.

Another influence on teacher perceptions of parental involvement is the effects of deployment. Factors in the effects of deployment are whether or not it is mom or dad who deploys, the number of deployments/length of deployment, and whether or not both parents are deployed. Another factor on the effects of deployment is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which only one out of five participants discussed. However, this subtopic fits well with the Role of the Family theme and will be discussed further within that theme.

Whether it is mom or dad who leaves on deployment seemed to affect the perception of the level of parental involvement to some degree. Table 5 shows that four out of the five interviewees agreed that when dad is deployed, the mom is typically seen more often, whereas, when mom is deployed, dad tends to keep his distance. All interviewed teachers who experienced this felt that dad's lack of presence did not diminish his parental involvement. It was just at a different level.

Another factor that influenced teachers' perceptions of parental involvement is whether or not both parents are deployed at the same time. Four out of four interviewees expressed this perception. Interview 4 was not applicable to this perception because it was her first–year teaching and she only had one experience with a parent on deployment. That deployment was of one parent only (as opposed to both parents being deployed at the same time).

It is difficult enough for a child to have one parent absent from his/her life for a long period of time, but it must be unimaginable to have both your parents gone on deployment explained Interview 2. When both parents are deployed, parental involvement becomes increasingly difficult. Interview 3 explained that sometimes teachers have to accept the fact that communication may not occur, especially when both parents are deployed. She advised that teachers be patient in these situations and watch the child.

What is important to remember about a military–connected student having parents who are deployed versus a traditional student whose parent is away on a business trip is that the deployed parent is in the military. Being deployed often involves dangerous activities within a timeline that can range anywhere from a few months to over a year. While implications can be made and similarities drawn from military–connected students to a traditional student, there are still aspects of the military that make this population of students unique.

This unique danger adds to a teacher's perception of parental involvement and their reaction to their students. Although all teachers agreed that no student is provided special treatment, when both parents are deployed, teachers place the responsibility of caring for these students on themselves. They are empathetic to what the child is experiencing, being without both parents. And without that parental support the teachers accept that parental involvement

will likely be absent. In this instance, teachers are not only playing the role of teacher but, in terms of academics, the parent as well.

The final and also extremely important theme that impacts the teachers' perceptions of parental involvement is communication. Every teacher interviewed agreed that communication is a part of the definition of parental involvement. The greatest contributor of communication between a deployed parent, non–deployed parent, and the teacher is the use of technology. In fact, Table 6 shows that four out of five interviewees experienced using technology to help keep parents involved with their students while on deployment.

Deployments of military personnel today versus deployments 40 years ago are quite different due to technology. Nearly every teacher interviewed recalled some way in which technology was utilized to involve parents in their child's education. Some forms of technology being used were emails, phone calls, websites, Social Media (exp: Facebook), the Class Dojo app, and Skype.

Interview 1 explained that a parent logged on to a special site to view her child's grades and emailed the teacher when she noticed that one of her child's course grades was low. The teacher then gave her access to the textbook website, which provided tutorials on how the material was taught. The deployed mom then Skyped with her child and helped him with his homework. In this one example, the parent and teacher are both utilizing various websites, email, and Skype to ensure that the parent remain involved and the child become successful. Interview 1 commented on how some traditional students' parents do not make that extended effort to help their child, and those parents are in town and in the same household as their child.

Research question 2. The second research question asks, "According to the general education elementary school teachers' perceptions, how is the child's perceived learning affected

by the involvement of the non–deployed parent?" While the answer to this question is also situational, there is a common theme that the majority of teachers agreed upon. This theme is the role of the family. How the adults in the child's life handle the deployment is a great indication of how the children will also deal with the deployment. Thus, the child's perceived learning is greatly affected by the involvement of the non–deployed parent. If the non–deployed parent is able to remain available for the child and handles the situation well, the child typically does the same. However, if the non–deployed parent is struggling with his/her role, then the child will mimic some of those behaviors and the learning is affected.

Throughout the interviews, it was evident through the discussions that this is a common theme found at all points of the deployment (prior to leaving, during the deployment, and upon return). Siegel and Davis (2013) called these distinct stages of deployment the pre–deployment stage, the deployment stage, and the post–deployment/reunion stage. Table 3 displayed at which stage of deployment each interviewee discussed their experiences and perceptions. All five of the interviewees expressed experiences in which the role of the family was important, and all five out of the five interviewees discussed perceptions during the deployment stage and the post deployment/reunion stage. Four out of the five interviewees discussed experiences in the pre–deployment stage. However, this stage was not applicable to Interview 4 because this was her first year teaching and had only experienced one student with a parent on deployment. When school began, the father was already deployed, hence, Interview 4 had yet to experience the pre–deployment stage.

Interview 5 spoke about parents who display their worries and place them upon the children. "But when you have those parents that you know are like, 'I'm leaving and I don't know when I'm coming back' or the mom is making a big deal about it, that's when their grades

plummet because they're little ones, it's scary." How the grown–ups handle the deployment at all stages makes a difference in how the child's learning is affected. "If the family is in distress, the child is going to be in distress…I think a lot of it depends on how the non–deployed parent is taking it" (Interview 1). Many of the interviewees explained that the non–deployed parent or the guardian left behind plays a huge role not only in the general well–being of the child but also in how the deployment affects the child's learning.

Interview 2 continuously referred to the strong band of women who found their support group through her Meet and Greet projects. She explained that, although the deployment was difficult for them, they maintained their families and kept them going strong. In fact, when Interview 3 was recollecting her experiences with deployed families, she completely overlooked a family with a deployed parent because the non–deployed mother did so well while the father was gone that she completely forgot that this was a family on deployment.

What is important to remember is that children see how the deployment was handled by the deployed parent when he/she returns and that affects their learning as well. This occurs in the post–deployment/reunion stage. The effects of deployment do not stop when the deployment is completed. Things like PTSD and divorce are witnessed by the children. Kids begin to develop the same fears that they see in their parents such as fears of windows, fears of tall buildings, fears of trash on the road. They might not understand the fear completely but they see it in their parents and begin to possess it as well. The same can be seen with the effects of divorce.

Interview 3 stated that the divorce of her student's parents seemed to have a greater effect on her learning than the actual deployment. Whether the deployment led to the divorce or contributed to it cannot be stated indefinitely, but can be considered as a possibility. Hence, the

student felt the possible aftermath of a deployment and, while not affected during the deployment stage, she was greatly impacted during the post–deployment/reunion stage.

Interview 2 recalled having some students rebel and become angry during the reunion stage. In fact, some students became behavior problems when the deployed parent returned where they were not behavior problems during the deployment. "I would think the angry ones are the ones where mom couldn't adjust, things change, maybe there was too much responsibility placed on that student" (Interview 2).

Interview 2 explained that the post deployment stage is a time of readjustment. Interview 1 referred to the week the deployed parent returns as the "honeymoon phase." "When the honeymoon is over you get to see if that family is going to make it or break it" (Interview 1). This is important for educators because it brings to light the realization that the effects of deployment start before the parents leave and continue for a long time after their return.

Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature

The literature review in Chapter 2 revealed that parent involvement leads to the academic success of children (Al–Alwan, 2014; Hampden–Thompson et al., 2012; Jeynes, 2012; Jeynes, 2016a; Jeynes, 2016b); military families are unique (Knoblok & Theiss, 2012; Ruff & Keim, 2014; Vuga & Juvan, 2013; Waliski et al., 2012); military deployment has negative effects on military–connected children (Gilreath, Cederbaum, Astor, Benbenishty, Pineda, & Atuel, 2013; Link & Palinkas, 2013; Paley, Lester, & Mogil, 2013); and effective programs in schools are needed for military–connected children (De Pedro, Astor, Gilreath, Benbenishty, & Berkowitz, 2015; Murphy & Fairbank, 2013; Park, 2011; Selber, Biggs, Chavkin, & Wright, 2015). The data gained to answer the research questions within this dissertation confirm the majority of

those findings. Additionally, the theoretical framework in which this research was based upon is connected with the data findings within this study.

Research questions and literature review. RQ1 stated, "How do general education elementary school teachers of military–connected students perceive and interpret the influence of parental involvement of students whose parent(s) are deployed on those students' academic learning?" Although the perceptions of the teachers interviewed varied, six common themes were discovered among them. Hence, how teachers perceive parental involvement depends greatly on how these themes influenced their perceptions. The themes are the role of the teacher, the role of the school, the role of the family, the role of the military/military community, the factors in the effects of deployment, and communication.

RQ2 asked, "According to the general education elementary school teachers' perceptions, how is the child's perceived learning affected by the involvement of the non–deployed parent?" What was discovered was that not only is the child's perceived ability to learn affected by the involvement of the non–deployed parent, but so is the child as a whole. In fact, depending on how the non–deployed parent deals with the deployment has a great effect on the child. In the case where both parents are deployed, the influence of the caregiver is very important, and works in the same way the influence of the non–deployed parent would.

Parental involvement leads to the academic success of children. Numerous studies have shown that parental involvement leads to the academic success of children (Al–Alwan, 2014; Hampden–Thompson et al., 2012; Jeynes, 2012; Jeynes, 2016a; Jeynes, 2016b). The findings from this research did not completely confirm or deny this claim. Based on the interviews, it is apparent that parental involvement, especially when one parent is on deployment can be a contributing factor to a student's academic success. However, that is not always the

case. Interview 4 explained that the parent of the child in her class was very involved. She would assist with homework; she would keep in touch with the teacher on a regular basis; she would support the teacher in disciplining her child. Despite these efforts, the student struggled in her class. Although, without that extra support, the struggling he endured would have been worse. Other factors within the themes also seem to contribute to a student's academic success such as the relationships a teacher builds with her students, communication between teachers and parents despite deployment, and how the family deals with the deployment at all stages (pre–deployment, during deployment, and post deployment/reunion).

Military families are unique. Research has shown that military families are unique (Knoblok & Theiss, 2012; Ruff & Keim, 2014; Vuga & Juvan, 2013; Waliski et al., 2012). The data from this study confirms this assertion. Although interviewees expressed making an effort to treat all students as fairly as possible, all the teachers interviewed understood that military families are unique and often require special considerations. Teachers spoke about understanding that sometimes an opportunity for communication between teachers and military parents (especially on deployment) does not exist. When both parents are on deployment, they understand that the ability to communicate becomes that much more challenging.

Another consideration made for military–connected students is in completing their homework. Interview 1 expressed in many stories that often times military families are going through struggles that are unique to their lifestyle. So completion of homework is the last thing on any family member's mind, especially during hardships or, on the contrary, during extreme exhilarations when a deployed parent returns home. Interview 2 explained that she often felt responsible for her military–connected students when parents were on deployment. That feeling

of responsibility heightened when the non–deployed parent was struggling with their unique lifestyle or when both parents were deployed, a unique attribute of being a military family.

Military deployments have negative effects on military–connected children. Numerous studies have shown that military deployments have negative effects on military–connected children (Gilreath, Cederbaum, Astor, Benbenishty, Pineda, & Atuel, 2013; Link & Palinkas, 2013; Paley, Lester, & Mogil, 2013). This single case study confirms this claim to an extent. The research within this study confirms that military deployments may have a negative effect on military–connected students. However, having a parent on deployment does not necessarily mean that the children involved in the deployment will have negative effects.

What was found was that there are certain factors in the effects of deployment such as whether it is mom or dad who is deployed, whether both parents are deployed, the number of deployments vs the first deployment, and the length of deployment. All of these factors influence the effects of the deployment, but do not necessarily lead to negative effects. What all teachers interviewed seemed to agree on is that the greatest contribution to a negative effect of deployment is how the adults in a child's life handle the deployment at all stages. That trickle–down effect can be either positive or negative depending on the circumstances.

Effective school programs are needed for military–connected children. Research has shown that effective school programs are needed for military–connected children (De Pedro, Astor, Gilreath, Benbenishty, & Berkowitz, 2015; Murphy & Fairbank, 2013; Park, 2011; Selber, Biggs, Chavkin, & Wright, 2015). The data from this dissertation confirms this finding. Due to the unique nature of military families, the importance of parental involvement, and the possible negative effects of military deployments, positive school programs are needed for military–connected students. Epstein (2011) explained the importance of the school, the family, and the

community working together as one to ensure student success. If a portion of that triad is missing, it is up to the other two portions to do more for the sake of the children. Additionally, since it was evident that the adults in a child's life have a great impact on the child, it is the duty of the school to create effective programs for students who are enduring unimaginable challenges.

Theoretical framework and research data. The two main theories on which the literature discussion is based are Epstein's (2011) theoretical framework on parental involvement and Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems theory. These were the two theories used to create theoretical triangulation within this study. The two theories possess many similarities. In fact, the ideas within each theory complements the other well.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1994), the microsystem in an individual's world are the aspects of a person's life that directly affect him/her. In the case of parental involvement, a child's family and school directly impact their life. This fact brings to light the extremely important role the teacher plays in a student's life. The data within this study showed the role of the teacher as an important theme that influenced their perceptions. However, what was also uncovered was the power of a teacher to build relationships and connections with his/her students in a way that supports the absence of a family member. Building relationships with students is key in helping all students succeed, but especially those students with one or both military parents on deployment. All teachers interviewed felt the need to become responsible for the well–being of the child when either the non–deployed parent was falling apart or when both parents were away on deployment.

When considering Epstein's (2011) view on parental involvement, it is apparent that the school, the family, and the community are equally important when trying to enhance

involvement in a child's education for him/her to be successful. What is unique about the military population is that the family is not always available due to their military duties. However, due to technological advances, the issue of distance is not as great an issue as it may have been in prior years.

Teachers interviewed expressed utilizing email, phone calls, special websites, special apps, social media, and Skype to keep in contact with parents. Although this was not always an available option, depending on the parent's job or location, technology did allow for many parents to stay up to date with their child's academic progress and behavior in school. Interview 2 expressed that she maintains a teacher website where she includes pictures and work samples so that any deployed parents can still be aware of what is occurring in his or her child's classroom.

This has a great influence on the teachers' perceptions of parental involvement and perceptions of student learning because now, through technology, parents on deployment may continue to stay involved in their child's education. This can occur through emails and phone conferences between teachers and parents. Technology can also allow parents to view what is occurring at school, thus, offering talking points to parents when they speak to their child about their day. Technology can even work as a tutoring tool for parents to assist their children with their school work.

What is also unique to this population of students is that the community involves two entities: the neighborhood community and the military community. This is why the community aspect of Epstein's (2011) triad include the microsystem, mesosystem, and the exosystem.

The microsystem includes peers. Peers can be developed at school, in the neighborhood, and in the community when children join a group such as sports or dance. Thus, community

peers would be considered part of one's microsystem. In terms of the mesosystem, the focus is the setting from which those within our microsystem come. Often times, military families live within a common neighborhood, whether it is on or off base. While this is not always the case, a majority live relatively close to one another. Issues that evolve in one's mesosystem may have a direct influence on a child's learning at school. Interview 3 explained that a very well–behaved student began to act up after the dad returned from deployment. She later learned that the student's parents were going through a divorce. "So I think that's what was affecting her more than the deployment" (Interview 3).

The exosystem is unique to military students because the military community and the government are the parents' workplace. The exosystem does not directly affect the individuals but the decisions made within the exosystem, especially with military–connected students, have a direct effect on them. If the government decides to go to war, that means that individuals within the military will be deployed. That decision to deploy, while existing within the exosystem has a direct impact on the community, the home, the parent, and the school which comprise the mesosystem and microsystem of that child's life.

"The family sacrificed a lot 'cause those kids would have been in a very different place if he hadn't had to go that last time" stated Interview 1 as she discussed a family whose deployed parent was hurt while on his third tour. When the father returned home, he was not the same anymore. This family experienced the effects of PTSD and the children witnessed their father physically abuse their mother until she was "black and blue." One of the children began cutting herself a few years afterward. "The community gave her a lot of backlash [from her husband's PTSD]…and the severity of which he came back and the fact that the kids just started to not do

well and she just didn't feel supported and she started to feel concerned that the school was going to use her situation against them. She fled; she just left the district."

In fact, while this was just one example, all the interviewees exposed the fact that the adults within a child's life have a direct influence on their ability to handle what is happening around them, which includes learning within their classroom. This confirms the important role of the teacher, but also requires that all adults within the school and community are examples of strong role models for the students. And when the non–deployed parents are struggling to be that person for their children, it is the job of everyone else within the microsystem to step into that role for these individuals. It is not just about academic success, but about the general well–being of all children.

Limitations

All research studies possess limitations. The first possible limitation in this study was in the sample size. Yin (2014) stated that qualitative case studies do not have a minimum requirement for the sample size. The choice, then, was made for this study to utilize a sample size between five to ten teachers. Perhaps the minimum number for the sample size should have been greater. This may result in a greater ability for the sample size to be more representative of the population. This limitation is discussed further in this chapter under the 'Recommendations for Further Research' section.

Another limitation was in the time that interviews were conducted. As previously stated, the majority of teachers were interviewed on the Saturday before school began as they worked tirelessly to finish setting up their classrooms for the first day of school. This time constraint was a limitation. Although interviewees were gracious enough with their time to allow for

interviews to occur, an attempt was made to be very considerate of the interviewees' time. It is possible that this limitation in time affected the quality of their responses.

Implication of the Results for Practice

Inductive reasoning was used in analyzing the data retrieved from this study. Inductive reasoning requires that a researcher look for trends within the data in order to generalize a probable conclusion (Richey, 2015). The implications discovered are generalizations being made for the phenomenon being studied.

While the perceptions of teachers vary from individual to individual, this study uncovered many commonalities and factors that lead to implications for practice. Teacher perceptions of parental involvement and students' perceived learning are influenced by the role of the teacher, the role of the school, the role of the family, the role of the military/military community, factors in the effects of deployment, and communication. It was apparent that students' learning, in addition to students' well–being, is affected by how the adults within the child's life are coping with the deployment (at all stages of the deployment). Thus, it appears that all school personnel who work closely with students should be required to attend trainings on building relationships with students and families. Trainings should include how to be a positive role model to students.

Based on the interviews of these dedicated teachers, it is apparent that teachers are aware of the importance of their role, especially in the life of a military–connected student. However, teachers are not the only members of a child's microsystem at school. Other school personnel who work closely with students (such as counselors, administrators, instructional coaches, physical education coaches, adult monitors, the librarian) should also be educated and trained on how important they are in these children's world, and how they can help be a positive influence

on military students specifically. Once trained, school personnel can begin to develop effective school programs designed to assist all students, but especially military–connected students with a parent or parents on deployment.

It is also important that the school take on the responsibility of connecting with military families, as did the teachers interviewed in this single case study. The school and community/military community should work together to offer support to the non–deployed parents prior to deployment as well as during deployment. That same support should be provided upon return from deployment. The teacher perceptions within this single case study revealed that all stages of deployment directly impact the children within the family. Based on the teacher perceptions of the interviewees, it is unclear as to the level of support given to military families from the military community, however, what was apparent is that the connection between the military community and school to assist these students and families is not as strong as it could/should be.

Education Secretary Betsy DeVos expressed the need for military–connected students to be supported as they transition from school to school when parents are given reassignments (Danilova, 2017). This needs to be taken a step further. There is a dire need for better communication between all aspects of Epstein's (2011) triad of supporting systems. The school, family, and military community need to create a strong partnership. A system should be in place in which schools are made aware of deployments without the parents or students being responsible for providing that information to teachers themselves.

All teachers interviewed revealed that the information about an impending deployment came from the parents or students. That included when the parent was returning from deployment. If a successful system exists somewhere else in a different state or district, then that

system should be modeled throughout all schools in the United States. Being aware of deployments allows teachers the ability to prepare for the extra support they can provide to students. Although all teachers expressed that they do not provide special treatment, they do empathize and prepare for their students' individual needs. Interview 2 stated that a military family of one of her first graders informed her that the dad would be deploying during the first week of school for the first time ever, and the child was not aware yet. "So my student doesn't know yet so I'm glad that she alerted me. She's very close to dad so I'm already ready" (Interview 2). The communication and support between all parties is vital for the success of military–connected students.

Another implication for practice that this study provides is the ability to take the information from this research and apply it to traditional students whose parent(s) may also be absent from their life. An example of this would be divorce, a work–related absence, a deceased parent, or children living in foster care or with a family member who is not their parent. If teachers and school personnel understand the importance of building relationships and offering support to students and families as well as understanding the need for them to be strong role models, then their power of influence can be spread to all students, not just those who are military–connected.

Recommendations for Further Research

It was clear that this study lends itself to further research. The research design for this single case study called for a sample size of five to ten teachers. This study obtained the minimal requirement of five teachers. However, it may be beneficial in further research to mimic this design, but utilize a greater sample size. Yin (2014) explained that there is no required sample size when conducting qualitative research. Nevertheless, requiring a minimum

sample greater than five may allow for the sample size to be more representative of the population.

This case study was conducted in a city that is home to one of the largest Army bases in the nation. Thus, the teachers' perceptions within this study focused on experiences with parents serving in the United States Army. One idea for further research would be to conduct a case study in which teacher perceptions include experiences within a different branch of the military. A larger scaled study would be to compare the perceptions of teachers amongst two or more branches of the military.

Another consideration for further research would be to compare the teacher perceptions of parental involvement amongst the same military branch, but between two schools within differing socioeconomic statuses. The school in which this research was conducted is within a high socioeconomic neighborhood. According to the teachers interviewed, a majority of the military parents are high ranking within the military. Because this city is home to such a large Army base, the varying ranks of military parents are evident. One of the interviewees has had the experience of working within two different highly populated military schools in the same district. In one school, the socioeconomic status was low. So she has had the experience of working with parents and students within varying socioeconomic statuses. She mentioned that a difference in degrees of parental involvement seemed to exist between the two schools based on her experiences working at both schools.

A third recommendation for further research would be to interview the administrators on their perceptions of parental involvement. Epstein (2011) saw involvement has a triad team that included families, schools, and the community. What is important to consider with that view of involvement is that it does not specify teachers but rather the entire school as a whole.

Administrator perceptions of parental involvement would be beneficial to view as they influence school programs and culture. Their perceptions likely possess implications that can assist schools in generating programs and support for military families.

This single case study focused on teacher perceptions within an elementary school. Another recommendation for further research would be to utilize the same research design, but to apply it to teacher perceptions in middle school or high school. Another possibility might be to compare the perceptions of elementary school teachers, middle school teachers, and high school teachers.

A final recommendation would be for a larger scaled research study that would survey school personnel across the United States to determine who informs them of parental deployments. This study can serve many purposes. It will allow for determining if this lack of communication is a problem across the country. It will also allow stakeholders to see if the communication between the military and school is stronger in certain areas of the United States, and then allow for further exploration as to why that communication is so much stronger there. An addition to this study would be to interview military families to determine if they feel the military should provide that information to schools or if they believe it should be a family's choice.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore how general education elementary school teachers of military–connected students perceive and interpret the influence of parental involvement on a student's learning when at least one of the parents is deployed. While there is a preponderance of research showing links between parental involvement and student learning (Al–Alwan, 2014; Hampden–Thompson, Guzman, & Lippman, 2012; Jeynes, 2012;

Jeynes, 2016a; Jeynes, 2016b; Karakus & Savas, 2012; Kirkwood, 2016;), there was a need to explore how general education teachers of military–connected students perceive and interpret the influence of parental involvement of students whose parent(s) are deployed on those students' learning. What was discovered is that teacher perceptions are influenced by six themes: the role of the teacher, the role of the school, the role of the family, the role of the military/military community, factors in the effects of deployment, and communication. While perceptions differed from teacher to teacher, all six themes were routinely found within the interviews and all the themes influenced the perceptions of the teachers. What was also discovered is that the non–deployed parent was an important factor in the student's learning and success in school. During the pre–deployment and post–deployment/reunion stage, both parents are important to the child's success. During the deployment stage, how the non–deployed parent (or the non–deployed guardian when both parents are deployed) deals with the situation is extremely important. If the deployed parent is able to stay involved with the child's school life that is fortunate for the student. However, teachers interviewed understand that often military duty does not allow a deployed parent to be involved. When both parents are deployed, the well–being of the child is very dependent on which adult is left behind to care for them, and whether the guardian is family or not seems to make a difference as well.

President Trump has vowed to improve the care and benefits for veterans (Danilova, 2017). An aspect of that commitment has to involve assistance to military–connected children in all schools across America. That is a commitment to almost two million children whose mom, dad, or both are serving as Active Duty, Guard, or Reserve in the military (Military Child Education Coalition, 2017). A gap exists on current qualitative literature on parental involvement and military families. Studies like this work to fill that gap and provide assistance

not only to the military families, but to the teachers and schools working to support the military–connected students.

This research revealed the important role a teacher plays in the lives of all children, but especially military–connected students. Providing teachers and all school personnel with the proper training to build and enhance relationships with students and families is necessary to the cause of supporting military families and will, hopefully, lead to the development of effective school programs for military–connected students. The understanding that teachers, parents, and all school employees, have a direct influence on the children around them is crucial. A partnership must be created between schools, families, and the military community. Every district in the entire country has military–connected students (Military Child Education Coalition, 2017). That is an urgency that must not be ignored. The hope is that this research serves as a stepping stone for further research that can assist military families, teachers, and schools of military–connected students and the military community.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. What is your definition of parental involvement?

2. Describe your experiences with parental involvement in a child's education when one parent is deployed?

3. How would you say the length of deployment impacts the parental involvement of the deployed parent? If your experiences have been different from family to family, what factors would you say are common and what are unique?

4. How does having a deployed parent alter your interaction with the military–connected student?

5. How does having both parents deployed alter your interaction with the military–connected student?

6. What has been your experience with the effects of deployment on the military–connected student?

7. What has been your experience with parental involvement with the non–deployed parent when one parent is deployed?

8. How is the child's learning affected by the involvement of the non–deployed parent?

9. What changes in parental involvement have you experienced when the deployed parent returns home? What is the difference in the child's behavior, focus, and learning?

10. What advice would you give a teacher with a student whose parent is on deployment?

11. Compare and contrast differences in approaches used for a 'traditional' student and a student with a deployed parent?

Appendix B: Descriptive Field Notes Typed Out (Interview 1–5)

Descriptive Field Notes Interview 1
Date: Friday, August 18, 2017 / Evening (only Friday interview)
Location: Interviewer's Home

- Interviewee was smiling a lot (eager and excited to begin interview despite expressing being tired from a long day at work)
- Interviewee and interviewer sat at dining room table
- The house was quiet, televisions off, no one else home
- Interviewee gave full attention to questions, made eye contact with interviewer and thought about each response
- Interviewee was rich in experiences with military–connected students
- Spoke of many different examples, stories, families
- Obvious that interviewee is very connected to her students and their families
- Because stories were rich in details, often times when a question was asked, one of her stories already covered that topic, however, that did not limit the question. She would think have another story that also covered that question
- Spoke about families in a positive, loving way
- Interviewee's sad stories seemed to hurt her heart–voice would crack, tone would be a whisper, eyes would tear up
- Interviewee would imitate the student's accent as she told the story
- Sincerity in her voice
- Interview was very conversational, easy to ask clarifying questions

Question 1: "how much parents participate in education"/interviewer asked interviewee to expand on her explanation of "participate"–some can't and yet they're still very involved and engaged in their child's education / benefits child

Question 2: Varies…have had extremely positive experiences where you can't tell and sometimes the whole world falls apart (paused, tone saddened)/ [snapping fingers] about a parent

who had anxiety that she was not with her crew overseas and just needed to leave, despite the dad already being gone. Voice saddened at the thought of how this affected her student.. even some where coming back makes it worse

Question 3: ummm [thinking, looking up]–It varies

Voice began to tremble, tone saddened when spoke of particular example / both interviewer and interviewee were crying

Military community non–supportive with PTSD & see it as a weakness

Question 4: long pause–thought for a while

"I love them all" / All treated the same

Question 5: "When both parents are gone– I feel extra responsibility toward that student" (a little different than one military parent being deployed

Military Parent Liaison– teachers go to her, not really the other way / gets the kids group counseling, HERRA club, severe instances get additional help/ she's there more for the families and providing outside resources

Question 6: everything is situation / depends on the non–deployed parent, depends on how the deployment went / some are sudden deployments but most are given plenty of time, but that can have an impact too

Question 7: Depends – some have constant anxiety, whether it's mom or dad, rank seems to make a difference, spur of the moment deployments seem to have a negative effect no matter what

Question 8: "If family is in distress, the child will be too" (no matter how academically high that student may be)– if they don't take it well, the child doesn't either

Question 9: week before returning– count down & excited / when they return– excited/honeymoon phase, usually like a wk. or 2 / afterward you can tell if they'll make it Sometimes it's just bad afterward (a lot of divorce and infidelity)/ can go a lot of different ways

Question 10: "love all your kids, make connections" (advice I'd give to any teacher whether or not parent is deployed)

Question 11: It's a little easier with a "traditional" student because an absent parent is still usually around & the series of events are different / Depends on how parents handle situation; how parents approach it is what makes the difference

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Descriptive Field Notes Interview 2
Date: Saturday, August 19, 2017 /Afternoon (3rd Saturday Interview)
Location: Case Study School / Interviewee's Classroom

- Excited tone of voice/Eager to be interviewed
- Husband was in classroom helping place letters on a bulletin board
- Interviewee was explaining where to place the letters
- Classroom fully decorated
- Classroom felt very welcoming
- Few, small piles gathered on tables
- Sent husband to copy machine to make copies, then sat down on a table across from me (giving me her attention)
- Interview felt very conversational
- Spoke of many positive experiences
- Wisdom within her words, you can tell she possesses many experiences with military–connected students

- Spoke about two different school in which she had military–connected students but she focused around case study school

Question 1: It's not just parents…any adult engaging in a student's learning

Question 2: Smiled and thought about it before answering. "so many experiences"

Question 3: tone of voice raised–"met so many strong women…I've been impressed"

Question 4: having deployed parent doesn't alter interaction / uses email and has website with pictures and activities

Question 5: paused for a long period of time as she looked up (very thoughtful of the response) / more empathetic to meltdowns or other behaviors, "don't get special treatment, but very empathetic"/ paused throughout response –seemed to consider what the response would be

Question 6: grade level of child doesn't make a difference / "they're still children & they miss their parents"

Question 7: "some step it up and some can't handle it" / Remembered: group of women (tone sounded in disbelief) / Interviewer asked if it makes a difference when both parents are in the military versus one civilian and one military parent– remembered 2 officers–whatever learned in army they instilled and carried through in their home [motioned hand up and down & chuckled], 2 amazing lesbian moms [whispered secretly and smiled], dad with 2 little girls [remembered story and laughed at dad trying but it is not the same without mom]/ [whispered] "you could tell that the girls were okay" [nodded head] "a little disheveled" [chuckled at the memory]

Question 8: pause for a while thinking–depends on how non–deployed parent has adjusted, # of siblings, how organized they are

When asked if the deployment can have a permanent effect on the child's learning, interviewee's voice raised with a lot of emotion "you don't allow it to be; that's where you intervene, where you take action, you help that child"

Question 9: had some rebel, they're angry / it's been so different

Some are happy; some are angry and become behavior problems

There is a period of readjustment

Factor–how they were able to function without absent parent

Two male coworkers walked in during interview, interviewee signaled to them to be quiet (placing finger on lips) and continued to give me her attention.

Question 10: Advice for a new teacher: communication–communicate and let that family know that you're there to help

Question 11: "no real difference…even in civilians there's students going through divorce and things like that…no difference–they all have needs"

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Descriptive Field Notes Interview 3
Date: Saturday, August 19, 2017 / Afternoon (1st Saturday Interview)
Location: Case Study School / Interviewee's Classroom

- Desks in straight columns
- Classroom very neat and put together
- Name plates on desks with students' first name in fancy writing
- Decorations hanging from ceiling / decorations were color coordinated
- Working on laptop
- Interviewee sat at her desk during interview as she continued to work on laptop
- Interviewer sat at a student desk across from the interviewee

- Interviewee was very distracted throughout the interview; often asked to repeat the question, would take long pauses to think of the answer
- It was difficult to expand on answers and attempt to get additional information

Question 1: interviewee repeated question seemingly for clarification (looking at laptop when question was asked)–"uh–a parent who is actively involved…everyday knows what's going on…doesn't mean constant communication"

Question 2: asked to repeat question (looking at laptop when question was asked) Thinking for a long time, stopped typing on laptop to think "It does decrease." Depends on whether it's female or male

Answers were short, required many extension questions to get more detailed responses

Follow up question from interviewer "when mom leaves does dad take an active role that maybe he didn't' have before? You know where it was always mom doing everything and then she left so all of a sudden you see dad which you hadn't really seen before" –interviewee had long pause and then long "um"

Coworker came in & interview was paused

Question 3: thinking for a long time–typing while question was read then stopped to think about a response "very hard for a parent who's deployed to be involved"/ follow up questions allowed for a story example of a child where both parents were going to be deployed

Question 4: "I try to be more understanding" [sighed, "um," thinking about answer]…I try to be more…I'm very fair– even despite a difficult situation"/ trying to explain her reasoning– interviewer asked her to elaborate– interviewee explained accommodating in her own way

Question 5: "It's harder" / with Class Dojo there's interaction but there are less chances for immediate communication

Question 6: (stopped working on laptop to listen to question) "It affects them"/ spoke of example where student misbehaved at the anticipation of the deployment (provided a lengthy example–seemingly thought out)

Question 7: interviewee asked for question to be repeated–They're involved, but it depends/ her experience was limited to both parents being on deployment

Follow up question asked if there's a difference when one parent is a civilian–said she hadn't had that situation–they've always both been military parents

Question 8: interviewee asked for the question to be repeated again–"I'm sure it has happened"…answer doesn't seem to go with the question/ working on laptop during question–very distracted. Difficult to come up with a follow up question

Question 9: interviewee looked up from laptop after first reading of question 9 and said, "I'm such a visual person, I'm sorry." Then she stopped working on her laptop to hear the question repeated. Remembered an example from question 7 where one parent was deployed–surprised tone, couldn't believe she had forgotten about her. Mom was on top of it during deployment but child's behavior changed after returning from deployment and turned out parents were getting a divorce. Response was lengthy and detailed

Question 10: long pause (thinking about question) "Be a little more patient [long pause] with the child because it's a single parent…keep an eye on the child"

Question 11: When interviewer said, "last question," interviewee stopped working on laptop and listened attentively to question…"I do try to be the same with all students"/ academically–the same; behavior–perhaps I give a little more slack; homework–more lenient in those instances

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Descriptive Field Notes Interview 4

Date: Saturday, August 19, 2017 / Afternoon (4th/Last Saturday Interview)

Location: Case Study School / Interviewee's Classroom

- Desks were put together in groups
- Room was quiet and neat
- Classroom was fully decorated and organized
- Interviewee and interviewer sat across from one another on student desks (very attentive to questions, very thoughtful of responses)
- Seemed to lack confidence in responses at time, would say things like, "I don't know if that's right"
- Interview felt conversational
- However, interviewee seemed nervous, she would say "um" a lot and take a long time to think about her answers

Question 1: "um [paused, long thinking] "Someone who helps their student with any questions at home; comes to conferences; when I communicate with them are open to communicate; try to attend events & get involved; genuinely cares and contacts me" [paused to think throughout response]

Question 2: Had one parent on deployment – mom was very involved

Student had trouble adjusting / mom always responded right away ["um" and paused to think throughout response]

Question 3: Another student lived with grandparents & dad was in military, "um as far as other experiences, last year was my first year so I can't make any comparisons with other students" possibly on deployment but no one informed her (not using that family as an example)

Question 4: with student was a little more understanding about behavior–knew he was having trouble adjusting

Interviewee and Interviewer became distracted by strange noises outside, both laughed, interviewee said "I'm sorry, I forgot the question;" question was repeated

expectations were never lowered for child

Question 5: N/A (skipped–1st yr. teacher & only experience was with one deployed dad and a non–deployed mom)

Question 6: behavior issues– thought he could get away with more at home because mom felt bad about dad being away

Had aggression toward others; later diagnosed with ADHD but mom didn't like him being medicated

Question 7: any notices– she would respond right away; always available to meeting and willing to help at home; she never made excuses or used the deployment as an excuse but she would question other student's behavior

Question 8: interviewee questioned "the involvement of the non–deployed parent?" seemingly for understanding of what question was asking; interviewer rephrased

student had to sit close to teacher and desk by himself; struggling student, hard to focus / interviewee stated that she's not sure if the behavior had anything to do with parental involvement so unsure how to answer that question

Question 9: better behaved when dad returned–interviewee never met with dad when he returned / joked and laughed that student was the one who informed teacher that dad was home and demonstrated him sitting upright in his desk

Question 10: "um"–paused to thinking–"Be understanding…be someone they can talk to…be sympathetic…let students know this is their safe space…not to be judgmental

Question 11: long "um" thinking & interviewee asked for the question to be repeated– sometimes with him I had to make it more engaging/ 1st year, 1st time– treated everyone the same

"If I had several years and if all across the board there were several factors I wish I could tell you a better answer but this was my first year so no I don't think I did" seemed unconfident in the fact that it was the interviewee's first year teaching

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Descriptive Field Notes Interview 5
Date: Saturday, August 19, 2017 / Afternoon (2nd Saturday Interview)
Location: Case Study School / Interviewee's Classroom

- Classroom was loud– a lot of laughing and talking
- Two friends (1 male and 1 female) were in the room helping cut out laminated decorations
- Room was messy, there was still a lot that needed to be done for the room to look ready for the first day of school
- Took a while to begin, assistant principal walked into the room and stayed to talk and joke with the teacher and her helpers
- Interviewee and Interviewer sat on student desks across from each other. Interviewee took laminated materials to the desk to cut during the interview
- Interviewee spoke with a confident tone in her experiences with military–connected students
- Answers were very general–rarely did she speak of specific examples
- At times the answers were difficult to expand on– the interview felt conversational at times and would flow nicely–other times it felt as though it lacked substance

- Interviewee often made jokes and laughed based on her responses

Question 1: interviewee cutting materials as she spoke– when parent is fully involved, helps with homework, attends activities, volunteers

Question 2: "depends on circumstances"/ In 4th grade there was a lack of parental involvement

Question 3: spoke 'matter of factly'–experience rang in her tone, "1st month is the hardest, even harder when they don't have anyone else"

Question 4: majority of time students have different behavior– withdrawn, emotional, very hard on them

Week of deployment is harder on little ones

Question 5: "I had 1 in 4th grade and the behavior completely changed" (she was staying with a neighbor)…when they stay with family, they don't become a behavior problem but they get very sensitive

Question 6: Extreme behavior–but depends on child and how parent interacts with child… "it goes into a lot of different extremes"

Question 7: Interviewee looked up from cutting materials and seemed confused/ Interviewer rephrased, "So I think of this question and I think of like, has there ever been instances where you almost didn't even know that other parent was gone because the non–deployed parent was so on top of their stuff?" Interviewee shook her head and said, "that is very rare" and began laughing at that idea.

When there's only 1 parent–they expect you to cater more to their children…parents pull a guilt–trip

Laughed and jokingly said, "I'm sorry they still have to learn–it's not my fault"

Question 8: when parents overdo it and start putting things in their head / upbringing–how parents react to deployment / shook her head and said, "It's like aww man" as though she couldn't believe that people did that to their children

Question 9: Immediate upon return–child wants to stay home so it's very difficult

Spoke of an example where a parent wanted Christmas vacation plus 3 additional weeks–when he was questioned about how the child would make up the missed learning, he said the teacher needed to stay afterschool to teach–interviewee made a phase of disbelief and said, "I was like uh, excuse me, okay" [jokingly laughing]/ competition of parents & mother & attention [chuckled at the thought of this] / explained that returning parent is often fighting with child on who's the boss of the house [jokingly laughed]

Question 10: [looking up, thinking] Be considerate; speak to parents and we still have to do our job [stated laughing jokingly]

Question 11: interviewee clarified question & then thought about response–Try harder to help academically / Liaison is available

Appendix C: Reflective Field Notes Typed Out (Interview 1–5)

Reflective Field Notes Interview 1

- Technology
- Imitating parents' feelings and actions
- Role of teacher
- Relationships
- Empathy
- Special clubs
- PTSD
- Abuse– CPS
- Varied experiences
- Military community
- Treating everyone the same
- Infidelity
- Divorce
- Dads vs. Moms
- Culture
- Bronfenbrenner's Theory

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Reflective Field Notes Interview 2

- No difference in how students are treated
- No special treatment
- Teacher role

- Support
- Teacher involvement
- Technology
- Strength
- Economically disadvantaged
- Multiple experiences/2 different schools
- Bronfenbrenner's Theory

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Reflective Field Notes Interview 3

- All kids treated the same academically /behaviorally a little more slack
- Parents willing to inform teacher of deployments
- Technology
- Fairness/ no special treatment
- Divorce after the return of deployment
- Interviewee very distracted and short in some responses

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Reflective Field Notes Interview 4

- Role of a teacher
- Use of technology
- Experience of teacher
- Expectation stayed the same
- School did not inform–possibly another parent on deployment but not sure
- Support from parent

- Treated students the same
- First year teaching–one experience with parent on deployment
- Different stages of deployment

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Reflective Field Notes Interview 5

- School does not inform
- Mostly negative experiences
- Parents impressing feelings onto kids
- Upbringing
- Sense of entitlement from parents
- Making school a safe place
- Very confident in experiences
- Spoke generally in regard to military–connected students

Appendix D: Statement of Original Work

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all the aspects of the Concordia University– Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.
2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources have been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced and all permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the *Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association.*

\s\ Valerie Grijalva Gonzalez
Digital Signature

Valerie Grijalva Gonzalez
Name (Typed)

December 01, 2017
Date