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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Resiliency Networks:
Bridging Multiple Worlds of Military-Connected Adolescents in Civilian Schools

A dissertation proposal submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the
degree Doctor of Education

in

Teaching and Learning

by

Alison Michelle Black

Committee in Charge:

Professor Alison Wishard Guerra, Chair
Professor Shana R. Cohen
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Professor Gail D. Heyman

2016

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The Dissertation proposal of Alison Michelle Black is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2016

Dedication

To my grandparents, Ralph Black, Helen Black, Norman Baily, and Rose Baily for instilling in me the belief that I can do anything I dream.

To my mother and father, Barbara and Norman Black, for their dedication to public service and education.

To my brothers and sisters-in-law, Kevin Black, Tulika Bose, Steven Black, and Elizabeth Falconi, for inspiring and encouraging me to become an academician.

To my husband, Trevor Watson, for being my biggest fan and supporting me through this academic journey.

To my dog, William Wallace, for his patience with my relative absence for the past few years. This summer, we will go on many adventures.

To my students who have become my champions. They have all been incredibly supportive of my work and have shown such strength, determination, and resilience. I am so proud of them!

To our nation's military Service members. Their families will not be forgotten.

Epigram

Hardship often prepares an ordinary person for an extraordinary destiny.

C. S. Lewis

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Resiliency Networks:
Bridging Multiple Worlds of Military-Connected Adolescents in Civilian Schools

by

Alison Michelle Black

Doctor of Education in Teaching and Learning

University of California, San Diego, 2016

Professor Alison Wishard Guerra, Chair

Abstract. A majority of the nation's military-connected dependents attend civilian public schools, yet there are pervasive inconsistencies in support programs and policies across schools (De Pedro, Astor, Gilreath, Benbenishty, & Esqueda, 2013). High mobility rates present several challenges to children of military Service members, such as learning gaps, social and emotional difficulties, and challenges forming relationships with peers and school personnel (Astor, Jacobson, & Benbenishty, 2012). This study examined how military-connected adolescents bridged

their multiple military and civilian worlds in the school context. The theoretical foundations of the study included the Bridging Multiple Worlds (BMW) (Cooper, 2014) model and Social Network theory. The BMW design investigated military-connected adolescents' perceived challenges and strengths of belonging to a military cultural community along with how they accessed resources for overcoming those challenges. Social Capital and Social Network theory situated developmental processes in a socialized context highlighting how interpersonal relationships shape development (Bourdieu, 1986; Daly, Moolenaar, Bolivar, & Burke, 2010). Focus groups revealed participants faced many of the typical challenges facing military-connected youth. They also perceived many of those challenges as having promoted positive developmental outcomes: social skills, resilience, and adaptability. Social networks, friendship networks and support networks, played an important role in overcoming the challenges of navigating their military and civilian worlds. Findings indicated differences in academic outcomes (GPA) between military and civilian participants, as well as between enlisted and officer participants. Findings also indicated different social network patterns between enlisted participants and officer participants. The rich history of military support within the local community and school environment may have influenced how military participants integrated into the whole eighth-grade friendship network. This study sought to fill the research gap by accurately representing the social and educational needs and circumstances of military-connected adolescents in a military-dense civilian middle school and to help

educators create highly supportive environments for military-connected adolescents in civilian schools.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Currently, only about seven percent of the 1.2 million military-connected¹ dependents in the United States attend Department of Defense Education Activity (DODEA) schools around the Americas and the world (De Pedro, Astor, Gilreath, Benbenishty, & Esqueda, 2013). Military-connected children tend to fare much better academically in these DODEA schools (De Pedro, Astor, Gilreath, Benbenishty, & Esqueda, 2013). Some researchers partially attribute this success to a focus on creating a strong sense of community belonging and rich military historical and cultural learning embedded into daily school experiences (e.g. learning about specific military branch values, symbols, and histories) (De Pedro, Astor, Gilreath, Benbenishty, & Esqueda, 2013). DODEA schools often require parental participation. It is often difficult to recreate the conditions of DODEA schools that support academic success in civilian schools due to the unique physical and social circumstances of living on base outside the United States borders. Families often live and work in the on-base community, and school officials and officers have stricter control over parents and children at DODEA schools. For example, there are often parent participation requirements, which are not typically implemented at civilian schools.

One challenge facing military-connected dependents is constant displacement. On average, the military-connected child will move six to nine times between kindergarten and twelfth grade (De Pedro et al., 2013). As the United States continues to engage in the longest war in its history, more and more families have become

¹ The term military-connected child is defined as an active duty military dependent.

impacted by deployment and displacement. High mobility rates present several challenges to children of military Service members. Challenges include learning gaps from inconsistent academic requirements among districts or states and difficulties forming relationships with peers and school personnel (Astor et al., 2012), which help to foster positive, effective learning environments. Relationships with peers, family, and group belonging are critical during early adolescence (Ito, 2010) but are often hindered by high mobility rates for military-connected adolescents. Military-connected children often also go through emotional and behavioral challenges related to a parent's deployment. During parental deployment, children and families of Service members may experience trauma and even secondary Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Milburn & Lightfoot, 2013). Deployment also carries with it cyclical stress: uncertainty before the Service member departs, safety concerns during deployment, and even transitional stress after a deployed parent returns. Changing family dynamics, roles, and relationships as children develop, and the deployed parent's experiences can lead to just as much, if not more stress and uncertainty as other deployment cycle stages (Milburn & Lightfoot, 2013). In many ways, the military-connected child's life is a constant state of transition due to high mobility rates and increasing deployment rates, which contribute to a variety of stresses including difficulty adjusting to new school environments (Bradshaw, Sudhinaraset, Mmari, & Blum, 2010). Even their daily lives at civilian schools require students to transition among peer groups, family, military, and civilian worlds.

Cultural and structural differences between military and civilian experiences

sometimes create a sense of military-civilian divide, which can be stressful for adolescents trying to fit in at school. The research on social capital in schools has described the impact of cultural mismatch between home and school as contributing to either a sense of alienation or belonging; students who feel that they belong often fare better academically (Cooper, 2014; Flores-González, 1999; Gibson, Bejinez, Hidalgo, & Rolón, 2004; Mehan, Villanueva, Hubbard, & Lintz, 1996). While American civilian culture values individuality and freedom of expression, military culture imposes strict emphasis on the common “mission” (Exum, Coll, & Weiss, 2011). Obeying orders and belonging to a rigid hierarchy with strict fraternization rules govern Service members’ lives, therefore their families’ lives, as well. Military-connected children must constantly navigate the cultural norms, scripts, behaviors, and values of both their military cultural community and civilian school environments, which can sometimes be in stark contrast. These tensions may cause additional stresses for military-connected adolescents in civilian schools.

Although high mobility rates often contribute to the challenges noted earlier, recent research suggest that these same challenges of military life can also promote resilience in adolescents and do not actually undermine adolescent development or promote unhealthy paths to achieving developmental milestones (Weber & Weber, 2005). In a study investigating parent perceptions of military-connected adolescent behavior related to relocation, Weber and Weber (2005) found that as mobility rates increased, adolescent behavior and parental perceptions improved. The study involved four high schools that received Military Impact Aid (federal funds given to military-

dense enrollment schools) and included participants from several branches of service and rank status. Parent survey questions included the Behavioral Problems Index (BPI) from the National Health Interview Survey on Child Health. Survey questions also asked for how many times the child relocated, parental perceptions of relocation, and the child's school behavior history. Researchers created four categories for number of moves: low (zero to two), moderate (three to four), high (five to six), and very high (seven or more). Chi squared tests showed that there were statistically different school behavior problems between low and high categories, as well as high and very high categories. Reported behavior problems rose with relocation rates and then declined for students in the very high relocation rate category. Rates for the very high category fell to levels similar to those of students with a low number of moves. Furthermore, after adjusting for age, Pearson's correlations results revealed that mobility rates were significantly associated with higher BPI scores; as children moved more frequently with age their perceptions of school behavior seemed to improve. In their discussion, Weber and Weber (2005) suggest that high relocation rates may actually be a factor in resilience development, rather than a detriment to development, yet few studies research this population with mobility as a factor of resilience. Researchers also discussed a gap in the literature on positive outcomes related to stress processes, such as frequent relocation. The current study investigated participant perceptions in facing and overcoming their challenges in navigating their military and civilian worlds: challenges such as moving often. Those who overcame their challenges effectively helped to shed light on best practices when describing these

processes. The current study also investigated the role of peers and support networks as factors of resilience after stressful events.

Additionally, the literature shows that military-connected children often have several positive experiences that foster optimal developmental outcomes, like resilience (Astor et al., 2012; De Pedro et al., 2013; Esqueda et al., 2012). Military-connected students are given the opportunity to travel and engage with a variety of cultures while on assignments abroad, they are surrounded by a close-knit community of support anywhere in the world, and they often develop strong character traits, such as loyalty, duty, and honor. This study took a strength-based approach in unpacking how military-connected adolescents utilized their assets and resources to overcome their challenges.

Current research lacks an understanding of students' school lives from the child's perspective, especially with understudied populations like military-connected children (De Pedro et al., 2013). Educators and policy makers need greater awareness of the strengths and challenges of military children and best practices in supporting military children, so that district and school organizational efforts can better address their needs. In order to do so, researchers need to be investigating military-connected youth as a diversity group in the nation's public schools (Biden, 2016). Although educators and researchers have studied school reform efforts across the nation for decades, school reform efforts supporting military children have not been studied (Esqueda et al., 2012). This study aimed to describe the school experiences of military-connected adolescents as they navigated their multiple worlds of home,

school, and military communities. Based on the Bridging Multiple Worlds theoretical framework (Cooper, 2014), this study investigated military-connected adolescents' bridging processes: the processes of utilizing assets and resources for overcoming challenges as they navigate across their multiple worlds.

Additionally, the literature on social network analysis has yet to consider the impact of the social network structure on adolescents from military-connected families. Investigating the structures and patterns of military-connected adolescent networks at school shed light on how they accessed forms of social capital in navigating their military and civilian worlds. This study intended to inform educators and school programs targeting military-connected adolescents in assisting newcomers throughout their progression of geographic moves, and contributed to an understudied body of research investigating military-connected student experiences in civilian public schools from participant perspectives. This study sought to fill the research gap by accurately representing the social and educational needs and circumstances of military-connected adolescents in a military-dense civilian middle school.

Theoretical Framework

This study is situated within the Bridging Multiple Worlds (BMW) theory (Cooper, 2014; Cooper & Denner, 1998), which focuses on children's individual and academic development between the overlapping spheres of the home and school contexts. BMW theory states that individuals constantly navigate among multiple cultural worlds of peers, home, and school with varying cultural expectations and goals. Social relationships within the multiple worlds lens often fit into patterns of

brokers and gatekeepers: those who help students overcome challenges and those who create barriers for students in their academic success. This theoretical model suggests that in accessing resources and building positive, supportive relationships throughout their academic pipelines, students can succeed in overcoming the challenges of poverty, racism, and other obstacles (Cooper, 1994). The BMW model predicts that students who coordinate specific resources with the appropriate challenges will have more success in navigating their academic pathways across multiple worlds of home, school, and peers. Cooper (2014) calls these processes of coordinating assets and resources bridging processes, a definition appropriated for this study. Social relationships and peer social networks are an important part of the bridging process connecting the civilian and military worlds of military-connected adolescents. Figure 1 depicts a modification of Cooper's (2014) BMW model, integrating the military community and focusing on the adolescent experience in middle school.

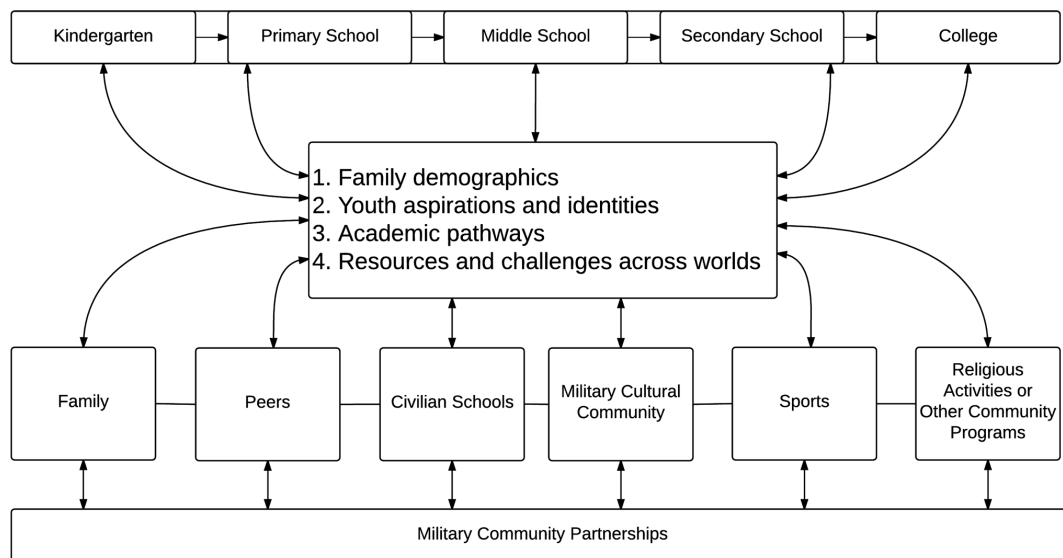


Figure 1. Bridging Multiple Worlds for Military-connected Adolescents (Adapted from Cooper, 2014)

The BMW framework grew from the application of the Ecological Systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) to understand how underrepresented minorities navigate their embedded contexts of home, school, and community. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecocultural Systems theory describes the social context for development as an interconnected and hierarchical niche nested within systems and layers of environmental factors. Individual histories and the broader cultural society influence transmission of cultural values and learning experiences; social interaction precedes development (Lake, 2012). This study focused on development in proximal processes such as the microsystem (family and school) (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). More specifically, this study was concentrated on adolescent perspectives about experiences navigating across these proximal developmental contexts. The BMW model was used

to analyze individual development processes among the several environmental contexts or ecologies in which adolescents coexist and navigate throughout life, such as the military and civilian worlds of home and school. Cooper's (2014) BMW model framed this study for investigating military-connected adolescents perspectives in how they utilized brokers as resources to overcome the challenges of navigating multiple worlds.

Social Capital and Social Network theories situate developmental processes in a socialized context highlighting how interpersonal relationships shape adolescent development (Bourdieu, 1986; Daly, Moolenaar, Bolivar, & Burke, 2010). Social Capital theory states that an agent, or individual, is socialized in a field, which can be defined as a changing set of roles and relationships within a social context, often marked by reproducing broader social and political power relationships, such as in schools (Bourdieu, 1986). Agents in the field access several kinds of capital, such as status, possessions, habits, and relationships. Through the process of acculturation to their roles and relationships based on their particular position within the field, developing individuals internalize the relationships they have built and the expectations for their continued operation in the field. The habitus, internalized relationships, expectations, and values of social groups, develop over time and through daily routines, activities, and scripts (Bourdieu, 1971). While social capital can be investigated in a variety of ways, this study primarily focused on information channels along with academic and emotional support as key forms of social capital in military-connected adolescents' lives and investigated how military-connected middle school

students and their families created the social capital necessary for academic success. Furthermore, this study was founded in Social Network theory, which states that forms of social capital, such as knowledge brokering and influence, can be mapped and quantified.

This study applied Social Network theory in order to measure and analyze patterns of military-connected adolescent participation within the full civilian eighth-grade network. In this study, military-connected adolescents were asked about their friendship networks in order to determine how individuals access information and social capital in the civilian school setting. Middle school peer social networks are especially important because friends exchange cultural knowledge and information that heavily influence future academic outcomes (Ito, 2010). Founded in Social Capital theory, Social Network theory provides a systematic way to quantify and visualize ties and structures of a particular network (Daly, et. al, 2010), like those of peer social networks. Together, the BMW, Social Capital, and Social Network theories provide a useful conceptual framework for understanding how home, culture, and school contexts influence adolescent development.

Social network analysis research has yet to consider the impact of the social network structure on adolescents from military families. Currently, much of Social Network Analysis research within schools focuses on educators (the adults). For example, some studies examine the impact of teacher social network structure on student achievement (Moolenaar, Slegers, & Daly, 2012). Others focus on schools' innovative climate as mediated by teachers' involvement in decision-making, among

comparing different networks, including those of formal roles, grade level groupings, and informal social interactions (Moolenaar, Daly, & Slegers, 2010). Research has shown that efforts to restructure networks through professional learning communities can bring about more effective collaboration and subsequent positive outcomes for students (Daly, 2010).

The key to understanding the influence of social networks is in its theoretical assumption that social capital is embedded within these networks and relationships. The evaluating of social network characteristics helps researchers measure social capital in a more concrete way than qualitative methods can capture alone (Lin, 1999). Pairing more quantitative social network data with the qualitative data from interviews and focus groups will allow for richer description and triangulation of data in understanding the role of peer relationships for military-connected adolescents. In addition to qualitative data generated, the full network analysis provided quantitative information about the entire network of eighth graders and how they were connected to one another. The egocentric network analysis shed more detailed light on the important relationships of individual participants and the nature of those relationships.

Middle school is commonly considered a time when the forming of social relationship becomes more important to adolescents than practically anything else, including academics (Ito, 2010). Students with social and cultural capital often have richer access to resources and they know how to apply appropriate resources to specific challenges. The theoretical frameworks that guided this study position the exchange of information using cultural brokers (parents, school adults, and military

and civilian peers). Brokers are often the primary form of social capital that shape experiences in how military-connected adolescents navigate their multiple worlds. Certain network characteristics of peer social networks may also be predictive factors in patterns of success for military-connected adolescents.

Research Questions

The overarching goal of this study was to investigate how military-connected adolescents navigate their multiple worlds in civilian public schools. Specifically, the following research questions were be addressed:

1. What do the peer social networks look like of adolescents attending a middle school in a military-dense region? How do they differ between civilian and military-connected adolescents?
2. What are military connected adolescents' the perceived challenges and resources among military-connected adolescents as they navigate their multiple worlds of home, school, and military communities? How do they access resources and utilize assets to overcome their challenges?
3. How do the experiences of navigating the multiple worlds of home, school, and military communities vary according adolescent and family characteristics? Adolescent and family characteristics include student achievement, gender, family socioeconomic status, military rank, family structure, etc.
4. To what degree does the heterogeneity of the individual peer (ego) network impact individual experiences navigating the multiple worlds of home, school, and military communities and does this vary by adolescent or family demographic

characteristics?

Expected Outcomes

Research question 1. The different ways in which these teens participate in their school peer networks may be related to academic achievement. For example, it was predicted that military-connected adolescents' density of clusters by group within the peer network would be related to academic achievement (GPA). It was predicted that clusters of military-connected students would be found, and that there would be a variety of patterns in terms of structure of and individual position within the full network. It was predicted that military-connected clusters would have higher centrality and density than the full network, as measured by external-internal ties index, also known as the network EI Index (Krackhardt & Stern, 1988). Prior experiences may be related to clustering within the network. For example, a participant with higher mobility may be more likely to participate in military-dense clusters. Clustering tendencies may also be related to a variety of academic outcomes and family demographics, such as rank or number of moves.

Research question 2. Consistent with current research (Astor et al., 2012; De Pedro et al., 2013), it was expected that participants would discuss the common challenges that military-connected adolescents face including those associated with high mobility rates and deployment cycles: making new friends, learning gaps, and high emotional stress. Military-connected adolescents would most likely rely on a variety of supports to help them overcome the challenges associated with navigating their military and civilian worlds.

Research question 3. It was expected that individual experiences of navigating the multiple worlds of home, school, and military communities would vary according to adolescent and family characteristics. For example, there may be overall gender differences in what challenges are perceived as most important. Gender differences might also be associated with academic outcomes or social network patterns. Students might report differences in the way family members and school personnel support them. Family structures, such as number of siblings may also be important factors for military-connected adolescents and how they experience the phenomenon of navigating their worlds. Furthermore, it was predicted that rank and socioeconomic status would be the most prominent characteristic to be associated with differences: academic achievement, access to resources and school programs, and social network position.

Research question 4. Following predictive social and cultural capital models, it was predicted that dependents of higher military rank (officers) would most likely have more relational and cultural capital and more effective strategies for accessing resources to overcome their challenges. It was expected that officer participants would have higher heterogeneity of friendship and support networks. Consistent with social capital models, it was expected that more connected students and those with better quality of connections within peer social networks would support students in being more successful both academically and socially-emotionally. Military-connected youth would most likely rely on both civilian and military-connected peers for support in order to access the capital that each would have to offer (i.e. knowledge of local

communities or shared experiences from the military lifestyle).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The questions explored in this study build upon previous literature related to the ways adolescents navigate contexts across home and school. This process is informed by work in the areas related to Social Capital theory that investigates the role of social capital as a resource in promoting optimal development. Finally, the constructs of connectedness and autonomy and risk and resilience during adolescent identity development within a military cultural community are central to the research questions addressed in this study. These areas of research inform the current study by describing the strengths, assets, and resources that adolescents often utilize in overcoming the challenges of navigating multiple worlds.

Navigating Multiple Worlds

Phelan, Davidson, and Yu (1991) developed the Navigating Multiple Worlds model that informed Cooper's (2014) BMW model. Navigating Multiple Worlds theory helps describe and visualize how youth experience challenges in navigating cultural worlds throughout their daily lives. The theory emphasizes the importance and influence of peer groups and family conditions that are relevant to their school lives. Phelan and colleagues (Phelan et al., 1991) followed 54 students across four diverse high schools over two years. Students, teachers, and families were interviewed about the importance and influence of peer groups and family conditions that were relevant to their school lives. Researchers found that some students transitioned among worlds quite smoothly, but many struggled with transitions among peers, school, and family without the support of adults. Those who more successfully navigated their worlds

mainly accessed relationships and programs to help transition among cultural worlds smoothly. Navigating Multiple Worlds graphic model transcended demographic categories and proved especially useful in understanding diversity of experiences within ethnically homogeneous groups (Phelan et al., 1991).

Building from Phelan et al.'s earlier work (1991), the transitional spaces between worlds that individuals must inhabit throughout their development are the focus of Cooper's BMW model in investigating the challenges and the resources at play in bridging their worlds. In the BMW model, transition spaces, between home and school or between family and peers, are not always barriers but can also become assets. Furthermore, transition spaces may present barriers or assets to individuals at different times in their academic lives under a variety of circumstances.

Bridging Multiple Worlds research addresses how youth from diverse cultures overcome challenges on their academic pathways toward college and career. Cooper's (2014) work examines five dimensions: family demographics, identity pathways, math and language academic pathways, challenges, assets, and resources across their multiple worlds, and cultural research partnerships as a way to describe important aspects of what she calls the academic pipeline problem: various barriers and hardships associated with poverty, racism, and immigration often prevent students from staying on the academic pathway toward college.

Ogbu's (1989) research on group differences in school engagement shed light on variations in how Black youth maneuver community versus school identities. He wrote about various strategies, including students who could be considered

assimilators (students who adopted a ‘raceless’ persona, dropping their community ties), regulars (students who had the skills for successfully navigating between school and community), and encapsulated youth (students who rejected academic identities because it was considered to be ‘acting white’). Subsequent research has described the circumstances in which immigrant, low-income, and ethnic minority students are situated as influencing the development of two main paths, a sense of alienation or belonging (Cooper, 2014; Flores-González, 1999; Gibson, Bejinez, Hidalgo, & Rolón, 2004; Mehan, Villanueva, Hubbard, & Lintz, 1996). In response to the precept that students’ sociocultural circumstances create conditions where they either flourish or fail, the BMW model shows that despite hardships and despite lacking the social capital that earlier studies consider necessary, teens from low-income, ethnic minority, and immigrant backgrounds can successfully build academic pathways to college through bridging processes.

To study the math and language pathways of African American and Latino students, Cooper (2014) and a team of researchers partnered with highly selective, pre-college bridging programs led by the University of California, Berkeley. Student responses from in-depth interviews with open-ended questions showed that participants were eloquent and articulate in describing how they navigated obstacles and built their academic pathways to college. Students from the college-bridging program, self-identifying as African American and Latino, made up the 120 participants of the study. Almost all African American students’ parents were born in the United States. Most mothers and many fathers had some college education, so

participants for the most part reproduced their parents' academic pathways as predicted by the capital model, in which social class and cultural capital is reproduced across generations (Coleman 1988; Cooper, 2014). A majority of the Latino students' parents were born outside of the United States, primarily in Mexico. Most parents had little to no college education, so Latino youth surpassed their parents' academic pathways as predicted by the challenge model, in which hardships associated with poverty, racism, and immigration can actually motivate students to succeed. These students were asked to describe how they navigated challenges and resources across their multiple worlds in writing responses to questions about influential people and experiences on their future plans, and how those people or experiences have impacted their academic pathways. Students commonly noted the support of family, friends, outreach programs, school personnel or coaches, and even negative experiences having motivated them further to prove naysayers wrong. These findings helped explain how experiences and resources can be either obstacles or motivators for students navigating their worlds and academic pathways. The most successful students in the study ultimately accessed resources from more of their worlds in overcoming their challenges. During the bridging process, students identified their challenges and found strategies for overcoming them: namely, in utilizing their strengths and assets, as well as their relationships with brokers, school programs, counselors, or peers that can assist them in accessing resources for academic success. Military teens often share family characteristics or experiences with the participant populations of these studies. Specifically, enlisted families are more typically representative of ethnic minorities

and low socioeconomic status families. Most military-connected children experience high mobility rates, social-emotional challenges, and academic challenges, regardless of rank or socioeconomic status (Astor et al., 2012; De Pedro et al., 2013). There exists a gap in literature related to how military teens utilize supports and resources for overcoming the challenges associated with navigating their multiple worlds. This study seeks to fill that gap.

Social Capital

According to Social Capital theory, many aspects of both academic success and academic failure can be attributed to the match or mismatch between home and school culture, scripts, and habits. Research in Social Capital addresses the social and cultural assets that communities and families bring to individual students in shaping their educational experiences. Bourdieu and Passerson (1977) found that capital grants students access to opportunities and knowledge that ensure high-level group belonging, giving students access to highly valued capital in schools, which in turn gives students a better chance at future economic and academic success. Coleman (1988) described the three most influential forms of social capital as obligations and expectations, information channels, and social norms.

For military-connected adolescents obligations and expectations regarding behavior, grades, and future goals, will most likely be formed between the home, school, and the military cultural community. While social norms may be somewhat uniform across the settings of home, school, and military cultural community, there may also be subtle yet important differences to outsiders that have heterogeneous

cultural meanings, which need to be further examined. For example, teachers might assume that parents of military-connected students are disinterested from a perceived lack of parent-teacher contact, especially related to help seeking; however, this might be more reflective of the importance of problem solving through a chain of command or fear of perceived weakness in the military cultural community. Like Cooper's (2014) findings, Mehan's (2007) recent research has also shown how school policies, structures, and programs can develop social capital that will help grant access to college for traditionally underserved student populations. It is not only possible but it is imperative for school programs and personnel to continue working on building students' social capital with all groups, as it is a key ingredient to academic and future success.

School personnel are not the only ones who play a key role in helping students develop their social capital throughout their school lives. Based on a pilot study, my conversations with several mothers of military-connected adolescents led me to believe that parents play a large role in setting up ways for their children to make "the right" connections and friendships, social capital, to help them get through the transition of moving well before they even leave their current station placement. Mothers spoke of making phone calls, checking websites, and emailing coaches, choir teachers, or counselors ahead of time in order to gain information about the classes and extracurricular activities that match their children's interests. In doing so, mothers ensure that their children have more access to social and cultural capital upon arrival at a new school. This phenomenon matches Lareau's (1987) findings, which suggest

that parents and children from middle class families who displayed greater awareness of school culture and structures would more often advocate for higher academic placements and other opportunities offered in schools, starting as early, and probably even earlier than, elementary school. Those who have higher access to and a better understanding of cultural capital valued in schools more successfully negotiate the school context. Especially for military-connected adolescents, parental capital is integral in helping students transition successfully both socially and academically.

Peer Social Networks

Middle school peer social networks are especially important because friends exchange cultural knowledge and information that heavily influence future academic outcomes (Ito, 2010). Early adolescence is often an emotionally volatile time, but this developmental stage is also a powerful time in children's lives because they are immersed in a peer-based learning environment where youth are constructing and collecting capital together, in the forms of academic knowledge, social norms, especially related to school, and cultural capital from those around them. Ito's (2010) work on adolescent social networks shows that most teens end up creating friendships with peers who share their interests and values, which often means similar ethnicity and socioeconomic status. What might this mean for the military-connected adolescent? If Ito's (2010) work is a predictive model for military-connected adolescents, it could be that students who have moved often in middle school and understand the pressures, strengths, and hardships of military lifestyle, can relate better to others in like situations, and will find the most effect support networks in

other military-connected students. On the contrary, it may be that the capital necessary for success in a new setting after a recent move would motivate students to seek friendship with those who are civilian locals, so that they can access local social, cultural, and academic capital.

Adolescent Social Networks

Social Network Analysis (SNA) studies with adolescents have been mostly focused on risk behaviors and public health outcomes (e.g. Ennett, Bauman, Hussong, Faris, Foshee, Cai, & DuRant, 2006; Valente, Fujimoto, Chou, and Spruijt-Metz, 2009). For example, adolescents with friends who engage in high-risk behaviors, like smoking, substance abuse, and early sexual activity, are also more likely to engage in the same high-risk behaviors (Ennett, et al., 2006). These studies are useful in providing data on how adolescents peer social networks are associated with specific outcomes that have future implications, such as substance abuse and body-mass. It is unknown whether military connected adolescents will also have peer social networks that reflect their own military-connected status. In a similar pattern to those that been documented around other areas such as substance abuse, social networks of adolescents have even been known to be homogenous in terms of body-mass index.

In a longitudinal study aimed at analyzing the social context of adolescent substance abuse, researchers surveyed 5,000 seventh and eighth graders every six months (Ennett et al., 2006). Students were asked about how many times they had used tobacco, alcohol, or marijuana in the past three months. Students also reported friendship networks in a survey administered at the start of the study. Researchers

investigated ties, dyads (reciprocated ties), and network density as a way to compare adolescent friendship networks and risk behaviors at 26 schools. As predicted by the literature on adolescent friendship networks, having substance users in an individual's network was strongly correlated with individual use. Ennett et al.'s (2006) study shows that social embeddedness variables from Social Network Analysis predict health and behavioral outcomes for adolescents.

Valente and colleagues (2009) conducted a study on adolescent social networks and obesity. The study investigated the friendship choices and Body Mass Indexes (BMI's) of about 600 eleven to fifteen-year-old adolescents at four schools in Los Angeles. Most of the study's participants were female (64%). Random-effects logistic regression models showed that students who were classified as overweight were two times as likely to have friends that were also overweight. After structural network effects were controlled for, this pattern maintained; adolescent friendships strongly represented their similar weight statuses. This study also found a weak association between weight and social position, which showed that girls were slightly more likely to be marginalized (naming more friends but being named less frequently as a friend by peers in the social network). In Valente et al.'s (2009) study, adolescents were more likely to have friends with similar physical traits. Perhaps adolescents are also more likely to choose friends who share other characteristics, like belonging to the military community. This study will further investigate the role of adolescent social networks in academic outcomes for military-connected youth; are they more likely to choose friends who are more like them in terms of military-

connectedness, or are they more likely to choose friends who are more like them in other ways and who can act as connectors for them after having recently moved to a new civilian school community.

The literature on adolescent social networks seems to imply that many adolescents affiliate with homogenous peer groups in terms of individual behavior, health outcomes, and even academic aspirations. It is not clear whether network affiliations exist long-term and when they begin to solidify (Valente et al., 2009). Yet, the findings from the field show strong implications that adolescent peer social networks are highly important for understanding individual and group adolescent outcomes. Researchers have yet to formally investigate military-connected youth social networks. The current study seeks to investigate the heterogeneity of the individual peer (ego) network, as well as patterns for military-connected individuals within the larger school network.

Adolescent Identity Development

Adolescence can be a tumultuous stage in an individual's life. Teens go through many physical, social and emotional, and cognitive changes during this developmental stage as they begin to develop their adult individual identities. Even a child's sense of morality becomes less black-and-white and more focused on the perceptions of others and her perceived role obligations (Hazen, Schlozman, & Beresin, 2008). The BMW perspective conceptualizes adolescent identity development in terms of personal exploration and a sense of belonging and commitment to certain social groups and communities (Cooper, 2014). Developing

membership in social groups is both a personal and collective process and may include ideas and beliefs related to political ideology, religious beliefs, and ideas about gender roles, sexuality, future career goals, and educational expectations.

Erikson's (1968) work on adolescent identity development argues that the individual develops a sense of self as she adapts to changing social circumstances and successfully resolves social crises. Throughout progressive psychosocial stages in life, the individual must constantly balance conflict between her autonomous needs and those of larger society. Middle school students often grapple with industry versus inferiority and ego identity versus role confusion. Children at this stage are trying to develop the skills they feel society needs from them and, therefore, begin to feel more industrious; school is an especially important place for individuals to learn these skills and develop a sense of competence. The BMW model builds on Erikson's (1968) work by emphasizing how individual histories, families, cultural communities, such as the military community, and larger societal and institutional contexts shape identity development.

Adolescents often experience role confusion and identity crises as they experiment with different lifestyles regarding school, career goals, peer groups, etc. Erikson (1968) also argues that in this stage children become more independent from families and feel the urge to fit into roles promoting future societal expectations, like college and careers, distancing themselves from parental relationships; however, more recent research has shown that forming a strong sense of belonging to family and cultural communities can actually support individual autonomy (Hazen et al., 2008;

McElhaney, Allen, Stephenson, & Hare, 2009) and in fact that attachment relationships and autonomy processes themselves are linked, not necessarily independent as previously considered. Researchers have found that during adolescence, it is most likely that the combination of autonomy and family- or community-relatedness that promotes optimal outcomes, including resilience, independent functioning, academic achievement, etc. (McElhaney et al., 2009).

Resilience is of special importance to military communities due to the constant state of transition and stress a military lifestyle can bring with its high mobility and deployment rates (Astor et al., 2012). Resilience is not a static quality but one that is learned over a lifespan and is fostered through supportive relationships and interactions within larger support networks; resilience can also be thought of in terms of family resilience and community resilience, which refers to the ability of social groups to overcome hardship for greater familial or community success (Romero-Marín & García Vazquez, 2012).

During early adolescents' transitions toward adulthood, peer groups also become increasingly important as a source of resilience, confidence, and sense of belonging (Hazen et al., 2008). Noam (1999) theorizes that early adolescents are particularly focused on group cohesion, rather than individual identity development, as with older teens. Psychology of Belonging theory (Noam, 1999) states that middle school children place high priority on popularity, friendships, and adhering to group norms. Peers play a particularly influential role in adolescent and future outcomes, especially during early adolescence (Ito, 2010), which is why peer social networks in

early adolescence are a critical focus of this study. In addition to peer and parental influence, nonparental adults (coaches, teachers, friends' parents, etc.) also serve as influential role models during adolescence (Hazen et al., 2008), which is why parents and non-parental adults in adolescent communities play a critical role in this study. Adolescence is a critical time for identity development, heavily influenced by family, peers, non-parental adults, and larger societal institutions, including school and cultural communities of practice, like the military cultural community.

Defining Culture

Anthropology and other social sciences traditionally define culture as shared practices and values transmitted through generations, often emphasis placed on nation-states or ethnic groups. However, more recent scholarship challenges such traditional definitions of culture as homogeneous and static groupings because of global shifts in economies, political systems, mass immigration movements, and the rise of multicultural societies (Cooper & Denner, 1998). Rogoff (2003) defines culture as a group of people with shared practices. This is a useful definition when thinking about military culture, often made up of ethnically, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse population. Development occurs while individuals enact their lives within multiple systems and communities.

Rather than focusing on a particular ethnic group, this study applies Rogoff's (2003) definition of culture as a shared set of practices and values communicated from one generation to the next through communities of practice. One particular problem that has come with researching culture as ethnic groups, especially when the norm

referenced is of the dominant ethnic group, is that the contrast model frequently perpetuates minority-group deficit models (Cooper & Denner 1998). Rather than lead to repeat research models, the educational disparity among groups, ethnic or communities of practice, can stimulate newer ways of thinking about culture and new methods for studying how disparate educational outcomes became. As further discussed below, the well-researched educational disparities for military-connected students have led me to think not about what is lacking or challenging for this group, but the strengths of how particularly successful individuals access resources and succeed despite great challenges. These students access resources from their cultural communities and schools in ways that may help us shed light on how to assist more military-connected students to do the same. This process takes place within different, overlapping environmental contexts.

Cultural and social practices have a variety of and different cultural meanings depending on environmental or social contexts, and familial, community, and societal goals (Rogoff 1990, 1991; Shweder 1996; Tharp & Gallimore 1988; Weisner 2002). Weisner (2002) adds that in complex ecologies daily routines as units of analysis help describe universals and variations in developmental outcomes in shedding light on cultural goals and intentions; daily routines are also responsive to ethnographic fieldwork, such as interviews and close observation (Weisner, 2002). Communities create for development through cultural pathways, acceptable, normative actions called scripts within local contexts (Weisner, 2002). Gutiérrez & Rogoff (2009) use the term repertoires of practice to describe daily routines, scripts, and other cultural

practices. Furthermore, Rogoff (2003) defines culture as constructed by shared repertoires of practice, not simply by ethnicity or other static demographic characteristics. Other descriptors, like ethnicity and socioeconomic status might be important to consider, but should not be sole defining characteristics of categorizing and/or contrasting participant groups. Using repertoires of practice to define cultural communities may help researchers to see patterns across and within traditionally defined groups, shedding light on both universals and variations in daily routines. Knowing more about the daily routines of adolescents in their most proximal developmental processes (school and home) can help researchers and educators determine strategies for promoting positive developmental outcomes, especially for those traditionally considered underserved or understudied. In this study, the researcher considers military-connected families to be a cultural community of practice, one with specific scripts, values, and routines that have specific goals and influence development and academic outcomes. Students must constantly navigate between the military and civilian, home and school, cultural communities of practice. This study hopes to shed light on how students navigate and bridge these worlds.

Military culture. This study applies Rogoff's (2003) definition of culture as a cultural community with shared practices in order to investigate universals and variations in their civilian school experiences. A group as large and diverse as the military is a complex ecological context with much variety in socio-economic status, ethnicity, and immigration background. Rank status sub communities (officer and enlisted) in the military are often demarcated by education levels and socioeconomic

status. However, the military community also embodies a sense of shared values, practices, and experiences. Exum, Coll, and Weiss (2010) describe the military community as one with a separate lifestyle from that of the civilian community: a community with its own cultural values that include such principles as codes of conduct, service, and emotional restraint. Military-connected families often share unique experiences, such as living abroad, moving often, and enduring deployment cycles and offshore duties (the absence of a loved one). A unique set of values, lifestyles, and community practices warrant defining a concept of military culture. The Navy is the dominant branch of service in the research context. Although there may be certain negative outcomes associated with the experiences children go through as a result of parental service, some look to the military cultural community as having positively influenced their children, helping them to become individuals of strong character, resilient and helping them to overcome challenges through the strength of community.

The concept of the military cultural community is central to the core questions addressed in this study. The context for this study is specifically located in a Naval community. Naval families have been known to support and assist one another throughout their numerous moves and deployments. The military cultural community is a community that openly attempts to facilitate strong connection to others in the Navy. Navy parents, spouses, children, and other family or community members will often help other military cultural community members get connected with others who can help them with specific needs, especially related to moving in and out of

geographic and school communities around the world.

Navy families informally carry the rank of the Service member and must follow the accompanying codes of conduct. Conduct and chain of command are heavily emphasized qualities within Navy culture, often exerting strong pressure to conform. Within the military, problems are addressed through the chain of command, which may lead to avoidance for seeking help. Traditionally, military culture has seen mental illness as a weakness (Astor et al., 2012) and cause for discharge as being considered unfit for duty. This may impact help seeking behavior for both adults and children, as values, scripts, and practices are observed by and passed down to children. Behavior and academic problems may also be perceived signs of weakness, and, therefore, some military families may not want to draw attention to their family or Service member out of protection. These cultural practices and values often impact the extent to which children and adults utilize services offered by the school, as well as the relationship between families and school personnel.

Navy and Marines also tend to leave on prolonged deployments in comparison with other service branches. Due to prolonged deployments, the Navy has a marked priority for taking care of one another (Astor et al., 2012). Families surrounding the family of the deployed regularly look out for each other's families. Military-connected families go through common experiences that develop a rich sense of community and culture: ceremony, deployment, mobility, and community support. Supportive environments, like the military cultural community, are known protective factors; academic outcomes for military-connected children significantly improve when

children have rich social support networks (O'Brien, 2007).

Conclusion

Researchers have called for more descriptive, situated research to accurately represent the educational needs and circumstances of military-connected children in civilian public schools (Esqueda, Astor, & De Pedro, 2012). Educators and policy makers need greater awareness of the strengths and challenges of military children and best practices in supporting military children, so that district and school organizational efforts can better address their needs. Although educators and researchers have studied school reform efforts across the nation for decades, school reform efforts supporting military children have not been studied (Esqueda et al., 2012). This study answers the call for research on military-connected children in civilian public schools. Not only are the military students a substantially understudied group, but also specific context of the study has been largely ignored by recent research efforts in the region. Knowing more about the formal organizational and more organic, informal community forms of support for military-connected children and families will help educators identify the strengths and weakness of civilian schools/communities. Military-connected students face significant resiliency and academic challenges. Even so, many become beacons of success and pride for their community, while some may fall into a more deleterious cycle. Students and families of the military make sacrifices and are considered to serve our country with their parent(s); it is the ethical duty of educators to offer them the support they need to be as successful as their civilian peers.

Chapter 3: Methods

Ensuring quality educational opportunities for all military children affected by mobility, family separation, and transition can be difficult. Researchers need to know more about what supports military-connected adolescents want and need to feel safe, secure, and successful. This study aimed to highlight their voices by gaining adolescent perspectives on the assets and resources they utilize to overcome the challenges of navigating their military and civilian worlds.

This study employed an integrated methods design to investigate how adolescents navigate their multiple worlds of home, school, and military within the context of a public civilian middle school. The term integrated methods, used by Yoshikawa, Weisner, Kalil, and Way (2008), refers to a dynamic process of mixing qualitative and quantitative methods throughout the inquiry process. Integrating methods allowed for improved data collection design to best shed light on the cultural phenomenon being investigated in a way that made sense to participants. Each collection method informed adjustments made to the next set of data collection methods. Ongoing analysis of qualitative and quantitative data also allowed for this level of design match for meeting participant points of view. Employing diverse data collection and analysis strategies also helped to triangulate data collected from both qualitative and quantitative methods (Green, Camilli, & Elmore, 2012; Maxwell, 2012; Mertens, 2014). Data from all parts of the study were further analyzed in isolation and across collection phases. Using integrated methods throughout the

different phases of this study led to richer data and analysis than that of the use of subsequent methods following a completed portion of that study.

An integrated methods design paradigm was particularly useful in researching cultural communities because it allowed for closer investigation into participant worldviews, rather than having solely relied on the outsider's conclusions (Ponterotto, Mathew, & Raughley, 2013). Quantitative and qualitative methodologies have enriched the design, collection, and analysis of studies relevant to human development (Yoshikawa et al., 2008). Together, survey data and qualitative data collected during participant interviews described the context and conditions of the current study more completely, both richly and precisely, which contributed to the study's credibility and expansive audience (Yoshikawa, Weisner, Kalil, & Way, 2008). The focus on participant voice helped to describe both the behaviors and the cultural meaning and intentions of the behaviors related to navigating their cultural worlds, blending participant and researcher knowledge. Moreover, integrating qualitative and quantitative methods featured the often unheard voices of adolescents, especially for a vulnerable population like military-connected youth. The methods employed in this study were meant to build knowledge with participants rather than about them (Gomez, 2014). The research goal was to meet the needs of the participants by including children, parents, and staff members in the knowledge building process. Participants reported demographic characteristics and experiential knowledge in surveys, which informed recruitment processes for focus groups. Prior to implementing focus groups, military parents and school staff were interviewed to

inform focus group protocols, questions, activities, and groupings so that participants could voice those issues that are most relevant and important to them and their lives.

Building off extant quantitative research on military-connected youth, this study integrated qualitative investigation through interviews and focus groups to respond to a gap in the literature representing the participant voice (Esqueda et al., 2012). Pairing a quantitative approach, social network analysis and inferential statistics, with qualitative analysis supported and expanded on findings from qualitative measures by offering more precision in describing outcomes and findings. Likewise, qualitative data from participant perspectives and personal experiences shed light on the more nuanced details of phenomena and patterns found by quantitative analysis.

Quantitative survey data identified focus group participants based on position in the full peer network and other individual and family characteristics. Survey data also informed adjustments to interview questions that helped to answer emergent questions regarding quantitative data. Information gathered from interviews paired with survey data informed the design and participant grouping for focus groups. Qualitative data (interview and focus group transcripts) and quantitative data from artifacts (ego network maps) gathered during focus groups were analyzed in a variety of ways: comparing code frequencies, GPA, and individual characteristics with social network position and heterogeneity indexes. Integrating quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis procedures allowed for rich description of both the

personal and common developmental pathways that exist for military-connected adolescents in civilian schools.

Research Questions

The overarching goal of this study was to investigate how military-connected adolescents navigate their multiple worlds in civilian public schools. Specifically, the following research questions will be addressed:

1. What do the peer social networks look like of adolescents attending a middle school in a military-dense region? How do they differ between civilian and military-connected adolescents?
2. What are military connected adolescents' the perceived challenges and resources among military-connected adolescents as they navigate their multiple worlds of home, school, and military communities? How do they access resources and utilize assets to overcome their challenges?
3. How do the experiences of navigating the multiple worlds of home, school, and military communities vary according adolescent and family characteristics?
Adolescent and family characteristics include student achievement, gender, family socioeconomic status, military rank, family structure, etc.
4. To what degree does the heterogeneity of the individual peer (ego) network impact individual experiences navigating the multiple worlds of home, school, and military communities and does this vary by adolescent or family demographic characteristics?

Table 1 links each research question with one or more data collection methods. Interviews with school staff provided insider knowledge regarding school experiences

with military-connected youth. These adult interviews also informed adjustments made to survey and focus group protocols so that data collection methods would address research questions in a way that made sense to participants. The survey given to eighth-grade participants yielded data for creating a full network graph and analysis of the social network at a military-dense civilian public school. During focus groups, eighth-grade military-connected participants described available resources for military-connected adolescents and how they overcame perceived challenges. All data collection points provided data for analyzing to what extent outcomes differed for those belonging to a particular sub community (gender, age, rank, socioeconomic status, ethnicity). The survey provided demographic data, which was compared with code frequencies representing participant experiences. A later survey asked participants to self-report estimated GPA ranges for semesters 1 and 2.

Table 1. Data Collection Procedures for Each Research Question

Research Question	Data Source		
	<i>Adolescent Survey</i>	<i>Adolescent Focus Groups</i>	<i>Adult Interviews</i>
1. What do the peer social networks look like of adolescents attending a middle school in a military-dense region? How do they differ between civilian and military-connected adolescents?	X		
2. What are the perceived challenges for military-connected adolescents and the resources available to them? How do they access resources to overcome their challenges?	X	X	X
3. To what extent do outcomes differ for those belonging to a particular sub community (gender, age, rank, socioeconomic status, ethnicity)?	X	X	X
4. To what degree does the heterogeneity of the individual peer (ego) network impact individual experiences navigating the multiple worlds of home, school, and military communities and does this vary by adolescent or family demographic characteristics?	X	X	X

Subsequent sections of this chapter further outline the study's integrated methods approach, research questions and design, data collection strategies, reduction and analysis procedures, and limitations.

Context

Bay View Middle School was situated in a beach community in southern California. The small district, about 3,000 enrolled students, served a large population of active-duty and retired military-connected (mostly Navy) families, the largest

portion active duty. Permanent residents in the community tended to be affluent. Many officer-ranking families lived among residents in the civilian community, while most enlisted families lived in on base housing nearby. Based on federal survey cards (completed annually) military-connected students made up 36% of those enrolled in the district. One of the two elementary schools in the district served military-connected children making up 79% of the total student body, due to its proximity to enlisted naval housing.

According to the School Profile and School Accountability Report Card (SARC), Bay View Middle School had an academic performance index (API) score of 923, while the state average API for middle school was 792 and the county average was 816 (2013). A majority of the school's students (86%) scored proficient or advanced in English/Language Arts (reading and writing) on the California state standardized test (STAR), while the state average at middle schools was fifty-nine percent. The middle school at which the study took place enrolled approximately 795 students, out of whom 530 were white, 122 were Hispanic or Latino, ninety-four were students with Disabilities, thirty-four were socioeconomically disadvantaged, twenty-six were English Language Learners, twenty were Black or African American, eighteen were Asian, sixteen were Filipino, nine were two or more races, four were Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and three were American Indian or Alaskan Native (California Department of Education Analysis, Measurement, and Accountability Reporting Division, 2013). According to Federal Survey Card data, the

military population at the school site was a considerable population, making up about thirty two percent of the general school population.

Many support programs already existed for military-connected adolescents at Bay View Middle School. School and district leadership created an established school culture that celebrated the community's military connection and promoted awareness among staff and students about the unique experiences of military-connected students. Bay View Middle School offered a variety of supports for military-connected adolescents. Student2Student, a club that met on campus during lunch, focused on connecting military students at the middle school, but also engaged club members in activities to support other military-connected kids in the district and Service members in the larger community. Their events included mentoring younger middle or elementary school students, leading the school community in writing cards for deployed Service members during the holiday season, and creating welcome committees for new students. The History Channel and Time Warner Cable sponsored the national program Take a Vet to School Day, an all-school celebration and one of Bay View's largest annual celebrations of military culture. Staff and families invited veterans to speak in classrooms and recognized the military visitors with an appreciation breakfast and choir performance. The day ended with skydivers and patriotic celebrations on the field. Additionally, the school's broadcast team dedicated several news packages to sharing the stories of and celebrating children of active duty Servicemen and Servicewomen during April, the Month of the Military Child. Other extracurricular activities also provided more avenues for military-connected

adolescents to meet and make friends in the civilian community. This military-dense school was a particularly welcoming and supportive environment.

As part of a federal grant, the school has received services for a program that started in 2011 to address active duty military dependents' learning and social-emotional needs. During the time of the study, the Department of Defense provided professional licensed consulting staff at the school site to provide non-medical counseling services to Service members and their families, children, and staff, due to the unique challenges faced by military families, particularly because the nation was in a time of war. The Military Family Life Counselor (MFLC) referred families to Navy services, administered one-on-one counseling, and facilitated student clubs, small groups, and monthly parent meetings (Military Spouses Meetings) to support military-connected families at the school site. Military Spouses Meetings met to discuss specific topics each month, such as raising resilient children. For three years prior to the study, the school had also received grants from the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) that paid for academic resources and technology for students who did not have regular access, usually due to financial needs or transition periods associated with moving for military-connected families. Additionally, the Navy Region Southwest Naval Base School Liaison Officer (SLO) addressed educational issues that affected military children in Navy Region Southwest by offering information, local resources, and support for parents. The school website also provided external links to several military and Navy support websites so that families could access resources online.

Participants

Participants included eighth-grade adolescents (ages 13-15 years) enrolled at Bay View Middle School, and a subset of parents and school personnel.

The survey sample was representative of school and district. 79% of total enrolled eighth-graders took the survey ($N = 205$). Table 2 shows the percent participants self-identified by race based on survey self-reported data. When collapsing groups, such as Latino with white and Latino, as well as Asian and white with Asian, the eighth-grade whole network survey participants closely resemble the whole school demographic makeup. The survey sample was also representative of district percentages for gender, race, and military-connected makeup; however, enlisted military-connected adolescents reported much more diversity than the school's and community's general population.

Table 2. Participant Self-Identified Race

Race	% (n)
White	58.54% (120)
Latina/o	13.17% (17)
Latino and White	5.85% (12)
Asian	5.37% (11)
Asian and White	4.88% (10)
Native American and White	3.90% (8)
Decline to State	2.93% (6)
African American	1.95% (4)
2 or more	1.46% (3)
Native American	0.98% (2)
Not Sure	0.49% (1)
Pacific Islander and White	0.49% (1)
Pacific Islander	0% (0)
Total	100% (205)

$N = 205$

Nearly half of the eighth-graders surveyed ($N = 205$) reported as military-connected, and nearly half of those who reported as military-connected identified as either enlisted or officer. Those who took the survey and reported military status were later invited to participate in focus groups. All military-connected adolescents were invited to participate in focus groups. A convenient sample of focus group participants ($n = 17$) were chosen based on parent consent and adolescent assent. Table 3 shows that while officer group participants were mostly white, enlisted focus group participants represented a much more diverse population than that of the officer group.

Table 3. Self-reported Race Enlisted Focus Group

Race	Enlisted % (n)	Officer % (n)
White	27% (3)	80% (5)
Asian and white	18% (2)	
Native American and white	9% (1)	20% (1)
Native American	9% (1)	
African American	9% (1)	
Latino	9% (1)	
Latino and white	9% (1)	
No response	9% (1)	
Total	100% (11)	100% (6)

n = 17

The enlisted group represents demographics more often associated with deficit models concerning underserved youth in America’s public school system: socioeconomically disadvantaged and racial or ethnic minorities. Considering these participants are already at risk for negative outcomes from hardships related to military lifestyle (high mobility rates, deployment related stress, secondary post-traumatic stress, etc.), enlisted military-connect youth may be considered double at risk. However, participants in this study have shown that given the network of resources and social capital offered by the military community, along with the individual assets gained from their experiences, it is possible to “beat the odds” and to be successful in school. Even so, the findings of this study based on data analysis suggest that there are important differences among enlisted and officer groups in their

bridging experiences, which means that they may benefit from a variety of different program interventions.

Adult Participants. Six school personnel were interviewed, representing a variety of roles in the civilian school: teacher, instructional assistant, Clinical Licensed (State of California) Psychologist/Marriage and Family Therapist, principal, assistant principal, and guidance counselor.

Recruitment of adult participants. Adult participants, colleagues, and parent participants responded to an email requesting participation in the study based on their position and personal experiences with the Navy.

Adolescents. The entire eighth grade population of enrolled students at Bay View Middle School ($N = 260$ at the time of recruitment) was recruited to participate in the complete eighth-grade social network survey. Of those contacted, approximately 79% ($N = 205$) of the entire eighth-grade population gave consent and participated in the survey. A subset of military-connected adolescents ($n = 17$) was recruited to participate in focus groups. All survey respondents who identified as military-connected were recruited to participate in focus groups. Those with parent consent were invited to one of two focus groups based on rank.

Recruitment of adolescent participants. To recruit the majority of the eighth-grade student body to participate in the large census survey, parent consent forms were sent home to all eighth-grade students and offered a piece of candy for returning the consent form signed, regardless of whether or not parents gave consent. Of the 260 total eighth-grade students recruited 211 gained parental consent. Nearly all those with

parental consent ($N = 205$) took the survey, which captured full network data and basic demographic data.

In the confidential online census type survey participants opted-in and gave assent before taking the survey. The survey included a set of questions for prefiltering military-connected adolescents for focus groups. This set of survey questions included demographic information: parental rank, age, ethnicity, gender, length of time spent living in the community, number of moves, and number of parental deployments experienced.

Measures and Procedures

Individual semi-structured interviews. School personnel ($n = 7$) were interviewed before the study: 1 teachers, 1 instructional assistant, 2 administrators, and 3 counselors about their experiences in working with military-connected adolescents and their perceptions about the typical strengths and challenges facing them (see Appendix A). Interviews were audio recorded for later data reduction and analysis, transcribing using InqScribe (Inquirium, version 2.2) transcription software. Due to the vulnerability of military spouses and employees, the adult interviews were held privately, individually. As military employees, some participants had special risk of impacting military careers and personal standing in the community.

Interview procedures. During interviews, school personnel were assured of anonymity, safety, and research goals for improving the experiences of their children in the civilian public school setting. Part of the interview utilized episodic interviewing (Weiss, 1994), which granted access to events and phenomenon not

otherwise seen: participants were asked to describe specific events (a time when they helped a military-connected adolescent, for example). Weiss (1994) considers episodic interviewing as the most useful tool for understanding a phenomenon from participant perspectives. Although, more generalized responses were also useful in eliciting generalized theories about what seemed to be typical of, or essential to understanding the phenomena under study. Elicitation of specific events and actions also helped to better describe phenomenon in specific sociohistorical and cultural contexts, rather than getting to generalizations about the studied phenomena (Maxwell, 2013).

Interviews with all participants were audio recorded for later data reduction and analysis. Audio files were loosely transcribed, which were then coded to develop a priori codes for later focus group transcript analysis. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes. Some changes were made to focus group protocols based on suggestions from adults.

Surveys. Surveys captured quantitative demographic data and peer social network information (see Appendix B) of all middle school participants. Survey data investigated social network patterns among military and civilian participants. The confidential survey captured individual data using participant research ID numbers so that respondent names were undetectable. Capturing full network data meant collecting data about a collection of ties that existed among an entire network, as many enrolled students as possible at a particular school. Survey responses represented the person-to-person connections in matrices called adjacency matrices, which indicated whether two people were connected (Daly, 2010).

Survey administration. Those with parental consent received an email with an online link to take the 20-minute electronic confidential survey that they completed during unstructured class time or their own private setting according to their preferences. Results from the survey prompted the research to make changes to focus group protocols. For example, survey participants responded that they would overwhelmingly go to friends and family for school advice more often than school adults and teachers. This same questions was added to focus group protocols in the hopes of gaining more qualitative data regarding this trend. Military-connected participants responded having military-civilian integrated friendship networks, which prompted the addition of questions to focus group protocols about how participants met their friends and if military-connected status was important.

Semi-structured focus groups. Semi-structured focus group protocols (see Appendix C) provided a forum for adolescents to engage in BMW activities, in which they discussed their challenges and resources in navigating their military and civilian worlds and mapped resources across their worlds (artifact). Two focus groups were conducted: officer military-connected adolescents and enlisted military-connected adolescents. Focus groups were audio and video recorded for later data reduction and analysis. The first focus group met after school in a meeting room on campus. The second group met for focus groups in a meeting room at the school during school hours (lunch time) in order to accommodate enlisted participants, many of whom rode the bus to and from school. Many military-connected adolescents mentioned that they took the bus to and from military housing, which limited their availability after school.

Many participants also noted having various extracurricular commitments scheduled after school. Focus groups were scheduled to disrupt participants' school routines as little as possible. Rev.com Transcribing Services transcribed the focus group audio and video files. Transcripts were then glossed with audio and video files and cleaned for accuracy. Participant work resulting from Bridging Multiple Worlds (BMW) (Cooper, 2014) activities was collected as artifacts and analyzed for heterogeneity indexes.

Semi-structured focus group procedures. Following the Bridging Multiple Worlds (BMW) model (Cooper, 2014), forty-five-minute-long focus groups were conducted with a subset of middle school participants who took part in the initial eighth-grade full network survey. Participants completed Bridging Multiple Worlds activities to further explore the constructs of brokers and gatekeepers, bridging processes, and the perceived strengths and challenges associated with the circumstances of belonging to a military cultural community. Through these activities, participants described their challenges and resources across worlds and their *instrumental scripts* (descriptions of people who helped them with math, who helped them with stress from home, or who encouraged them at school). Participants also described parental education and basic family structure demographics to gather information on diverse family forms. The protocol started with structured questions and responses that led to forums that were more open-ended. Because structure influences how participants respond (Mertens, 2014), focus group questions were mostly open-ended; a less-structured format allowed for flexibility in what participants

wanted to discuss and what was important to them, which led to a rich understanding of themes and constructs. Participants wrote ideas and individual responses before discussing with the wider group. Having participants respond confidentially and individually first also aided with comfort level and helped to prompt participant talk in the focus group setting.

Data Analysis

Both the literature and grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) informed data analysis strategies for identifying emergent themes in unpacking the bridging processes of military-connected adolescents.

Qualitative Analysis

Adult interviews. Audio-recorded files were indexed and coded for themes related to the research questions: strengths and challenges in navigating multiple worlds and utilizing resources and assets in overcoming those challenges. A priori codes based on the literature in combination with a grounded theory approach informed the development of a priori codes for focus group transcript analysis.

Focus groups. Artifacts (participant work from focus groups and BMW activities) were analyzed and compared among participants. Field notes from focus groups were indexed and coded with verbatim audio and video transcripts for themes at multiple pass-throughs. A priori codes (based on the literature and adult interviews) were applied, along with emergent codes for data reduction. Then, data chunks and themes were further analyzed regarding each research question. Throughout each analysis stage, Maxwell's (2012) multi-step approach to the reduction and analysis

process (reading, indexing, and writing memos to record analytic thinking) was employed.

Quantitative Analysis

Peer social network analysis. First, survey data was cleaned and reduced. All students enrolled at the school were paired with a research ID number. Each survey participant reported up to ten close friends for each open-ended questionnaire item. The survey results were then downloaded from Qualtrics and transposed to create an adjacency matrix, maintaining consistent interpretations of the ties in a network (Borgatti, Everett, & Johnson, 2013). Due to the unintended asymmetry of open-ended network questionnaires, the matrix needed to be symmetrized so that all ties were reciprocated; when one person of a pair mentioned the other, there was a match. Random selections of pairs were double checked with original survey data for accuracy. Next, the matrix was uploaded into UCINET's NetDaw and UCINET (Borgatti, Everett and Freeman, 2002). The program drew a network graph. Attribute data (i.e. gender, self-reported race, military or civilian status, and rank) was loaded and matched into the program. UCINET (Borgatti, Everett and Freeman, 2002) was used to analyze density, and centralization of the full peer network. In these programs, individual nodes were highlighted and colored to represent demographic (attribute) data in looking for patterns among friendship groups. These patterns were analyzed to understand the major processes and functions of information exchange and social relationships in the full network (Moolenaar, et al., 2012).

The exchange of capital (knowledge and resources) in any social network depends on structures and the patterns of social ties within the network (Daly, 2010). One such pattern of social ties is reciprocity. Reciprocity is defined as the degree that two actors (individuals) reciprocate one another's tie. For example, two friends may report high frequency in interactions, noting strong reciprocity. One person may share information with another who does not reciprocate to the same degree. High degrees of reciprocity among actors in a network typically foster the information sharing process, increasing individual and network capital. Measuring patterns of reciprocity helped to identify clusters, or subgroups, within the larger network. According to Social Network theory, clusters are important for analysis because of their smaller, more intimate nature. Individuals within these clusters may share information more efficiently, but can only be utilized by the rest of the network if they are connected to each other (Daly, 2010). This study sought to identify whether clusters were formed around military-connected adolescents or if they blended into the network more seamlessly.

This study also investigated other commonly studied network characteristics: density and centralization. Density is the number of ties that exist in a network compared to the maximum possible ties (Moolenaar, et al., 2012). Centralization is the amount to which several relationships within a single network is centered on one or a few central actors; other actors in the same network might have few relationships. Extremely highly centralized networks mean that one or a few actors control the flow of knowledge and resources in a network (Moolenaar, et al., 2012).

Descriptive analyses. Descriptive statistics, including central tendency measures (mean, median, mode) and frequency counts (n and valid percentage), explored typicality and variance (standard deviation) of participants, their backgrounds, and other information based on survey responses: GPAs, mobility rates, deployment rates, patterns in who helps participants overcome specific types of challenges, etc. Focus group and adult interviews were coded for perceived challenges and resources for military-connected youth, using Dedoose (version 5.0.11) for code frequency, code co-occurrence, code presence or absence, and code clouds.

Inferential statistics. Differences among demographic categories in bridging process experiences were investigated using a mixed methods analytical approach. Patterns, code frequency application, and GPAs were compared among demographic groups, using variety of multivariate statistics including t-tests, ANOVAs, and Pearson's product moment correlations along with qualitative analyses. IBM SPSS (Version 22) was used to conduct quantitative analyses and Dedoose (version 5.0.11) was used for qualitative and mixed methods analyses to investigate patterns of code frequency application by participant demographics: code frequency, code co-occurrences, code presence/absence, and code clouds.

Survey analysis. These quantitative surveys enabled the collection of demographic data for later statistical analysis, investigating relationships and correlation tables among subgroups, such as military rank (socioeconomic status), mobility rates, gender, etc. with academic outcomes gathered from grade reports.

After analyzing qualitative data, there is an opportunity for investigating correlation tables and statistical relationships among various patterns from coded transcripts, demographic data (subgroups), and academic outcomes. Combining quantitative and qualitative data further supported data generated during focus groups and interviews, and it deepened understandings of the outcomes related to bridging processes.

Artifact analysis of ego networks. Artifacts from focus group activities were quantified and compared. Figure 2 shows a sample of the ego network mapping activity that participants filled out. The heterogeneity (Blau's index) of each friendship ego network was analyzed and compared among focus group participants, as well as patterns by family and individual characteristics.

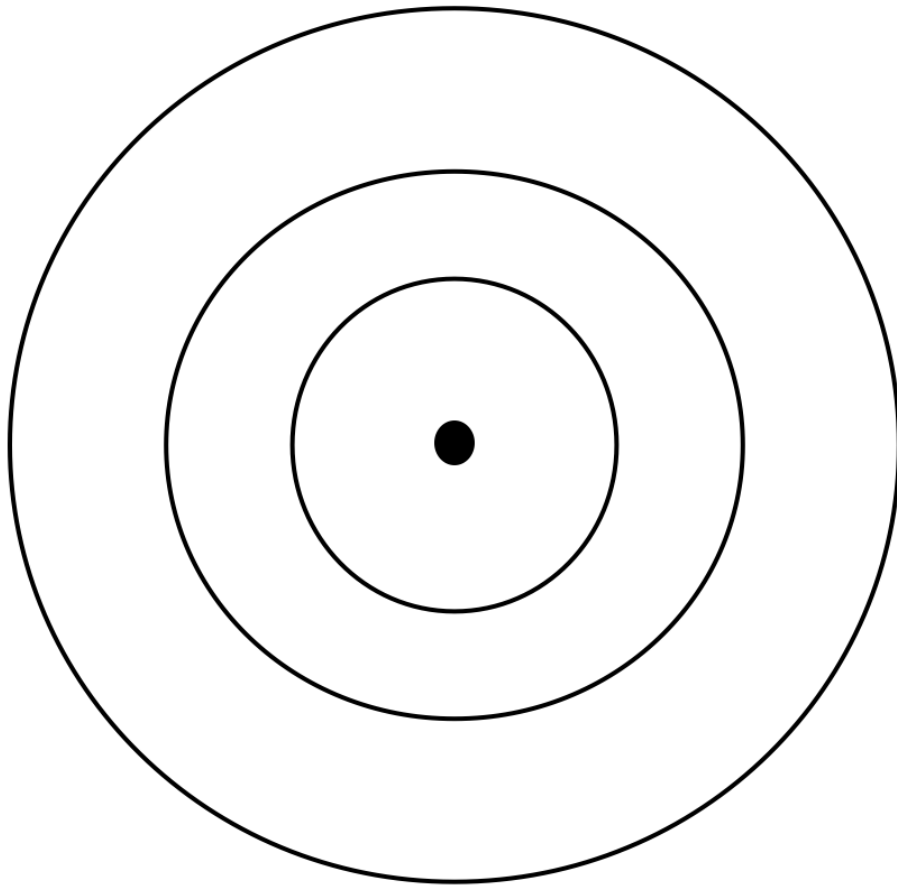


Figure 2. Ego network mapping activity

Limitations

The researcher's positionality as a teacher who worked closely with participants and already knew participants in a classroom setting, could have led to bias in interpreting data based on the influence of previously held beliefs and expectations. Participants may have felt pressured to answer the way they believed their teacher wanted them to answer, due to their prior relationship with and the power status of the teacher researcher. On the other hand, researcher positionality may have granted more access and insight to children's lives that would have otherwise been

inaccessible to an outside researcher with whom participants had no former trusting relationship. Many parents understood the study's intentions as ultimately to benefit their children and others in their military community. Participants trusted the researcher and had been building relationships with her based on respectful, daily interactions since the beginning of the school year. Some participants may have also known the teacher-researcher from previous years or siblings who had taken her class.

Other limitations include participant fear of negative results for speaking negatively about the military community. As children of military employees, they may have been overly positive in their discussions of the military community and its impact on their school lives. Adolescents may have worried that their parents could suffer in their jobs if they did not present a positive view of the military. Although individual interviews may have been able to overcome this fear of retribution, focus groups were chosen as a way to gain intersubjectivity among participants. Discussion among participants prompted expansive and counter ideas, as well as consensus in many instances. Once again, it is possible that participants felt pressure to come to a consensus with one another based on loyalty to their tight-knit community.

A limitation in full network analysis was that some missing data existed since not all members of the network gave consent and were present at the time the survey was administered. In order to overcome this challenge, this study collected survey responses by posting the link to the survey in an email, allowing all participants access within the given time frame. The survey blocked respondents from taking the survey

more than once to ensure that the survey data represented the individuals and their ties in the full network.

This study did not take into account the many military and societal contextual factors that may lead to different findings with a study based in other settings. Even though there are several common experiences among children in military cultural communities, military experience likely varies greatly depending on geographic location, service branch, demographics (socioeconomic status, rank, reservists or active duty), and the broader socio historical context, such as times of peace or war. The small sample size and in depth focus on a specific, bounded school context may have limited its generalizability; however, it also contributed to the study's descriptive nature and focus on participant perspectives, informing educators about the strengths and needs of military-connect adolescents in civilian middle schools.

Overcoming limitations to validity. In order to address the internal validity of data analysis procedures, multiple evaluators checked random sections of qualitative data for interrater reliability. Participants and community members read initial findings during the post analysis stage in order to give feedback during member checks. Initial findings were presented at an educational research conference with feedback from leaders in the field and researchers with experience working with military-connected families in public schools. The multiple methods employed throughout the study and the inclusion of multiple data sources increased validity of findings.

Chapter 4: Analysis

This integrated methods (Yoshikawa, Weisner, Kalil, & Way, 2008) study investigated military-connected adolescent bridging processes: how they navigated their multiple worlds and accessed assets and resources to overcome any potential challenges associated with navigating multiple cultural worlds. Although existing literature points to military-connected adolescents as an at-risk for lower academic achievement, higher dropout rates, emotional and behavioral struggles (e.g. suicide ideation, substance abuse, etc.) than their civilian peers (Astor et al., 2012; De Pedro et al., 2011), participants in this study viewed many of the challenges they face as assets in bridging military and civilian worlds. Military-connected adolescent participants articulated that the challenging experiences stemming from being a military connected family contributed to positive developmental outcomes, such as doing well in school, being self-reliant, being adaptable to new situations, and being able to build new relationships with peers and school adults when moving schools.

Like many understudied populations, participant voice, especially adolescent voice, remains a gap in the literature on military-connected youth. Participants in this study were articulate in describing bridging processes across multiple worlds and in discussing how they accessed resources in overcoming the challenges they face when navigating their worlds. In short, military-connected adolescents in this study described a resiliency framework: the theoretical framework that situates protective factors that mitigate potential risk for negative outcomes within the social systems in

young people's lives (Resnick, 2000). Participants in this study relied on their families, peers, the military community, and schools for support and resources. These findings will be discussed more in detail in the pages that follow, organized by research question. Specifically, the following research questions were addressed.

Research Questions

The overarching goal of this study is to investigate how military-connected adolescents navigate their multiple worlds in civilian public schools. Specifically, the following research questions will be addressed:

1. What do the peer social networks look like of adolescents attending a middle school in a military-dense region? How do they differ between civilian and military-connected adolescents?
2. What are military connected adolescents' the perceived challenges and resources among military-connected adolescents as they navigate their multiple worlds of home, school, and military communities? How do they access resources and utilize assets to overcome their challenges?
3. How do the experiences of navigating the multiple worlds of home, school, and military communities vary according adolescent and family characteristics?
Adolescent and family characteristics include student achievement, gender, family socioeconomic status, military rank, family structure, etc.
4. To what degree does the heterogeneity of the individual peer (ego) network impact individual experiences navigating the multiple worlds of home, school, and military communities and does this vary by adolescent or family demographic characteristics?

Research Question 1

What do the peer social networks look like of adolescents attending a middle school in a military-dense region? How do they differ between civilian and military-connected adolescents?

Whole Network Close Friends Patterns. The eighth-grade close friends network at this school site was relatively spread out with few (less than 10) clusters of 7 and many (over 250) clusters of 3, which made sense given the survey defined close friends as a person with whom respondents spent more time outside of class and openly shared personal information. The whole network was most notably divided by gender. Overall, the whole network integrated peers from across diverse student groups. Figure 3 depicts the whole eighth-grade close friends network graph. Although several small clusters existed in the network graph, the network was relatively spread out and somewhat evenly distributed. Many of the isolates, nodes listed vertically along the left side of the figure, actually did have parent consent to participate, and so did not actually take the survey. It is possible that even less isolates actually existed among this close friends network, often the sign of relative connectedness and an inclusive school climate.

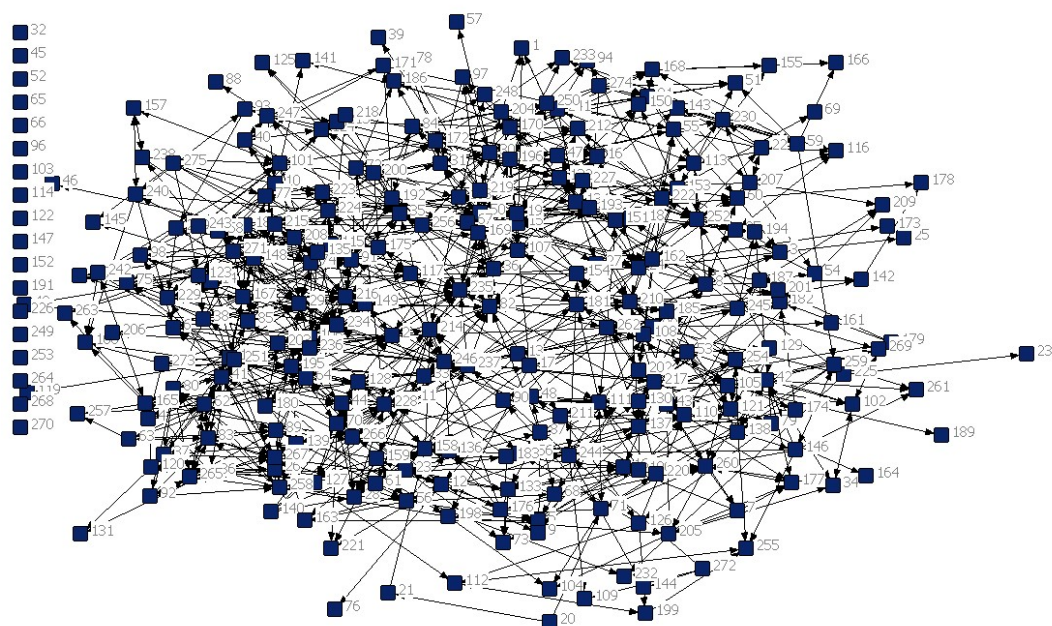


Figure 3. Whole Network Close Friends Graph (N = 205)

The following Figures 4, 5, and 6 depict the whole network of eighth-grade participants at this site, highlighting different sets of demographic attributes (i.e. gender, self-reported race, military or civilian status, and rank), followed by whole network measures density and centrality.

As seen in Figure 4, participant gender was the strongest obvious visual pattern in terms of clusters. White nodes represented students who chose not to identify as male or female; pink nodes represent female participants, while blue nodes represent male participants. Male and female clusters made up nearly half of the network graph with some overlap, which made sense given the age of participants and the definition of close friend (a person with whom respondents spent more time outside of class and openly shared personal information) used in the survey.

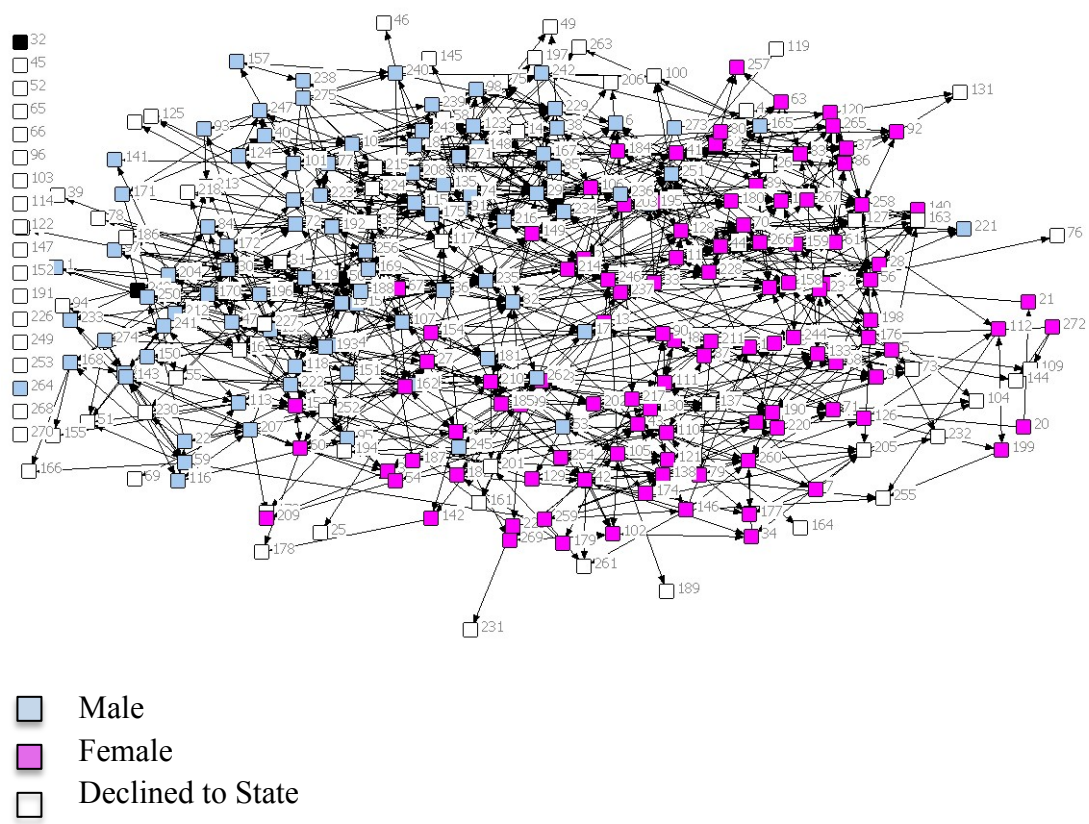


Figure 4. Whole Network Close Friends Graph: Gender (N = 205)

Participants at this site reported relatively integrated friendships with regard to race. In Figure 5, the different colors in the network graph represent self-reported race identities. The network was relatively integrated with very little evidence of clustering by race.

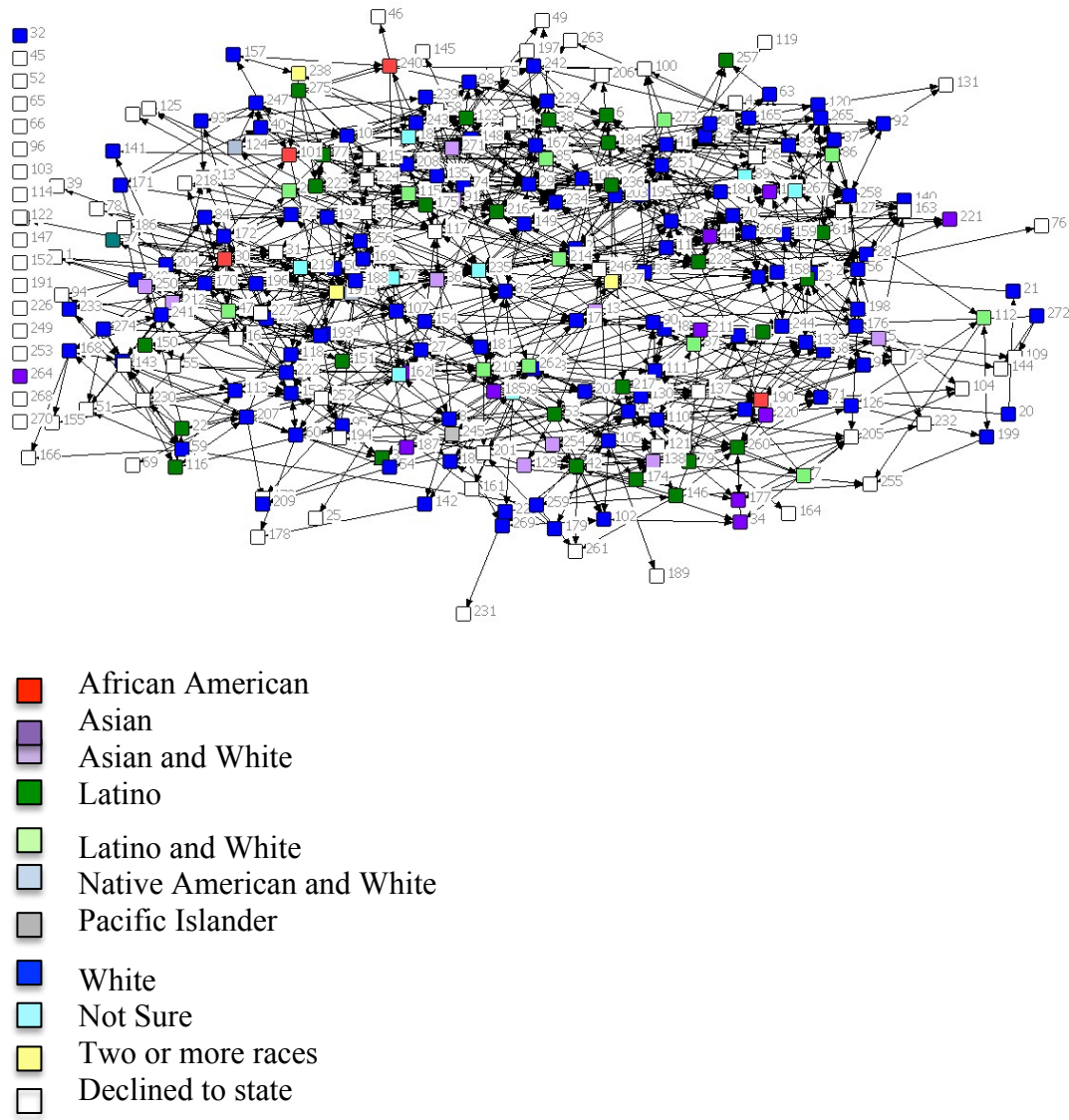


Figure 5. Whole Network Close Friends Graph: Self-reported Race (N = 205)

As seen in Figure 6, Military-connected students were relatively integrated and evenly dispersed throughout the civilian network, although some clustering did appear. Military-connected adolescents had both military and civilian friends in their peer networks. Several civilian-only clusters clearly stood out, while virtually no

military-only clusters were identifiable. Military-dense clusters existed, but the graph showed no exclusively military clustering.

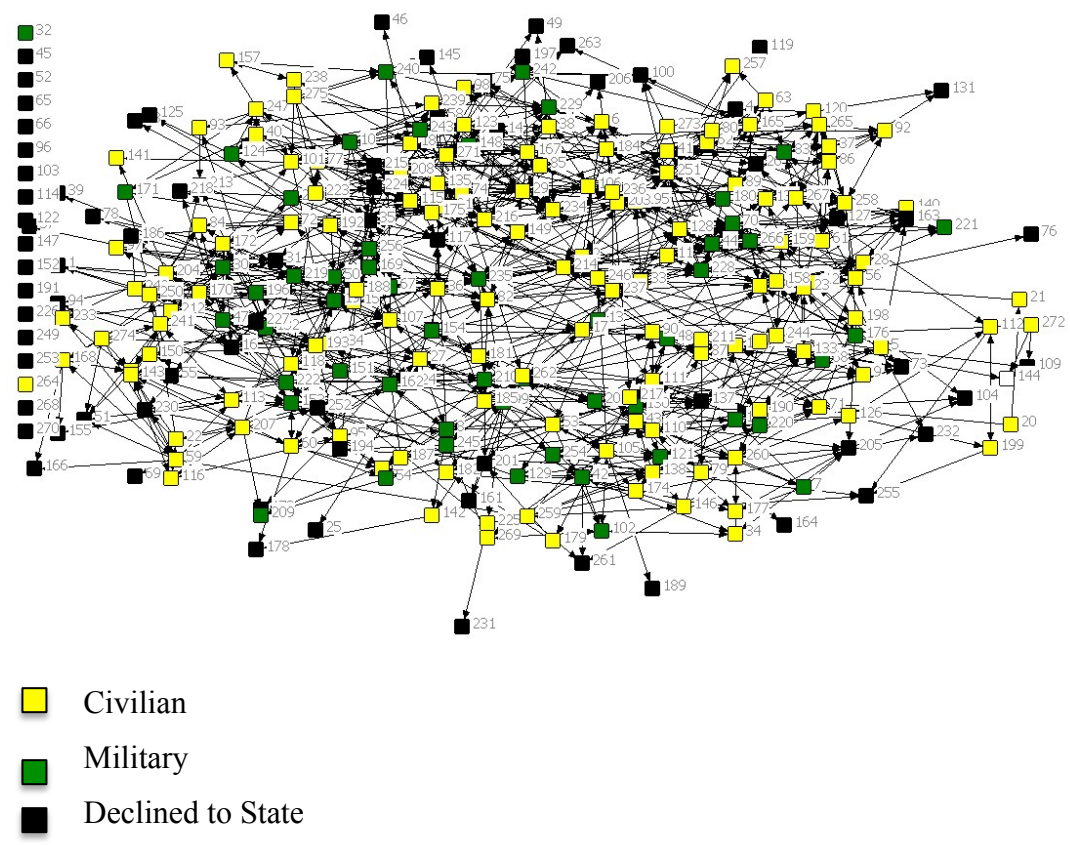


Figure 6. Whole Network Close Friends Graph: Military-connected (N = 205)

Using UCINET (Borgatti, Everett and Freeman, 2002), a variety of analyses was calculated to describe the network and how individual actors related to one another. Density is a measure of cohesion, or the number of existing ties in a network as a ratio to all ties possible in a network. Centralization is the amount to which several relationships within a single network is centered on one or a few central actors; other actors in the same network might have few relationships. Both the density and the centrality of the networks were relatively low, which made sense considering the

fact that this was a network of close friends at a large school. Close friendship groups were evenly dispersed. Table 4 shows the eighth-grade close friends network at the site as embedded in non-dense local neighborhoods (small groupings) to a even degree, as well as the normalized degrees of density, clustering, and centrality for the whole network.

Table 4. Whole Network Density, Clustering Coefficients, and Centrality

Whole Network Density			
Density	Number of Ties	Standard Deviation	Average Degree
0.015	1166	0.123	4.240
Whole Network Clustering Coefficient			
Overall graph clustering coefficient	0.215	Overall graph clustering coefficient	0.215
Weighted Overall graph clustering coefficient	0.165	Weighted Overall graph clustering coefficient	0.165
Whole Network Normalized Centrality			
Network Centralization (Out degree)	2.110%	Network Centralization (Out degree)	2.110%
Network Centralization (In degree)	3.575%	Network Centralization (In degree)	3.575%

Peer networks. Military Connected Adolescents tended to have both military-connected and civilian close friends in their peer networks. Figure 7 shows how

military-connected youth, enlisted (green) and officer (red), were relatively well integrated into the full network with civilian peers (black) at this school. Enlisted military-connected adolescents participated in more military-dense clusters than officer participants, which focus group data (quantitative and qualitative) also supported.

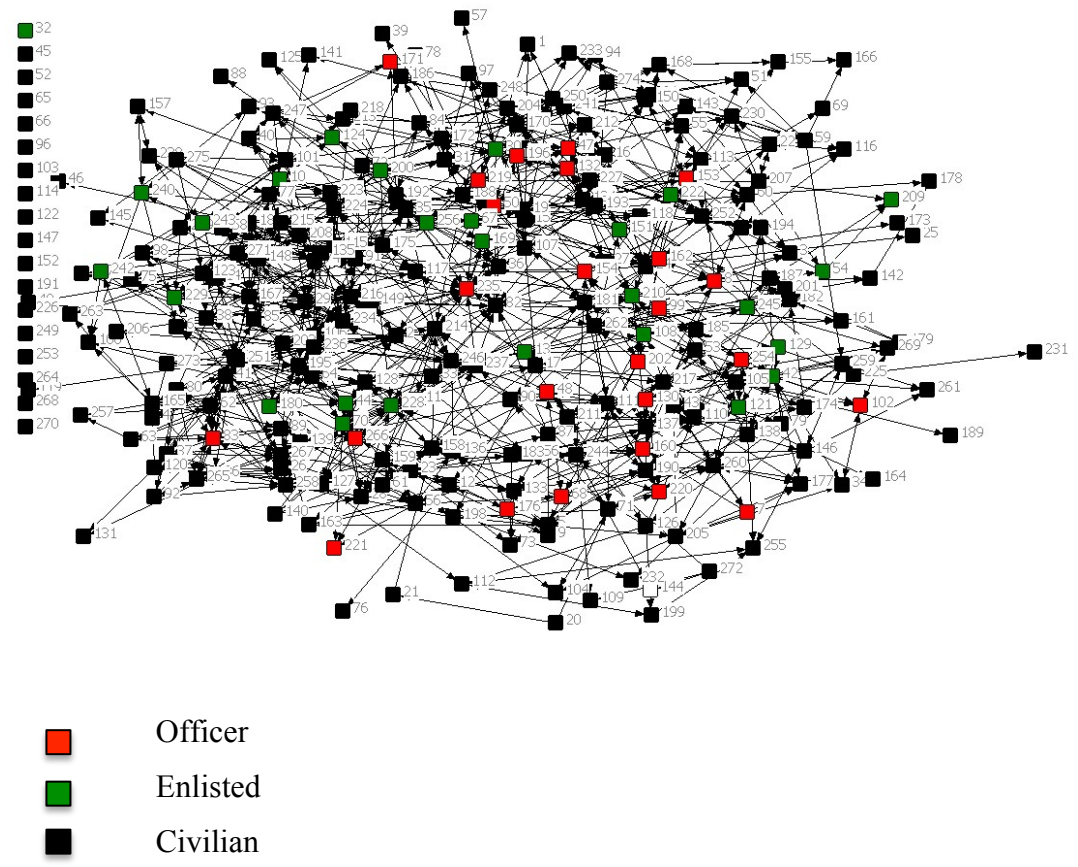


Figure 7. Whole 8th-grade Social Network of “Close Friends” (N = 205)

The network external-internal ties index, also known as the network EI Index (Krackhardt & Stern, 1988), an inverse measure of homophily (Borgatti, Everett, & Johnson, 2013), allowed for closer investigation of the visual trends noted above. The

EI indexes shown in Table 5 describe how likely each group is to have relationships within categories and across categories.

Table 5. Density Matrix

	Enlisted	Officer	Civilian
Enlisted	0.04	0.02	0.03
Officer	0.02	0.04	0.03
Civilian	0.03	0.03	0.02

Enlisted and officer groups are relatively even (enlisted, 27: officer, 25). Enlisted participants tended to have close friendships within their own group, over officer and civilian groups. In fact, they were nearly two times as likely to interact with other enlisted participants in the close friends social network than officer participants. Likewise, Officer participants were twice as likely to have close friendships with other officer participants than with enlisted participants. Civilian participants were just as likely to have close friendships with other civilians as they were with both subgroups, enlisted and officer participants.

Due to these preliminary findings regarding military and civilian friendship groupings, focus group protocols were modified to ask military-connected adolescents about military and civilian friendships. The new prompts asked students if any of the friends or the people who help them were military-connected and if that mattered to them. Additionally, participants labeled the military-connected friends and helpers on their friendship maps for qualitative and quantitative analyses. These additions to

focus group protocols helped participants in more accurately describing why and how they formed both military and civilian friendships in their networks.

Overall, close friend networks at this site were relatively evenly dispersed by race, which may possibly be evidence of overall school connectedness and positive school climate. It may also be simply a reflection of the fact that asking about participants' close friends, as opposed to friends, yielded smaller friendship groupings, and that a different network question would yield different results. Nonetheless, military-connected participants participated in friendship groups that included both military and civilian adolescents. Enlisted participants were more likely to have other enlisted participants in their friendship groups than officer or civilian peers, and the same pattern was true for officer participants. Civilian participants were just as likely to have enlisted peers as officer peers in their friendship groups. Qualitative data and ego network data also yielded similar patterns.

Research Question 2

What are military-connected adolescents' perceived challenges and resources as they navigate their multiple worlds of home, school, and military communities? How do they access resources and utilize assets to overcome their challenges?

Military-connected adolescents perceived the challenges of navigating multiple worlds as promoting their individual assets and fostering positive developmental outcomes. Many participants described how moving often forced them to become better at making friends, to develop better social skills, and to be more independent.

Participants who lived abroad, although it was challenging, discussed how they learned about new cultures, which motivated them and gave them an advantage when studying related subjects in school. They also spoke about learning to be adaptable and independent. The Venn diagram in Figure 8 represents the topics participants discussed as challenges, assets, and both when navigating their multiple worlds. Code count frequencies that were applied ten or more times are listed beside the codes in parentheses. The following sections elaborate sub findings related to the Venn diagram.

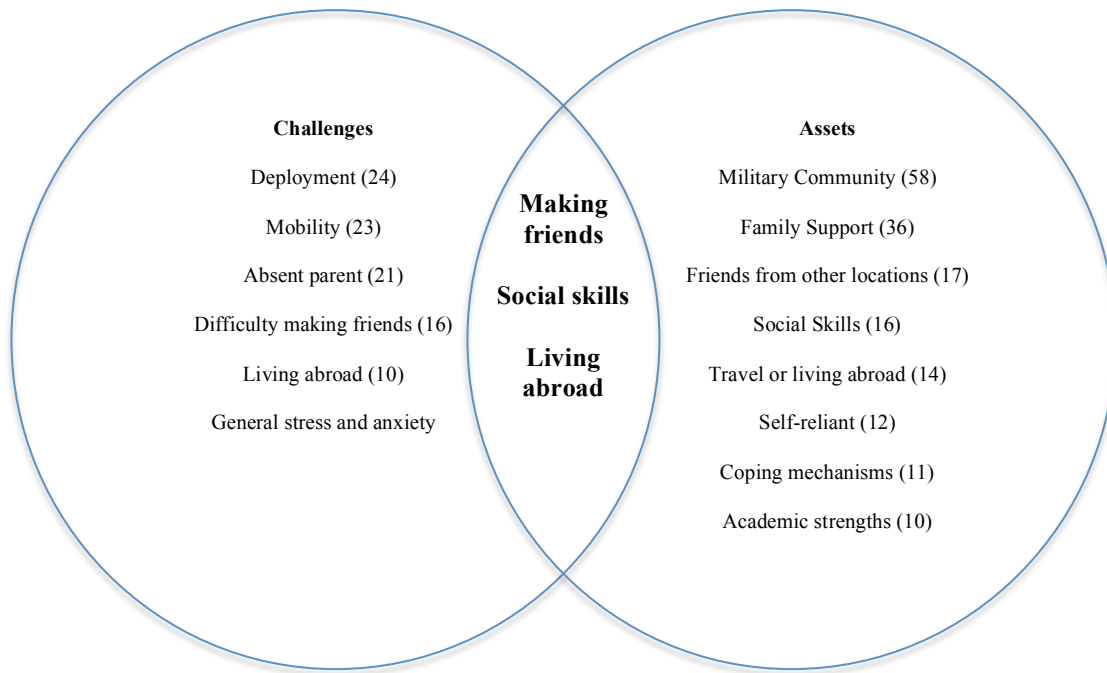


Figure 8. Venn Diagram of Assets and Challenges in Bridging Military and Civilian Worlds

Deployment and Absent Parents. Participants' most frequently discussed challenges associated with deployment and absent parents. Deployment and absent parent codes co-occurred more frequently than any other pair of codes (10).

Participants also noted the difference between off shore duty and deployment; they described both as challenging, but spoke of deployment as having the extra burden of concern for their parent's safety. The following quote refers to off shore duty:

Okay, you guys know this, but like sometimes they are deployed but not really deployed, like they will be gone for like a month (yeah). That's hard. My dad, he likes to play video games with me and when

he's gone I can't do that. I mean I can play with my sister, but it's not the same.

She missed spending time her father. One boy added, "Yeah, my mom is getting deployed one week from now." In a side conversation with a peer, he spoke about his current family situation: while his mother was on deployment, his father was stationed in another part of the country, so he was staying with cousins and had to commute a longer distance to get to school in the mornings. Family structure seemed to add layers of difficulty for some participants. All participants identified deployment and absent parents as primary challenge of military life.

Concern for safety. Participants often spoke of being scared about the safety of the deployed parent. For example, one participant noted, "My dad, he's going to deploy for the first time soon and that's going to be really hard. Not having him around and not knowing if he's safe." She was not only worried about his safety, but she expressed that the "not knowing" created emotional strain, especially since this will have been her time experiencing deployment. More so during the Second Iraq War and post 9-11 era, the Navy deployed Service members into more dangerous territories for longer periods of time and more frequently than in previous times of peace. Participants discussed some of the more dangerous locations their parents have been: "Cause like, in 2003, my mom got deployed during the, in Iraq around the area, and then, uh, they were on the coast of Africa, and there was a Somali pirate problem, so they had to take them back...that was scary." Participants were aware of and articulate about the dangers facing their parents while on deployment.

Many participants relied on technology to ease their minds about their parents' safety:

Normally I just convince myself that those rarely happen, and it's actually kind of honestly true. But what I do normally if I am going through, like, a hard time. Um, technology has made that much easier. Uh, FaceTime, text, call, I can call them, make sure they're okay. Seems like that makes things much easier.

Technology helped calm their fears by giving them reassurance that their parent was alive and well, but it also connected children with their deployed parents, which helped lessen their feelings of absence.

Extra responsibilities. Deployment or an absent parent often meant extra responsibilities, according to military-connected adolescents. Participants spoke about how deployment presented emotional challenges, but it also disrupted family composition and family roles. Participants sometimes noted being overwhelmed by the extra tasks, even though they wanted to help: "It can always be challenging sometimes when parents on deployment, because ... especially for older siblings, like me, you kind of have to step up into that parent role for, like, the younger ones." Perhaps adolescents especially felt the burden of these extra responsibilities due to their age, capacities for helping, and birth order in the family. One participant discussed the difficulties of having his father stationed across the country:

Yeah, like my dad's on ... like he's, like, spending the year at the east coast right now, because he got stationed there, so he's going to be like half of the time, he's going to be like out in the sea. So it's like really hard when he's out in the sea, because he can't call and really, like, talk to him really, or like we can email him, like ... but it kind of takes him a while to reply. And so my mom's always like ... I mean, you guys needed to like, help look ... because we ... my sister and I would have to, like, help her, like, with the dishes or like washing clothes and stuff

like that. And, like, when my dad's here, like, we wouldn't normally do as much like to help, because my dad would help also. And so sometimes, she gets like really frustrated, because she just feels like, um, she has like all that responsibility, and like my sister and I have to help also, and so it's like then it's frustrating for my sister and I, because like we have all the sports going on, and like school and then all the stuff, so it's like ... and my mom also works, so it's like ... it's like really hard.

He described the difficulties of managing a challenging academic and extracurricular schedule along with extra responsibilities but also his family members' frustrations. He felt stressed from the additional work but also from the family's emotional well-being. He understood the frustrations his mom had, which may be why he and his sister helped. He had a choice, and although it was a challenge, he still helped his mom when he could have given up. In addition to typical teen struggles, military-connected adolescents spoke of juggling extra responsibilities at home with already challenging routines. Although participants discussed the challenges and stresses of taking on extra responsibilities at home during deployment and off-shore duty, they also simultaneously described having the strength to get through difficult times and become more independent.

Coping mechanisms. Participants did not dwell on the difficulties due to deployment; they spoke about coping mechanisms that helped them get through their difficult times. Sometimes that meant pouring themselves into extracurriculars, like music or sports. Many busied their minds with positive distractions as much as possible. Some even found positive aspects to focus on while their parents were away:

My dad was the one, like, he, he would like go on Haiku like every single night and check my grades. And, you know, I'm not really complaining about that, but he's gone on deployment right now for

three years, so he, like, no one's on me as much, and I think that kind of, like, when everyone's, like, bugging me about it, it kind of just, like, it just affects me in a harder way. Like, I don't really want to do it, cause it's just like the stress that's getting to me, that's all I'm thinking about. So I think, like. I think, like, them giving more, more freedom about it, is kind of like helping me, in a way. I don't know. That probably didn't make sense.

Others also focused on their relative freedom while parents were away.

Although her parent's assistance with school was helpful, she noted that she could focus more on feeling less stressed at school while her father was deployed, since they give her a little more freedom regarding grades during her father's deployment. This relative lightening of stress load may have helped her cope with the emotional stress of an absent parent and concern for his safety.

One participant even mentioned that while his mom was away, he would think of all the movies he could watch and things he could "get away with" to get his mind off of missing her or worrying about her. While this self-soothing thought process may be seen as positive resilience, it may also be evidence of possibly negative coping or destruction of relationship quality. It is unclear what it is he may have been referring to by "getting away with." If, for example he were referring to small "harmless" activities, such as eating a little more junk food than usual, that may be child rearing differences between his cousins (with whom he was staying) and his mother, his comments may be more evidence of positive coping, whereas if he was referring to higher risk behaviors, such as staying out later without adult supervision or drinking alcohol, this would be more evidence of negative coping. Given his own example of

what movies he would be allowed to watch while she was away, it seems that he was speaking more about

Additionally, participants lively discussed the “cool” souvenirs their parents brought back from deployment. One participant talked about the gift his dad brought back while traveling in Africa: “My dad went to Africa and he brought me back African bongos, a drum.” Another spoke about how her dad once brought her back a boomerang from Australia. Participants smiled and enthusiastically discussed their collections of souvenirs. In this sense, participants recognized the hardships of having a parent deployed, but they also learned to focus on the positives.

Living Abroad. Participants discussed living abroad as both a challenge and a strength. Participants discussed how everything from light switches to grocery shopping could be challenging, especially if their family did not live on base while living abroad. One student noted: “In Belgium, we didn’t have a base to live on, so we’re kind of like, out on our own.” He continued to discuss how different life was:

“Everybody (knows) the stereotypical American and European size living overseas... and it gave you a different look on the world. You guys were used to... you know, Burger King, McDonald’s, Starbucks and all here, but in Europe, you don’t have that.”

He and his family navigated a new language and culture, which was challenging but he articulated how that experience changed his outlook on the world. It may have also helped strengthen resilience and his ability to adapt to new situations. Another followed up by sharing her similar experiences and talked about how difficult even daily activities, such as grocery shopping, became challenging at first.

We don't have Walmart, we Delhaize in Europe. Delhaize is kind of like Walgreens... and everything will be in French, Dutch, or Flemish, or all three, and so whenever you buy something, you don't know if that's actually what you want or not. One time my mom wanted to buy spaghetti squash, but she bought melon instead and she cooked the melon, and asked, 'How's everything tasting?' When you eat it, it's sweet melon.

She and other focus group members laughed as she spoke about these new and challenging cultural experiences. The fact that they could laugh about their challenging experiences revealed a certain positive attitude that may have come from having experienced and overcome their challenges. Participants even laughed some when speaking about the difficulties of standing out while living abroad.

When moving to and living in a new country, participants sometimes felt like they stood out and struggled to learn new cultural practices. Many focus group members said that they felt they stood out a lot. One participant recalled how people would even take photos of her and her sister because they looked so different from typical local residents: "When I was little, we lived in Hawaii, Japanese people would come up and take photos (laughter)." The other members could relate: "Yeah, and they just... run up and take a photo. [Crosstalk] (laughter)." Although the discussion started with laughter, participants also spoke about the challenges of not fitting in. One participant noted:

When I was in Belgium... There are really people, like mean, but like for some reason, we have like a neon light over our head and over our house, like that's the Americans. Everybody knew we're Americans.

He expressed that no matter what, everyone always seemed to know they were Americans and that made them stand out. It was not clear, but he may have also been

alluding to the geopolitical climate of the times when he lived there during which Americans were not always popular in certain places.

At the same time, participants met new friends on base who shared their experiences and learned a new appreciation for other ways of life. Despite the feeling of standing out, Participants discussed how welcoming some people were and how much they learned about other cultures in the process. One participant spoke of how she became good friends with a Japanese family while living on base in Okinawa:

And you have to say, like, Europeans are like a lot more accepting of like other people, like they're a lot nicer, like have you ever felt like the Japanese people like, kind of, accepted you into their culture.

She went on to talk about sometimes forgetting to take off her shoes inside, which she said was a huge mistake there, but that her friends and their families were helpful and understanding. While on base, she said it was like a tiny America, but as soon as she left the base, she eventually learned new customs and appreciated her new friends.

Additionally, participants discussed how they gained knowledge about the history and culture of the places they lived, which made them relative experts when studying those cultures in school. One participant spoke about his time in Italy: "So then, whenever we do, like, the Italian history or like Roman history, that's pretty easy." His personal experiences living abroad, actually seeing the ruins and going to museums, gave him an educational enrichment opportunity that many of his civilian peers might not have had. Others spoke about how in European schools, they taught a lot more European history and hardly any American history. While they may have had

some learning gaps, in this sense, participants mentioned these educational differences as having positively impacted their school experiences.

Having lived abroad even gave some participants additional social capital among civilian networks; their peers wanted to know more about their experiences.

One student said:

It's cool. In history class when you're learning about something like ... Last year, we're learning about Spain and I said, "Oh, I went to The Rock of Gibraltar, which is England and Spain," and a monkey stole my phone there. That's something cool, not like here. They were like, "Oh really? You've been there?"

He noticed that other students in class thought it was interesting that he had been to the place they were studying, and he was able to contribute helpful knowledge to class discussions. Others agreed: "If you've been some place like really cool and start telling people about it, they may get interested, and then you could become friends." Participants learned to leverage their unique travel experiences and living abroad to help with academics and making new friends.

Participants also took advantage of the tight-knit military community that existed at overseas bases and participated in travel activities that helped them create new friendships with other military kids. As one participant recalled:

"I remember, when I lived in Spain we did these things called ITT trips, and they already planned a trip to a different country for you and you just pay for it, and then you go together with them to another country. And we also had this thing, it was called Jams and they would get trips together, and say they meet other military groups in Austria so you meet 400 other military kids from different countries and then bond together and do activities."

Other group members nodded as he spoke about the trips and about meeting new friends who were also in the military. The support of the military community and the resources available seemed to have helped participants overcome many of the challenges with living abroad. Participants noted the difficulties (code frequency = 10), but more frequently spoke of the strengths they gained from travel and living abroad (code frequency = 14) as part of their overseas experiences.

Mobility. Participants' discussed mobility as one their greatest challenges, but also as having promoted individual strengths. Mobility presented many challenges to any child or adolescent; participants in this study mainly discussed that moving made it difficult for them to make friends. Mobility co occurred equally with difficulty making friends and social skills across transcripts. Participants were asked if it was difficult to get attached to friends when moving so often, participants mentioned how technology helped him keep in touch with friends after having moved in the following excerpt:

R: "Sometimes it's difficult to get too attached, right?"

13: "Yeah."

222: "Yeah, but with technology these days, you can always, you know, FaceTime people."

13: "Mm-hmm (affirmative)."

R: "That's true."

222: "Text messages. You can always keep in touch."

129: "Mm-hmm (affirmative)."

222: "So, it kind of makes that easier."

129: "Oh yeah, I remember mentioning a friend (who moved away) so we FaceTimed each other day, and stuff, and we still talk to each other and stuff, which is nice."

Participants agreed that technology played an important role in helping them maintain friendships as they moved throughout their academic careers. Technology lightened their stress about moving because they would be able to still talk to their friends any time they needed to after they moved.

Difficulty making friends. Participants discussed the difficulties of making friends due to high mobility. For example, they mentioned transition periods as the most difficult. When they first moved to a new school, it was often hard to find others with shared interests. One participant said, “It’s like that and then also when you do move to a new place, and if you don’t know anyone there, it could take a while especially if you can’t find someone with the same interest as you.” Additionally, participants agreed that by middle school, many of the kids had formed solid friendship groups, which made it especially difficult to fit in: “People who live at the schools have known each other since they were little.” He and others struggled with the awkwardness of trying to insert themselves into “tight groups” that had formed over many years.

Social skills. Despite experiencing difficulty making friends, participants perceived moving often as having contributed to the development of social skills. Participants were asked to describe their strengths; they most immediately responded, “Social skills.” For example, one participant answered, “For me, making friends easily. You kind of have to when you are in the military because you move so much.” Focus group participants all agreed that military-connected kids, in general, probably developed strong social skills: “Yeah, every military child has some,... they have to

get social skills.” As soon as he said this, the other participants nodded and gave affirmative verbal responses. One participant shared a story of how she walked up to someone about her age on base and simply asked if she wanted to be her friend: “Oh Yeah. Okay, so she was riding her bike and I was drawing with chalk on the sidewalk with my sisters. She rode up and said, ‘Hey, want to be my friend?’ (laughing).”

Another stated:

Social skills...For my family to typically stay in a place for, like, two, three years, depending on what our orders are. So, typically it could take, anywhere from, a few weeks to a few months... Social skills, like keeping in touch with them after you move and it’s something (even though) you’ll make new friends where you moved to, it’s kind of important, because nobody wants to be that one person without friends.

He mentioned that in addition to making new friends, he learned how to keep in touch with friends after having moved away. Since it can take several weeks or months to make new friends, participants kept in touch with the friends they had already made to make the transition easier and to maintain close friendships across time and place.

Participants generally described coping mechanisms and positive aspects of their challenges. They had an overall positive outlook on even their greatest difficulties, sometimes making light of their shared experiences. At one point participants conversed about the never-ending packing process. They described it as both annoying and funny. Military-connected adolescents laughed as they each told stories regarding “that one box” that never gets unpacked. Some recalled making box forts when they were younger. Participants across focus groups seemed to enjoy

sharing their common experiences and remained focused on maintaining positive attitudes about the challenges associated with the military family lifestyle.

Resources. Military-connected adolescents accessed a variety of resources (military community support, family, friends, and school) to overcome their challenges. Participants were specific and articulate when discussing the people who helped them bridge their military and civilian worlds. In order of code frequencies, participants mentioned military community support (58), family support (36), civilian and military friendship groups (28), friend support (12), school support (9), and technology (9) as resources for overcoming the challenges of military lifestyle and navigating multiple cultural worlds.

Military community support. Participants discussed military community support to overcome challenges. Military community support was the most frequently coded resource (58). The next closest code frequently coded resource (family support, 36) was not even coded at 2/3 the rate of military community support. They noted a variety of formal and informal ways in which the military community helps them: providing counseling services, financial support through discounts and scholarships, information exchange among families when moving to new locales, but most often a sense of belonging and understanding from their military community and peers. For example, participants were asked, “What are some of the ways the military community helps you in school?” The first response revealed the importance of military friendships: “It’s easy to make friends because everybody understands what you are going through.” Another stated, “Everyone kind of knows the experience, so they all

kind of know what you're feeling. They just get it. They know how to support you.”

The shared experiences of the military lifestyle help children and families make instant connections. One participant noted, “Actually, when I moved here, I already had a friend.” He described how he had known this friend from a previous station. In fact, participants across officer and enlisted groups discussed having met friends in previous locations and running into them again at some point in a new station.

Additionally, participants discussed that kids and families supported each other by sharing information about the base, schools, activities, and culture of a location to help other families readjust to their new stations. One mentioned how a military club, such as Student 2 Student (S2S), could help: “If I go and he goes to, like, a military club or something and then you knew people who are also military that could be your friends.” Informal and formal networks among military students in schools helped participants make friends more easily, even when it could have been very difficult having moved many times already, often times mid year. Officer participants spoke notably of overseas bases and military schools, where all students are military-connected, as a place where they made many of their military friends. Enlisted participants met most of their military friends on base, regardless of being local or overseas because they loved on base in both contexts.

According to participants, families often utilized one another as resources for gaining access to knowledge about new communities and to make connections with other families stationed there. One participant discussed how other families had helped hers when moving to Japan:

Kind of like ... like ... like when we were in Japan, um, we like move there and ... like I didn't really know one, because I was like coming home, and then we like ... we like moved back and like just recently, like, this family we knew become like they're going to move back here. And like we knew some of the kids there are like ... there's ... like there's a ton of families and you're not a ton, but a bunch that have like moved over here.

She also expressed how her family had helped other families who had recently moved into their current community. Families paid it forward by connecting with and exchanging information with other military families in transition around the country and the world. Both formal and informal military community resources (Family Ombudsman, School Liaison Officers, and internet resources) acted as critical communication links among families. It may be that as children, they were unaware of the formal resources their parents accessed. Perhaps their families relied more frequently on the informal networks within the military community. It is also conceivable that their parents accessed these informal networks via formal military resources. Either way, participants in this study mostly mentioned informal military networks as supports.

Family supports. Participants frequently accessed family support as resources. Family support was the second most frequently coded resource (36). Participants often spoke of relying on family support, especially that of their siblings, when adjusting to new settings. Although participants moved often and struggled with making friendships, they also utilized the support of family members to help ease the stress of moving and to make connections with new friends and teachers. Mobility code

frequency co occurred with military community support, as well as with family support.

Many participants said they relied on siblings who supported them both socially and emotionally. One participant expressed,

Like when you first move then it (family) really counts because my sister she had to move from different states and stuff 'cause when she was little and I wasn't born yet cause my mom was in the military so she can help me out, 'cause I would be, "How did you make new friends when you're new to a state?" and she would tell me so I was like, "Okay."

Her sister showed her the successful strategies she had used to find and make new friends in new locations and schools. Another participant articulated the emotional support siblings could offer: "My brother he like really helped me. Like I'll be bored and I'll be like alone cause I haven't made friends yet and then he'll come and do something random and then we'll get in this big like, thing all day and then it just takes up my day and I actually have fun." Before she made friends, her brother spent time with her and strengthened her resolve during the transition. Siblings seemed to play a special role in supporting one another, especially during transition periods.

Participants also discussed family support as their most frequent source of support for both school and social challenges. During focus groups, participants mentioned parents first as a resource for both academic and social problems. Both enlisted and officer groups unanimously answered "parents." As noted earlier, focus group participants also discussed friends as a frequent resource.

Friends as resources. Participants discussed both civilian and military friendships as resources. During focus groups, they noted that their friends' military

versus civilian status was not necessarily important to them, but that they often met their friends in their neighborhoods. Both enlisted and officer groups mentioned that other military-connected friends could understand what they were going through without having to explain, and that was important to them. Having military-connected friends offered instant connections based on shared experiences, a tight-knit community, and perhaps even having been friends in prior settings. Participants spoke about the ease in making friends on base due to its tight-knit community. For example, one participant stated: “I’d say it’s easier to make friends on a military base, because sometimes your parents work together, so it’s somewhat, it’s a smaller community. It’s like is a tighter community. So they’re like, ‘Where does your dad work?’ ‘On that ship.’ ‘Oh, my dad works on that ship too.’” Both officer and enlisted participants mentioned ending up at the same schools as friends and classmates from earlier stations in their lives. One participant said:

My friend that I have now, ... (laughter) Um, she was here in third grade the same year that I was in the same elementary school, then she moved away in fourth grade, and came back here this year... So, it’s kind of better to have a friend that you’ve known for so long, ‘cause then, like, you know them, and also, you know the area, so like ... if I just moved there, and I see a friend from old, and they just moved there too, if I need to find directions, I can just ask her.

Seeing friends again from previous moves was a benefit for military-connected youth in that it often helped them feel like they knew someone at school right away, rather than not knowing anybody and having to start from zero.

On the other hand, participants discussed how it could also be difficult to have military-connected friends because they both knew at some point one of them would be moving:

Like, when I was in elementary school, I had this best friend, well I, I lived in between two Caitlins. Caitlin A. and (laughter) Caitlin B., but Caitlin B. was my best friend. Then, one day I remember she had to move, so ever since then, I was, I've been a little hesitant to make friends in the military, because they could just move at really any moment. Like, you don't really know.

Having civilian friends was in some ways a safer bet, because the likelihood that they would leave while stationed here was much smaller. In this sense, civilian friends were not only resources for accessing capital in the civilian school and community, they brought a sense of stability and consistency for participants. Military-connected youth accessed social capital (insider community knowledge) and social-emotional support from both military and civilian friends.

Although all participants discussed the importance of having both military and civilian friends, patterns began to emerge among officer and enlisted groups: enlisted participants more frequently discussed military friendships than officer participants. Geographic and subcultural difference among groups may have played a role in these emergent patterns. Officer participants mostly lived within the civilian community, whereas enlisted participants mostly lived on base in military housing. Officer participants tended to have higher socioeconomic status and higher levels of parent education. Enlisted participants were a much more racially diverse group than officers. Patterns among enlisted and officer groups will be further discussed in the next section.

School adults. Most participants only occasionally spoke about having accessed support from school adults. Participants did not independently discuss school staff, but when asked, they mentioned particular individuals as supports. During focus groups participants were asked, “In general, who helps you with more social and emotional problems?” All 11 mentioned family first; participants identified mostly parents and siblings. Then, the follow-up question asked, “What about adults at school?” Four participants each identified a teacher to whom they would go, and one mentioned that she often goes to the school counselor for support. One student noted: “My older sister has Mr. R. who is really helpful. He told her to tell me if I ever need to talk I can go to him, too.” Even for problems related to school work, participants went to family and friends first:

Where I go to, my family first, and then maybe go to my teachers to see if ... especially the one where I have, like (clears throat), the one that are like the bad grades. I could see if they could help me, like, after school or during lunch or something like that.

Participants also mentioned technology as a resource for school as a first resource, but because the research explicitly asked about the people who helped them, perhaps it came up less in their conversations. One participant noted how much she relied on Internet resources made available by the school: “Like the computer ... I don’t really go to anybody. Well, it’s kind of ...I look on Haiku...” Haiku is the name of the learning management system this school used for posting content, calendars, information, discussion boards, and communication among students, parents, and staff. She continued, “Typically (I look) on haiku or ‘Students Helping Students’ kind of thing.” Several teachers had set up a discussion board (“Students Helping

Students”) open to all students enrolled in their classes, where students asked each other about course content and homework assignments. Another participant added, “Haiku is going to be right there, right? (points to the center of the chart).” He noted that had there been a place for it on his support network chart, technology would be at the very center, because of how frequently he relied on it for academic support.

Participants were asked for clarification in the following exchange:

R: “So, tell me if this is true. For smaller issues, you might go to your friends...”

049: “Yes.”

R: “... but for more difficult things like you don’t understand the concept or your grade isn’t what you want, so you might go to family first, and then maybe teachers too?”

132: “Mm-hmm (affirmative).”

R: “Does that sound about right?”

132: “Yeah.”

266: “Yeah.”

102: “Yeah.”

Participants infrequently spoke about seeking support from teachers and school staff, and mostly seemed to seek support from family and friends, which matches survey data. Military-connected youth may have relied more on family than friends due to the circumstances of having moved often, but most participants in focus groups noted that it depended on the situation. It is also conceivable that speaking about receiving help from school staff is seen negatively by adolescents. Nonetheless, speaking of knowing when to go to specific people or resources implies that they were strategic in help-seeking behaviors. As noted above, throughout focus groups military-connected participants articulately described how and when they would go to certain people in their lives as resources for overcoming challenges.

Whole network survey data found similar trends, with friends and family as the most frequent resource before school adults, suggesting that these patterns of support seeking may be typical among adolescents. The survey, given to the whole eighth-grade network (civilian and military), asked the following question:

In general, when you are experiencing a difficult problem with school, what percentage of the time (out of 100) are you likely to turn to friends, family, and school adults? Click and drag the bars to the number that matches what percentage of the time you would go to that group of people.

All participants significantly more frequently turned to family and peers than to school staff when experiencing problems at school. Table 6 shows the average value for each support category. Standard deviation is relatively large for all three categories, supporting the idea that support-seeking patterns most likely vary greatly based on individual personality and circumstances, family structure, and other adolescent characteristics.

Table 6. What Percentage of the Time (Out of 100) Are You Likely to Turn to Friends, Family, and School Adults?

Answer Choice	Average Value	Standard Deviation
Friends	57.84	31.66
Family	54.07	33.49
School adults (teachers, counselors)	26.92	29.69

(*N* = 205)

Based on survey data and qualitative data, both civilian and military-connected participants went to family and friends first for support with school problems and social-emotional issues. Seeking support from friends, family, then school may be developmentally appropriate for adolescents, especially given the importance of peer relationships during early adolescence. It may be more a reflection of “acceptable” help-seeking behaviors within the age group or cultural group of participants.

During focus groups, participants spoke about the military community as having encompassed nearly every aspect of life for participants. Especially for the enlisted group, friends, family, neighborhood activities, and school (since this study took place in a military-dense school), were all likely to fall under the category of military community. In addition to the typical support networks of civilian adolescents (family, friends, extracurriculars, and school), military-connected adolescents and their families discussed having an extended support network with them throughout their travels: the military community. It is also possible that this type of constant community could end up being a constraining or limiting community. Perhaps participants propensities to focus on the positive is due to the fact that they self

selected to participate, and that these individuals had positive experiences with the military community, but others outside of the current study have not. It may be that such a tight-knit community frowns upon speaking negatively on the military community, or that students were afraid of retribution for their parents who were employed by the military. Given a small sample and a limited amount of time with participants, it is difficult to assign meaning beyond the scope of these one-time conversations. Still, the potentially positive impact of a tight-knit supportive environment like the military community warrants more investigation to see if this trend holds true with larger samples and across contexts and age-groups. This tendency to seek support from a variety of helpers (family, friends, and school adults) matched data from artifact analysis (ego network analysis discussed later in the chapter as discussion of research question four).

Focus group participants spoke about the pervasive influence of the military community in their lives. They articulated the common challenges of belonging to a military-connected family (deployment cycle stress, high mobility rates, difficulty making friends, living abroad). Much of the qualitative data matched survey data (such as high deployment rates, deployment negatively associated with GPA, (discussed later in this chapter as discussion of research question 3) and high mobility rates.

Focus group participants also spoke about having both military and civilian friends, which matched social network analysis and artifact analysis (ego network analysis discussed later in the chapter as discussion of research question four).

Military-connected adolescents in this study described how civilian friendships provided both relative stability and knowledge about the local community. They described how military friendships provided a sense of shared experiences and familiarity with those they had met at previous stations.

Research Question 3

How do the experiences of navigating the multiple worlds of home, school, and military communities vary according adolescent and family characteristics? Adolescent and family characteristics include student achievement, gender, family socioeconomic status, military rank, family structure, etc.

The sections that follow describe analyses and findings in terms of self-reported survey data (mobility, deployment, and academic outcomes as measured by GPA), code application frequency by categories (rank and gender), and code application frequency by focus group artifact data (i.e. friendship network patterns, support network patterns, parental education levels, mobility rates, and deployment rates). Patterns by race or family structure were not analyzed due to low cell sizes.

Mobility and deployment rates. By eighth grade, most military-connected adolescent participants had experienced several parental deployments and moved schools numerous times. There was no significant difference between officer and enlisted groups for mobility and deployment rates among survey participants or among focus group participants. The mean mobility rate for survey participants was 3.24, representing the category 3-4 times. The focus group sample reported a slightly higher

mean mobility rate of 3.53. The majority of all military-connected participants had moved 3-4 times and more. The mean deployment rate for survey participants was 3.61, representing the categories 3-4 times and 5-6 times. The focus group sample reported a slightly lower mean deployment rate of 3.29. The majority of all military-connected participants had experienced parental deployments at least 3-4 times and more. Table 7 displays a breakdown of deployment and mobility rates among survey participants.

Table 7. Deployment and Mobility Rates among Whole Network Survey Participants

Deployment Rates	Valid Percent (n)
0 times	3.70 (2)
1-2 times	18.52 (10)
3-4 times	22.22 (12)
5-6 times	24.07 (13)
7 or more times	31.48 (17)
<hr/>	
Mobility Rates	
0 times	14.81 (8)
1-2 times	14.81 (8)
3-4 times	22.22 (12)
5-6 times	27.78 (15)
7 or more times	20.37 (11)

(*n* = 54)

The majority of participants had already moved 5-6 times and experienced 7 or more parental deployments by the time of this study, their eighth-grade year of school. Not only have participants experienced mobility and deployment, but they have experienced it many times. Although much of the literature on military-connected youth suggests that high mobility rates contribute to a host of challenges noted earlier, recent research suggest that as mobility rates increase, adolescents may begin to benefit in the form of developing resilience (Weber & Weber, 2005). Deployment often comes with stress for military-connected adolescents: uncertainty before the Service member departs, safety concerns during deployment, and even transitional stress after a deployed parent returns (Milburn & Lightfoot, 2013).

Experiential differences. Comparing code frequencies revealed experiential differences among focus group participants. Using SPSS, independent t-tests were run to explore differences between demographic categories (gender and rank) by code frequencies among focus group participants.

Friendship patterns. Officer focus group participants discussed civilian and military friends more frequently than enlisted participants. Officer participants significantly more frequently discussed friends as a resource for support ($M = 2.50$, $SD = .58$) than enlisted participants ($M = 1.56$, $SD = .71$), $t(11) = -2.28$, $p = .043$. Tables 8 and 9 represent group means and independent t-test results for comparing civilian and military friends code application frequency between officer and enlisted groups.

Table 8. Group Means: Civilian and Military Friends Code Frequency by Rank

Code	Rank	<i>n</i>	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Civilian and Military Friends	Enlisted	9	1.56	.71	.24
	Officer	4	2.50	.58	.29

Table 9. Independent Sample t-test Comparing Civilian and Military Friends Code Frequency by Rank

Code	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Civilian and Military Friends	-2.28	11	.043	-.94	.41	-1.86	-.03

During focus groups, although enlisted participants described the importance of having both civilian and military friendships, they nearly all mentioned that most of their friends were military-connected. On the contrary, officer participants noted that while they had many military friends, often by coincidence (from school and overseas military bases), most of their friends tended to be civilian. Officer participants in this study lived within the civilian community, while enlisted participants lived in naval housing separate from the civilian community, so it makes sense that officers would have more civilian and military friendships than enlisted participants, who had mostly military friends.

Economic hardship. Enlisted focus group participants discussed economic hardship, whereas officer participant did not. Enlisted participants significantly more frequently discussed economic hardship ($M = .64$, $SD = .92$) than officer participants ($M = 0$, $SD = 0$), $t(10) = 2.28$, 0.05 . Tables 10 and 11 represent group means and independent t-test results for comparing economic hardship code application frequency between officer and enlisted groups.

Table 10. Group Means: Economic Hardship Code Frequency by Rank

Code	Rank	<i>n</i>	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Economic Hardship	Enlisted	11	.64	.92	.28
	Officer	6	.00	.00	.00

Table 11. Independent Sample t-test Comparing Economic Hardship Code Frequency by Rank

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Economic Hardship	2.28	10	0.05	0.64	0.28	0.02	1.26

Enlisted participants mentioned that sometimes it was difficult to relate to kids at the school due to socioeconomic differences. One participant noted: “The military doesn’t pay that well, so it can also be difficult to relate to like the kids that live in these multi-million dollar houses (group nodded).” Because sense of belonging is often an important factor in how students fare academically in schools, economic hardship may be in some way associated with differences in achievement outcomes (GPA) by rank. Not being able to relate to peers in the civilian community as much due to socioeconomic factors may have also led enlisted participants to have more military-dense friendship networks in this study.

Deployment and mobility impact on GPA. There were no statistically significant correlations between GPA and mobility or deployment rates. However,

there was a near significant negative relationship between deployment and GPA, most notably for semester 2 ($r = -.25$, $p = .10$). This trend may have been significant given a larger sample size. The participants included in this study had almost all experienced relatively high rates of mobility and deployment. Given their experience with such challenges, it may be that participants are fairly well-equipped to deal with the challenges associated with moving and parental deployment. Still, the negative relationship between deployment and GPA shows that deployment is related to lower GPAs. See Table 12 for the Pearson's correlation coefficients.

Table 12. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation: GPA by Mobility and Deployment Rates

Correlations				
	GPA Semester 1	GPA Semester 2	Deployment Rates	Mobility Rates
GPA Semester 1	1			
GPA Semester 2	.79**	1		
Deployment Rates	-.19	-.25~	1	
Mobility Rates	.12	.18	.13	1

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, ~ $p < .10$

High mobility rates have been linked to negative academic outcomes and behavioral challenges for military-connected adolescents. However, in this study, mobility did not seem to be associated with academic achievement as measured by GPA. It may be that GPA is more susceptible to variation than other measures, such as

standardized tests, and, therefore not the strongest indicator for academic achievement. Maybe the support participants received from peers, family, the military community, and the school mitigated potential harmful effects of mobility and deployment. Perhaps participants had already developed resilience and coping strategies so that mobility and deployment would not greatly impact their schooling. If any of these possible explanations are true, it made sense that no correlation was found among mobility and GPA.

GPA group differences. Even though mobility and deployment may not have had negative relationships with participant academic achievement, group differences existed for military-connected adolescents. Due to the small sample size of focus groups, similar sets of statistical analyses were also run with the eighth-grade whole network survey data. A one-way between participants ANOVA was conducted to compare outcomes by adolescent and family characteristics. For both focus group and survey data, ANOVA tests found no statistically significant differences between male and female participants for semester one and two GPAs, mobility rates, and deployment rates. ANOVA tests also found no significant differences among race groups for semester one and two GPAs, mobility rates, and deployment rates.

Group differences by outcomes (GPA) were statistically significant between civilian and military-connected participants. On average, military-connected adolescents reported lower GPAs for both semesters 1 and 2 than their civilian peers. Tables 13, 14, and 15 represent the GPA range response values used for the self-report survey, along with group means, and the outcomes from an independent t-test analysis.

Table 13. GPA: Numeric Scores Represent Self-reported GPA Ranges

Numeric Code	GPA Range Values
1	Below 2.0 (Ds and below)
2	2.0-2.4 (some Cs, mostly Ds or below)
3	2.5-2.9 (mostly Cs)
4	3.0-3.4 (mostly Bs)
5	3.5-3.9 (mostly As)
6	4.0 (straight As)

Mean scores in the following section represent responses to survey questions about self-reported GPA ranges for semesters 1 and 2 (see Table 13). A score of 1 represents a GPA of 2.0 (Ds and below), whereas a score of 6 represents a GPA of 4.0 (straight As). So, the mean scores seen in Table 13 (4.4-5.3) represent a range of scores from 4-6, which represents GPA ranges from 3.0-3.5 (mostly Bs) to 4.0 (straight As). Mean scores are not actual mean GPAs.

Table 14. Group Means Scores: Representative of Self-Reported GPA Ranges by Military-connected Status

	Group	<i>n</i>	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
GPA_Sem1	Civilian	112	4.94	1.08	.10
	Military-connected	47	4.47	1.30	.20
GPA_Sem2	Civilian	112	5.34	.82	.08
	Military-connected	47	5.09	.93	.14

Table 15. Independent Sample t-test Comparing Group Mean Scores Representing Self-reported GPA Ranges by Military and Civilian Participants

	t	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
						Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
GPA Semester 1	.06	2.34	157	.02	.47	.20	.07	.86
GPA Semester 2	.51	1.71	157	.09	.25	.15	-.04	.55

Group differences by outcomes (GPA) were statistically significant between officer and enlisted participants. The mean scores are categorical (see Table 14) scores of 1-6: 6 being a GPA of 4.0, 1 being a GPA of below 2.0. Statistics were run among focus group participants and with whole network survey data. For both focus group analysis and whole network survey data independent sampled t-tests found statistically significant differences between rank and enlisted focus group participant self-reported GPA.

The same trend was true for focus group participants. The officer group reported significantly higher semester on GPAs ($M = 5.40$, $SD = .89$) than the enlisted group ($M = 3.90$, $SD = .89$), $t(13) = -2.32$, $p = .037$. The officer group also reported significantly higher semester two GPAs ($M = 5.80$, $SD = .45$) than the enlisted group ($M = 4.60$, $SD = .84$), $t(13) = -2.94$, $p = .011$. The standard deviation of GPAs for semester one among enlisted focus group participants showed more variation than officer focus group participants and more variation than semester two, meaning that

there may have been more chance for sensitivity to extremes. Still, independent sampled t-tests found statistically significant differences between rank and enlisted focus group participant self-reported GPA. Tables 16 and 17 further describe the numeric codes used to represent GPA range values, groups means, and independent sample t-test outcomes.

Table 16. Group Mean Scores: Representative of Self-Reported GPA Ranges by Rank (Focus Groups)

	Rank	n	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
GPA Semester 1	Enlisted	10	3.90	1.29	.41
	Officer	5	5.40	.89	.40
GPA Semester 2	Enlisted	10	4.60	.84	.27
	Officer	5	5.80	.48	.20

Table 17. Independent Sample t-test Comparing Group Means Scores Representative of Self-Reported GPA Ranges by Rank (Focus Group)

Variable	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	Sig. (2-Tailed)	Mean Diff.	Std. Error Diff.	95% Confidence interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Sem. 1 GPA	-2.32	13	.037	-1.50	.65	-2.90	-.10
Sem 2. GPA	-2.94	13	.011	-1.20	.41	-2.08	-.32

The research then ran Pearson's Product Moment Correlations to assess the relationship between rank and GPA among focus group participants. There was a correlation between the two variables for semester one and two. Greater variation in

GPA responses for semester 1 may have accounted for the higher significance in the correlation for semester 2 GPA ($r = .63, p = .011$). See Table 18 for the Pearson's correlation coefficients.

Table 18. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation: GPA by Rank (Focus Group)

Correlations			
	Rank	GPA Semester 1	GPA Semester 2
Rank	1		
GPA Semester 1	.54*	1	
GPA Semester 2	.63*	.86**	1

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, ~ $p < .10$

Whole network differences. The officer group reported significantly higher semester one GPAs ($M = 5.15, SD = 0.88$) than the enlisted group ($M = 3.88, SD = 1.36$), $t(43) = -3.61, p = .001$. The officer group also reported significantly higher semester two GPAs ($M = 5.65, SD = 0.67$) than the enlisted group ($M = 4.60, SD = 0.87$), $t(43) = -4.58, p = 0.06$. Tables 19 and 20 display the group means and independent t-test results.

Table 19. Group Means: Self-reported GPA by Rank (Whole Network)

	Rank	n	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
GPA_Sem1	Enlisted	25	3.88	1.36	.27
	Officer	20	5.15	.88	.20
GPA_Sem2	Enlisted	25	4.60	.87	.17
	Officer	20	5.65	.67	.15

Table 20. Independent Sample t-test Comparing Self-reported GPA by Rank (Whole Network)

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
GPA_Sem1	-3.61	43	.00	-1.23	.35	-1.98	-.56
GPA_Sem2	-4.58	42.97	.00	-1.05	.23	-1.51	-.59

The research next ran Pearson's Product Moment Correlations to assess the relationship between rank and GPA among whole network survey participants for a larger sample size. There was a positive correlation between rank and GPA ($r = .56$, $p = .00$). See Table 21 for the Pearson's correlation coefficients.

Table 21. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation: GPA by Rank (Whole Network)

Correlations				
		GPA Semester 1	GPA Semester 2	Rank
GPA Semester 1	Pearson Correlation	1		
GPA Semester 2	Pearson Correlation	.79**	1	
Rank	Pearson Correlation	.48**	.56**	1

** p<.01, *p<.05, ~p<.10

Officer participants reported higher mean GPAs than enlisted participants for both semesters. Less variation in second semester reporting showed higher significant differences among groups for second semester GPAs. Perhaps lower mean GPAs for enlisted participants is related to parental education level, socioeconomic status, or friendship and support networks. As noted earlier, civilian peers reported significantly higher mean GPAs than military-connected participants, with officer participants reporting higher mean GPAs than enlisted participants. It could have been that enlisted participant GPAs interacted with officer GPAs and that there may be no significant difference among officer and civilian mean GPAs. Officer participants are more integrated into civilian networks than enlisted participants. It may also have been that officer participants had more access to the knowledge and resources about the school and civilian community are embedded in civilian social networks. Nonetheless, significant differences in mean GPA were found by rank in both the large network sample and the smaller focus group sample.

Summary. Patterns by race or family structure were not analyzed due to low cell sizes; however, group differences existed between military and civilian

populations, as well as between officer and enlisted populations. Civilian participants reported higher mean GPA ranges than military-connected adolescents: officer participants reported higher mean GPA ranges than enlisted participants.

High mobility and deployment rates have been linked to negative academic outcomes and behavioral challenges for military-connected adolescents. In this study, deployment rates were negatively associated with GPA; however, mobility was not associated with GPA. Qualitative data analysis revealed equal code application frequencies for difficulty making friends and social skills. In this study, participants described the challenges associated with mobility (difficulty making friends) as having led to positive individual strengths, especially social skills. These findings imply that mobility may actually help military-connected adolescents build resilience over time. It could be that after a certain breaking point, challenges turn into resilience factors or even a non-factor. It is also conceivable that once a child is used to a certain challenge it becomes a normal part of life with little negative or positive impact on developmental outcomes. Findings related to GPA mobility and deployment suggest that deployment may be a greater influence for academic achievement than mobility, which warrants further investigation with future research. However, it is important to remember that based on privacy restrictions, GPA was obtained through self-report measures. It may be that these measures were more a reflection of participant self-efficacy than actual achievement. It may also be that participants inflated or deflated their GPAs based on lack of knowledge. GPA can be a difficult variable to use, especially for comparison. The findings from this study regarding military-civilian and

officer-enlisted GPA gaps warrant further investigation. Once achievement data is more publically available for military-connected youth as a diversity group in schools, it will be possible to use potentially more reliable data sources for measuring academic achievement.

Research Question 4

To what degree does the heterogeneity of the individual peer (ego) network impact individual experiences navigating the multiple worlds of home, school, and military communities and does this vary by adolescent or family demographic characteristics?

During focus groups, participants completed ego friendship and support networks. These ego networks were compared for heterogeneity (Blau's Index) and percent military. Blau's index is a measure of the probability that two participants randomly chosen from a dataset will be members of the same category. As Blau's index values approach zero, networks are less diverse and more heterogeneous; as Blau's index values approach one, networks are more diverse and less homogeneous. A completely homogenous network would earn a Blau's index value of zero, whereas a perfectly even display of heterogeneity in a network (one of each category) would earn a Blau's index of one. There was no significant difference among heterogeneity indexes for friendship networks.

Friendship network differences. Enlisted participants reported more military-dense friendship networks than officer participants. Diversity of friendship networks (Blau's Index) was analyzed with regards to military and civilian categories. Although

enlisted and officer focus group participants for had nearly identical the same average Blau's index measures, the makeup of their networks were reversed. Officer participants reported that civilians made up about 60% of their friends networks and military-connected adolescents made up about 30%; whereas, enlisted participants reported that military-connected adolescents made up about 60% of their friends networks and civilians made up about 30%. There was a near statistically significant difference in average percent military makeup for close friend networks and support networks, $t(12) = 2.08, p = 0.06$. . Enlisted participants reported higher military-dense friendship networks ($M = .60$) than the officer group ($M = .26$), See Table 22 for the independent sample t-test statistics. Figure 10 show the group mean and differences in percent military friendship networks between enlisted and officer participants.

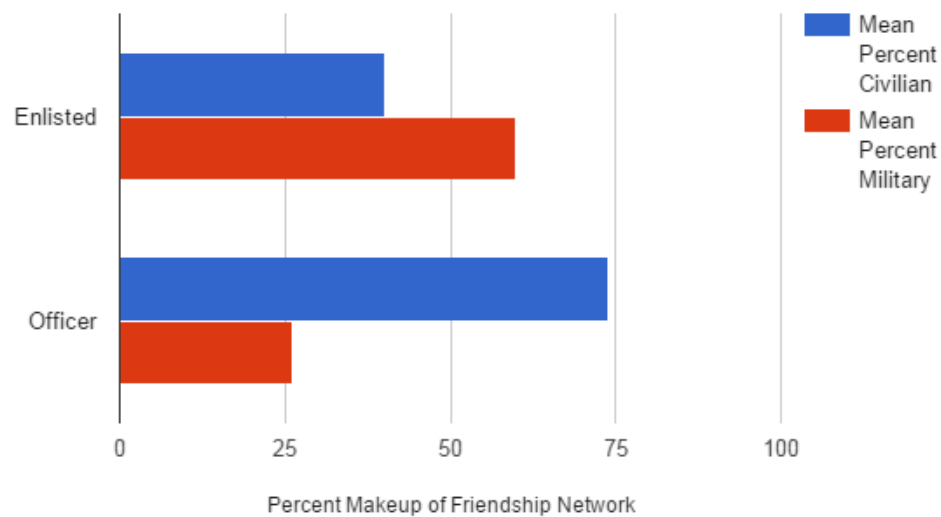


Figure 9. Mean Percent Military and Civilian Makeup of Friendship Networks by Rank

Table 22. Independent Sample t-test Comparing Percent Military Friends Network by Rank

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Std. Error Difference	Lower Upper
Percent Military Friends Network	2.08	12	.06	.34	.17	-.02 .70

Support network differences. Officer participants had more overall diverse support networks than enlisted participants. In the previous section, diversity (Blau's Index) measured heterogeneity of networks with regards to military and civilian categories. Given the more varied data for support networks, diversity of support networks was measured using Blau's Index two ways: first for military and civilian makeup, second for overall diversity of support networks using the categories peers, family, school adults, and other adults. For support networks, mean percent military makeup was closer between officer and enlisted groups than it was for their friendship networks. However, heterogeneity of support networks differed more between enlisted and officer groups than that of their friendship groups. Figure 11 shows the mean Blau's index of military makeup for support networks juxtaposed with the mean Blau's index of overall makeup for support networks. The gap between endpoints of the line represent the difference in Blau's index mean values. Mean Blau's indexes for military makeup and overall makeup were the same for officer participants, whereas

enlisted participants reported slightly less heterogeneity in their overall makeup of support networks, but significantly less diversity in terms of the military makeup of their support networks.

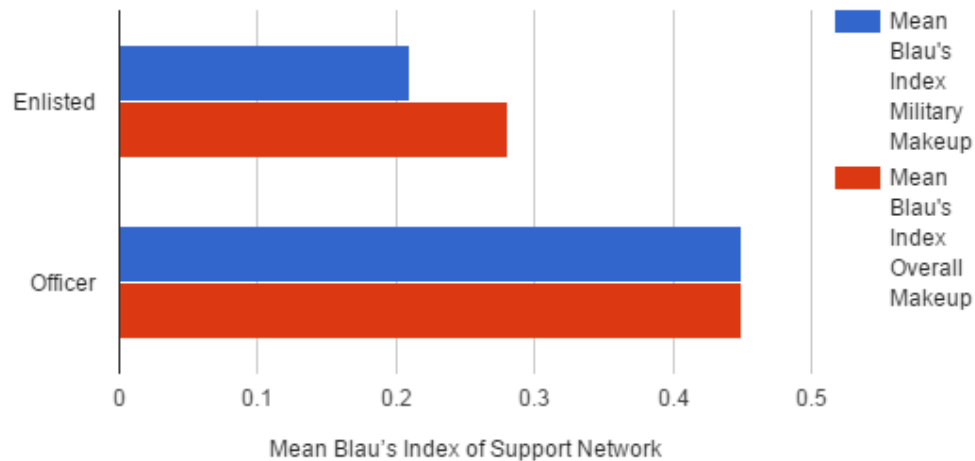


Figure 10. Mean Blau's Index of Support Networks by Rank

Both officer and enlisted groups reported going to a variety of people for support: peers, family, school adults, and other adults to a similar degree, but the military-density of those support networks differed significantly. These findings imply that enlisted participants in this study relied more on military-connected helpers than their officer counterparts. In fact, enlisted participants reported significantly lower heterogeneity of support networks in terms of military makeup ($M = .21$) than the officer participants ($M = .45$), $t(9.08) = -2.9$, $p = 0.02$. Table 23 shows the results of the independent t-test comparing Blau's Index of military makeup for support networks. Table 24 shows group mean differences in Blau's index for military makeup of support networks between enlisted and officer participants.

Table 23. Group Mean: Blau's Index of Military Makeup for Support Networks

	Rank	<i>n</i>	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Blau's Index Military Makeup of Support Networks	Enlisted	9	.21	.25	.08
	Officer	5	.45	.05	.02

Table 24. Independent Sample t-test Comparing Blau's Index of Military Makeup for Support Networks

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
					Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Blau's Index Military Support	-2.9	9.08	.017	-.25	.08	-.44	-.05

Next, Pearson's Product Moment Correlations were run to assess the association between mobility rates and variables of heterogeneity for participant friendship and support networks. Mobility rate may have impacted the heterogeneity of networks, especially military and civilian makeup, as someone who has moved often, may not have had as much opportunities to make friends or build relationships with civilian peers and school staff. Based on the literature that mobility can make it difficult to build and maintain relationships (Astor et al., 2012), it was hypothesized that mobility would be associated with lower total friends in friendship networks and helpers in support networks. It was also hypothesized that mobility would be associated with total and percent military makeup of support networks along with heterogeneity in friendship and support networks. Mobility was not significantly

correlated with total number of military friends in friendship networks or total number of helpers in support networks. Nor was mobility significantly correlated with percent military makeup of support networks. See Table 25 for the Pearson's correlation coefficients.

Table 25. Independent Sample t-test Comparing Blau's Index of Military Makeup for Support Networks

	Mobility Rate	Total Military Friends in Friendship Network	Total Helpers in Support Network	Total Military Helpers in Support Network	Percent Military Makeup of Support Network	Blau's Index (Military-civilian Diversity) of Support Networks
Mobility Rate	1					
Total Military Friends in Friendship Network	.42	1				
Total Helpers in Support Network	.23	-.13	1			
Total Military Helpers in Support Network	.34	-.08	.57*	1		
Percent Military Makeup of Support Network	.41	.22	-.22	.57*	1	
Blau's Index (Military-civilian Diversity) of Support Networks	.58*	.31	.59*	.36	-.12	1

** p<.01, *p<.05, ~p<.10

There was a significant positive correlation between mobility and Blau's Index (as measured by military-civilian diversity) of support networks ($r = .58$, $p = .03$). As students experienced more moves, their support networks became more heterogeneous. Moving more often may have increased participant awareness and

necessity for accessing support from a variety of people in their lives. It may be that participants tended to gravitate toward those with shared experiences, and as they moved more often participants were more habituated to and willing to reach out to more helpers in developing their support networks.

There was a also significant positive correlation between total helpers in support networks and total number of military helpers in support networks ($r = .57, p = .03$). As the total number of helpers in their support networks increased, so did the total number of military-connected helpers. There was also a significant positive correlation between total helpers in support networks and Blau's index of military makeup in support networks ($r = .59, p = .03$). As the total number of helpers increased, so did the heterogeneity of support networks. As the total number of helpers increased, participants were more likely to more helpers from each category, which in turn increased both the total number of military-connected helpers and the level of heterogeneity in terms of military-connectedness.

Conclusion

Much of the existing research describes military-connected adolescents as at-risk for lower academic achievement, higher dropout rates, emotional and behavioral struggles (e.g. suicide ideation, substance abuse, etc.) than their civilian peers (Astor et al., 2012; De Pedro et al., 2011); however, participants in this study described their challenges as potentially promoting positive developmental outcomes (such as motivation to do well in school, self-reliance, being adaptable to new situations, and strong social skills). Participants articulated that although making friends, moving

schools, living abroad, and sometimes relating to civilian peers was challenging, they bridged their multiple worlds by accessing a variety of assets and resources (military community, family, friends, and school adults) as supports. Adolescent comments reflected the possibility of a resiliency framework that situated protective factors that mitigated risk within the social systems in their lives (Resnick, 2000). Findings from this study imply that mobility can help military-connected adolescents build resilience, but deployment may be associated with lower academic achievement.

Analysis revealed intragroup variation across data sets. Despite having positive discussions about military-connected experiences, potential achievement gaps persisted at the site: civilian participants reported higher mean GPA ranges than military-connected participants; and officer participants reported higher mean GPA ranges than enlisted participants. These reported GPA differences suggest that there may be some unseen interactions that potentially influence academic achievement warranting further investigation for future research.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Currently, the majority of military-connected dependents in the United States attend civilian public schools (Esqueda, Astor, & De Pedro, 2012). Only about seven percent attend Department of Defense Education Activity (DODEA) schools around the Americas and the world (De Pedro, Astor, Gilreath, Benbenishty, & Esqueda, 2013) where military-connected children tend to fare much better academically than in public schools. The racial achievement gap in DODEA military base schools is much narrower than in public schools, and children at military schools outscore the nation's civilian schools on national tests; families report more positive functioning in military base schools despite experiencing the same struggles that are associated with risk in civilian schools (Esqueda et al., 2012). Though student populations and local contexts may not be comparable, military-connected youth seem to achieve higher academic outcomes in the highly specialized contexts of military base schools. Ensuring quality educational opportunities in public schools for military children affected by mobility, family separation, and transition can be difficult. High mobility rates often present challenges to children of military Service members: learning gaps, difficulty making friends, and challenges forming relationships in schools (Astor, Jacobson, & Benbenishty, 2012). Relationships with peers, family, and group belonging are critical during early adolescence (Ito, 2010) but may be hindered by high mobility rates for military-connected adolescents. Additionally, military-connected children often go through emotional and behavioral challenges related to a parent's deployment: cyclical stress, safety concerns, changing family dynamics, and extra responsibilities (Milburn

& Lightfoot, 2013). In many ways, the military-connected child's life is a constant state of transition due to high mobility rates and increasing deployment rates, which contribute to a variety of stresses including difficulty adjusting to new school environments (Bradshaw, Sudhinaraset, Mmari, & Blum, 2010). Even their daily lives at civilian schools require students to transition among peer groups, family, military, and civilian worlds. Cultural and structural differences between military and civilian experiences sometimes create a sense of military-civilian divide, which can be stressful for adolescents trying to fit in at school. Military-connected children must constantly navigate the cultural norms, scripts, behaviors, and values of both their military cultural community and civilian school environments, which can sometimes be in stark contrast. These tensions may cause additional stresses for military-connected adolescents in civilian schools.

Current research lacks an understanding of military-connected adolescents' civilian school lives from the child's perspective (De Pedro et al., 2013). This integrated methods (Yoshikawa, Weisner, Kalil, & Way, 2008) study investigated military-connected adolescent bridging processes to respond to this gap in the literature. The current study highlighted adolescent perspectives to represent how they utilized resources embedded in their social networks to overcome the challenges of navigating their military and civilian worlds. This chapter includes a summary of the findings, next steps for future research, and implications for stakeholders.

Connections to Prior Research and Theory

This study found numerous connections consistent with prior. Although traditional achievement gaps have been narrowing in Department of Defense Schools, achievement gaps remain in civilian public schools (Esqueda et al., 2012). Not only were military-connected adolescents in this study more likely to have lower GPAs than their civilian peers, but enlisted participants were more likely to have lower GPAs than officer participants. This difference between enlisted and officer participant academic outcomes (GPAs) may have been related to factors such as socioeconomic status and parental education levels, which would be consistent with literature attributing the persistent achievement gap to schools as a reproduction of society (Bourdieu, 1971; Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu & Passerson, 1977; Lareau, 1987). Rank in the military has historically been representative of education levels, socioeconomic status, and race. Enlisted families tend to be more racially diverse, from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, and have lower education levels than their officer counterparts (Feaver and Kohn, 2001).

Findings from this study are consistent with the research on social capital in schools, which has described the impact of cultural mismatch between home and school as contributing to either a sense of alienation or belonging; students who feel that they belong often fare better academically (Cooper, 2014; Flores-González, 1999; Gibson, Bejinez, Hidalgo, & Rolón, 2004; Mehan, Villanueva, Hubbard, & Lintz, 1996). Especially for highly mobile populations like military-connected adolescents, social capital (knowledge, norms, and sense of belonging) can be difficult to acquire,

and yet it is integral in helping students transition successfully both socially and academically. Sense of belonging may have influenced differences in GPA among groups. Both a qualitatively lower sense of belonging and quantitative difference in GPAs were more pronounced among enlisted participants than officer participants, which is consistent with existing literature on social capital and schools (Cooper, 2014; Flores-González, 1999; Gibson, Bejénez, Hidalgo, & Rolón, 2004; Mehan, Villanueva, Hubbard, & Lintz, 1996). GPA group differences between military and civilian participants may have been indicative of the greater cultural differences between military and civilian cultural communities. While American civilian culture tends to value individuality and freedom of expression, military culture more often imposes strict emphasis on the common “mission” (Exum, Coll, & Weiss, 2011). Feaver and Kohn (2001) refer to this type of military-civilian divide as the civil-military cultural “gap”: differing values and attitudes between civilian and military populations in the United States. It is possible that the civil-military cultural “gap” also influences military-connected youth and their sense of belonging in civilian schools. More mixed methods research might be able to shed light on any interactions between sense of belonging, rank, and educational outcomes for military-connected youth.

Major challenges discussed by focus group participants were consistent with existing literature on military-connected youth (Astor et al., 2012). They discussed deployment related stress, difficulty making friends, moving often, and living abroad as major challenges. Yet, participants in this study had positive outlooks and did not

dwell on the negative aspects of the challenges they faced. Instead, they spoke of how they learned coping mechanisms and relied on the support of family, friends, the military community, and school adults to help them overcome their challenges. They also spoke of how some challenges helped them to develop individual strengths and resilience. For example, although participants discussed difficulty making friends as a challenge of high mobility rates, military-connected adolescents also discussed the important role that civilian and military friends play as resources for bridging their military and civilian worlds. These findings are consistent with Cooper's (2014) work, which has shown that many at-risk youth perceive their challenges as motivators, pushing them to prove naysayers wrong and ultimately leading to positive individual strengths, like resilience. In the current study, participants also discussed their challenges as contributing to individual strengths, such as social skills, self-reliance, appreciation for other cultures, and problem solving.

For military-connected adolescents, peers were more than simply friends, they were helpers, people that granted access to important community and academic knowledge, as well as emotional support. Mobility was not significantly correlated with lower GPAs. Instead, mobility was possibly a factor of resilience (Weber & Weber, 2005).

In consistency with the Bridging Multiple Worlds framework (Cooper, 2014) participants in the study accessed resources from multiple worlds in overcoming their challenges; officer participants, who reported higher GPAs, reported higher heterogeneity of support networks. They accessed people and resources from more

worlds (friends, family, school adults, military, and civilian) than enlisted participants who reported lower GPAs. Prior research (Cooper, 2014; Cooper, C. R. & Denner, J., 1998), has shown the most successful adolescents accessed resources and support from more worlds. Studies with larger populations across multiple contexts may be able to illuminate positive association between heterogeneity of support networks and academic achievement. It is possible that accessing support from across multiple worlds and higher heterogeneity of support networks contribute to positive developmental outcomes for adolescents who constantly navigate multiple cultural worlds. In the current study, both enlisted and officer military-connected participants relied on their social networks (friends, family, the military community, and school adults) as important bridging resources for overcoming the obstacles associated with navigating their multiple cultural worlds and those associated with military lifestyle (i.e. mobility and deployment).

Supportive environments (close familial relationships, positive school climate, and the military cultural community) are known protective factors for at risk youth; academic outcomes for military-connected children significantly improve when children have rich social support networks (O'Brien, 2007). For military-connected adolescents who participated in focus groups, family was the number one discussed go-to resource for both school and social emotional support. Survey responses revealed that the entire population (civilian and military) went to friends more often than family, but went to both friends and family much more frequently than school adults for school related problems. These findings are consistent with the literature on

the importance of peers during early adolescence (Erikson, 1968; Ito, 2010). Some have suggested that adolescents typically seek independence and autonomy from family during this developmental stage (Erikson, 1968). Yet, more recently, researchers have found that during adolescence it is most likely a combination of autonomy and family, as well as community-relatedness that promotes optimal outcomes (i.e. resilience, independent functioning, and academic achievement) (McElhaney, Allen, Stephenson & Hare, 2009). Participants spoke of military-connected friendship and support networks acting as major supports, possibly resiliency networks for participants. Similarly, resilience research paradigms (Resnick, 2000) assert that social systems and networks often benefit youth by mitigating potential risk factors.

New Insights

Context matters. Much of the research on military-connected youth in civilian schools focuses on outcomes on a national scale. Few studies focus on describing and documenting the varying local contexts in which military-connected youth go to school. The multiple, visible Naval bases within the community, along with other Service branch bases in surrounding communities, create a physical environment in which the military community is a part of the regional scenery and culture. These bases have had a strong historical presence in the greater social and cultural history of the community in which the study took place. Additionally, participants in this study attended a military-dense school where they made up more than one-third of the school population. It is possible that the large number of military-connected youth at

the site and the rich military history in the community, influenced the network findings; participants, their families, their friendships, and their support networks were all embedded within a geographically small community where their unique experiences as military-connected youth were generally celebrated. It may be that this context may contributed to the amount to which military-connected adolescents integrated into the social network at their school. On the other hand it might be that these social network patterns would be found at any local context with that large of a military-connected population. Either way, findings from this study highlighted the potential influence the school context and community makeup within that broader social context for military-connected adolescents attending civilian public schools.

Differences by rank. Experiential differences existed at this setting between enlisted and officer military-connected adolescents. Rank could also be thought of in terms of socioeconomic status, parental education, and race with larger population samples. Significant differences by rank in achievement (GPA), friendship network patterns, and support network patterns, have not been explored by prior research with military-connected youth. Enlisted participants participated in more military dense friendship networks and support networks. Officer and enlisted participants had nearly identical heterogeneity indexes for friendship networks, but the mean percent military versus civilian makeup of their friendship networks were reversed. On the contrary, officer participant support networks had significantly higher heterogeneity in support networks, suggesting that they may have greater variety in helpers (friends, family, and school adults). More research should explore the cultural meaning and outcomes

related to these differences. Are these differences attributed to geographic living conditions, social class, education levels, racial diversity, formal fraternization rules among the adult Service members? Are these differences associated with positive or negative outcomes for military-connected youth? From this study, new questions have been raised regarding possible intersectionalities of social justice (socioeconomic status, race, and gender) for military-connected adolescents in civilian schools.

Military-civilian divide. Some other unexpected topics that came up during focus groups may warrant further investigation. Some participants spoke about feeling like it was difficult to relate to civilian peers, which may imply a greater problem of military/civilian divide. Military-connected youth all spoke about the challenges of making new friends at a school where most of the other students had been friends since early childhood, but enlisted participants noted sometimes having felt difficulty in relating to their civilian peers, specifically due to socioeconomic differences. Perhaps, given different contexts sense of belonging would not be a problem, or could even be the reverse. If this is indicative of larger national trends, enlisted military-connected youth may be at a distinct disadvantage from their officer peers in a variety of ways. Not only do officer families typically come from higher socioeconomic and educational backgrounds, but they may sometimes have a stronger sense of belonging in civilian public schools than their enlisted counterparts. In the current study, officer participants were more integrated into civilian social networks at the site, which was predominantly of more affluent, higher socioeconomic status permanent residents. They also lived in the civilian community, whereas the enlisted

participants tended to live on base. Officer participants, were more likely to be insiders in this case. Knowing that sense of belonging is an important form of social capital for social and emotional well-being and academic achievement, it is important to consider the construct when studying youth in schools, especially highly mobile populations.

Implications for Future Research

Based on the current study, some new questions that warrant future investigation have surfaced:

1. What do these phenomena look like at other school sites and different geographic locations and across contexts?
2. What are the roles of local context, school leadership, and school climate in fostering healthy experiences and positive support networks for military-connected adolescents?
3. How do these phenomena change over time in young people's lives?
4. How does mobility contribute to risk and resilience?
5. What meaning is assigned to the different patterns in social and support networks, bridging experiences, and academic outcomes between enlisted and officer groups?
6. What role does sense of belonging play in military-connected youth school lives?

The section that follows proposes recommendations for researchers in addressing these questions.

Replicating studies like this one across multiple local and national contexts would import larger sample sizes, but it may also help researchers determine what

variation can be attributed to local context from other variables. Integrated methods (Yoshikawa et al., 2008) and the Bridging Multiple Worlds (Cooper, 2014) theoretical model applied to future studies will facilitate detailed investigation of the social contexts and related outcomes at schools that serve military-connected youth. Current research lacks accurate and rich descriptions of the complex ecologies and public school experiences of military-connected youth (Esqueda et al., 2012). More studies applying integrated methods (Yoshikawa et al., 2008) would help to unpack the layers of individual and community variables nested within complex, evolving ecologies that surround youth across academic pathways. The field would benefit from more comprehensive, systematic, and methodologically sound approaches for studying highly mobile populations, like military-connected youth.

Social network analysis is an especially promising methodology for studying military-connected youth. Given the documented influence of peers and friendships on later academic outcomes for early adolescents (Ito, 2010), descriptive and quantitative social network analysis should be at the forefront of studies involving youth in schools. Social network analysis shed light on how, surprisingly, military-connected youth (highly mobile participants) integrated well into the social systems at the school. By studying the social networks of military-connected youth in a variety of settings, researchers would gain a better picture of what types of environments (local contexts, school leadership, and school culture) lead to more positive peer interactions in schools. Utilizing social network analysis among peers in schools may also help to improve school-based intervention efforts, including welcoming newcomers and

connecting peers through programs like Student 2 Student® (S2STM). Research-practice partnerships might apply social network analysis to help school leaders leverage peer networks in getting youth to participate in school-based interventions and in getting more youth to engage in more integrated friendship networks. For example, individual position and group roles in social networks are key to finding centrally located students (who are highly influential, open to diversity, and empathetic) as peer links. These students could serve as peer models whose presence may be more natural than adults in reducing stigma for help-seeking and joining programs that can help new students make connections faster in their new communities.

Longitudinal studies would be useful in helping researchers and educators know more about how experiences and academic outcomes for military-connected adolescents in public schools change over time given a variety of factors, such as age of participants, deployment rates, and mobility rates. Often times, highly mobile populations can be difficult to study. With military youth researchers may have a unique opportunity to gain access and insight into the school lives of highly mobile youth, since military-connected families stay under the umbrella of their branch of service as may they move geographic locations. Technology and social media may be a useful tool in terms of keeping in touch with participants for longitudinal research.

Subsequent research should further explore how participants perceived their challenges as assets, ultimately leading to positive developmental outcomes, which is divergent from most current research and education perspectives that tend to default to

a deficit model for at-risk youth. However, some recent research has suggested that certain challenges, like increased mobility, may actually foster resilience (Weber & Weber, 2005). More studies should focus on the construct of mobility and how mobility rates and other challenges interact with educational experiences and outcomes for military-connected youth in schools across a variety of contexts.

Future studies should also investigate intersectionalities of social justice regarding educational and experiential outcomes for military-connected youth among demographic groups by rank, race, socioeconomic status, and gender. This critical lens will help to illuminate equity issues within the military community so that researchers and policymakers can pinpoint strategies for narrowing the achievement gap between enlisted and officer military dependents in public schools. Furthermore, more investigation into a potential military-civilian divide at the school level might shed light on the role that sense of belonging plays in military-connected adolescents' school lives. Findings from such work may help educators in building supportive environments for the nation's military-connected youth in public schools.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Military-connected adolescents and military Families. Findings from the current study highlight the important roles that social networks, support networks, and friendships play in developing resilience and positive mindsets. Military-connected adolescents may want to consider making friends with both military-connected and civilian youth at school. Civilian friends may be able to offer consistent support and knowledge about the school and community, while military-connected friends may be

able to offer a sense of understanding based on shared experiences with the military lifestyle. Even though military-connected youth move frequently, sometimes with little warning, technology helped students maintain friendships and ease the stress of moving so much. Certain technologies, perhaps some sort of social network app for military-connected families and adolescents to stay connected with one another and to introduce themselves to other military and civilian kids in their new communities may help ease the stress of transition and help military-connected youth build friendship networks across multiple moves.

Schools and School Districts. School climate, along with community and staff awareness matters. School and district leaders that serve military-connected families should make celebrating the unique experiences of military-connected youth a priority. There are many ways to achieve this: encouraging professional development and staff training on the strengths and needs of military-connected families and celebrating local holidays that relate to the military (i.e. Veterans Day, Memorial Day, National Month of the Military Child). School leaders and educators should encourage families and students to share their stories, thank them for their service, and facilitate communication with teachers and school staff. Teachers may want to implement welcome surveys that ask a variety of questions about students and their families, including a question item asking if they are military-connected. Due to confidentiality rules, many educators do not know which students are military-connected unless students and families volunteer that information voluntarily. The field is currently moving toward removing barriers for identifying and tracking military-connected

youth in schools, which will help teachers and educators at the local level to assist families and students through potentially difficult transitions (Biden, 2016).

Sometimes, the simple act of asking students about their unique experiences helps build relationships and is an important part of empowering youth in the classroom setting.

Schools and districts may be able to leverage social networks to help build positive school communities and welcome new students throughout the year. Identify influential and empathetic central actors. During interviews, school staff noted that enrollment for peer-based groups, like Student 2 Student® (S2STM), is particularly low by eighth-grade. It could be that, as shown in the findings at this site, many military-connected youth are already feeling well-connected to their school's social system and no longer need the support as much, but it may also be an issue of age and stigma. Peer models and peer-based recruitment may be more effective than the current model (MFLC and school staff as recruiters) and could help to increase enrollment for existing programs that have seen success in other contexts (Aster et al., 20120).

Schools need to meet families and youth where they to communicate and share resources, especially for those who may already feel less-connected to the community. Rather than always meeting on school sites, seek out the popular meeting points in the community and ask support groups to meet there. If there are bases nearby, offer to occasionally have school-related meetings on base; this may ease the stress of stigma or economic difficulty for many military families.

Military Community and School Partnerships. Local programs supporting MCAs should focus on connecting military-connected adolescents with other military-connected youth *and* civilian peers. Currently, programs exist to connect military-connected youth, but school-based military community interventions can do more to connected youth within the civilian school and local communities. Perhaps, in addition to clubs on campus, military liaisons can host events for both military and civilian families in order to bridge any existing social gaps and help military-connected youth transition into their new homes. Connecting parents and family members with school staff, as well as extracurricular and the academic expectations of the school and community are also important in helping families transition. Military community services may be able to do more to promote and facilitate communication between parents and staff regarding initial identification of students who are military-connected, but also in keeping educators and support staff informed about deployments and other life stressors that may impact student social, emotional, and academic well-being.

Technology may be an important resource for military-connected youth and their families. New technologies, such as the app WelConnect (2015), can help to connect school-based programs with military-community initiatives and supports, as well as welcome new students and families still in transition. As part of utilizing this technology, districts create transition teams and resource centers to facilitate the coordination of services for families in transition. The app even provides parents with the ability to file enrollment paperwork and to alert schools about any special needs

and services required for incoming students. It will also help set up appointments and reminders for families, all before they even arrive in the community. WelConnect (2015) is only available in certain school districts in Southern California, but may serve as a model for how other regions can develop local school-community-services partnerships that utilize technology to support highly mobile youth in schools.

State and Federal Policy. Given the existing literature documenting the challenges facing military-connected youth in US public schools (Astor et al., 2012), federal and state institutions should coordinate with local districts and schools to help track military-connected youth. Documentation should follow students across contexts, similar to the way that individual Education Plans (IEPs) follow students with special needs wherever they enroll. Changes in legislation will soon remove barriers for identifying and tracking military-connected youth in schools and assist researchers with regards to creating public data sets and opening up public funding for researching military-connected youth as a diversity group in the nation's public schools (Biden, 2016). These changes will also allow federal, state, and local entities to track data and monitor the academic achievement of military-connected youth, much the same way as with other diversity groups.

In contexts where military-connected families are more spread out, state agencies and military services governed by the Department of Defense might create support groups and social gatherings where families and children can meet and develop supportive relationships across schools and neighborhoods within great geographic regions. These regional social support networks may help lessen transition

stress and increase sense of belonging for students who do not go to school with other military-connected youth. Parents and families will also be able to maintain social support systems and exchange information regarding local contexts, even when they find themselves far from the military community and the services it provides.

Final Remarks

The current study highlights the importance of including participant voice, especially for invisible or marginalized populations. Even though certain life circumstances and stressors may be associated with negative developmental or academic outcomes, it is important to remember that these shared experiences may also cultivate individual and group resilience by contributing to a sense of group belonging and promoting individual strengths that may help participants later in life. Military-connected adolescents and their families face many challenges, but, according to participants in this study, they also have supportive, flexible extended resiliency networks: friends, family, and the military community, which often overlap. By including participant voice, researchers can better understand the power of social networks as protective factors that mitigate risk in young people's school lives and the cultural meaning behind them.

In addition to describing the particular set of challenges unique to military-connected youth and making recommendations for policies, the work of researchers should highlight the unique experiences of military-connected adolescents along with the potential factors of resilience, such as the supportive environment of the military community, support networks, and friendship networks, that mitigate potentially

harmful outcomes. Giving participants voice may be the first step in inspiring other military families to share their experiences and to show pride in circumstances they have overcome. In many ways the power of their voices speak for themselves.

Research-community partnerships based on the inclusion of youth perspectives have transformative potential for studying a variety of youth phenomenon within schools and for better understanding the factors that contribute to highly supportive environments, especially for understudied groups or invisible populations in US public schools such as military-connected adolescents.

Appendix A: School Personnel Interview Protocol

School Personnel Interview:

Thank you for agreeing to help me learn about the strengths and experiences of military kids in public schools. Today, I would like to ask you some questions about your experiences in working with military kids and how you support them in your setting. Please answer the questions below to the best of your ability.

- What is your job title? How long have you worked in that position? in schools? with military kids?
- In what ways do you work with military-connected kids?
- What do you believe are the greatest strengths of being a part of the military community for middle school students?
- What do you believe are the greatest challenges of being a part of the military community for middle school students?
- What role do peers/friends play in middle school students' school experiences? for those who are apart of the military community?
- Please tell me about a time you remember supporting a military child?

Appendix B: Electronic Student Survey

Link to Qualtrics Survey (Preview)

Introduction and consent:

Welcome to the Middle School Friendship Network Survey

This VOLUNTARY, CONFIDENTIAL survey is to better understand your friendship networks at school and how networks benefit students within schools. I estimate that this survey will take about 20 minutes to complete. You have the option to take this survey at school, during this unstructured free work time, or you may take it at home if that you would like more privacy. In order to make sure this research study is valid, please do not share your responses with anyone. We also do not want anyone's feelings to be hurt. Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your thoughtful responses are invaluable for us in learning about friendships at school.

The survey must be completed by October 16, 2015. We hope that you answer every question, but if you do not wish to answer a question, you may simply leave it blank.

Prior to beginning the survey, please read the informed consent form by clicking on the following link:

Informed Consent Document

After reading the informed consent document, please click "yes" to signify that you have provided your consent to participate in the study. Click "no" to terminate this survey.

- YES - Let's get started!
- NO - Get me out of here!

First, tell me who you are. Using the handout that your teacher has given you, find your name. Type the letter code that corresponds with your name in the textbox below. Please double check to make sure the code matches your name.

The next series of questions will ask you to reflect on various aspects of your school's friendship network. On the next page you will find questions about your friends and a list of your school's eighth-grade students. I understand that you have

friends in many grade levels, but this study is focused on eighth grade. Some of these people you may be friends with; others you may not know at all. In the next sections we are interested in finding out with whom you are friends and to whom you go to for help with certain challenges. Please choose as many names as is appropriate. If there is only one person whom you go to for support, then just choose that one person. If there are several people whom you go to for support, then choose several names. If there is no one on the list to whom you go to for support, then do not list any names.

For the next series of questions, list the letter codes of your friends into the textbox below. Use the list of enrolled eighth graders given to you by your teacher. Please be careful to double check that the letter code you have typed matches the name of your friend.

Who do you consider to be your close friends?

By “**close**” I mean a person with whom you may spend more time outside of class time or openly sharing personal information.

Who do you turn to for advice about your teachers, which classes to sign up for?

Who do you turn to for advice about clubs, sports, and other extracurricular activities?

In general, when you are experiencing a difficult problem with school, who are you more likely to turn to?

What percentage of the time do you turn to your friends for help with that situation?
What percentage of the time do you turn to your family for help with that situation?
What percentage of the time do you turn to your school adults for help with that situation?

More About You: For our research purposes, we are interested in learning more about you. You are now close to finishing the survey, keep going!

Demographic Information

Age: 12, 13, 14, 15

Gender: Male Female

Ethnicity: African-American, Asian, Latino, White, Other (please specify)

I have a parent who is currently active duty military: yes no

If no, students skip all remaining questions

If yes, students will answer the following questions:

My parent is an officer: yes no

My parent has been deployed

0 times

1-2 times

3-4 times

5-6 times

7 or more times

I have moved

0 times

1-2 times

3-4 times

5-6 times

7 or more times

I have been living here for more than 6 months: yes no

Thank you!

Your participation in this survey is greatly appreciated. Please note that we will share and discuss the general results of this survey **WITHOUT** any names being used. Your individual survey responses will be kept confidential at all times. Please remember not to share your survey responses with your friends in order to yield valid and reliable data and to ensure that no one's feelings are hurt.

Appendix C: Focus Group Protocol

Remember to bring the following:

- Two writing utensils (in case the lead in a pencil breaks/ a pen runs out of ink)
 - A notepad with sufficient paper for taking notes during the entire focus group
 - Recording equipment:
 - digital audio and video recorders
 - charging cords
 - memory cards
 - Consent/assent forms (enough copies for all participants)
 - Extra pens and pencils for participants
 - Focus group protocol (this document - for me)
 - Note taking form
 - Personal information cards (for them to contact me)
-

Things to remember:

- Allow for think time (let there silence)
 - Interview respondent as little as possible
 - Avoid asking leading questions
-

Probes:

When seeking more diverse responses:

- “We have had an interesting discussion, but let’s explore other ideas or points of view.”
- “Has anyone had a different experience that they wish to share?”

When seeking more detail:

- “Tell me more about that...”
 - “Could you explain what you mean by...”
 - “Can you tell me something else about...”
-

Before the Protocol:

- Welcome focus group participants as they arrive.
- Obtain written and verbal consent to participate and to have the focus group recorded.
- Ground rules
- At the end of the focus group, let participants know how to contact me if they have any questions.
 - Give them my card with personal information on it (non-work information)

Opening:

Thank you for agreeing to help me with my research study about how military-connected kids navigate their military and civilian worlds at school, your strengths, and experiences as being a part of the military community. We will try to keep this

meeting to about 45 minutes to an hour, so you can enjoy the rest of your day. Since you are the experts, I want to hear from you and learn from you! Your thoughts are incredibly valuable to me. I want your honest opinions and hope to find ways for improving your lives at school and the lives of other military kids at school. I will not be offended by anything you have to say. Before we start, let's make sure everyone is willing to participate.

Please make sure you fill out the consent form in front of you. If you wish to end participation in this focus group, you may let me know and leave at any time. No personal identifying information will be shared at anytime. In fact, rather than your names, you will be using a research ID number for your packet. If you have filled out your consent form and you agree to participate in this focus group please say, "yes."

Great! I really appreciate you taking the time to participate in this study. Now, let's go over some ground rules.

1. Confidentiality: "What's said in this room stays in the room." We want everyone to feel safe sharing their thoughts, so please do not discuss what each other have said to anyone outside of this room.
2. One person at a time. No side conversations. However, I do want you to respond to one another in a conversation-like way. You do not need to raise your hands.
3. Be respectful. We want to hear everyone's ideas. There are no right or wrong answers – only opinions based on your own unique experiences, which are all valuable.
4. Be honest. We want to hear all sides of a topic, both the positive and the negative.
5. Stay on topic.

Warm-up:

Let's get started with something easy. Tell me about your favorite food. Feel free to respond to one another like a natural conversation. Let's just make sure everyone gets to share.

Focus Group Questions:**Section 1: Friends and Family**

Thank you for agreeing to help me learn about the strengths and experiences of military kids. Today, I would like to talk to you about your friends, family, and experiences in middle school.

Ok, let's get started! For section one, I would like to learn a little bit more about you. In this section, you will tell me about your friends and family. Please fill out the form on page one to the best of your abilities. Write about the family members who influence you most (whom you are close with).

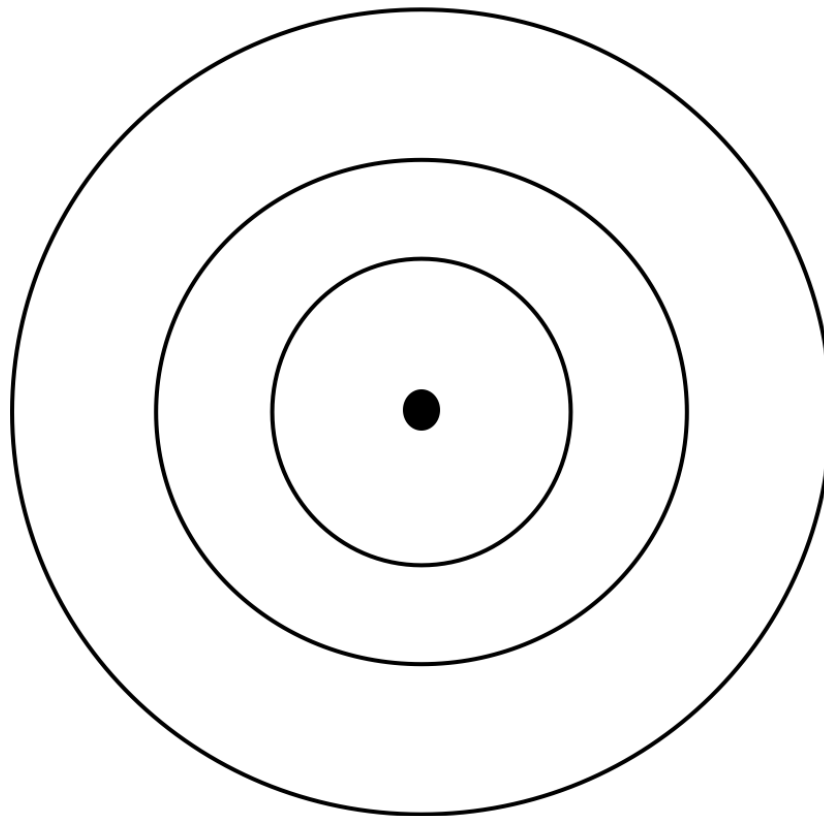
Family Member (relationship to you, not name, such as mom, dad, sister, cousin, uncle, grandmother, etc.)	Where were they born?	What kind of job do they have?	How far did they go in school? (0=did not finish high school, 1=high school, 2= some college, 3= graduated college, 4=graduate school or professional degree, like teacher, lawyer, doctor, real estate agent, etc.)

Great! Thank you so much. Now, let's turn to page 2.

Here, I would like you to tell me about your friends.

1. Make a list of your friends.
 - a) Who do you consider to be your “best friends”?
 - b) How did you meet each of these friends?
 - c) Are any of these friends also military kids? If so, which ones?
 - d) Does that matter to you? Why or why not?

2. Make a chart of you and your friends, with you in the center and your friends connected to you.
 - a) How are they connected to you, and how are they connected to each other
 - b) What do you do together?
 - c) When/how often do you see each other?
 - d) Are any of these friends military kids?
 - e) Does that matter to you? Why or why not?
 - f) Label your friends who are military kids.

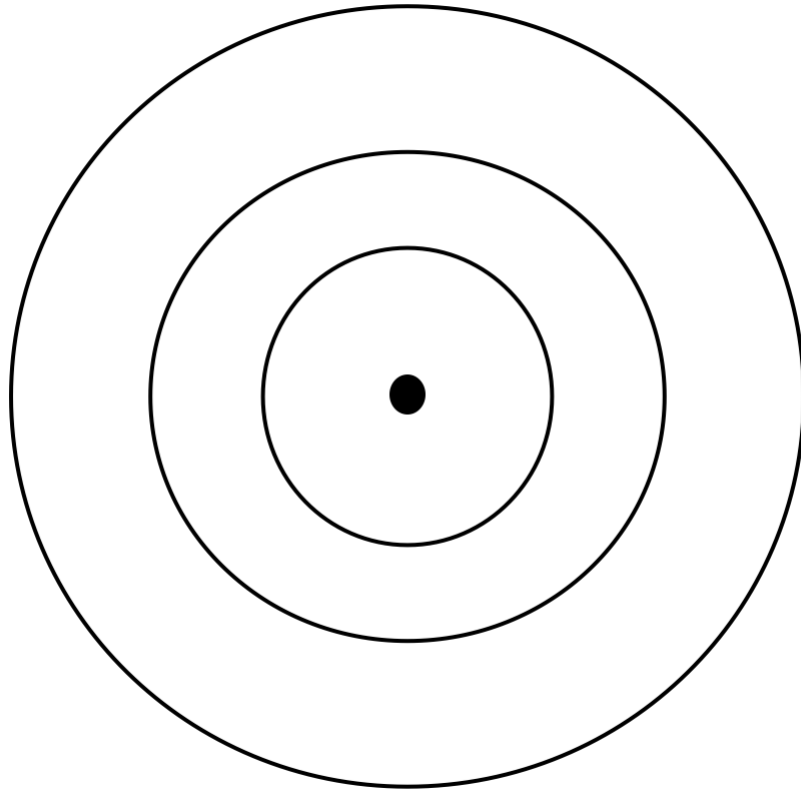


That was fun! Now, let's turn to page 3.

Let's try repeating what we just did, but this time we will include anyone (child or adult) who helps you.

3. Make a list of the people who help you.
 - a) In general, when you are experiencing a difficult problem with school, who are you more likely to turn to?
 - b) What percentage of the time do you turn to your friends for help with that situation? What percentage of the time do you turn to your family for help with that situation?
 - c) What percentage of the time do you turn to your school adults for help with that situation?

4. Make a chart of you and the people who help you, with you in the center and your supporters connected to you. (Supporters might be family members, friends, part of your military community, coaches, teachers, counselors, etc.).
 - a) How are they connected to you, and how are they connected to each other?
 - b) What do you do together?
 - c) When do you see each other?
 - d) Are any of these people connected to the military community?
 - e) Is that important to you? Why or why not?



Section 2: Mapping Worlds Activity

Now, let's talk about the worlds you live in. If you need to add a group or activity to the map, feel free to write it anywhere on your paper.

What are your worlds?

What are expectations in each of your worlds?

How do your worlds fit together?

What about the role of the military community?

Tell me how the military community influences you?

What Are My Worlds?

Circle the worlds you participate in and write in the important people you interact with in these worlds. Don't write their names, but do write in their relationship to you, such as mother, father, sibling, friend, coach, priest, counselor, or principal. These people can be positive influences in your life or may cause you difficulties. If you need to add a group or activity to the map, feel free to write it anywhere on your paper. If you need to add a group or activity to the map, feel free to write it anywhere on your paper.

Family

Myself

Neighborhood

Friends

Military

Community Clubs

School

Religious Activities

Music

Video Games

Sports

Section 3: Challenges and Resources:

Thanks! That was fun. Now we are just going to have a discussion. I would now appreciate you telling me about your important experiences in middle school. For this activity, important people may be teachers, family members, friends, or other people. The experiences that have influenced you may be positive or negative, such as a field trip or a friend getting into trouble.

1. What are some strengths you have as a student?
2. Where do you think those came from?
3. What are some of the ways in which being a part of the military community helps you in school?
4. What are some challenges you face as a part of the military community in schools?
5. What people or experiences have been major influences on your academics? on your plans for the future?
6. Tell a short story about a time when someone helped you in overcoming an academic, social, or emotional challenge in the past year?
7. How does your experience at this school compare to experiences at other schools (fitting in, making friends, feeling support as a military-connected child)?

Back up questions to refocus if students get off topic or need more specified questions:

1. Who helps you with your school work?
2. Who or what helps you make friends?
3. Who helps you with your problems?
4. Who helps you think about college or career?
5. Who helps you think about what you want to be in the future?
6. Think about the person who most helps you think about what you want to be in the future. (Tell me) about a specific situation in which this person helped you and explain how he or she helped you. Be as specific as possible.
7. Who or what causes you difficulties with school?
8. Who causes you difficulties with making friends?
9. Who causes you difficulties with staying focused in school?
10. Who causes you difficulties with feeling good about yourself?
11. Who causes you difficulties with thinking about your future?

Modified from BridgingWorlds.org Activities © E. Domínguez & C. R. Cooper, 2001

Appendix D: Focus Group Participant Packets

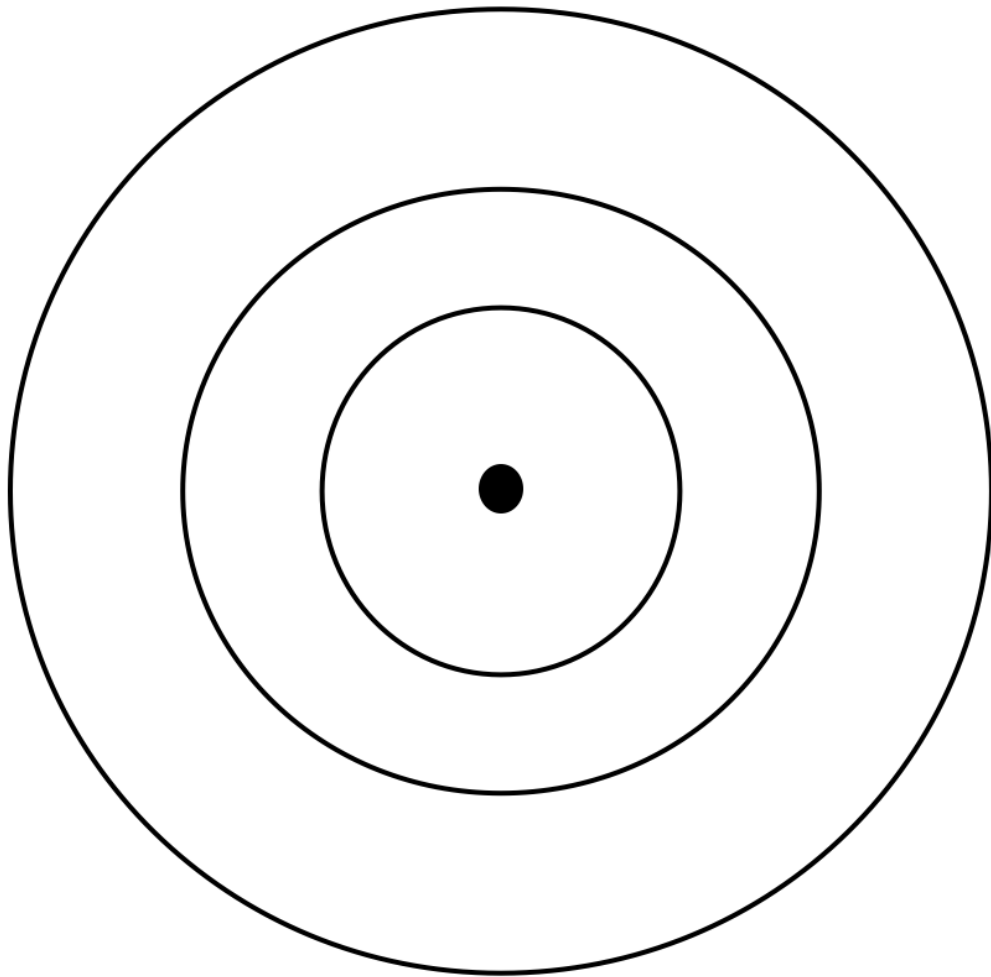
My Research ID Number: _____ **Today's Date** _____

Section 1: Friends and Family

I would like to learn a little bit more about you. Please fill out the form below as best as you can.

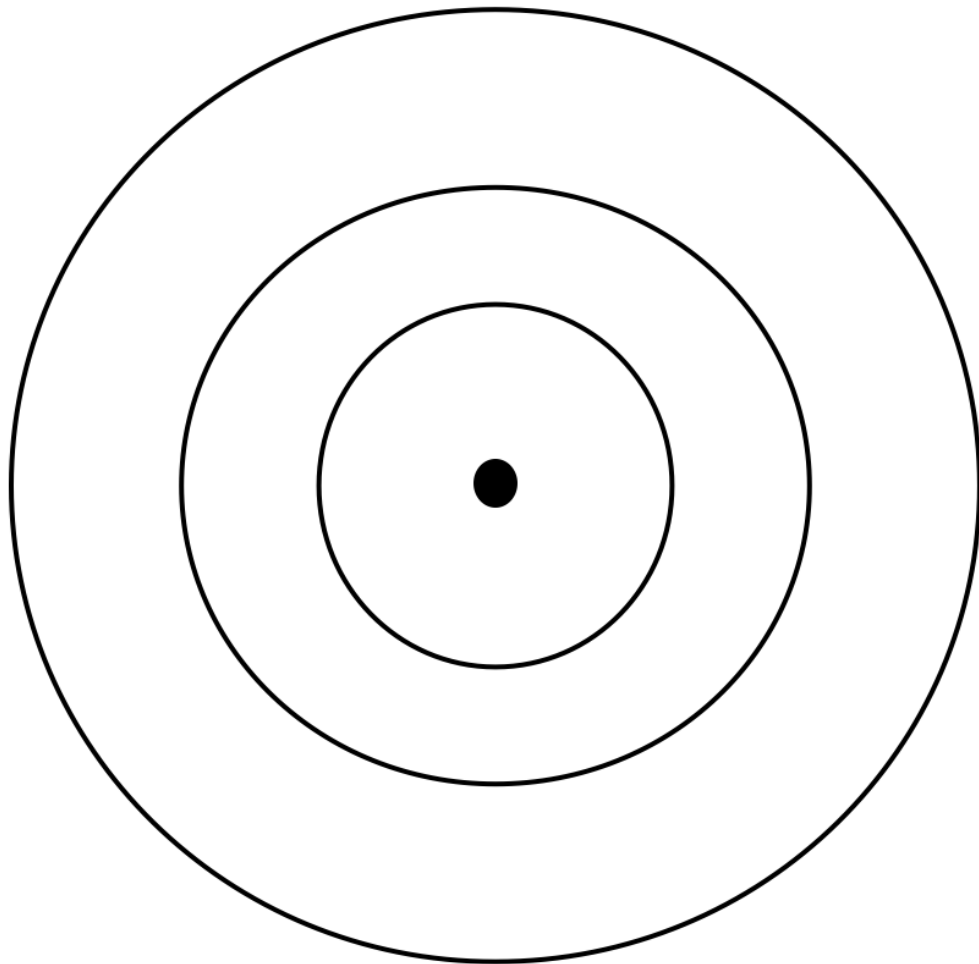
Family Member (relationship to you, not name, such as mom, dad, sister, cousin, uncle, grandmother, etc.)	Where were they born?	What kind of job do they have?	How far did they go in school? (Write the number if you know). 1 = some high school 2 = high school diploma 3 = some college 4 = graduated college 5 = graduate school or professional degree (teacher, lawyer, doctor, real estate agent, etc.)

1. Make a list of your friends.
2. I'd like to work with you to make a chart of you and your friends, with you in the center and your friends connected to you.



Let's try repeating what we just did, but this time we will include anyone (child or adult) who helps you.

1. Make a list of the people who help you.
2. Make a chart of you and the people who help you, with you in the center and your supporters connected to you. (Supporters might be family members, friends, part of your military community, coaches, teachers, counselors, etc.).



Section 2: Mapping Worlds Activity

Circle the worlds you participate in and write in the important people you interact with in these worlds. Don't write their names, but do write in their relationship to you, such as mother, father, sibling, friend, coach, priest, counselor, or principal. These people can be positive influences in your life or may cause you difficulties. If you need to add a group or activity to the map, feel free to write it anywhere on your paper.



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