CANADIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL PROFESSIONALS
AWARENESS OF THE NEEDS OF MILITARY-CONNECTED CHILDREN

by

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Abstract

Military families live a unique lifestyle. Mobility, separation, and risk are three important factors that distinguish military families from their civilian counterparts. Since the start of the Global War on Terror, there has become an increased interest within the United States to understand, prevent, and reduce the effects associated with living in a military family. However, since the military is a microcosm of Canadian society, there has been a lack of research that addresses military-connected children in the Canadian context. Thus, the needs of Canadian military-connected children are not fully understood. The purpose of this qualitative research is to explore how military-connected children and their unique needs are perceived by school professionals in Canadian secondary schools.

This research followed a phenomenological research methodology to explore the perceptions of Canadian secondary school professionals of military-connected students and their unique needs. Six participants, selected via snowball sampling, participated in a single in depth, one-on-one interview. The audio data was transcribed verbatim and analyzed using a general inductive approach.

The findings suggest that Canadian secondary school professionals are generally aware of the military lifestyle. However, school professionals lack an overall awareness of how secondary schools are currently addressing and supporting the needs of military-connected children. Based on these findings, implications of the study are discussed and recommendations for future work in this field are made. This research contributes to the wider body of research regarding the educational experiences of military-connected children by offering the voices of Canadian secondary school teachers and describing
how these school professionals perceive military-connected children and their needs.
Dedication

I would like to dedicate my Master of Education thesis to my late father, Jeff Hill. Having served in the Canadian Armed Forces for 21 years, the military lifestyle was one my father knew well. During his military service, my father was immersed in a world that demanded an ethos of strength, toughness, decisiveness, and resiliency. But as hard of an exterior that he had, my father also had a softer side. He was my number one fan and undoubtedly believed that I would succeed at whatever I aspired to do. Sadly, just two months after I began the Master of Education program at Queen’s University, my father passed away on November 11, 2015. Although I wish he was still here today, his memory was a constant source of motivation and inspiration throughout my degree.

I would also like to dedicate my thesis to all the Canadian military families. Having grown up in a military family, the military lifestyle is one I hold near and dear to my heart. I hope my research has helped bring awareness to military-connected children and their families within Canada.

I would also like to dedicate my thesis to my step father, Brian Edmonds, who passed away in July 2016. Furthermore, I would like to dedicate my thesis to my grandfather, Ron Hill, who passed away in December 2016. Both were a constant source of love and support throughout my life.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

My Research Story

Having grown up in a military family, I can relate to the unique challenges that military families deal with. As a military-connected child, I experienced parental deployment, frequent relocation, and constant school transitions. Over a period of 17 years, I experienced a nine-month parental deployment, relocated six times, and attended seven different schools. I not only experienced two different provincial curriculums, but I also had the opportunity to develop new peer relationships every time my family relocated. As a result, my academic performance and peer relationships were greatly impacted. Yet, this lifestyle became a part of who I was and how I identified. I was a military child - someone who was constantly experiencing separation, mobility, and risk.

Even though the military lifestyle has shaped who I am and has played a large role in how I identify, it was never something that I thought would influence my work as a graduate student. In fact, I did not become interested in exploring the educational experiences of military-connected children until half way through my Bachelor of Education degree. During my Bachelor of Education degree, I was required to complete an alternative practicum, which is a practicum that allows teacher candidates to explore an area of educational interest outside the traditional classroom. However, I struggled with what to pick for this alternative practicum. There was not an area of educational interest that stuck out to me that I wanted to explore further. And then one day it just happened. I had an epiphany. I decided that I wanted to somehow connect my teaching
practice with my identity as a military child. It was at this point that I turned to the educational literature to see what was being said about military-connected children within education. While there was a large amount of research that focused on military-connected children within the United States, the lack of research that addressed military-connected children within the Canadian context was astonishing. I was left with more questions than answers regarding military-connected children within Canada. It was at this point that I wanted to devote my graduate research to exploring the awareness of military-connected children and their needs within the Canadian educational context.

Introducing the Research

For some people, their job is what they do; it does not define who they are. Yet, when considering the military, it is a career unlike any other. The demands of military life create a unique set of pressures on service members and their family members. Deployment, separation, loss, war trauma and frequent relocation are just some of the many challenges associated with the military lifestyle (Astor, De Pedro, Gilreath, Esqueda, & Benbenishty, 2013; Atuel, Esqueda, & Jacobson, 2011; Esqueda, Astor, & De Pedro, 2012). However, there may also be benefits associated with being a military-connected student. Although there is a lack of literature that addresses the positive benefits associated with living in a military family, I can provide a personal example from my own experience of growing up in a military family. While frequently relocating was challenging at times, I was able to develop new peer relationships with each posting. I still keep in contact with many of these peers today, and I feel fortunate to have a peer network that extends across the world. Although my father is no longer actively serving in the military, I still feel that my ability to develop relationships in new situations
benefits me. I am not only able to adapt to new situations, but I am able to easily connect to those around me. While the military itself can be viewed as a career, the military extends into the service members’ personal lives, affecting the everyday lifestyle of their family members as well as themselves (Cole, 2014).

The “nature, frequency, and intensity” of military operations in Canada have significantly shifted since the 1990s (Cramm, Norris, Tam-Seto, Eichler, & Smith-Evans, 2015, p. 2). With operational tempo both increasing and remaining continuous, the roles of Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) personnel have significantly changed (Cramm et al., 2015). Previously taking on the role as peace keepers and peace makers, CAF personnel now take on the role as warriors (National Defence and Canadian Forces Ombudsman, 2013). Thus, deployment, separation, and risk have become more common amongst Canadian military families with 70% of families experiencing at least one deployment since 2008 (Battams, 2016). With a shift in roles amongst CAF personnel, the 64,000 children and youth of military families in Canada have also begun to experience the unique challenges with the military lifestyle more frequently (NDCFO, 2013).

Studies have shown that the unique challenges associated with the military lifestyle can not only influence the academic achievement of students, but also their abilities to socially function (Esqueda et al., 2012; Horton, 2005). Furthermore, studies have shown that the psychosocial health and well-being of military-connected children may also be impacted by the unique challenges that are associated with the military lifestyle (De Pedro et al., 2014). Having schools enhance their abilities to support military-connected children is important because schools can act as a supportive environment that shield students from depression, conduct problems, feelings of
alienation, anxiety, and school failure (Atuel et al., 2011; Waliski, Kirchner, Shue, & Bokony, 2012).

**Purpose and Research Question**

Research shows that there has become an increased interest within the United States to understand, prevent, and reduce the effects that are associated with living in a military family since the start of the Global War on Terror (Brendel et al., 2013). However, what is lacking within the literature is an understanding of Canadian military-connected children and their needs. Since the military is a microcosm of Canadian society, little attention has been given to military-connected children in the Canadian context. Thus, there is a great need to not only study the needs of military-connected children in Canada, but also understand how these needs are perceived by school professionals. The broader purpose of this qualitative research is to explore how the needs of military-connected children are being addressed in Canadian secondary schools. More specifically, the following research question guided this study: How are military-connected children and their unique needs perceived by school professionals in Canadian secondary schools?

**Outline of Thesis**

This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the researcher, the research topic and problem, as well as the research question that was used to guide this study. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the existing literature that discusses how schools address military-connected children and their needs. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the phenomenological research methodology and the data collection methods that were used in this study. Chapter 4 describes the findings of the
study, and the major themes that emerged from the data. In Chapter 5, the thesis concludes by discussing both the implications and limitations of the study and provides suggestions for future work related to the field. This chapter further discusses the different stakeholders that could benefit from this study, while also outlining how I intend to mobilize the findings of this study.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter will provide an overview of the existing literature that relates to the educational experiences of military-connected children and how the needs of military-connected children are being addressed in schools. However, before providing an overview of this literature, it is important to make note of the context in which this literature is situated in.

The purpose of this study is to explore how military-connected children and their unique needs are perceived by school professionals in Canadian secondary schools. When I began looking for literature that addressed the educational experiences of military-connected children, I found that most of the literature that existed was American based. The only literature that I could find within the Canadian context include general statistics about Canadian military families. I tried to find studies that addressed the educational experiences of military-connected children in both Australia and New Zealand, but my search was unsuccessful. Therefore, it is important to note that the majority of the literature I will citing in this section will address military-connected children within the American context. However, I will draw upon the Canadian literature when possible. Since the current situations within the United States and Canada differ, it is important to keep in mind as the reader that the findings of the American studies I cite may not apply to Canadian military-connected children and their families. As a result, distinctions between the American and Canadian contexts will be provided when necessary.
Military Lifestyle

In Canada today, there are approximately 54,000 military families (Battams, 2016). While 49% of all Regular Force members have children under the age of 18, 20% of single CAF members also have children under the age of 18 (Battams, 2016). In total, over 64,000 military-connected children are currently growing up in Canada (Battams, 2016).

Military culture can be considered unique. It has a “language, a code of manners, norms of behavior, belief systems, dress and rituals” that service members conform to (Meyer et al., 2016; p. 3). Service members can “develop camaraderie, esprit de corps, group cohesiveness, and a set of idealistic honorable tenets that make up the glue that hinges [them] together with common bonds” (Meyer et al., 2016; p. 3). Being immersed in military culture can be such an experience that Veterans will identify with this culture more than any other cultural influence even decades after leaving active duty service (Meyer et al., 2016).

In general, military families are diverse (Battams, 2016). Military families play important roles in their communities, workplaces, and the country at large (Battams, 2016). At this point, it is important to provide a profile of the military personnel who serve in the CAF, as it is a much different profile of the military personnel who serve in the American armed forces. I will discuss the following when considering the profile of Canadian military personnel: composition of military personnel, education, income, and job security.

According to a 2008 report released through Statistics Canada, “a very small proportion of CF personnel were members of visible minorities – only 6% of all CF
members were visible minorities compared with 17% of the civilian working population” (Park, 2008). This rate is much lower in comparison to the American military, as 33% of American military personnel in 2008 were representative of visible minorities (Park, 2008). In addition, only 6% of the CAF personnel were immigrants, whereas 21% of American military personnel were immigrants (Park, 2008). When considering the education of CAF personnel, only 6% of actively serving military personnel in 2008 had less than a high school education (Park, 2008). Twenty-eight percent of military personnel held a high school diploma, while 52.6% held a postsecondary degree/diploma (Park, 2008). Although many factors such as rank and education can influence income in the CAF, the median income of male CAF personnel in 2002 was $50,000 in comparison to the $40,000 for their civilian counterparts (Park, 2008). Furthermore, the median income in 2002 for CAF officers was $73,000, whereas the median income for CAF non-officers in 2002 was $43,000 (Park, 2002). When considering job security, CAF personnel reported “higher levels of job security and co-worker support, with less than 2% of military personnel feeling job insecurity compared with 14% of full-time civilian workers” (Park, 2008). Reports of high co-worker support may be related to “the nature of military work, which involves close collegial collaboration and clear role definitions” (Park, 2008). While the statistics above come from 2002 and 2008, it is clear that CAF personnel are well-educated, financially stable, and experience job security.

When distinguishing military families from civilian families, three important factors need to be considered: mobility, separation, and risk (Drummet, Coleman, & Cable, 2003). Military families are not only required to relocate frequently at the discretion of the military and adopt to new communities, but they can also experience
foreign postings and deployments (Drummet et al., 2003). What is further challenging for military families is that they are expected to behave in a certain way while coping with the above stressors (Drummet et al., 2003). It is important to note that in isolation, mobility, separation, and risk are not unique to Canadian military families (NDCFO, 2013). There are many other professions and occupations that experience mobility, separation, and risk both in isolation and paired together (NDCFO, 2013). Police officers, for example, are regularly faced with the possibility of injury or even death in their workplaces. Furthermore, occupations such as first responders and oil rig workers experience both separation and risk (NDCFO, 2013). What makes the military career distinctive is that all three characteristics (mobility, separation, and risk) are combined (NDCFO, 2013).

**Mobility**

One factor that distinguishes military families from their civilian counterparts is frequent relocations. In Canada, when compared to their civilian counterparts, military families on average move three times as frequent (NDCFO, 2013). Military families have little say in when or where they will be posted, and for how long their posting will last (Battams, 2016). With each relocation, military families are required to establish new community ties and develop new relationships (Battams, 2016). On average, a military family will relocate every three years, with a total of nine relocations over a 20-year career (Berg, 2008). Per Battams (2016), 70% of spouses have reported relocating at least once to accommodate a military posting. Furthermore, 27% of CAF spouses reported that they were required to relocate at least four times due to military postings (Battams, 2016). Mobility can be viewed as challenging for military families because it impacts a variety
of elements that are essential for a stable family life. These elements include daycare, schooling, access to healthcare, as well as establishment of social circles (Rowan-Legg, 2016). However, it is important to note that there are also positive benefits associated with the military lifestyle. Studies have shown that mobility and constant school transition can provide a military child with a fresh start and the opportunity to try out a new and different social version of themselves (Kelley, Finkel, & Ashby, 2003; Masten, 2013; Park, 2011; Esqueda et al., 2012). Furthermore, the military lifestyle allows children to travel and meet new people (Blaisure, Saathoff-Wells, Pereira, Wadsworth, & Dombro, 2012).

**Separation**

Military personnel are sometimes required to be away from their immediate and extended families for long periods of time (Rowan-Legg, 2016). Per Battams (2016), military-related duties cause CAF personnel to spend a quarter of their time away from home (Battams, 2016). This separation causes challenges within military families because the separation often causes the at-home-partner to adopt a single parenting style (Rowan-Legg, 2016). Besides training, one of the main sources of separation for military families is deployment. According to the Department of National Defence (DND), deployment is defined as the following:

A deployment of a DND employee is a transfer of that employee from one position to another in accordance with Part 3 of the *Public Service Employment Act* (PSEA). Part 3 of the PSEA provides for deployments to or within DND as a staffing mechanism intended to support flexibility, efficiency and diversity in managing human resources to meet current or future operational requirements and organizational needs (Department of National Defence, 2017).
While 39% of Canadian military families have experienced three or more deployments, 21% of Canadian families have experienced five or more deployments (Battams, 2016). While deployments are challenging on spouses, the children of military families often experience a variety of emotions and responses (Defence R&D Canada, 2009). Prior to a parent’s deployment, children may become emotionally withdrawn, apathetic or exhibit regressive behaviours (Defence R&D Canada, 2009). Feeling overwhelmed, sad or anxious are all emotions that children can feel during the early stage of a deployment (Rowan-Legg, 2016). However, these emotions often diminish once new routines are developed in the absence of their deployed parent (Rowan-Legg, 2016). When the deployed parent returns, children are often filled with excitement, anticipation, and relief (Rowan-Legg, 2016). While a deployment can be stressful for all the family members involved, military families today are often able to communicate with the deployed family member (Rowan-Legg, 2016). While this may appear as an advantage, often communication with the deployed family member can be considered anxiety-provoking because the family becomes involved with the deployed family member’s reality (Rowan-Legg, 2016).

Risk

In addition to mobility and separation, risk is also another challenge faced by military families. Risk can be experienced during training and deployment, and after deployment. Depending on where a family member is deployed and the nature of the occupational role they hold, the safety of that family member can be put at risk (Rowan-Legg, 2016). The possibilities of permanent injury, illness, or death are all things military families must deal with when a family member is deployed (Rowan-Legg, 2016). Furthermore, deployment can also pose a significant risk to the adjustment of a family
member when they return home (Riggs & Riggs, 2011). Military personnel returning home from deployment of areas of active combat may experience depression, anxiety, substance abuse, suicidal ideation, interpersonal conflict, and aggressive behaviour (Riggs & Riggs, 2011).

**Well-being of Military Children**

Since the start of the Global War on Terror campaign that was launched in 2001, the United States has experienced the largest sustained deployment of military personnel in the history of its armed forces (Cozza & Lerner, 2013). As of 2010, over 2.1 million service members have been deployed in support of the conflicts, and 44% of those deployed service members are parents (Department of Defence, 2010). This means that since 2001, over 2 million U.S. children have experienced mobility, separation, and risk more frequently (Brendel et al., 2013). Similarly, with the operational tempo of CAF personnel shifting significantly over the past two decades, military families in Canada have also begun to experience mobility, separation, and risk more regularly (Battams, 2016). Shifting roles from peace keepers and peace makers to warriors, 70% of Canadian military families have experienced at least one deployment since 2008 (Battams, 2016; Cramm et al., 2015). Thus, the lives of the 64,000 children and youth of Canadian military families have become affected (Rowan-Legg, 2016).

Due to an increase in operational tempo in the United States, there has been great efforts put forth to understand, prevent, and reduce the effects that mobility, separation, and risk may have on military-connected children (Brendel et al., 2013). However, little is known about how mobility, separation, and risk may affect the lives of Canadian military-connected children. Below I will outline the pre-existing literature that addresses
how the military lifestyle may impact the lives of military-connected children. While many of the studies I cite are American based, I will refer to Canadian studies when possible.

When considering the well-being of military-connected children, American studies have reported that the military lifestyle can affect the social, emotional, behavioural, and educational aspects of a child’s life.

**Social aspects.** When considering the social aspects of a child’s life that the military lifestyle can affect, many American studies discuss relationships and peer networks. Peer networks play an important role during adolescent development as they are important sources of intimacy and companionship (Vernberg, 1990). However, frequent relocations can greatly affect the pre-existing peer networks that school-age children and youth, causing them stress and leaving them vulnerable (Simpson & Fowler, 1994; Vernberg, 1990). This is because school-age children and youth are required to leave behind their old friends and familiar school environments, and are expected to develop new peer relationships while attending a new and unfamiliar school (Simpson & Fowler, 1994).

Since students spend a minimum of thirty hours in school per week, a change in schools can greatly affect the relationships that a student forms with peers and teachers (Mehana & Reynolds, 2004). Since younger children are just learning and developing socialization skills, forming new friendships and relationships can be especially difficult (Simpson & Fowler, 1994). Furthermore, forming new friendships and relationships can be challenging for adolescents because of the difficulties of breaking into already established cliques and groups (Simpson & Fowler, 1994). These struggles with
developing new peer relationships and fitting in can be seen in a study conducted by Vernberg (1990) where peer relationships of two adolescent groups were monitored throughout a school year. The first group of adolescents were considered “mobile” and had recently located to a new school. The second group of adolescents were considered “non-mobile” and were students who had been at the school for at least the past two years. When looking at the social experiences of both groups, the social experiences of the mobile adolescents were less positive in comparison to the non-mobile adolescents. The mobile adolescents had fewer contact with peers and experienced less intimacy and sharing with friends. Furthermore, the mobile students experienced more instances of rejection in comparison to the non-mobile students. Therefore, the findings of the study showed that there is evidence to suggest that mobility during adolescent development can cause students to experience more difficulties with peers and possibly be rejected by their peers.

**Emotional and behavioural aspects.** American based studies have shown that dealing with the challenges that are more frequently associated with the military lifestyle can impact military-connected children both emotionally and behaviourally. As previously mentioned, military-connected children may experience behavioral and stress disorders, risky behaviours, sadness, hopelessness, depressive symptoms, suicidal ideation, and changes in sleeping and eating (Brendel et al., 2013). In a study conducted by Cederbaum et al. (2014), it was found that children of American military families are at an increased risk of having mental health issues and becoming depressed. This study found that 33.7% of adolescents with a parent in the military reported feeling sad and hopeless. Furthermore, 24.8% of adolescents with a parent in the military reported having
seriously considered attempting suicide. A study conducted by Reed, Bell & Edwards (2011) found that in comparison to their civilian peers, military-connected children that live in the United States engage in more violent behaviors such as carrying weapons to school and experience higher rates of physical and nonphysical victimization. It is important to note here that the above studies do not specify whether these emotional and behavioral challenges were experienced by military-connected children generally or during a time of separation or transition. As discussed in the separation section, military-connected children may experience many emotions and responses when dealing with separation or a deployment cycle. Thus, the context in which these emotional and behavioral challenges were being experienced by military-connected children need to be taken into consideration. Furthermore, very little is known about how the military lifestyle may affect Canadian military-connected children both emotionally and behaviorally. Therefore, it cannot be concluded that Canadian military-connected children experience similar emotional and behavioral challenges as American military-connected children do.

**Educational aspects.** When considering how the military lifestyle can impact the academic success of a student, there are studies that indicate that frequent relocations and deployments are associated with academic difficulties (Mehana & Reynolds, 2004). It is important to note that although academic difficulties amongst military-connected children were not addressed by the participants of this study, I felt that it was important to include as many American studies address academic achievement/difficulties amongst military-connected children. While I will specifically address academic achievement amongst
military-connected children in a later section, this section will draw upon literature that discusses mobility in general and its effects on academic achievement.

One main reason that exists in the literature as to why mobility can cause academic difficulty is because school mobility directly disrupts the instruction of students (Mehana & Reynolds, 2004). Students that change schools must adapt to new instructional settings, new textbooks, and curricula, and the teaching styles of new teachers (Mehana & Reynolds, 2004). Adapting to the above changes takes time, and will impact student performance if they already have other factors putting them at risk for low achievement (Mehana & Reynolds, 2004). Mobility can also indirectly affect the academic performance of a student through the social stress and engagement issues that can occur from adjusting to a new environment (Ou & Reynolds, 2008).

A meta-analysis conducted by Mehana and Reynolds (2004) looked at the effects of school mobility on reading and math achievement of children in Kindergarten to Grade 6. While mobility was associated with lower levels of reading and math achievement, on average, mobility caused a 3-4 month performance disadvantage in achievement (Mehana & Reynolds, 2004). Another study conducted by Ou & Reynolds (2008) found that mobility negatively predicts achievement and school completion in the United States. It is important to note that a negative connection between mobility and academic performance seems to appear more when the mobility is enforced rather than a choice (Boon, 2011). When mobility is a choice, outcomes on academic performance are rarely reported (Boon, 2011). As previously mentioned, military families often have little say in when or where they will be posted, and having to relocate is not a choice (Battams, 2016). Therefore, a study conducted by Buerkle and Christenson (1999) concluded that it is not
mobility itself that determines the academic performance of students, but rather why the move occurred.

**Military and School Relationship**

As previously mentioned, since the Global War on Terror, there has been an increased interest in understanding, preventing, and reducing the challenges associated with the military lifestyle (Brendel et al., 2013). Thus, the United States government has made it a national priority to ensure the well-being of military families and their children (Brendel et al., 2013). One way that the American military has addressed the care and well-being of military families and their children is through educational supports. Below I will outline how the American military has worked with schools to help support the needs of military-connected children. Although little is known about the relationship between the military and schools within Canada, I will also review the available literature on the relationship between the military and schools in Canada.

**Military Funded Schools**

Following the Second World War, the American military began funding schools for the children of service members to attend while stationed overseas. Located in the United States, Europe, the Pacific, and the Americas, these schools still exist today and continue to be funded by the Department of Defence Education Activity (DoDEA), a branch of the Department of Defence (DoDEA, 2016). Keeping in mind the needs of military-connected children, the educational approach that has been developed by DoDEA schools acknowledges, rather than ignores such needs. Having a military focused approach means that DoDEA schools offer a large amount of educational supports that address the unique needs of military families (Esqueda et al., 2012). However, it is
important to note that although the educational approach of DoDEA schools is military focused, only 20% of military-connected children attend these schools (Atuel et al., 2011).

In the past, the educational situation for military-connected children in Canada was like the current situation in the United States. Following the Second World War, the education of military-connected children became the responsibility of the Department of National Defence (Rehman, 2015). Schools for the children of military personnel were established nationwide with a total of eighteen existing as of 1958 (Rehman, 2015). As noted by Rehman (2015), the creation of these schools went “hand-in-hand with the building of permanent married quarters (PMQ) for bases of all three service branches.” While there was the option of sending their children to civilian schools in the community, Canadian military families often lived on base (Battams, 2016). Thus, many military families often sent their children to attend DND schools (Battams, 2016). To be more specific, 80% of military families that lived on base sent their children to DND schools (Rowan-Legg, 2016). Today, there are 32 military bases located across Canada (Rowan-Legg, 2016). Yet, these DND schools no longer exist (Rowan-Legg, 2016). This is because due to budget cuts by DND, these DND funded schools were turned over to provincial school boards in the early 1990s (Rehman, 2015). Currently, military-connected children in Canada are attending civilian schools within local communities.

**Training of School Professionals**

One way that the American DoDEA schools support the needs of military families is through the training of educational personnel. Specialized training is provided by the Department of Defence (DoD) to help the educational personnel employed at DoDEA
schools prevent or mitigate the negative effects that are associated with mobility, separation, and risk (Harrison & Vannest, 2008). Because of this training, DoDEA school professionals gain a better understanding of how the military lifestyle and its associated challenges can affect student success and well-being (Esqueda et al., 2012). Since there is a better understanding of the military lifestyle and its effects amongst school personnel, more time and effort is put forth by staff in developing and maintaining schools supports (Brendel et al., 2013; Esqueda et al., 2012). In recent Canadian literature, the understanding and awareness of the unique stressors that military families face was referred to as “military literacy” (Battams, 2016). This term appeared in a recent document published by the Vanier Institute for the Family.

Curriculum

Another large part of the educational approach taken by DoDEA schools is curriculum. Implementing a uniform curriculum and set of standards allows DoDEA schools the opportunity to help reduce the difficulties associated with mobility. The Common Core Standards provide “clear and consistent guidelines for what students are expected to learn and to prepare them for college and/or careers” (Atuel et al., 2011, p. 4). Implementing the Common Core Standards in all DoDEA schools not only ensures that military children will not fall behind in school, it also ensures that any previously learned material will not have to be repeated (Atuel et al., 2011). Furthermore, when compared to military-connected children that attend civilian schools, the academic achievement of students who attend DoDEA schools and follow the Common Core Standards is higher (Esqueda et al., 2012). DoDEA students score above the national average on standardized tests of achievement such as the National Assessment of
Educational Progress (NAEP) and the Terra Nova Achievement Test (Esqueda et al., 2012). While little is known about the curriculum that was used by the Canadian DND schools, an article recently published in the Canadian Military Family Magazine provides some insight. According to a former DND teacher, “you would integrate more into your curriculum about where their parents were whether it was Bosnia or Afghanistan, or Haiti or whatever was happening in the world” (Rehman, 2015).

**Military-related Supports**

In addition to educator training and curriculum, DoDEA schools are more likely to have military-oriented services for students and their families that focus on mobility, separation, and risk (Brendel et al., 2013). To develop and implement these services, DoDEA schools will work with the local installations (Esqueda et al., 2012). An example of a service that would be offered for students who attend DoDEA schools would be a peer support group that focuses on parental deployment (Esqueda et al., 2012). Another service that has been established at some DoDEA schools are parental groups for the spouses of deployed service members (Esqueda et al., 2012).

**Public or “Civilian” Schools**

As evidenced by DoDEA and DND schools, the military has been progressive in supporting the needs of military-connected children and their families. However, as previously stated, only 20% of military-connected children attend DoDEA schools. The other 80% of military-connected children attend public or “civilian” schools (Atuel et al., 2011). There is evidence to suggest that the needs of military-connected who attend civilian schools in the United States are not being properly addressed (Atuel et al., 2011). When considering why the needs of American military-connected children are
perhaps not being addressed in civilian schools, the literature points to three main reasons.

One reason why the needs of military-connected children are not being properly addressed in public or civilian schools is because non-DoDEA schools are generally not aware of or do not understand the specific and unique needs of military-connected children (Harrison & Vannest, 2008). As noted in the literature, there is a lack of awareness by school personal about the needs of military-connected children because staff are unaware of the cultural anomalies associated with the military lifestyle (Esqueda et al., 2012). In addition, military-connected children are not being properly identified in public or civilian schools (Brendel et al., 2013). Within DoDEA schools, a data system is used to help identify students (Atuel et al., 2011). Within this system can be found both educational and health information about students (Atuel et al., 2011). This information is useful because it can help school personnel with things such as enrollment and grade placement (Atuel et al., 2011). Since military-connected children make up a small percentage of the student population that attend civilian schools, a similar identification system would be beneficial for civilian schools to use (Atuel et al., 2011). Within civilian schools, there also appears to be a lack of training for school personnel on how military families and their needs should be dealt with (Brendel et al., 2013). As noted by Brendel et al. (2013), even if there are supports available in civilian schools for military-connected children and their families, school personnel themselves are often unaware that they exist. Thus, school personnel are not able to properly advise military families of any services that do exist (Brendel et al., 2013). Therefore, military families often do not receive the support services that they require (Brendel et al., 2013).
Military-connected children who live in Canada now attend civilian schools within local communities. To date, there is no research on whether the needs of military-connected children who attend civilian schools in Canada are being addressed. However, in a recent document released by the Vanier Institute of the Family, it was reported that 54% of surveyed CAF spouses agreed that “military children are at a disadvantage because civilian public schools do not understand military lifestyle” (Battams, 2016, p.4).

Unlike in the United States, school boards across Canada do not receive any financial assistance from the federal government to develop supports for military families and their children (Council of Ministers of Education Canada, 2016). Instead, each province and territory has its own ministry that is responsible for the organization and delivery of education (CMEC, 2016). What is clearly lacking from these ministries is funding for programs that help support military-connected children. Therefore, since military-connected children are now attending civilian public schools, it is important for educational personnel to have awareness of the military lifestyle and its unique needs.

**Community Supports**

In addition to the educational supports that were previously discussed, the care and well-being of military families and their children have been addressed through community programming.

The number of military focused supports and programming offered at the local, regional, and national levels are steadily increasing in the United States today. One of the most prominent organizations that exists in the United States today is the Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC). MCEC is a non-profit, worldwide organization that is focused on “ensuring quality educational opportunities for military children who are
affected by transition, family separation, and mobility” (Military Child Education Coalition, 2016). Programs offered through MCEC include the Student 2 Student (S2S) program and the Parent-to-Parent program (MCEC, 2016). Within schools that support mobile students, the S2S program helps military-connected children and civilian students to develop and maintain peer-based programs (MCEC, 2016). The S2S program has proven to help military-connected children gain confidence, enhance their comfort level and increase their well-being during the transitional period to a new environment (MCEC, 2016). The Parent-to-Parent program focuses on training and educating military parents on how to be their child’s strongest advocate when it comes to educational and social issues (MCEC, 2016). Other community organizations that exist include Operation Military Kids (OMK), Families OverComing Under Stress (FOCUS), and Military OneSource (Brendel et al., 2013). While there are many organizations and community programs that exist, the main focus of them all is to provide school and community support for military-connected children and their families (Brendel et al., 2013). As noted by De Pedro et al. (2011), the types of supports that are offered through these organizations sufficiently help military-connected children cope with the challenges that are associated with the military lifestyle.

Within Canada, Military Family Resource Centers (MFRC) exist to help support the needs of military families (National Morale and Welfare Services, 2017b). Located on CAF bases, MFRCs provide programs and services to “empower and encourage strong, independent individuals and families” by focusing on family support and community development (NMWS, 2017b). Furthermore, MFRCs “assess local needs in order to avoid duplication of community services and resources” (NMWS, 2017b).
Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the pre-existing literature that relates to the research question. The distinguishing factors of the military lifestyle were presented and a discussion regarding how these factors affect the well-being of military-connected children was provided. Furthermore, how schools address the needs of military-connected children in both the United States and Canada was also discussed. The following chapter will provide both an overview of the phenomenological research methodology and the data collection methods that were used in this study.
Chapter 3

Research Methods

This chapter outlines the research methodology and data collection methods that were used in this study. The research methods section includes an overview of the following: the recruitment of participants, the participants, data collection, and data analysis.

Phenomenological Methodology

The research methodology that was used for this study is phenomenology. Phenomenology is used when a researcher “describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a phenomenon” (Creswell, 2013, p. 57). Since experiences are the focus of phenomenology, researchers concern themselves with the perspectives of individuals who have been involved with the issue that is being researched (Groenewald, 2004). By collecting data from individuals who have experienced the phenomenon, the researcher is able to describe the essence of an experience for the individuals involved (Creswell, 2013). The aim of this research is to explore how Canadian secondary school professionals perceive military-connected children and their unique needs.

Phenomenology was the most appropriate methodology to use for addressing the research problem because the central phenomenon being studied is an experience and the intent is to describe its meaning for the individuals involved in the issue. This methodology offers insight into the types of experiences Canadian school professionals have with military-connected children and how they perceive their unique needs.
Methods

Recruitment of Participants. The original aim of this study was to explore how military-connected children and their unique needs are perceived by school professionals in Ontario secondary schools. Participants were going to be recruited through purposeful sampling. After receiving approval for this study from the Queen’s University General Research Ethics Board (GREB) (Appendix A), the Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board (ALCDSB) and Limestone District School Board (LDSB) were contacted. These specific boards were contacted because they contain military bases in their catchment areas. All the required forms to request completing research in these school boards were completed and submitted. Although follow up emails were sent to each of the boards, no contact was made back from each of the boards.

After having no contact from the above boards, an amendment was submitted to GREB to request widening the scope of the study to all of Canada (Appendix B). A recruitment poster (Appendix C) was developed and posted onto the “Military and Veteran Family Health Research Group” Facebook page. This Facebook page which was developed by Dr. Heidi Cramm, a professor in the Faculty of Rehabilitation Therapy at Queen’s University, highlights ongoing research projects of both academic researchers and graduate students across Canada that relate to the health of Canadian military and veteran families. While the recruitment poster received a lot of interest, no participants were recruited through this Facebook page.

Following the post to the “Military and Veteran Family Health Research Group” Facebook page, an amendment was submitted to GREB to request an additional method of recruiting participants. This request was approved (Appendix D) and a new
recruitment poster (Appendix E) was developed and posted onto my personal Facebook page. One individual (a former teacher of mine) contacted me and informed me of her interest to participate in the study. Once this individual confirmed her participation in the study, I used snowball sampling and recruited a second participant (another former teacher of mine) through the above individual. Snowball sampling involves the recruitment of participants based on the recommendations of others (Patton, 2002). The other four participants were recruited in a similar manner. One of my committee members reached out to a local teacher and passed along some information about my research study. The contact information of this local teacher was then passed along with permission. I made contact through email, and this teacher agreed to participate in my study. I once again used snowball sampling and recruited three more participants. Although efforts were made by each of the above participants to pass along my contact information to other potential participants, only six participants were ultimately recruited for this study.

Participants and Setting. To be eligible to partake in this study, participants had to be a current school professional (teacher, guidance counsellor, youth worker, or administrator) within a Canadian secondary school. Each of the participants met this requirement. The participants who were recruited for this study are teachers who teach in Ontario secondary schools. A total of six participants were recruited to explore how military-connected children and their unique needs are perceived by school professionals in Canadian secondary schools. These six teachers allowed the central phenomenon to be understood best because they teach in school boards that contain military bases within their catchment areas. While all the participants are currently teachers, two of the six
participants also hold a department head position within the schools at which they teach.

All the participants teach a variety of subjects including Math, Physics, Computer Technology, English, History, Geography, and Physical Education. Four of the participants have only had experience teaching at the intermediate-secondary level, while two participants have taught at both the elementary and intermediate-secondary levels.

Table 1 and Table 2 below summarize basic information about each participant.

Table 1

*Summary of participant details*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Teaching Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Department head and teacher</td>
<td>Math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Physics, Math, English, and Computer Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Student success teacher</td>
<td>History and Geography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 4</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Department head and teacher</td>
<td>Physical Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 6</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Ontario Literacy Credit teacher</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2

Summary of participant details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Total number years of teaching</th>
<th>Estimated percentage of military-connected children in school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 1</td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>20-30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 2</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 3</td>
<td>24 years</td>
<td>10-20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 4</td>
<td>20 years</td>
<td>10-20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 5</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 6</td>
<td>30 years</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Collection. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Upon indicating their interest in participating in the study, participants were emailed an information form (Appendix F) outlining the topic of the study and what participation in the study would entail. If participants indicated that they were still interested in participating in the study after reading the information form, a consent agreement (Appendix G), and the interview protocol (Appendix G) was sent to each of the participants via email. Further email correspondence occurred with each of the participants to arrange a meeting time and location for each of the interviews.
Each of the interviews were conducted at a time and location determined by the interviewee. Four of the six participants chose to be interviewed at the school where they teach at. Within each of these schools, the teachers chose to be interviewed in their own personal classrooms. The remaining two participants chose to be interviewed outside of their place of work. One participant chose to be interviewed in their home, while the other participant chose a local Starbucks coffee shop. Each interview varied in length of time. While the shortest interview lasted for 25 minutes, the longest interview lasted 45 minutes.

Prior to each of the interviews, the participants were asked to look over the consent and confidentiality form, and the interview protocol that was previously emailed to them. The interview protocol was sent prior to each of the interviews to allow the participants time to reflect and think about the research topic and their potential answers. Each participant was notified that printed copies of the above forms would be brought to the interview for them to sign. Prior to the interview beginning, the participants were given time to sign the required forms, and ask questions. A hard copy of the interview protocol was given to each of the participants at the beginning of the interview to act as a reference guide. The interview protocol included open-ended, emerging questions to allow participants to generate their own responses. Using semi-structured interviews to understand how military-connected children and their unique needs are perceived by school professionals in Canadian secondary schools was beneficial. This is because while semi-structured interviews generally have a set of predetermined open-ended questions, other questions related to the interview topic can emerge from the dialogue between the
interviewer and interviewee (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Thus, a more in depth exploration of the phenomenon can occur (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

**Data Analysis.** Following each individual interview, the audio recording was transcribed verbatim. A code was given to each file to maintain participant confidentiality. An example of a code would be the following: “P1 Transcript.” When possible, identifying features such as names, cities, school boards were also removed from the transcripts. Once again, codes were used in place of this identifying information to maintain participant confidentiality. Using participant 2 as an example, the following code was used in place their name: “Sure. My name is NK.” There was a total of 57 pages of transcript data. The length of the transcripts ranged between 7 and 11 pages for each participant.

Once all the data was transcribed, a general inductive approach was used to analyze the data. The inductive analysis described here refers to an approach that primarily uses reading of the data to derive themes through interpretations of the data made by the researcher (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). It is important to note that all research involves inherent bias because the researcher is deriving themes through their interpretation of the data. However, by allowing the key findings to emerge from the data, it helps the researcher avoid imposing preconceived notions onto the data (Saldaña, 2013). No qualitative coding software was used in the data analysis for this research, and I analyzed each individual data set manually.

Having been raised in a military family, I recognized the biases that I could bring to my data analysis process and how my experiences as a military-connected child could influence my interpretation of the data. Although it is difficult to eliminate bias in
research, I used bracketing to help mitigate my personal bias prior to starting the formal data analysis. Bracketing is a process by which “a researcher reflects on their viewpoints/experiences related to the study’s central phenomenon, describes these perspectives in writing, and then works to set them aside (or “bracket” them) during the analysis process (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2015, p. 364). I felt that bracketing was important to conduct to ensure that my perspectives and experiences as a military-connected child would not overwhelm the perspectives and experiences of the participants (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2015). After going through the bracketing process, I conducted a preliminary exploratory analysis of the data. By reading through the data, the researcher can gain a general sense of the data and write down any initial thoughts or ideas that come to them (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2015). Furthermore, a preliminary exploratory analysis provides the researcher the opportunity to begin thinking about the organization of the data (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2015). I felt that a preliminary exploratory analysis of the data was important because I was able to understand the data as a whole before I started to further break the data down into different categories and themes (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2015).

Following the preliminary exploratory analysis, I began the formal data analysis and carried out open, axial, and selective coding as described by Strauss and Corbin (1990). A Microsoft Word document was used to document the open codes, axial codes, and selective codes. Before analyzing all the data sets, my supervisor and I worked together to open code one of the transcripts. Once the open coding of this transcript was completed, I moved on to analyze the rest of the data sets by myself. The open coding phase involved reading and rereading the data sets while taking notes of any terms or
phrases that stuck out. The open coding process resulted in 65 unique codes. Examples of some of the open codes include the following: duty, social skills, awareness, military, pride, communication, uniform, identity, behaviour, collaboration. Following this, axial coding was carried out and open codes were grouped into categories based on similarities or common components. The axial coding process resulted in 13 categories. These included the following: (1) relationships, (2) separation, (3) stress, (4) mobility, (5) identity, (6) informal identification, (7) formal identification, (8) a need to formally identify, (9) need for professional development, (10) the creation of professional development, (11) community involvement, (12) programs and services offered, and (13) a need for collaboration. Finally, selective coding was completed and four broad themes emerged from the data. These include the following: (1) general awareness of the military lifestyle, (2) identification of military-connected children, (3) professional development, and (4) the relationship between the military and schools. At this point, my supervisor was consulted to ensure the themes were represented the understanding of the data. The themes that were the most relevant to the research question are the outcome of the data analysis, and are presented descriptively as the findings in of the research study.

Summary

This chapter outlined the qualitative approach I used to explore how military-connected children and their unique needs are perceived by school professionals in Canadian secondary schools. By using a semi-structured interview approach, I gathered detail-rich data from six participants that allowed me to answer my research question. The themes that were the most relevant to the research question are the outcome of the
data analysis, and are presented descriptively as the findings in of the research study. The findings of the study will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.
Chapter 4

Findings

This chapter describes and discusses the findings of the study. The following research question guided this study: How are military-connected children and their unique needs perceived by school professionals in Canadian secondary schools? Based on this research question, the data was organized around the following 4 broad themes: general awareness of the military lifestyle, identification of military-connected children within schools, professional development, and the relationship between the military and schools.

Overview of Findings

After analyzing the data, four broad themes emerged from the data: general awareness of the military lifestyle, identification of military-connected children within schools, professional development, and the relationship between the military and schools. Within general awareness of the military lifestyle, there were five categories: (1) relationships, (2) separation, (3) stress, (4) mobility, and (5) identity. Within identification of military-connected children within schools there were three categories: (1) informal identification, (2) formal identification, and (3) a need to formally identify. Within professional development there were two categories: (1) need for professional development, and (2) the creation of professional development. Within the relationship between the military and schools there were three categories: (1) community involvement, (2) programs and services offered, and (3) a need for collaboration. While some of the data was applicable to multiple themes, my supervisor and I made decisions about where to categorize data based upon which theme they best represented. Provided
below are tables that summarize the major findings of the study.

**Table 3 Description of Broad Theme #1: General Awareness of the Military Lifestyle**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>Participants discussed how the military lifestyle affected the social relationships of military-connected children and their families. Both positive and negative effects were discussed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separation</td>
<td>Participants discussed the different types of separation military families may experience. One participant talked about separation that was due to the parent’s role within the military, while other participants discussed how families may feel separated or lost within new communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>Participants discussed the different types of stress that military families may experience. Parental stress as well and the stress that military-connected children themselves may experience were discussed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility</td>
<td>Participants discussed how military families may experience frequent relocation, while also addressing how mobility could affect the lives of military families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>Participants discussed how being a part of a military family may lead some military-connected students to have a unique identity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 Description of Broad Theme #2: Identification of Military-Connected Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Informal identification</td>
<td>Participants discussed how the informally identify military-connected children. The following ways were brought up: visual cues, communication with students, parents, and other teachers, and school assignments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal identification</td>
<td>Only one participant discussed the formal identification system that is used to identify military-connected children at the school she teaches at.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to formally identify</td>
<td>Participants discussed a need to formally identify military-connected children so that the needs of these students could be better supported.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 Description of Broad Theme #3: Professional Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Need for professional development</td>
<td>Participants discussed a need for professional development that focuses on military-connected children and their needs. The following reasons were provided for why professional development should be created: lack of pre-existing professional development, improving teaching practice, interaction with military-connected children, and to increase awareness of others within the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation of professional development</td>
<td>Participants discussed the creation of professional development and the types of information they thought would be useful for school professionals to know. Collaboration with the military and a need for student voice were brought up.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5 Description of Broad Theme #4: Military and School Relationship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community involvement</td>
<td>Participants discussed if they were aware if the military had reached out to work with local schools. While many participants were unaware if the military had reached out to work with local schools, participants discussed how members of the community who were connected to the military would help inside the classroom. Furthermore, participants discussed community services that were military focused.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs and services offered</td>
<td>Participants discussed the various programs and services they were aware of that the military offered to support military-connected children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for collaboration</td>
<td>Participants discussed that a collaboration between the military and schools would be beneficial to help better support military-connected children.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**General Awareness of the Military Lifestyle**

Within general awareness of the military lifestyle, five main themes emerged: (1) relationships, (2) separation, (3) stress, (4) mobility, and (5) identity.

**Relationships**

Many of the participants identified that the military lifestyle would have an impact on the relationships that both military-connected children and their families have with others. When discussing social relationships, participants discussed both the (1) negative impacts, and (2) positive impacts.
**Negative impacts.** Participants identified how the military lifestyle could negatively impact the social and peer relationships of both military-connected children and their families. Participant 1 noted “specifically I think it’s mostly social only because I am going to say you know they have to make new friends.” Participant 1 not only identified that military-connected children would have to make new friends, they also talked about how military-connected children may be hesitant of creating new relationships with peers. When discussing this, participant 1 noted the following:

And I wonder too if there is ever a fear of developing a strong relationship with someone outside the military because you might not be around for a long time. I wonder if they purposefully hold back [in developing relationships] because they don’t want to get attached because they [know] they are going to move again.

Participant 4 also discussed social relationships and identified that “relationship building is one of the main things for students.” They further discussed that:

The negatives of course would be, again going back to relationships, it’s difficult to figure out probably how to make that pathway for them to work if they are moving from place to place and having to restart every single time.

Participant 5 discussed the struggles that military-connected children may face when trying to fit in. They noted that:

I feel it’s really tough to be fully engaged in your lesson, activities, and other pieces when you are struggling to fit in. When you’re doing peer work, and you don’t know that peer that is across from you. And when you are trying to re-establish amongst a peer group that may have been together since Kindergarten.

In addition to the social relationships that military-connected children are required to create, participant 1 discussed how the military lifestyle may affect family relations. When reflecting on her current family situation, participant 1 discussed how difficult it would be for her to be a part of a military family because of how close she is with her
family. She brought up the idea of “disconnectedness” and how “you might not end up in the same town where your grandparents are. Your aunts, and uncles. And so there’s all those family connections that I can’t even imagine living without.” Furthermore, participant 4 also discussed the need for families to “make connections quickly. Good connections quickly.” Making good connections was deemed important by participant 4 because without these connections they felt that military families were at risk of “feeling a little isolated, and left out.”

**Positive impacts.** While some participants discussed how the social relationships could be negatively impacted, some participants discussed how the social functioning of military-connected children could be positively impacted. Participant 4 talked about their experience with coaching military-connected children and noted that “I’ve seen students come in from military families that are really well-behaved, can interact socially really well, really quickly. Especially if they get involved in something. Particularly that’s what I see in sports because that’s what I focus on.” Participant 2 also discussed how military-connected children “usually do really well socially.” However, participant 2 noted that although military-connected children may do well socially, they “don’t think [military-connected children] necessarily love it when they have to move.”

**Separation**

Separation was a theme that was brought up by participants when discussing the military lifestyle. One participant talked about separation that was due to the parent’s role within the military. Other participants discussed how families may feel separated or lost within their new communities. In my interview with participant 3, parental separation was discussed extensively. They not only discussed that parental separation was
something experienced by military-connected children, but they also discussed how parental separation can be more difficult depending on their parent’s position within the military:

And now we have a unit on base. We have the JTF2. Those are our secret forces. They are the equivalent to the Green Beret down in the United States. Those guys are gone all the time. Those kids don’t even know where their dads are. They are not allowed to know. So that’s a whole other level.

Participant 6 also discussed this feeling of “unknown” amongst military-connected children when experiencing parental separation. When discussing parental separation, they noted that “just the essence of missing your parent, and not knowing what’s happening to your parent when they are deployed or if they have to be transferred” must be very stressful for a child. Participant 6 also brought up the impact of parental separation. Military-connected children are not only missing their parent, but the parent who is away is “missing a lot.” Participant 6 discussed how:

Parents miss milestones. The other thing I really thought about was that parents miss milestones. And they can’t help it. Their job says you’re not going to see your child graduate, or you’re not going to see that dance recital. Or you’re not going to watch their championship football game. And that you’re not going to be able to assist them daily with homework.

While parental separation is stressful and difficult for the child, it can also be as equally difficult on the parent that is separated from their family. Furthermore, other family members can also experience difficulties during separation. As pointed out by participant 3, this parental separation can result in “a lack of interaction for spouses” making “separation for parents and families” difficult and challenging.
**Stress**

Four participants felt that military families often experienced stress. Participant 2 discussed parental stress and noted that “So parental strife. I have some students who parents are split often times. There seems to be a parent kerfuffle. It seems like, sometimes things are a ruckus.” Parental stress was also brought up by participant 6 and they noted that a position in the military requires “Always being on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year depending on what’s happening in the world.” As a result of always being on call, participant 6 considered the military as a “high alert, high stress position.” While parental stress was also brought up by participant 3, they also commented on how parental stress can be passed down to their children. When discussing stress, the following comment was made by participant 3: “The stress of the children dealing with their parents. So the stress that is put on the parents in their jobs that the students take on.” Participant 4 also discussed how the children can take on the stress that is being experienced by parents and noted that “Trying to [work] through [relationships] would be tough. So that of course transcends down to the kids.” While participant 6 brought up stress experienced by military-connected children, the discussion surrounded feeling stressed because the absence of a parent. They noted that “there seems to be that kind of – always stress. It is better when the parents are home. Always happiness when their parents comes back into the home situation. And you do see a shift.”

**Mobility**

When considering the military lifestyle, four of the participants discussed mobility. For participant 1, when hearing the phrase “military lifestyle,” the first thought that came to mind was “when I hear the phrase I think of people moving all over the
place.” Similarly, participant 4 also expressed that they thought of “someone that has been around the country, or possibly out of country a few times.” Participant 2 also mentioned mobility and noted that “I think of moving around.” Participant 3 discussed how the frequency of mobility could be dependent on the position that a parent holds within the military. They noted that “If their father or mother has gone up the ranks quickly, that means they have moved a lot more.”

While four of the participants simply discussed mobility, two participants discussed how they thought mobility could affect the lives of military families. Participant 3 and participant 5 discussed transition and the different types of transitions they thought military families are required to make when they relocate. The idea of transitioning into new communities was brought up and participant 3 discussed the following: “a lot of the time [is spent] fitting into a small community that has people that have grounded roots.” For participant 5, transitions between “schools, houses, homes, and cities” were noted. While participant 5 noted that transition is something they felt that military families experience frequently, they also discussed what educators could do for students in these times of transitions:

But I think that in those moments of transition, you have to be even more sensitive to that. And be aware of things like their engagement, and their mental-health. I think that with leaving peer groups, and coming into communities – new communities, and knowing you have to leave, there is a lot of transition that these students are going through.

**Identity**

Two participants seemed to be aware that being a part of a military family may lead some military-connected students to have a unique identity. When discussing identity, participants commented on how the military lifestyle can impact one’s identity
and how the person views themselves. Participant 3 discussed how in a military community, “[children] are subjected to the rank of their father or mother.” Expressing that they have taught the kids of officers, colonels, and generals, participant 3 noticed that “just like the socio-economic in civvie street, the same socio-economic issues in the military exist. And it affects kids and their sense of who they are.” The issue of identity was also brought up by participant 6. However, they discussed how the issue of having an identity tied to the military can be difficult for children sometimes. They noted that “for some students, they don’t want to have that identity. But it’s a part of their life. And it’s not something that you can just, you know, shut down.” This participant further went on to discuss that “even when parents are retired from the military, they’re still immersed in the military. It never leaves them. The behavioural patterns. They don’t just go away.”

Identification of Military-Connected Children

Within identification of military-connected children within schools, three main themes emerged: (1) informal identification, (2) formal identification, and (3) a need for identification.

Informal Identification

Five participants identified that there are no formal procedures put in place to identify military-connected children. Participants discussed how military-connected children are often identified informally through the following ways: (1) visual cues; (2) communication with students, parents, and other teachers; and (3) through school assignments.

Visual Cues. For some of the participants, visual cues played a large role in identifying military-connected children. For most of the participants, it was the visual cue
of a uniform or military attire that helped them determine if a student was connected to the military. For participant 1, seeing the actual students themselves in uniform at school helped a lot. They noted that “I don’t ever remember anybody saying those words to me. Or saying something similar to that. Like I don’t ever hear anybody say ‘just so you know, we’re military.’ The only way I would know is if they come in uniform.”

Participant 1 made an additional comment when we were discussing the identification of military-connected children and noted that “Yeah, that’s what I mean. They blend in like everybody else. But I can tell you when you can identify some. And that is on Remembrance Day. When they come dressed in their attire instead of our school uniform.” It is important to note here that the “uniform” that participant 1 is referring to is a cadet uniform. When participant 1 was asked to clarify why they thought seeing a child in a cadet uniform meant that that child was connected to the military, she provided the following explanation: “And the odd time you have a student tell you that they are a cadet. So I’ll make some assumptions. Although I know not every cadet is necessarily a child of a military family. But there is probably a connection somewhere down the line.”

Therefore, when a student would come to school dressed in a cadet uniform, participant 1 made an assumption that that child was connected to the military. However, it is important to note that not every child that is involved in a Cadet program comes from a military family. This connection between wearing a cadet uniform to school and being military-connected was simply participant one’s perspective.

In addition to seeing the students themselves dressed in military-related attire, participants discussed that a strong indication that a child was military-connected was when parents would come to the school dressed in their military attire. Participant 5
discussed parent-teacher night and how “there have been some situations where I hadn’t
done that class survey beforehand and a parent would – they would come dressed in
uniform to a parent night.” Participant 6 didn’t reference parent-teacher night, but spoke
generally about “seeing the parents come in in their official clothing – their uniforms” to
the school.

Communication. In addition to visual cues, communicating with students,
parents, and other staff through a variety of ways played a large role in determining if a
child was military-connected. One form of communication that all the participants
discussed was verbal conversations. Many of the participants discussed that is was
through their personal conversations with the students that they learned a student was
military-connected. Participant 1 noted that “There’s a couple I know of, and that’s
because they talk about it. They speak of their one or both of their parents working in the
military. So that’s the only way we really know.” Participant 2 also discussed personal
conversations with students and noted “Honestly, we don’t know until the kids say so
themselves. Because no one tells me but the kids.” While participant 6 noted that
personal conversations with students happen throughout the year, many of the
conversations with students happen around Remembrance Day because:

Remembrance Day is really important to me because of family members being
involved in the military and historically within my family people have gone off to
war, and have not come back. So it’s of interest to me, and when that time of the
school year comes around we get into discussions, and that’s how I find out.

In addition to having personal conversations with students, conversations with parents
and other staff members were also brought up by participants. Participant 4 noted that
“I’ve had parents come up and say we’re not from here at parent-teacher interviews, or
when report cards go out.” Furthermore, participant 4 mentioned “At the beginning of the
year at staff meetings we sometimes get briefed on new students, and get told that we have some military families moving in.”

Another way that the participants potentially identified students as being military-connected was through written communication. The Ontario Student Record (OSR) and grade 8 transition notes were brought up by two of the participants. While the OSR is in fact a formal document, participants brought up the OSR because the OSR can sometimes include additional information that could improve the education that a student is receiving. As mentioned by participant 4, “We can always go to the OSRs and take a look at where they’re from and see if there are any needs.” Furthermore, in the discussion that I had with participant 2, they mentioned that “We have an OSR. And it moves school to school and there is a stamp for every school. So you might pick up a kids OSR and be like oh, they moved a lot.” Although the OSR may provide information about where a student is from, or how many schools a student has attended, participant 2 mentioned that this additional information needs to be taken into special consideration because “that could be due to so many things. Like it doesn’t say [if all the moving] was due to [being] in the military.” Like the OSR, participant 2 also brought up Grade 8 transition notes and discussed that:

What grade 8 transition notes are is they are not official, which is why they are not largely shared. It’s where the Grade 8 teacher says okay, like off the cuff can you tell me anything about these kids that are going from your class into high school. Just so we have some background. If the teacher thinks it is relevant, it might say the parents are in the military. But they also might not.

School Assignments. The last way that participants discussed informally identifying military-connected students was through school assignments. Two of the participants discussed that because they teach English, students are given opportunities in
the assignments to discuss personal experiences. Participant 6 discussed that students “come forward in their writings too because of teaching English. It comes through in their writing. They will talk about their parent, or will talk about when they journal – they will talk about experiences. Which I think is very healthy.” Similarly, participant 2 discussed their experiences with students describing their connection to the military in their assignments:

In my Grade 9 class, one of the expectations for the writing portfolio is to write a personal narrative. So they are expected to pick a moment in their life that mattered. Or it could be from an experience that their parent had and they want to retell or share. Or something that happened to them. It could be happy or sad. And every year I have students writing about moving. Every year. So there’s always at least one person writing about what it’s like to go through the experience of saying bye to a father, or mother who’s going abroad. What it’s like to drive all the way from BC and arrive in this new city. So it’s through that. That’s a big way I learn that.

**Formal Identification**

As previously reported, there are many informal ways that participants used to identify military-connected students. When asked, most participants identified that there are no formal procedures put in place to identify military-connected children. However, one participant did in fact indicate that there is a formal system used in their school to identify military-connected children. Although participant 3 did not provide extensive information on this identification system, they did note that “We can do a search in our [student information] system. But when they register, they are identified. I don’t know what other schools do. We do that because we have the resource of counselling. We have a military student support group.”
A Need to Identify

The participants were given the opportunity to discuss if they thought that a formal procedure should be put in place to identify military-connected children. Participants discussed a need to formally identify military-connected children because of (1) the lack of formal identification that currently exists, and (2) to help further support students.

Lack of pre-existing formal identification. As previously reported, five of the six participants described being unaware of any formal procedures being in place to identify military-connected children. Participant 2 noted “But to my knowledge, unless I’m wrong, there is no formal designation used.” While many of the participants were unaware of any formal procedures, some of the participants indicated a need to be able to formally identify military-connected children. For instance, participant 6 noted “I know of none. But there should be.” Furthermore, participant 1 described “I think just even like – you know for instance our struggling students, or our students who are on an IEP. We get notification who those students are through email. Here’s all our identified students. So it would be good to get the same thing for military. You know, and not because you’re going to treat them differently. But just, it’s good to be aware of who they are.”

Identification to enable support for students. When the participants were asked why they felt that military-connected children should be identified, many discussed the reason of being able to further support these students. Participant 3 noted “Yes. I don’t know how to do it better. But if you don’t know who they are, you don’t know how to support them.” Participant 4 also discussed the importance of identifying military-connected children in communities that have a large military family population:
Each child has their own experiences, and sees and perceives things differently. And their thoughts control their emotions. The emotions control their perceptions, and their perceptions control their behaviour. So I think that it should be something that should be marked, or earmarked for educators. Especially in transient – in communities that have military families.

Many of the participants discussed that being able to identify military-connected children would help support these students further because it would help them understand where these students are coming from. This can be seen in a comment made by participant 2 that stated the following:

Those sorts of designations would be helpful. But I don’t think it’s a bad idea by any means because it just lets you know where this person is coming from. And I think anything that helps you know where a kid is coming from is good.

Participant 6 also saw a need to identify military-connected students so that they could better understand where these students are coming from:

I do see a need for sure because it’s critical for understanding the behavioral changes and emotional upset. In regards to deployment of parents, moving, the news regarding war and conflict in other parts of the world. So we just don’t have the perspective that we need to in order to help students cope. And if we understand that’s where they are coming from, and if they are acting out, or if they are very regimented in their own lifestyle, then you can ponder that and think of ways to help them.

In addition to understanding where these students are coming from, participant 1 discussed how identifying military-connected children would provide educators with insight on the types of struggles military-connected children deal with:

So I mean I guess as a teacher I think its always good to be aware because it gives you insight into have they been in Ontario you know? Or have they been travelling the world. Or you know, it would give us insight into some struggles that they might have. Even just, not necessarily mental health issues, but their mental well-being in terms of you know, socially. Are they fitting in. Are they making friends, and all that kind of stuff. You know, if you know who these students are, you can keep eyes open and make sure that they are adjusting okay.
Professional Development

Within professional development, two main themes emerged: (1) need for professional development, and (2) the creation of professional development.

Need for Professional Development

All participants discussed that they were unaware of any professional development that has been developed and/or offered that focuses on military-connected children and their needs. Participants provided the following reasons for why professional development should be created: (1) lack of pre-existing professional development; (2) improving teaching practice; (3) interaction with military-connected children; and (4) increase awareness of others within the school.

Lack of pre-existing professional development. None of the participants had any knowledge of any professional development that existed that focused on military-connected children and their needs. When asked about professional development, both participant 1 and 4 responded by saying “No. Nothing specifically about the military” and “Not one has been offered to me. So I don’t know of any. Sorry.” Participant 6 also noted that they were unaware of any pre-existing professional development by stating “No. No, honestly nothing has really jumped out. And nothing that we have had offered, in terms of our professional development. So it would be nice to include it.” Participant 5 brought up an interesting point when discussing professional development. This participant discussed that they had never received any professional development that specifically had the “military” title in it, but had in fact partaken in professional development that could be applied to military-connected children and their needs:
Not specifically with the title military. But I have had PD that would benefit those students. So there would be things like, let’s say, we were just offered a mindfulness option for professional development. Right, so that mindfulness training can help me work with students who are experiencing some anxiety, or depression or something. But it doesn’t mean that it is solely for military students. But it could benefit them. So never with the military kind of title to it. But I have had PD that would benefit those students

**Improving teaching practice.** When asked about professional development, one participant discussed a need for professional development that focused on military-connected children because it would improve their overall teaching practice. Participant 4 made the following comment:

Yeah, of course. Yeah we do professional development all the time. Teachers try to keep current with, or up to date with everything. So yeah, of course, right. If you want to be a good teacher, you’ve got to know what’s in front of you.

**Interaction with military-connected students.** Two participants indicated that professional development that focused on military-connected children and their needs should be developed because of the likelihood of educators interacting with military-connected children. Participant 1 considered the importance of professional development for educators who teach at schools that have large percentages of military-connected children and stated “Well, as I’m sitting here talking about it, I’m realizing that there probably is some importance to it, right. Especially if we are working at a school where there could be a large amount of military students.” Participant 4 thought larger than the school level and pondered the idea of creating and implementing professional development at both the provincial and national levels. They suggested that “Maybe it should be a part of what we do in Ontario, or even Canada. Because you know, those teachers will encounter – no matter where you are in Canada – you are going to encounter someone that’s in the military.”
Increase awareness amongst others within the school. When asked about professional development, three of the participants discussed that receiving professional development that focused on military-connected children would not only help raise their awareness of these students, but would also help them raise others’ awareness of these students. When discussing professional development with participant 5, she mentioned that her teaching approach encompasses getting to know students and their stories so that as a teacher, she can be empathetic and sensitive towards them. As a result, participant 5 felt that professional development that focuses on military-connected children would not necessarily impact her teaching practice, but she would take it to help raise the awareness of other teachers who do not necessarily have a similar teaching approach. This participant commented:

I think the more support students can have at this stage of the game the better. Would it change the way I am currently doing my practice? Probably not because I feel that I am already doing that. But if it would help other teachers to be more aware, and that would in turn help maybe students I don’t know be more connected to what they need to be successful, than I think it’s worth it, right.

In addition to raising awareness of other staff members, participants discussed that taking professional development could help them raise the awareness of other students in the school. Participant 6 noted that “It would be nice to see a linkage into the students. To have a presentation for not just military students, but everyone.” Participant 1 also spoke of the need for “non-military” students to be aware of the military lifestyle. They seemed unsure if “non-military” students could connect to the military lifestyle and understand the potential impact that this lifestyle could have on their peers. While discussing other student awareness, participant 1 made the following comment:

And I think that even people – even students that aren’t military-connected – for them to be aware of you know what its like to be involved in the military. You
know obviously on Remembrance Day we have some people from the military come and speak to us, and that kind of thing. But I don’t know if kids always connect to ‘hey that could be the parent of the person sitting beside me.’ But I don’t know if kids connect to – I don’t know. So I think even for that reason – for kids to be more aware, aside from just the teachers.

The Creation of Professional Development

In addition to discussing why professional development that focused on military-connected children would be useful, participants also discussed the creation of professional development. They were not only asked who should be involved in developing this type of professional development, but also what types of information they would like to see such a professional development session. The two sub-themes that emerged were the following: (1) collaboration with the military, and (2) a need for student voice.

Collaboration with the military. When considering the creation of professional development, half of the participants discussed the need to collaborate with the military. Participant 6 discussed that collaborating with the military would be beneficial because of the proximity of the base to the school. Furthermore, they discussed that both the military and schools would provide the perspectives that would be needed to create effective professional development material. While discussing this collaboration, participant 6 made the following comment:

It would be great if we could combine because of our great situation in terms of locality, and just closeness. That it would combine forces. And to have from our perspective, the educators. And to have the military perspective because there are things we need to learn, and the more that we share what we see, and what the military sees. I think it would be super helpful for staff and students.

While the other two participants also discussed the need to collaborate with the military, they discussed more specifically the idea of having a “liaison.” The participants brought
up the idea that this liaison would be somebody within the CAF who has experience in both the military and within education. This liaison would not only aid in the creation of the professional development material, but would also deliver these professional development sessions. A suggestion of this dual experience can be seen in a comment made by participant 4 when discussing this liaison:

…but offered by people that, from the military that have experience. And I don’t know if the military has people that deal with families that are sort of in need, or need to be marked that way. That would be good if there was a position in the military that would have that. To teach the teacher right, and then the teacher would teach – you know the resource teacher would come and then explain to us that this kid need this in your class.

Similarly, participant 3 also referred to having a liaison that comes from both a military and education background to help create and implement professional development sessions. While discussing this liaison, participant 3 made the following comment:

The military has to have an education liaison at every base. Somebody in a role like yours or what not that touches base with the schools. And right now they are working out of their counselling, but they need to do something more than that. They can almost do it a little bit further. They can have an officer in the Canadian military who is an educator that fits kind of under that family liaison that goes out and teaches the local schools on it. Educates them on the tools they need. They can’t tell us the specific details, but they can tell us what the lifestyle is like.

Need for student voice. While some of the participants discussed the desire to collaborate with the military in developing professional development, participant 5 discussed heavily the need to incorporate student voice into any professional development material that may be created. When discussing their desire to include student voice within professional development material, the participant talked about why including student voice was so important to them:

So I think if there could be some concrete examples of the situation that are live and well right now so that we can have some time to think about how that would
compound. Yeah. So some kind of current and relevant experiences of students within our school, within our board would be great. Again, sometimes some of the most powerful PD I get is when I actually have student voice. When I actually hear from students what their experiences are like. Not that we have to have a live student sitting there. But it’s really powerful to have quotes from students.

Later on in the conversation, participant 5 further reflected on an experience that they had had with their students earlier that day and shared the following with me:

You know what I was thinking about – when I was looking at that question, I was thinking about asking the students. Asking the students those questions would be really powerful. Just in my Grade 9 class today when I had a minute and was going through some of your questions, my students were doing some group work. And I went over to students who are military and I asked them. So I just kind of surveyed them and that’s powerful. Hearing from them. Right now. What they are struggling with. What is relevant – they have the answers. These kids really need to drive that and what they really need. And that’s what we are getting at right. To support the kids.

**Military and School Relationship**

Within the military and school relationship theme, the following sub-themes emerged: (1) community involvement, (2) programs and services offered, and (3) a need for a relationship between the military and schools.

**Community Involvement**

When discussing the relationship between the military and schools, participants were asked if they were aware if the military had ever reached out to work with schools in supporting the needs of military-connected children. While most participants were unaware that the military had reached out to work with schools, two participants did share the experiences they had had with working with the military. While participant 4 noted that they were unsure if the military itself had reached out to work with schools, they discussed how community members who serve in the military have frequently reached out to help. The two experiences that were shared by participant 4 involved
community members reaching out to help the participant inside the classroom. Participant 4 shared an experience related to a Sergeant Major supplying equipment for an outdoor education class:

For me personally, I don’t know about the school board level, but I know at the school level here at the community level, when I ran the outdoor class, I just have to make a phone call to the base to borrow canoes and it was a Sergeant Major for the cadets that gave me their canoes to use. PFDs, their paddles, tents, sleeping bags, for two of the years. And also within that, I had – there was a retired search and rescue technician guy that took us out and did some survival stuff with us.

The following experience regarding community involvement was also shared by participant 4: “Then there are community members that I workout with that are military that have come in and done some fitness stuff, and they are leaders – again search and rescue guys and girls that help out.” Participant 4 also discussed how community members have reached out to help with extracurricular activities and noted that “when we attempted to do our football program, I had one guy come and approach me and say I’ll help out, and he was from the military.” Participant 3 also commented on community involvement. Similar to participant 4, participant 3 mentioned that they were unsure if the military itself had reached out to work with schools. However, the participant had had experience with their support services and commented “Not the military directly. Their support services have. That’s their mandate. The Military Family Resource Center (MFRC) has counsellors that are attached to schools.”

**Programs and Services Offered**

In addition to being asked if the military has reached out to work with schools, participants were asked specifically if they were aware of any services that the military offers that support the needs of military-connected children, and if any information about
these programs and services have been offered to the schools. Many of the participants noted that they were unaware of any services or programs that the military may offer. Although not a service, participant 2 discussed seeing military related resources around the school and shared the following: “I did notice interesting things like there was a magazine on the table in the office for parents to pick up or kids that said something like “military families.” So like there were more materials.” When further asked about the magazine, the participant shared the following: “I really don’t think I’ve heard of the military doing anything like that. Other than the military family magazine that gets put into the office. But I’m not sure who puts that there.” In addition to the military magazine, participant 2 discussed their experience with recruiting service:

The only programs that I have seen in the school are things more like recruiting type stuff. Like – these are the programs we offer or here is summer employment. Those are the programs that I think that are most highlighted. They will set up a booth in the hallway or whatever, but to my knowledge the content is all that. I don’t think there is that supports piece. And I don’t want to promise it’s not there, but when I hear it on the announcements, it’s more about here’s summer employment, here’s post-secondary education.

When sharing their knowledge of services the military may offer, a few participants discussed that they had learned about services that the military offers, but from outside sources. Participant 4 noted that “I’ve only heard [radio] commercials about the MFRC daycare.” Furthermore, participant 5 discussed that “personally, I have not received that information. But I just know through word of mouth that they offer counselling services through the military.” Similarly, participant 2 also expressed the following when discussing services the military offers:

I think so, but not through the school as much. I’ve seen it more – I don’t know if I’ve seen it on a bus, or on an ad, or like. And there might have been a poster in the school or something. But it’s not – I wouldn’t say it’s a well-publicized resource.
Need for Collaboration

When asked, all the participants indicated that there should be some form of collaboration between the military and schools. Participant 2 made it clear that a relationship between the military and schools was important. However, in order for the relationship to be successful, participant 2 discussed the need for clear roles and noted the following:

No I think collaboration is always good. I mean in general in education they want to do collaboration with all kinds of community resources. And that’s thought to be the way to go. So I think collaboration would be good. I mean clear roles is always a big thing. You know, if you collaborate who is doing what, or who is overseeing what. But I think that would be good to go together.

When expressing their thoughts on collaboration between the military and schools, participant 6 also recognized that clear roles and open communication need to be addressed by both institutions and discussed the following:

So then again, that would be something that I would see as being important to visit. And yeah. I just think we should be more involved, particularly our proximity to the base. But the base also needs to be more open about what they would like to see us do. So it’s to communicate back and forth, and to break down that barrier between two institutions. I think it would be exciting to find a way to bridge the gap. I think if you bring both institutions together, that’s the secret. That’s the key for allowing programming to go forward. To have that linkage. Then that means, okay we’re safe. We can talk about these things. Both bodies agree, and both organizations want this to happen. So yeah, all about breaking down walls.

For participant 5, collaboration between both the military and schools was also important. They felt that for students to be properly supported, both institutions needed to collaborate and come together. When discussing the collaboration, participant 5 expressed the following:
I think it would be ideal if there was a collaborative approach. And I don’t know if that has tried to be initiated or – but I think the more adults we have supporting youth in our community, the better. So I think the more we can partner and connect with students and make sure they are receiving the support and guidance that they need, then I think the more – the better in any situation. I’m all about if there can be collaboration. And knowledge is power. Or the more that I know as a teacher, the more sensitive I can be. Hopefully the more well-adjusted the students are. So I think a collaborative approach - there is probably lots of opportunities for that. Especially at our school given the location.

Participant 3 also indicated that collaboration between both institutions was required to better support the students. They felt very strongly about having a military presence within schools and expressed the following:

Oh absolutely. They need to be seen inside the schools. We need to know what is going on out there. We raise their kids 5 days a week, 8 hours a day. Their life for 5 years is our school. Their social connectedness is around our school. We need to know what’s going on in their lives if we want to educate them properly. Not to the point where we think we are their parents, but if there are bigger issues than on the normal – and I keep using the word normal. There is no normal. If we want to support them properly, we need to do that.

Summary

The findings from the individual interviews contributed to the analysis of how the unique needs of military-connected children are perceived by Canadian secondary school professionals. By speaking directly to Canadian secondary school professionals, discussion regarding their specific experiences with military-connected children and their families provide insight on a perspective that is not well documented in the literature. A more detailed discussion of these findings now follows with links to relevant literature.
Chapter 5

Discussion

This final chapter outlines the major findings of this study and situates these findings in the context of the relevant literature. Implications and limitations of the research are provided, while suggestions for future work in this field are also discussed. The chapter concludes by discussing the major stakeholders that could benefit from this research and I outline how I plan to mobilize the findings of my study.

General Awareness of the Military lifestyle

When considering general awareness of the military lifestyle, all the participants could identify aspects of the military lifestyle that families may experience. While some participants could identify more aspects than other participants, there still appeared to be a good general awareness of the military lifestyle amongst the participants. This finding differs from other studies that have focused on the educational experiences of military-connected children within the United States. Many American based studies indicate that there is a lack of awareness amongst public or “civilian” schools of the specific needs of military-connected children (Bradshaw, Sudhinaraset, Mmari, & Blum, 2010; Chandra, Martin, Hawkins, & Richardson, 2010; Harrison & Vannest, 2008; Mmari, Roche, Sudhinaraset, & Blum, 2009). Yet, the participants in this study could identify aspects of the military lifestyle. However, being able to identify some of these aspects could be a result of teaching at a school that has a military base within its catchment area. This meaning that perhaps the participants of this study interact with military-connected children and their families more frequently than the educators did in the studies
mentioned above. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, the studies mentioned above were conducted in the United States. Since the United States specifically has DoDEA and non-DoDEA schools, there is chance that educators who teach at non-DoDEA schools lack an understanding of the military lifestyle because there are not military bases within their catchment areas. Thus, they would not be exposed to this lifestyle as frequently.

It is important at this time to also address academic performance. It is surprising that while the American based studies cited in the literature review discussed the academic performance of military-connected children, academic performance was not brought up by any of the participants of this study. This suggests that some of the findings of the American based studies may not apply to the Canadian context.

It is also important to note the positive aspects associated with the military lifestyle were also discussed by the participants. Social functioning was discussed by two of the participants, and it was noted that military-connected children can often adjust well socially. As previously outlined in the literature review, there is evidence to suggest that military-connected children can have positive social experiences. Relocation and school transition can provide military-connected children the opportunity to start fresh and try out a new social version of themselves. (Kelley, Finkel, & Ashby, 2003; Masten, 2013; Park, 2011; Esqueda et al., 2012). Furthermore, being able to travel and meet new people is also a benefit associated with the military lifestyle. (Blaisure, Saathoff-Wells, Pereira, Wadsworth, & Dombro, 2012).

**Identification of Military-Connected Children**

When it came time to discuss the identification of military-connected children, five of the six participants were unaware of any formal procedures that are in place to
help identify military-connected children. This finding can be considered unique to this study as there are no studies that address the identification of military-connected children within Canadian schools. However, there are discussions within the literature that address the lack of identification of military-connected children within American civilian schools. A study conducted by Bradshaw et al. (2008) found that there are no established procedures put in place by public schools to help facilitate school transition for military-connected children. Although not a study, Esqueda et al. (2012) also discusses the lack of procedures that exist within civilian schools to keep track of military-connected students. While data systems within DoDEA schools prove to be beneficial, there is a need for future research to address the identification of military-connected children within both American and Canadian civilian schools with a larger data set. While a data system may prove beneficial for schools, it is important to consider that military families may not feel the need to be identified. Per Bradshaw, Figiel and Deutsch (2014), military-connected students worry that stereotypes are held by schools about military families, and school staff consider them as different and problematic. Therefore, before determining if identification procedures should be used by civilian schools in both the United States and Canada, studies need to consider both the pros and cons of identifying military-connected children. Furthermore, military families would need to be informed that a data system would only be used to help develop support services and programs, rather than single them out (Esqueda et al., 2012).

**Professional Development**

All six participants were unaware of any professional development that has been created that focuses on military-connected children. However, there appeared to be an
overall agreement amongst the participants that professional development that focuses on military-connected children and their needs would be beneficial. This finding is unique to this study. This is because there appears to be a lack of studies that address the professional development of educators that teach military-connected children. When considering the United States context, there are many articles that discuss the military-specific training that DoDEA school professionals receive (Brendel et al., 2013; Esqueda et al., 2012; Harrison & Vannest, 2008). When considering the professional development of non-DoDEA educators, all that is mentioned in the literature is the lack of training that exists for civilian school personnel in addressing the needs of military-connected children (Atuel et al., 2011). Yet, there are no studies referenced to support this claim. When considering the Canadian context, there are no studies that exist which address the professional development of educators who teach military-connected children. While discussions indicate a need for professional development and specialized training that focuses on military-connected children, there needs to be more studies conducted that support this claim in both the United States and Canadian contexts.

**Military and School Relationship**

Many of the participants were unaware if the military had reached out to work with schools in supporting the needs of military-connected children. For the participants, they felt that the military was responsible for dealing with military-related issues, whereas schools simply deal with educational issues. For the participants, there appeared to be a disconnect between the military and schools, and discussed a need for collaboration between both institutions. The participants felt that collaboration between the military and schools would aid in supporting the needs of military-connected
children. This finding is similar to the findings of American based studies. When considering the American context, there is clear evidence within the literature that indicates that collaboration between the military and schools exist. One of the main examples is DoDEA schools. As previously mentioned, DoDEA schools have an educational approach that focuses on the military lifestyle which allows the academic, emotional, and social needs of military-connected children to be better supported (Atuel et al., 2011; Esqueda et al., 2012). However, when considering the educational experiences of military-connected children in civilian schools, it is suggested that the military and school districts need to increase their communication and collaboration (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Mmari et al., 2009). Furthermore, the literature addresses various ways that the needs of military-connected children could be better supported through the collaboration of schools, military families, and service providers (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Garner, Arnold, & Nunnery, 2014; Kudler & Porter, 2013; Mmari et al., 2009). While there is evidence to support the finding that a collaboration between the military and schools can aid in supporting military-connected children within the American context, there needs to be studies conducted within the Canadian context to determine if collaboration between the military and schools would be beneficial within the Canadian context.

**Implications**

As previously outlined, evidence supports that mobility, separation, and risk may affect the educational experiences of military-connected children. Studies have shown that the military lifestyle can not only effect the social and emotional well-being of
military-connected children, but also their academic success (Boon, 2011; Buerkle & Christenson, 1999; Cederbaum et al., 2014; Mehana & Reynolds, 2004; Ou & Reynolds, 2008; Reed et al., 2011; Simpson & Fowler, Vernberg, 1990). While these needs are being addressed and supported by DoDEA schools, there is evidence to suggest that civilian schools in the United States lack awareness of the military lifestyle and how this lifestyle may affect the educational experiences of military-connected children (Atuel et al., 2011; Esqueda et al., 2012; Harrison & Vannest, 2008). Thus, it appears that the needs of military-connected children are going unaddressed in American civilian schools.

When considering the Canadian context, there are no studies that support the claim that school professionals who teach in civilian schools lack awareness of the military lifestyle. Furthermore, there is no evidence to support that the needs of military-connected children in the Canadian context are being unaddressed in civilian schools. However, when considering the findings of this study, all the participants could identify aspects of the military lifestyle that families may experience. Yet, the participants found it challenging to discuss things such as identifying military-connected children, professional development, and the relationship between the military and schools. Therefore, while the participants could identify aspects of the military lifestyle, there appeared to be an overall lack of awareness amongst the participants on how civilian schools are addressing and supporting the needs of military-connected children. This section will address some implications for Canadian school professionals moving forward.
Increasing Awareness

While interest in supporting the needs of military families has grown within the last two decades, what appears to be lacking is research that addresses how to better support educators who teach military-connected children (Brendel et al. 2013; De Pedro et al., Farrell, Bowen, & Swick, 2014). As previously discussed, the literature suggests that school personnel who teach in American civilian schools have little awareness of military families and their needs and feel unsure how to properly support students through issues related to risk, deployment, and separation (Bradshaw et al., 2010; De Pedro et al., 2014; Mmari et al., 2009). Thus, these educators are not necessarily properly equipped to support military-connected children and their families. However, the findings of this study suggest that some school personnel who teach in Canadian civilian schools with a military base within their catchment are do have awareness of military families and their needs. Furthermore, there appeared to be a lack of awareness amongst the participants on how Canadian civilian schools are addressing and supporting the needs of military-connected children. It is important to consider that the findings of this study may not extend to Canadian school professionals that teach at civilian schools in other parts of Canada.

When considering how to better support educators who teach military-connected children, one suggestion would be to increase the general awareness of military culture and lifestyle amongst school personnel. As noted in the literature, military-connected children not only report feeling poorly understood by school staff and peers, but also feel that their needs are not being properly addressed and supported by school staff and peers (Aronson & Perkins, 2013). It is important to note that the study referenced above was
conducted in the United States, and military-connected children within Canada may not report similar feelings. As a result, more studies need to be conducted that address the school climate perceptions of military-connected children within the Canadian context.

However, educators need to be able to access information on military families and their needs. Recently, the Vanier Institute for the Family released a resource entitled “School Counsellors Working with Military and Veteran Families” (Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association & Canadian Military and Veteran Families Leadership Circle, 2017). This resource not only provides information on Canadian military families, but also provides suggestions on how the needs of military-connected children and their families can be supported within schools and classrooms (CCPA & CMVFLC, 2017). While a resource like this is meaningful and helpful, educators need to be aware that resources like this exist and where they can be accessed. In addition to simply increasing the awareness of military culture and lifestyle, teachers could benefit from specialized training that could not only teach them how to communicate with military families, but also how to support students through times of separation and deployment (Brendel et al., 2013).

Being able to support the needs of military-connected children within schools and classrooms is important because there is evidence to support that in addition to parents, schools can act as a support for children who are experiencing family stressors (De Pedro, Astor, Gilreath, Benbenishty, & Esqueda, 2014). To act as a support for military-connected children, American studies have shown that both the social and emotional climates of civilian schools need to be addressed (De Pedro et al., 2014). Having a positive social and emotional climate can promote the following: social and emotional
well-being, academic achievement, higher attendance, enhanced problem solving, greater motivation to learn, higher self-esteem, and willingness to seek help from teachers and other school staff (Bond et al., 2007; Bonny, Britto, Klostermann, Hornung, & Slap, 2000; Wilson, 2004). Furthermore, positive climates can not only have positive effects on the psychological and behavioral outcomes of students, but also lower levels of depression and anxiety (Bond et al., 2007; Loukas, Suzuki, & Horton, 2006). Having civilian schools think about and work towards changing school climate is important because American studies have shown that in comparison to their civilian counterparts, military-connected children that attend civilian schools often have more negative social and emotional climate perceptions (Bradshaw et al., 2010; De Pedro et al., 2014; Mmari et al., 2009). In an American study conducted by Mmari et al. (2009) military-connected children not only reported feeling misunderstood by teachers and peers, but also experienced challenges adjusting to new school policies and procedures after transitioning into a new school. Again, there is no evidence to suggest that military-connected children within Canada report similar feelings and experiences as military-connected children do who attend civilian schools in the United States. Therefore, there is a need for future studies to address the school climate perceptions of military-connected children within Canada to determine if there is a need for Canadian civilian schools to change their school climates. In conclusion, it would be beneficial for school professionals who teach military-connected children to have access to information regarding military-connected children. Having access to such information could help civilian schools better support the needs of military-connected children.
Identifying Military-Connected Children

Although a large percentage of military-connected children attend civilian schools within the United States, their presence and needs appear to be overlooked by school personnel (Esqueda et al., 2012). Within DoDEA schools, a data system is used to help prevent any delays when dealing with student enrollment and learning (Atuel et al., 2011). Having access to educational and health information allows school staff to appropriately make decisions about enrollment, grade placement, and the awarding of course credits for military-connected children (Atuel et al., 2011). Unlike DoDEA schools, many civilian schools in the United States lack a formal data system to keep track of military student enrollment (Atuel et al., 2011; Bradshaw et al., 2008; Esqueda et al., 2012). As noted in the literature, being unable to identify military-connected children provides a challenge for American civilian schools because they are unable to determine “if a significant proportion of the study body is experiencing undue stress from deployment and other military-related life events” (De Pedro et al., 2014, p. 11). Therefore, it is suggested that implementing a data system in American civilian schools would be beneficial because it would help educators not only identify military-connected children and their needs, but also monitor academic performance (Atuel et al., 2011; Esqueda et al., 2012).

While there is evidence to support that civilian schools in the United States should implement some form of data system to help identify military-connected children, there is no evidence to support this claim in the Canadian context. Moving forward, there is a need to address the identification of military-connected children within Canada and consider both the pros and cons of not only identifying military-connected children, but
also implementing an identification system. While the participants of this study discussed the benefits of being able to identify military-connected children, other perspectives also need to be taken into consideration. As previously mentioned, it is important to consider the perspectives of military families. While school professionals may see a need to identify military-connected children, the parents of military-connected children may not see a need to be identified, nor believe that their child’s schooling experience may improve because of being identified as military-connected. Furthermore, because the children are under the age of 18, the issue of gaining parental consent needs to be taken into consideration. Therefore, before considering if military-connected children who attend civilian schools in Canada should be formally identified, further studies need to address both the pros and cons of an identification system and explore the thoughts and opinions of the major stakeholders involved.

**Collaboration**

There has been a tremendous amount of effort put forth in the United States to help support the needs of military-connected children within schools. The military, school districts, and community organizations have collaborated in various ways to help improve the educational experiences of military-connected children in both DoDEA and civilian schools. This is because studies have indicated that the communication and collaboration between military bases and school districts need to be made a priority (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Mmari et al., 2009). In the United States, DoDEA schools have school liaison officers that assist military families with school issues and coordinate with local school systems (DoDEA, 2017). One of the main roles of school liaison officers is to help create and foster relationships between the military and schools (DoDEA, 2017).
There is a need for further collaboration in Canada between the military and local schools. Similar to the DoDEA school liaison officer position, many of the participants brought up the idea of a school liaison officer and how a school liaison officer could help bridge the gap between the military and local schools. Some of the participants also discussed that a school liaison would not only be a good point of contact for military families, but also for educators. School personnel could seek out the school liaison for any questions they may have about military families and supporting their needs. While I am suggesting that having a school liaison could be beneficial for civilian schools in Canada, future studies need to explore whether or not there is a need for school liaison officers.

**Limitations**

Although attempts were made to decrease the limitations involved in this study, there are still some limitations that remain. One limitation that needs to be considered is researcher bias. When conducting phenomenological research, there is an interpretation of the data that is carried out by the researcher. When carrying out this interpretation, there is the possibility that researcher biases will be introduced. Since I as a researcher grew up in a military family and was a military-connected child, there were many opportunities where researcher biases could have been introduced. However, special consideration was given to my position in relation to the study throughout the entire research process. While I went through the schooling system as a military-connected child, I was mindful of the fact that my experience is just one experience. And while I may have experienced what I did, there was an understanding that not every military-connected child has the same educational experiences. Furthermore, I was mindful that
my experience as a military-connected child may not represent the current contexts, curricula, or resourcing within schools. I can also only provide insight from a military-child’s perspective.

Another limitation of the study was the participants themselves. The individuals who chose to participate in the study chose to do so voluntarily. As noted by McMillian and Schumacher (2006), there is a significant difference between participants who do and do not volunteer to partake in a study. Participants who voluntarily choose to partake in a study may be more educated and have higher intellect (McMillian & Schumacher, 2006). Furthermore, participants who voluntarily choose to partake in a study may have more experience with the phenomenon being studied. Thus, there was the possibility that the individuals who participated in the study may have had a connection to the military. However, while the participants noted that they knew friends or family members who serve in the military, none of the participants grew up in a military family themselves.

The demographics of the participants can be considered a third limitation of the study. As previously mentioned, the participants of the study currently teach at Ontario secondary schools. Therefore, their experiences with teaching military-connected children can only provide a better understanding of how military-connected children and their needs are perceived by Ontario secondary school professionals. Furthermore, because the participants of the study teach at Ontario secondary schools, the study does not take into consideration the experiences of school professionals who teach at elementary schools. All the participants of the study also taught at schools who have military bases in their catchment areas. This means that there is probably a greater chance that these teachers would interact with military-connected children daily inside their
classrooms. Therefore, the experiences of teachers who teach at schools that do not have military bases within their catchment areas are not represented in the data. While there is a smaller chance that these teachers would interact with military-connected children and their families, their experiences also hold value when examining how military-connected children and their needs are perceived by Canadian school professionals. As previously mentioned, none of the participants grew up in military families. Therefore, it would have been interesting to see how similar or different the experiences of school professionals who come from military families would have been to the experiences of participants who did not come from military families.

The sample size of this study can also be considered a limitation. In total, six participants were recruited for this study. Due to this small sample size, the findings of this study cannot be generalizable to a larger population. Since the participants teach in Ontario secondary schools, the data collected is more representative of experiences that teachers have in Ontario secondary schools. There was no data collected that was representative of how educators perceive military-connected children and their unique needs in other parts of Canada. Therefore, although not generalizable, the findings of this study provide some understanding of how military-connected children and their unique needs are being perceived by school professionals in not only Canadian secondary schools, but more specifically Ontario secondary schools.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

Based on the findings of the current study and its limitations, there are a few recommendations for future studies. Coming into this research, I carry my own personal biases. I personally grew up in a military family and went through the educational system.
as a military-connected child. Because of this experience, I not only value the educational experiences of military-connected children, but also see a need to further understand and improve these experiences. Thus, it would be wonderful to see future studies conducted by other researchers that have a connection to the military. In my experience, having a personal connection to the research topic provides a more meaningful and rich experience for the researcher. However, I also see a need for future studies to be conducted by researchers who are not connected to the military to allow for a more objective perspective of participant experiences.

Since the academic performance of military-connected children was not discussed by the participants of this study, a quantitative study that compares the academic achievement of military-connected children to their civilian counterparts would help clarify whether the findings of the American based studies are representative of the Canadian context.

The scope of this research included six individuals who discussed and shared their experiences about teaching military-connected children. At the end of each interview, participants were asked if there was anything further they wanted to comment on or add that was not discussed in the interview. Many of the participants responded with how valuable they felt the research was, and how this research would be beneficial to everyone involved: the children, the families, and the schools. As an extension to this research, the voices of military-connected children and their families need to be represented. It was noted by many of the participants that the perspectives of military-connected children and their families would hold just as much value as the perspectives of educators. Furthermore, the perspectives of administrators and other school
professionals such as guidance counsellors or youth workers would be important to consider in future studies. The perceptions and awareness amongst these school professionals may differ from the awareness of classroom teachers. Therefore, to properly support military-connected children, the perspectives of everyone involved need to be taken into consideration equally.

Another potentially valuable avenue to explore would be the experiences of elementary school professionals. Furthermore, the needs of military-connected children in elementary school differ from the needs of military-connected children in secondary school. Therefore, giving voice to elementary school professionals would only add value in understanding how the needs of Canadian military-connected children are perceived and supported by school professionals.

Lastly, exploring the perceptions of school professionals across Canada would be beneficial for future studies. While the original purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of Canadian secondary school professionals, all the participants currently teach in Ontario secondary schools. The ways that military-connected children and their unique needs are perceived and addressed by school professionals may differ across provinces. Therefore, future studies should aim to capture the experiences of school professionals from other provinces so that these experiences can add to and provide a better understanding of how the needs of military-connected children are being perceived and addressed across Canada.

**Benefits of the Study for Stakeholders**

In addition to contributing to the wider body of research regarding the educational
experiences of military-connected children, several different stakeholders stand to benefit from this study: (a) the participants themselves; (b) other school professionals; and (c) education administrators and policy-makers.

**The Participants Themselves**

One group of stakeholders that will benefit from this study would be the individuals that participated in the study. Throughout the interview process, all the participants had the opportunity to reflect upon their personal experiences teaching military-connected children. Many of the participants indicated during the interview how important and relevant they felt the topic was. Furthermore, three of the participants disclosed that prior to the interview, the research topic was one that they had never thought about or reflected upon until it was brought to their attention in the interview.

**Other School Professionals**

In addition to the participants themselves, this study could benefit other school professionals that are currently or will be teaching military-connected children. As previously mentioned, the participants of this study were given the opportunity to reflect upon their experiences teaching military-connected children. Although the participants did not directly indicate the value of this reflection, hopefully other school professionals might consider reflecting on their own experiences teaching military-connected children.

**Education Administrators and Policy-Makers**

While all the suggestions that have been made in this chapter are practical, they still require the support of education administrators and policy-makers. Ultimately, education administrators and policy-makers play a large role in the types of projects and resources that get funded. This study provides some evidence that there is limited
awareness among school professionals of military-connected children within schools. Thus, administrators and policy-makers would benefit from information about military-connected children within classrooms and schools. Being able to make informed and educated decisions on whether to develop and fund things such as data systems, professional development, or school liaisons is important. Furthermore, given that this study provides insight into how Canadian civilian schools are currently addressing the needs of military-connected children, administrators and policy-makers also have the potential to impact the educational experiences of these students.

Knowledge Mobilization

While the findings of this study contribute to the wider body of research regarding the educational experiences of military-connected children, it is important to discuss how I will mobilize the findings of my study to major stakeholders.

One of the first stakeholders to consider is the participants themselves. After submitting the final copy of my thesis to the School of Graduate Studies at Queen’s University I plan on contacting each of the participants to see if they would like to be provided with a copy of the thesis. If a digital copy is requested, I will provide a PDF file via email. If a hard copy is requested, a paper copy will be mailed to them. If a digital and hard copy are requested, both will be provided. Providing a copy of the thesis will be beneficial for two reasons. Firstly, the participants will be able to see how their responses contributed to my study. At the end of the interviews, many of the participants indicated that it would be interesting to see what types of findings would emerge from the study given the lack of pre-existing research that exists on this topic. Secondly, there is the hope that the participants will use this study to help increase their colleagues’ awareness
of military-connected children and their needs. While it cannot be assumed that the participants will share the findings of this study, participants could use this study as a stepping stone to start a conversation with other school professionals, administrators, and policy makers regarding the educational experiences of military-connected children.

In addition to the participants themselves, I hope to mobilize the findings of my study to other researchers. With the guidance of my current supervisor and my future PhD supervisor, I plan to develop material that can be published in academic journals. Because of the lack of pre-existing research that focuses on this topic in Canada, it will be important to work towards getting academic publications to mobilize the findings of my study to other researchers. In addition to academic publications, I also plan on presenting my study at future academic conferences. Two conferences in particular would include the Canadian Society for the Study of Education (CSSE) conference and the Canadian Institute for Military & Veteran Health Research (CIMVHR) conference. Both conferences are held annually and would provide me with an excellent platform to mobilize my study with other researchers.

In addition to using other avenues to help mobilize the findings of my study, I also hope to raise awareness of this research topic by continuing on as a graduate student. While my study provides meaningful information regarding the educational experiences of military-connected children in Canada, more research needs to be conducted that focuses on military-connected children in the Canadian context. Therefore, I will be continuing on as a PhD candidate in the School of Rehabilitation Therapy at Queen’s University. As a PhD candidate I will build upon the research I conducted as a Master of
Education candidate and hope to continue to raise awareness of military-connected children and their needs within the Canadian context.

**Summary**

Military families live a unique lifestyle. Mobility, separation, and risk are three important factors when distinguishing military families from their civilian counterparts. In the United States, there has been an increased interest in understanding, preventing, and reducing the effects associated with the military lifestyle. When looking at the Canadian context, there has been a lack of research that addresses military-connected children. The purpose of this study was to explore how military-connected children and their unique needs are perceived by school professionals in Canadian secondary schools. This research followed a phenomenological research methodology, and six Canadian school professionals were interviewed. The findings suggest that Canadian secondary school professionals are generally aware of the military lifestyle. However, school professionals lack an overall awareness of how secondary schools are currently addressing and supporting the needs of military-connected children. While American based studies seem to have a negative undertone when addressing military-connected children and their families, the participants of this study appeared to have a positive view of military-connected children and the military lifestyle. Therefore, one must be cautious when considering the findings of American based studies on military-connected children and their families as they may not apply to Canadian military-connected children.
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doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0021249


Appendix A

Queen’s University General Research Ethics Board (GREB) Clearance Form

December 20, 2016

Miss Shannon Hill
Master’s Student
Faculty of Education
Queen’s University
Duncan McArthur Hall
511 Union Street West
Kingston, ON, K7M 5R7

GREB Ref #: GEDUC-834-16; TRAQ # 6019664
Title: "GEDUC-834-16 Canadian Secondary School Professionals Awareness of the Needs of Military-Connected Children"

Dear Miss Hill:

The General Research Ethics Board (GREB), by means of a delegated board review, has cleared your proposal entitled "GEDUC-834-16 Canadian Secondary School Professionals Awareness of the Needs of Military-Connected Children" for ethical compliance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (TCPS 2 (2014)) and Queen’s ethics policies. In accordance with the Tri-Council Guidelines (Article 6.14) and Standard Operating Procedures (405.001), your project has been cleared for one year. You are reminded of your obligation to submit an annual renewal form prior to the annual renewal due date (access this form at http://www.queensu.ca/traq/signon.html; click on "Events"; under "Create New Event" click on "General Research Ethics Board Annual Renewal/Closure Form for Cleared Studies"). Please note that when your research project is completed, you need to submit an Annual Renewal/Closure Form in Romeo/traq indicating that the project is 'completed' so that the file can be closed. This should be submitted at the time of completion; there is no need to wait until the annual renewal due date.

You are reminded of your obligation to advise the GREB of any adverse event(s) that occur during this one year period (access this form at http://www.queensu.ca/traq/signon.html; click on "Events"; under "Create New Event" click on "General Research Ethics Board Adverse Event Form"). An adverse event includes, but is not limited to, a complaint, a change or unexpected event that alters the level of risk for the researcher or participants or situation that requires a substantial change in approach to a participant(s). You are also advised that all adverse events must be reported to the GREB within 48 hours.

You are also reminded that all changes that might affect human participants must be cleared by the GREB. For example, you must report changes to the level of risk, applicant characteristics, and implementation of new procedures. To submit an amendment form, access the application by at http://www.queensu.ca/traq/signon.html; click on "Events"; under "Create New Event" click on "General Research Ethics Board Request for the Amendment of Approved Studies". Once submitted, these changes will automatically be sent to the Ethics Coordinator, Ms. Gail Irving, at the Office of Research Services for further review and clearance by the GREB or GREB Chair.

On behalf of the General Research Ethics Board, I wish you continued success in your research.

Sincerely,

John Freeman, Ph.D.
Chair
General Research Ethics Board

c: Dr. Elizabeth Lee, Supervisor
Dr. Richard Reeve, Chair, Unit REB
Ms. Erin Rennie, Dept. Admin.
Appendix B
GREB Amendment Clearance Form

January 23, 2017

Miss Shannon Hill
Master’s Student
Faculty of Education
Queen’s University
Duncan McArthur Hall
511 Union Street West
Kingston, ON, K7M 5R7

Dear Miss Hill:

RE: Amendment for your study entitled: GEDUC-834-16 Canadian Secondary School Professionals Awareness of the Needs of Military-Connected Children; TRAQ # 6019664

Thank you for submitting your amendment requesting the following changes:

1) To add the use of social media as a means of recruitment, i.e., Facebook group entitled “Military and Veteran Family Health Research Group;”

2) To extend the geographic location of the study from Ontario to all of Canada;

3) Facebook Recruitment Poster (v. 2017/01/19).

By this letter you have ethics approval for these changes.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

John Freeman, Ph.D.
Chair
General Research Ethics Board

c.: Dr. Elizabeth Lee, Supervisor
Appendix C
Recruitment Poster for “Military and Veteran Family Health Research Group” Facebook Page

Are you a secondary school educator who has worked with or is currently working with military-connected children?

If so, you may be eligible to participate in a research study about the awareness of military-connected children and their needs by school professionals.

If you are interested in partaking in a research study that consists of an interview on how the unique needs of military-connected children are perceived by school professionals, or to learn more information, please contact:

Shannon Hill at 11slh10@queensu.ca or at 613-449-9066

Dr. Elizabeth Lee at elizabeth.lee@queensu.ca

Dr. Heidi Cramm at heidi.cramm@queensu.ca

Military & Veteran Family Health Research Group

This study has been granted ethical clearance by Queen's General Research Ethics Board (#6019664). If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the GREB Chair, Dr. John Freeman at 613-533-6000 ext. 78281
Appendix D
GREB Amendment Clearance Form

February 24, 2017

Miss Shannon Hill
Master’s Student
Faculty of Education
Queen’s University
Duncan McArthur Hall
511 Union Street West
Kingston, ON, K7M 5R7

Dear Miss Hill:

RE: Amendment for your study entitled: GEDUC-834-16 Canadian Secondary School Professionals Awareness of the Needs of Military-Connected Children; TRAQ # 6019664

Thank you for submitting your amendment requesting the following changes:

1) To add an additional method for recruiting participants, i.e. to post a recruitment poster on your own personal Facebook page;

2) Recruitment Poster Facebook (v. 2017/02/13).

By this letter, you have ethics approval for these changes.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

John Freeman, Ph.D.
Chair
General Research Ethics Board

c: Dr. Elizabeth Lee, Supervisor
Appendix E
Recruitment Poster for Personal Facebook Page

Are you a secondary school educator who has worked with or is currently working with military-connected children?

If so, you may be eligible to participate in a research study about the awareness of military-connected children and their needs by school professionals.

If you are interested in partaking in a research study that consists of a one-hour interview on how the unique needs of military-connected children are perceived by school professionals, or to learn more information, please contact:

Shannon Hill at 11slh10@queensu.ca

Dr. Elizabeth Lee at elizabeth.lee@queensu.ca

Dr. Heidi Cramm at heidi.cramm@queensu.ca

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the GREB Chair at 1-844-535-2988 or at chair.GREB@queensu.ca
Appendix F
Letter of Information and Consent Form

Canadian Secondary School Professionals Awareness of the Needs of Military-Connected Children

This research is being conducted by Shannon Hill under the supervision of Elizabeth Lee, in the Faculty of Education at Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario. This study has been granted clearance by the General Research Ethics Board according to Canadian research ethics principles (http://www.ethics.gc.ca/default.aspx) and Queen’s University policies (http://www.queensu.ca/urs/research-ethics).

What is this study about? The purpose of this qualitative research is to explore how military-connected children and their unique needs are perceived by school professionals in Canadian secondary schools.

What is involved to participate in this study? The study will require one semi-structured interview with the researcher at a location and time chosen by the participant. In total, participating in this study will require one hour of time. Your contribution will be recorded via an audio device. There are no known physical, psychological, economic, or social risks associated with this study. The benefits of this study are to provide a better understanding of how military-connected and their unique needs are perceived by school professionals in Canadian secondary schools.

Is participation voluntary? Yes. You should not feel obliged to answer any questions that you find objectionable or that make you feel uncomfortable. You may choose to withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on your employment. If you wish to withdraw, contact Shannon Hill at 11slh10@queensu.ca or (613) 449-9066 or Elizabeth Lee at elizabeth.lee@queensu.ca. If you withdraw, you may request removal of all of your data from the study.

What will happen to your responses? Your responses will be kept confidential. Only myself as the researcher, and Elizabeth Lee as my supervisor will have access to this information. Your confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible. Results from this study may be published in professional journals or presented at conferences, but any such presentations will maintain individual confidentiality. In accordance with the General Research Ethics Board Standard Operating Procedures, data will be...
securely/password protected for a minimum of five years or beyond until ultimate disposal is required. If data are used for secondary analysis they will contain no identifying information. You are entitled to a copy of the findings, if you are interested. If you would like a copy of the findings, please contact Shannon Hill at (613) 449-9066 or 11slh10@queensu.ca

What if you have concerns? Any questions about study participation may be directed to Shannon Hill at 11slh10@queensu.ca or (613) 449-9066, or to Elizabeth Lee at elizabeth.lee@queensu.ca. Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at chair.GREB@queensu.ca or 613-533-6081.

Thank you for your interest in participating in this research study.

Your signature below indicates that you have read this Letter of Information and have had any questions answered to your satisfaction. Please keep a copy of this letter for your records.

Name: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

Signature: ___________________________
CONSENT FORM

Canadian Secondary School Professionals Awareness of the Needs of Military-Connected Children

Name (please print clearly): ________________________________________

1. I have read the Letter of Information and have had any questions answered to my satisfaction.

2. I understand that I will be participating in the study called Canadian Secondary School Professionals Awareness of the Needs of Military-Connected Children. I understand that this means that I will be asked to participate in a one-on-one semi-structured interview.

3. I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time. I understand that every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of the data now and in the future. Only researchers affiliated with this study will have access to my data. The data may also be published in professional journals or presented at scientific conferences, but any such presentations will be of general findings and will never breach individual confidentiality. I understand that I am entitled to a copy of the findings, if I am interested.

4. I am aware that if I have any questions, concerns, or complaints, I may contact Shannon Hill at 11slh10@queensu.ca or at (613) 449-9066 or Elizabeth Lee at elizabeth.lee@queensu.ca. Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board at chair.GREB@queensu.ca or 613-533-6081.

5. I have read the above statements and freely consent to participate in this research:

Signature: ___________________________ Date: ______________________________
Appendix G

Individual Interview Protocol

General Information/Background
I would like to start by learning about your background.

1. In a couple of sentences, could you please state your name and briefly describe your formal education.
2. Could you please briefly describe your role here at ____________.
3. What are your main responsibilities as a ____________ here at ____________.
4. How long have you held your current position at ____________.

Needs of Military-Connected Children
Next I would like to talk to you about military-connected students and their needs.

5. What comes to mind when you hear the phrase “military lifestyle”?
6. What types of needs do you think may be specific to the military lifestyle?
7. In what ways, do you think the military lifestyle impacts the educational experiences of military-connected students?

Identifying Military-Connected Children
Now I would like to discuss with you how military-connected children may be identified.

8. What is the current population of the school that you teach at?
9. Of the total school population, what percentage of the population would you say military-connected students represent?
10. Are you personally aware of any military-connected students that attend this school? If yes, how do you know they are military-connected?
11. Can you tell me about any procedures that are in place to identify military-connected students within the school population?
12. As an educator, do you see a need to be able to identify military-connected students?

Professional Development
I would now like to discuss the types of professional development you have had as a school professional.
13. Throughout your career as an educator, are you aware of any professional development sessions that have been offered that focus on military-connected students and their unique needs?

14. Have you personally ever had the opportunity to participate in professional development that focuses on military-connected students and their unique needs?
   - If you have had the opportunity to participate in such professional development, did you attend the session? Why or why not?
   - If you have attended such professional development, could you briefly explain what the focus of the professional development was?
   - Could you briefly explain how the professional development session was delivered (i.e. workshop, presentation, etc.).
   - If you have not had the opportunity to participate in such professional development, would you attend a session if you were given the opportunity? Why or why not?

15. As an educator, what types of information about military families do you think is important for educators to know or have access to?

**Military and School Relationship**

There has been a large amount of support that has been developed and put in place by the military to help support the needs of military-connected children.

16. During your time as a school professional, are you aware if the military has sought to work with the school boards in supporting the needs of military-connected students?

17. Are you aware if the military has provided information to the schools on programs that they offer to help support the needs of military families and their children?

18. Do you feel that schools should be involved in supporting the needs of military-connected children at school, or do you feel that schools simply being aware of this population and their needs is enough?

**Conclusion**

Thank you for your time and allowing me to interview you. At this point, I just have one more question for you.

19. Is there anything you would like to add or comment on that was not discussed during the interview?