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Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

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A Study of Military-Connected Parental Perceptions of Civilian Secondary School Image,
Legitimacy, and Reputation

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

by

Jorge Manuel Soldevila

May 2022

Dedication

This is in memory of my late father-at-heart, Raul “Rafy” Tirado. Although you are not here to see the results of your sacrifices, I am honored and blessed to continue to strive to meet your expectations every day. This journey would not have been possible without you taking a chance and believing in me before I believed in myself. Thank you for loving me and treating me like your own.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my wife and matriarch of our tribe, Eminnette. Thank you for being the best mother, daughter, sister, and friend God could have ever blessed as a partner. I may never be able to find the words to express my gratitude for your support and encouragement through this process, but I am genuinely thankful to have you in my life and share our successes and accomplishments as one, striving every day to show my love. You have been my rock and inspiration through all our struggles and difficulties, and I can’t wait to continue adding to our story together. For our children Ariana, Keila, and Kaleb, who will someday look unto this work and be inspired to pursue your dreams and embrace your passion for yourself. I love you all with all my heart, to the moon and back.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my family for their unconditional love and encouragement. My mother, Lydia Nelly, for the sacrifices made as a mother for the benefit of her child, and my sister Brenda for taking on the motherly role of a teenager with unwavering grace and enthusiasm. My amazing mother-in-law, Jeannette, thank you for always keeping me in prayer and being so encouraging of the efforts needed to tackle the challenges of this project. To my dad, Manuel, for helping me in all things great and small. I would not be where I am today without the love and support from each of you. Your prayers were felt and sustained me through all of this.

Many thanks to my dissertation chair, Dr. Jose Perez, for the invaluable guidance and remarkable patience throughout this process. Your words lifted and carried me through the most demanding assignments. I would also like to thank my committee members for the advice and feedback that pushed me forward through the various stages of this study. I am also grateful to those I have had the pleasure to work with and all who have influenced my passion for education and confidence to take on this task.

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Abstract

Using elements from the parent-based school reputation model, this qualitative methodology study explored the association between a school's perceived image and reputation as a barrier to the school-home relationship involving military families. Military-connected family culture and diverse contexts affect parent-teacher relationships through a perceptual gap between a school's role in what it concretely accomplishes and its beliefs about supporting students' behavioral, emotional, and academic needs. This study aimed to explore the opinions and beliefs of military-connected families based on their experiences with schools during service. The resulting grounded theoretical model argues that military families construct a perception of school support based on (A) a school's ability to satisfy their needs during the transition, (B) the perceived quality of programs and services for military families, and (C) a parent's perception of a school's academic expectations and staff competency that results in (X) the influence of a military family's perception of the school image and legitimacy. The grounded theoretical model allows for understanding factors valued by military families that influence the perceived quality of services and programs offered for support during relocations. The study challenges current educational leaders by suggesting the impact of image management on the perceived value of public schools through the intentional effort to display superior insight, expertise, and achievements within the military culture.

Keywords: military family support, parental perceptions, home-school relationship, school image

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Chapter 1: Introduction

A collaborative parent–teacher relationship is an essential element in a student’s educational success (Deslandes et al., 2015). Unfortunately, parent–teacher relationship literature indicates a perceptual gap between the school’s role in what it concretely accomplishes and beliefs about how it should support students’ behavioral, emotional, and academic needs (Bang, 2018; Culler et al., 2019; D’Agati, 2015; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Bang (2018) found that a contributing factor limiting parent–teacher collaboration originates from misunderstanding parent and teacher roles, expectations, concerns, and views on education. Palts and Harro-Loit (2015) noted that parent attitudes toward school and teachers were influenced by previous experiences and memories, arguing that communication was the single most crucial component for a positive effect on the perception of school from parents. Despite best efforts to promote positive parental involvement through dialogue, effective parent–teacher relationships, and conflict resolution approaches, schools struggle. Research suggests difficulties in the alignment of mutual home–school goals and a lack of understanding of parents’ priorities and perceived value of the role of education (Palts & Harro-Loit, 2015).

Priority on parent–teacher relationships has been evident in various government educational policies and laws that require education institutions to strategize for collaborative partnerships between home and school (Deslandes et al., 2015). However, educational policies such as the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act required states and local education institutions to publicly disseminate accountability data, resulting in diverse rating formats across states (Jacobsen et al., 2014). The growing focus on academic results, student intervention programs, and emerging competition between schools for ratings has led to the predominance of a clientelism culture with significant implications for how parent–teacher partnerships are

perceived, valued, and implemented (Deslandes et al., 2015; Hammons, 2017; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Jacobsen et al., 2014).

Schools often overlook components of diverse families' life contexts that impede effective home–school partnerships, contribute to a perceptual gap, and limit the positive effects of positive parental involvement in schools (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Ratliffe & Ponte, 2018). Furthermore, there is a documented correlation between a civilian family's perception of community and the school support on the positive family adaptation, parental attitude in schools, and the correlation between positive coping of stressor events and the outcome of these events (Zhan, 2018).

Military families are ideal for studying the broad implications of family life context on the role of public schools in the community support to highly transient groups. A limited understanding of the complex cultural challenges of military-connected families creates an exceptional opportunity to explore the military culture and perceptual gap between military-connected public schools that impede the development of positive military home–school relationships across the nation (Kranke, 2019). This chapter will outline the proposal for exploring and understanding military-connected families' experiences with school support, which is significant to the positive adaptation of military-connected families and their adolescent children (DeGraff et al., 2016).

The conceptual framework of this study revolved around the parent-based school reputation model developed by Skallerud (2011) to frame the research question and drive an exploratory study on military-connected families in education. Previous research has identified a positive and significant relationship between image, legitimacy, and reputation (Del-Castillo-Feito et al., 2020). Skallerud's (2011) reputation model was used to explain the context of school

image and reputation as it affects measures of military-connected parental expressed satisfaction with civilian schools (Badri & Mohaidat, 2014). Additionally, this study relied on Hill's (1958) ABC-X model of stress and coping in exploring the experiences of the military family and the perceived role of community in the family's positive social-emotional outlook. Furthermore, Epstein's (2018) theory of overlapping spheres of influence allowed the researcher to understand the documented relationships in educational roles and responsibilities of families, schools, and students. Lastly, as applicable to education and schools, the reputation and image theory components illustrated the emerging trend of a customer-oriented environment within public education. This study focused on the perception of community, formal and informal support, and the reputation construct of military-connected public schools as expressed through the experiences of military-connected families using a qualitative methodology with a grounded theory approach (DeGraff et al., 2016).

Statement of the Problem

It is not known the elements that influence the perception of military-connected families, a field in the educational literature that school leaders could utilize to address families with high transition and mobility struggles (Esqueda et al., 2012). For military-connected families, parental absenteeism resulting from deployments and relocations is known to affect parental involvement and the development of quality parent-teacher relationships, significantly impacting a military-connected student's socio-emotional transition (Sherbert, 2018). Military-connected families are often separated due to deployment or have little choice about assigned duty stations' location and duration. This high family mobility adversely affects the mental health of military-connected students and validates the need to explore school-based measures that promote effective family transition and positive well-being (De Pedro et al., 2018; Mulholland et al., 2020).

The perception of military-connected civilian schools' supportiveness to military-connected families' unique challenges may significantly affect the promotion of the family's coping with stressors (Conforte, Bakalar, et al., 2017). Additionally, the limited understanding of military-connected families' cultural challenges creates an opportunity within schools to address a significant threat to the reputation, legitimacy, and image of military-connected civilian secondary schools and their teachers (Conforte, DeLeon, et al., 2017; Kranke, 2019). If this problem is not studied, educational leaders cannot adequately address the barriers that limit effective home-school partnerships for families with high transition and mobility struggles.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of military-connected families to understand a parent's priorities in the perceived value of the reputation and legitimacy of schools. The role of perception on a school's reputation and legitimacy is undeniable. Military-connected families and their school-age children face unique educational obstacles compared to nonmilitary-connected families (Conforte, Bakalar, et al., 2017). DeGraff et al. (2016) argued a correlation between military-connected families' well-being and the families' perceptions of how well their military culture was understood and supported by the community and its schools. This study targeted a narrow demographic within several military-connected civilian high school campuses in a Texas public school district. The data collected from the responses of the selected participants provided an opportunity to identify school-level measures that influence military-connected families' perceptions of support and school reputation.

The lack of understanding of the unique challenges of military culture by military-connected civilian schools poses a threat to the perception of school legitimacy and the development of an effective home-school relationship that further influences the parental

perception of value and desired involvement in their children's school. This study contributes to the literature in family science, a field that education leaders rely on to address known barriers to home-school relationships and parent involvement with families of high transition and student mobility struggles (Esqueda et al., 2012; Mancini et al., 2018; Willerton et al., 2011).

This study utilized a qualitative research method using a grounded theory approach to explore military-connected families' opinions and beliefs on public learning agencies. A qualitative research method was appropriate for understanding how individuals experience events, make sense of the world, and describe their experiences under certain conditions (Usher & Jackson, 2017). An essential element of qualitative methodology is describing events through data to explore the meaning participants assign to specific events and explaining a theory under study (Lichtman, 2014; Roberts, 2010). Eberle (2013) defined a theory as a conceptual model that describes and illustrates a phenomenon. For this study, the complex nature of military home-public school partnerships was explored through various associated theories. The conceptual framework derives from an abstract, grounded analysis of parent-teacher relationships using concepts of Skallerud's (2011) parent-based reputation construct, Hill's (1958) ABC-X model of family stress coping, and Epstein's (2018) spheres of influence in education. This study provides context and a foundation for understanding the perspective of military-connected families about the educational institutions that aim to support them.

Research Questions

This study utilized a qualitative research methodology to describe school-level factors and other related variables that contribute to the military-connected parents' perceptions about the reputation and legitimacy of their children's civilian schools. The following research questions guided the data, the research design, and the in-depth data analysis approach:

RQ1: How do military-connected families develop a perception of school image?

RQ2: What are military-connected families' expectations of the communication and engagement with their student's school?

RQ3: What are military-connected parents' opinions and beliefs of public schools' responsibilities in meeting students' behavioral, emotional, and academic needs?

This study aimed to explore the opinions and beliefs of military-connected families based on their experiences. The research questions focused specifically on (a) military-connected families' needs and experiences with schools, (b) the level of involvement and interaction of military-connected families with schools, and (c) expectations of the role and responsibilities of schools in a military family context.

Definition of Key Terms

The following definitions provided a common understanding of essential terminology within the scope of the study:

Department of Defense Education Agencies. Department of Defense Education Agencies schools are international military-funded campuses structured to support active-duty families and students at military installations worldwide (Esqueda et al., 2012).

Deployment. Military-related deployment refers to any movement of military personnel from a home installation to somewhere outside the continental United States and its territories (Military.com, 2017).

Military-connected public school. Civilian-operated public schools with a military affiliation based on an identified military-connected student enrollment (Department of Defense Education Activity [DoDEA], 2015).

Parental involvement. Parental involvement in this study describes families' level of participation and communication with schools to support their students (Epstein, 2018).

Parental perception. Parental perception describes a parent's belief about the expectations for how a school should support students' behavioral, emotional, and academic needs (Bang, 2018).

Permanent change of station. Permanent change of station, also known as a PCS, is a military-related long-term assignment or transfer of service members and their families between duty stations (Absher, 2021). Permanent change of stations can be from one to several years assignment.

Student mobility. Rumberger (2021) defines student mobility as the practice of students changing schools at any point during a school year other than promoting school levels. For this study, student mobility within the military context refers to the transition between states and international education agencies (Garner et al., 2014).

Temporary duty deployment. Temporary duty deployment, also known as TDY, is temporary military orders away from a permanent duty station from just a few days up to months (V, 2020).

Chapter Summary

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. The first chapter presents the background and overview of the proposed research, detailing why researchers advocate conducting the study into military-connected families through available literature. The significance of this study is elaborated with an argument from the literature to explore the perception of community, formal and informal support, and reputation of military-connected

civilian secondary schools as expressed through the perspective of military-connected families (DeGraff et al., 2016).

Chapter 2 will provide a more detailed review of the available literature in understanding how civilian-operated schools can influence their image to serve military-connected families more effectively. Furthermore, throughout Chapter 2, I present an in-depth report of available literature to provide various perspectives on the military-connected family culture, home-school relationships, and the school reputation and image constructs. Chapter 3 discusses the proposed research methodology and design for use in the study. Chapter 3 also reviews data analysis protocols and ethical considerations to frame the study's procedures in addressing the study's research questions. Chapter 4 summarizes the data collected and subsequent analysis, using the selected methodology and study approach. The data is presented in a narrative format, focused on describing experiences related to the guiding research questions. Chapter 5 will present a framework for addressing the study's stated problem, explaining the study's contribution to the available literature. The comprehensive summary of this study is presented as a proposed alternative look into a school's approach in the efforts to support military families during relocation and transitions.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 1 argued the purpose and importance of this study to the research literature on school reputation and perception of school image effect on home–school relationships. The collaborative parent–teacher relationship is an essential element in students’ educational success (Deslandes et al., 2015). Unfortunately, research on parent–teacher relationships illustrates significant conflicts from a perceptual gap between the school’s role in what it concretely accomplishes and beliefs about how it should support students’ behavioral, emotional, and academic needs (Bang, 2018; Culler et al., 2019; D’Agati, 2015; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Bang (2018) found that a contributing factor limiting parent–teacher collaboration originates from misunderstanding parent and teacher roles, expectations, concerns, and views on education. Despite best efforts to promote positive parental involvement in education through dialogue, effective parent–teacher relationships, and conflict resolution approaches, schools struggle to align mutual home-school goals and understand parents’ priorities and perceived values of the role of education (Palts & Harro-Loit, 2015).

The factors that influence the perception of families with high transition and mobility struggles are not known (Esqueda et al., 2012). However, there is documentation on the effect of frequent deployments and relocations on military-connected families’ dynamics, which are common and leave limited choice about the next assigned duty stations’ location and duration (De Pedro et al., 2018). Researchers argue for the study of how public schools and the community adapt and support military families as necessary to serve better those who serve our nation (De Pedro et al., 2011). The experiences of military-connected families with civilian schools are a significant starting point in the educational research on military families’ needs and expectations for education (Conforte, Bakalar, et al., 2017). The limited understanding of

military-connected families' experiences in the construct of reputation, legitimacy, and image of public schools and their teachers undermines a learning agency's communication of value and desired parental involvement (Conforte, DeLeon, et al., 2017; Kranke, 2019). The study's findings will contribute to educational leadership in identifying and promoting theories to explain the perceptual gap between military families and their schools.

In this chapter, I provide a more detailed review of the available literature in understanding how civilian-operated schools can influence their image to serve military-connected families more effectively. This chapter presents an overview of three separate bodies of literature. These bodies of literature provide various perspectives on the military-connected family culture, home-school relationships, and the school reputation and image constructs. The research literature uncovers valuable insight into the psychological context that influences the behaviors of individuals within a military-school relationship. Available evidence reflects an emerging trend of a customer-oriented environment within public education. The discussion of the evolution of the home-school relationships occurs through the documented model of a power theory. Furthermore, the chapter extensively considers school image elements through well-established corporate image and reputation models from Brown et al. (2006) and Fombrun and Shanley's (1990) approach.

Conceptual Framework Discussion

Using elements from the parent-based school reputation model developed by Skallerud (2011), this study explored the association between a school's perceived image and reputation and the parent-home relationship involving military families (Del-Castillo-Feito et al., 2020). Previous research identified an association between image, legitimacy, and the reputation of higher education institutions (Del-Castillo-Feito et al., 2020). An institution's reputation directly

relates to its success based on stakeholders' overall evaluation of an institution's handling of relationships (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990). As such, Skallerud's (2011) reputation model was used to explain the context of school image and reputation as it affects measures of parental expressed satisfaction of military-connected civilian schools (Badri & Mohaidat, 2014).

A review of Hill's (1958) ABC-X model of stress and coping provided the base social theory to analyze the relationships between a military family's perceived resources during a stress event and the family's outcome of the event. Through the ABC-X model discussed in this chapter, the role in the military family and their perceived role of the public school relates to the family's positive social-emotional well-being through frequent relocations.

Additionally, this study analyzed the military parent-teacher relationships through Epstein's (2018) theory of overlapping spheres of influence to illustrate the perceived power roles and responsibilities of families, schools, and students. By reviewing the literature on the overlapping spheres of influence theory, I referenced the documented connection between overlapping education responsibilities that directly affect student outcomes. For military-connected families, parental involvement is significantly affected by frequent deployments and relocations that influence the perceived roles and responsibilities of the family, school, and student in the education process (Sherbert, 2018). Lastly, the study relied on the identified role of a school communication culture as a critical element in enabling a collaborative dialogue between teachers and parents (Palts & Harro-Loit, 2015). A typical communication mistake in school efforts is misunderstanding the needs and wants of the community (Eger et al., 2018)

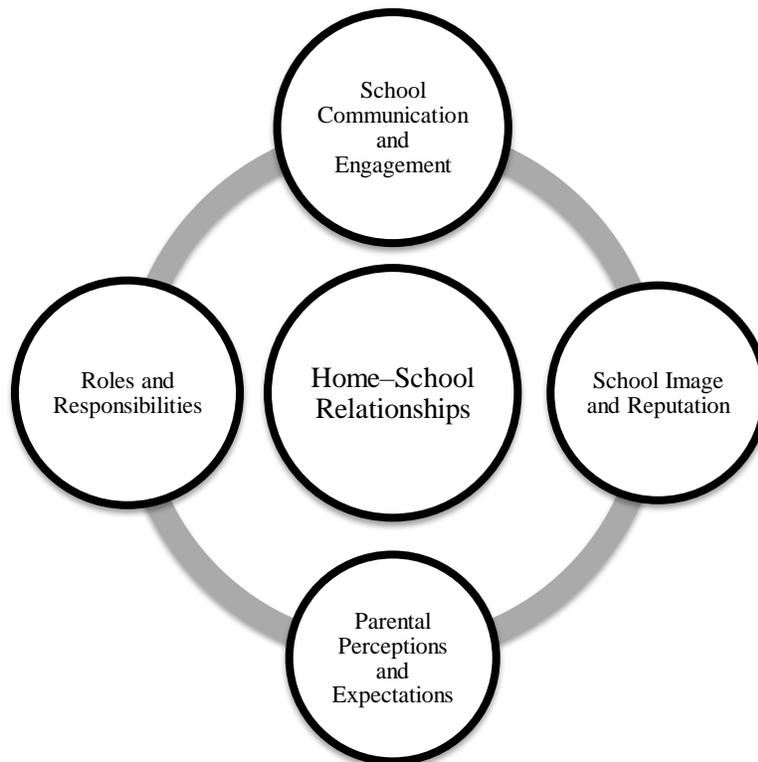
The military families' culture was ideal for studying the broad implications of family life context through public schools' perceived support and quality. The study's contributions apply to literature in family and social science and school marketing management. The study's findings

help educational leaders better understand the identified factors and expectations for home–school relationships of families with high transition and mobility struggles.

The conceptual framework (see Figure 1) proposed in this chapter guided the study within the exploration of (a) military-connected families’ needs and experiences with schools, (b) the level of involvement and interaction of military-connected families with schools, and (c) expectations of the role and responsibilities of schools, as a powerful instrument in developing trust between schools, teachers, and military-connected parents. This study focused on the construct of school image through military-connected family culture by using a qualitative research methodology with a grounded theory approach.

Figure 1

Military Home–School Relationship Conceptual Framework



Understanding Military-Connected Family Culture

There are an estimated 1.2 million school-age children and adolescents of U.S. active-duty military members, with over 650,000 currently enrolled in the United States in 250 military-connected civilian K–12 public schools (DoDEA, 2020). The military family culture is a dynamic and complex lifestyle that demands adaptation to frequent changes while mitigating vulnerabilities and forcing the resilience of family members (Mancini et al., 2018). Esqueda et al. (2012) estimated that the average military child moves six to nine times or approximately every 2.9 years throughout their school-age years, three times more than their civilian counterparts. Researchers have identified deployment stressors through a multistage cycle of deployment (Mancini et al., 2020). De Pedro et al. (2018) described the start of the deployment cycle as the notification of a military family's relocation or a service member's deployment, followed by the departure and eventual deployment phase. However, the most documented stressful event of the deployment phase for military families is the postdeployment phase, where service members struggle to reintegrate into the family system and re-establish relationships with other family members (De Pedro et al., 2018).

The challenges and needs of military-connected children vary according to their age and psychosocial development stage. For example, military-connected adolescents experience the significant growth and maturation associated with puberty in addition to the stress of the military culture (Mulholland et al., 2020). Clever and Segal (2013) described a major social challenge for military-connected adolescents as leaving old friends and their efforts to make new social connections, especially at public schools where there may be well-established student social networks. Studies have found that students rely on coping mechanisms, such as guarded behaviors that lead to fewer investments in friendships, which leave them on the fringe of peer

social groups (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Clever & Segal, 2013). As a result, military-connected students depend on their families and school for social-emotional support more heavily than civilian students (De Pedro et al., 2018).

Research has found that participation in school activities and groups is a critical mitigating strategy in establishing social networks (De Pedro, Esqueda, et al., 2014). However, coaches and extracurricular teachers lack the necessary familial connection to identify this unique demographic and do not have the procedures for responding to their needs (De Pedro, Esqueda, et al., 2014). Bradshaw et al. (2010) described military-connected students struggling with the timing of relocations that lead to missing tryouts, deadlines to participate in camps, and a sense of frustration from the repetitive cycle of students having to prove themselves at each new location.

Throughout history, societal changes affect military duties and have affected the experience observed within the military family dynamic (Mancini et al., 2020). For deployed military members, the family must respond and adapt, even if temporary, to alternative family roles that place further stress on additional obligations and duties for family members left behind (Wolf et al., 2017). Following the attacks on September 11, 2001, military service families faced an increase in deployments to combat operations that redefined the experience of parental absences in military households (Culler et al., 2019). Temporary duty deployments, known as TDY, have increased in frequency over the last decade, with assignments ranging from three months and regularly lasting up to a year (Culler et al., 2019). Service members often are absent during critical developmental milestones of their children, such as their births, birthdays, holidays, and graduations (Wolf et al., 2017). Research links parental absences in military families with a higher risk of adverse psychological and physical outcomes for family members,

as evident by the available literature on the emotional and behavioral experiences of military-connected students when compared to their civilian counterparts (Culler et al., 2019; Sherbert, 2018; Wolf et al., 2017). The challenges of military families are not limited to physical relocations and hardship. Families faced with a relocating service member, especially for deployments to war that range from several months to years, create an emotional strain for the family members left behind (Jacobsen et al., 2014). Additionally, service members stationed in the various military installations throughout the United States require members to be on call all day and year-round as part of their duty expectations. Studies have found that military-connected parents' perceptions of community and formal and informal support from other military families are significant elements of positive family adaption within the family military lifestyle (DeGraff et al., 2016).

For military-connected families, frequent moves result in parental absenteeism from deployments and relocations that are known to affect parental involvement and the development of quality parent–teacher relationships, significantly affecting a military-connected student's socio-emotional transition (Sherbert, 2018). Frequent moves across states and international borders require military-connected families to repeatedly transition between varying academic expectations and school climates (Garner et al., 2014). For military-connected families, parental absenteeism and separation are a significant part of the family culture due to service members' frequent assignments, permanent change of station, or deployments. Permanent or temporary deployments limit opportunities for the type of parental involvement needed to develop quality parent-teacher relationships known to benefit a student's socio-emotional transition (Sherbert, 2018). Military-connected parents' limited school involvement significantly affects the military-

connected students' educational environment, affecting behavioral and academic outcomes (Moeller et al., 2015).

Community support from civilian-operated schools through an awareness of military culture has the potential to establish a positive school experience that acts as a protective setting for military-connected families and their students. With so many military-connected students enrolled in public schools across the nation, civilian schools have emerged as an ideal location for the emphasis on communication and relationships among staff, students, and military families to effectively respond to their students' social, emotional, and academic needs (Kudler & Porter, 2013).

Family Stress Theory

Coping with stress is a challenging but regular part of military-connected family culture, with literature identifying the presence of formal and informal support systems from local communities as essential to the strong support of family adaptation (Russo & Fallon, 2015). Malia (2006) defined stress as a process over time, not just an isolated event that affects an individual. Systems theory outlines the progression of the stress process as consisting of inputs, throughputs and transformations, and outputs from an event or situation (Deacon & Firebaugh, 1981). Malia (2006) described the stress process from a psychological context to identify stressors as events or conditions (inputs); mediating resources and perceptions to buffer and filters (throughput); a response to change within the emotional construct (transformation); and the susceptibility to changes in health as one of many manifestations from experienced stress (output; Malia, 2006).

Hill (1958) first proposed the family stress model and framed it as the ABC-X family crisis model as a study of military families in the wake of World War II. The ABC-X model

explored how military families managed resources to deal with stressful events (Mancini et al., 2020). In Hill's (1958) model, a stressful event or situation is considered the A factor, with resources available for the family comprising of the B factor, the C factor being the perception of factor A that results in the X factor or degree of stress experienced by the family (Malia, 2006). The ABC-X model of stress and coping focused family theory on the correlation between a family's available resources at the time of a stress event and its influence on a family's perception of the event (Creaser, 2017). The contextual ABC-X model suggests that support of military families could promote effective coping for stressors and prevent events from escalating into crises (Sullivan, 2015). The ABC-X model was used in this study to explore the role of military-connected parents' perceived school support on the family's positive social-emotional well-being (Conforte, Bakalar, et al., 2017).

Boss (1987) extended upon Hill's (1958) research through the development of the contextual model of family stress (CMFS) theory to describe the complex process of a family in maintaining equilibrium within an upset state of the family system. CMFS centered on family context, utilizing three internal and five external contexts to analyze how a family's stress process outcomes over time (Mancini et al., 2020). The CMFS theory provides insight into the response and resilience (output) in family change during the stress process (Mancini et al., 2018). Coping with stress is a standard part of the military families' culture. However, there is little research studying the factors that support military-connected families in mitigating the impact of stressful events (Russo & Fallon, 2015). Research on military families has relied on the CMFS framework and applied it to multiple dimensions of the military culture, emphasizing the military family response during the phases of the deployment cycle (Mancini et al., 2020). Boss (1987) expanded on the psychological context concerns of the family's perception to stress to which a

family may have no control over but still firmly affects a family's adaptation and coping mechanisms (Malia, 2006).

Department of Defense Education Agencies

The Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) is a subagency of military-affiliated schools funded by the Department of Defense (DoD) that serve students who have parents in the military (Berkowitz et al., 2014). Unfortunately, DoDEA schools provide specialized military support to less than 90,000 students around the globe. Unlike the civilian school districts that enroll most military-connected students, DoDEA schools offer a uniform curriculum across its international school system and work with local installations to implement programs tailored to address the military-connected family's unique needs (Esqueda et al., 2012). DoDEA school administrators, teachers, and staff are all trained to identify and respond to the specific needs of military-connected students through an intentional social and emotional school climate to provide the academic, social and emotional, and community supports needed to mitigate military stressors (De Pedro, Atuel, et al., 2014). As a result, parents and students from military families express high levels of satisfaction and adaptation with DoDEA schools despite numerous transitions and challenges associated with having a family member in the military (Esqueda et al., 2012).

Unfortunately, civilian schools do not have the same advantages as DoDEA schools. In contrast to civilian-operated districts, the DoDEA system's small school size appears to facilitate a greater familiarity and personal knowledge of a military-connected family's deployment situations that allow school personnel to meet military-connected families' needs during parental absences (Smrekar & Owens, 2003). Management of the DoDEA system occurs at the federal level. Support for the civilian schools, where most military-connected students are enrolled,

occurs from state and local agencies (Esqueda et al., 2012). The effect of the inconsistent support to military-connected families across civilian schools demands examination.

Dunst (2002) argued about the educational need for a particular set of beliefs, principles, values, and family-centered practices that create collaborative relationships with families and enhance family capacity in their role as decision-makers through access to formal and informal supports. De Pedro, Esqueda, et al. (2014) noted a lack of research on the role of civilian school communities in supporting, addressing, and understanding the educational needs of military-connected students. Teachers' preparation in public civilian schools about families in the military is critical because educators are the gatekeeper to identifying and recommending students to the needed resources or services (Kranke, 2019). Schools' understanding of military life enables celebrating the military culture that enforces identities to improve engagement and feeling of belonging (Garner et al., 2014). The challenges of effective military home-civilian school collaborations are further augmented when considering military-connected families' unique cultural and social-economic diversity (Moeller et al., 2015). Community support is an essential factor influencing military-connected families functioning through social support during the stress of deployment or geographical relocation (Conforte, Bakalar, et al., 2017). Military spouses have expressed the need for support systems from the school to protect their children from behavioral, emotional, and academic concerns (Culler et al., 2019). Researchers have found a correlation between military-connected families' well-being to their perception of how well their military culture is understood and supported (DeGraff et al., 2016). It is increasingly important for education leaders in the United States to understand the culture of the families for which they serve due to the growth of the culturally diverse population of students and families in public education throughout the country (Sherbert, 2018). Clever and Segal (2013) described

military families as a strikingly diverse group with diverse needs that change over time as they move through personal and military transitions.

There is a general assumption of an assimilated military culture awareness by administrators and teachers at schools serving near military stations worldwide. However, Garner et al. (2014) found that more than half of the teachers in public civilian schools associated with military installations reported a lack of understanding of military families' culture and needs. Berkowitz et al. (2014) found that military families consistently reported a more negative perception of their children's school climate and available support than nonmilitary parents.

Military Family Support

Military leaders have recognized the importance of military family support programs to facilitate the operational readiness of their service members and bolster the resiliency of family members (Conforte, Bakalar, et al., 2017). Efforts to develop a strong, effective, and sustainable military recognize the role of service members' families, as evident by the various military services to improve relationships between the service member and family members (Park, 2011). The discourse on the military experience often overlooks military families. However, family members are critical to service members' morale, retention, and ability to perform their duties (Shinseki, 2003). Park (2011) argued that a strengths-based approach in the civilian sector for support of military families would be more effective than problem-focused strategies by targeting the assistance, support, and engagement of the larger community. Research indicates a correlation between social support networks and resiliency, mental health, and family adjustment (McKenney, 2020). After the attacks on September 11, 2001, the Department of Defense significantly founded and expanded programs to support military families during deployment

(Lester et al., 2012). Marine Corps funded programs like the New Parent Support Program, providing parenting classes, support groups, and home visits by nurses and social workers (Lester et al., 2012). Also, the Department of Defense created a family readiness program to provide resources and deployment support to military service members (Lester et al., 2012).

Home–School Relationships

The parent–teacher relationship is an essential element to the students’ academic success. Parent–teacher relationships’ influence on student achievement has prompted the development of various government educational policies and laws that demand collaborative relationships between home and school (Deslandes et al., 2015). Although the conflict between parents and teachers may be unavoidable, understanding the role of relationships may be affected through proper conflict resolution strategies (Iqbal et al., 2017). Studies have observed individuals adopting different roles during social interactions within an organization (Bratton et al., 2010). In schools, there is a link between the broad range of parent–teacher interactions and the individuals’ perception of social expectations of the interaction between each other (Porter, 2008). Parent attitudes are influenced by previous experiences and memories, arguing that communication strategies can positively affect the partnership between school and parents (Palts & Harro-Loit, 2015).

Three theoretical perspectives have dominated research and literature on school–family relationships: separate, shared, and the sequential spheres of family and school responsibilities perspectives (Epstein, 2018). The separate responsibilities perspective assumes that family and school relationships are motivated by mutually exclusive goals, roles, and responsibilities (Epstein, 2018). The suggestion is that achieving differing goals by two institutions occurs when educational development is entirely left to the professionals or teachers and parents to maintain

their child's social development (Epstein, 2018). The separate responsibilities perspective contends that families and schools have distinctly different roles in education. As a result, teachers may communicate with parents only when severe learning or behavior problems arise or when parents only contact teachers when extremely concerned about their child's educational progress (Epstein, 2018).

Epstein (2018) developed the theory of overlapping spheres of influence as a device to expand on the established home-school relationship theories. The overlapping spheres of influence illustrate the effect of families, schools, and communication on students' learning outcomes while acknowledging previous findings that some activities are conducted independently from the other institutions (Epstein, 2018). The model focuses on the shared responsibilities perspective to identify and develop the overlapping responsibilities and boundaries of home, school, and community within the individuals' backgrounds, philosophies, and experiences (Epstein, 2018). Four multifaceted forces activate the spheres of influence model: (a) family background characteristics, philosophy, and practices; (b) school characteristics, philosophy or policy, and practices; (c) community characteristics, policies, and practices; and (d) the age of the student (Epstein, 2018, p. 72).

Lareau (1987) described the historical evolution of the home-school relationship in the United States as nonlinear through three major stages that evolved the teacher as family and the parent as a teacher. The first stage describes the teacher as a family, where teachers were dependent on families for support and living assistance in rural areas (Lareau, 1987). During the second phase, based on the historical rise in mass schooling, parents were included in the schools but not necessarily involved in the education process of students (Lareau, 1987). Presently, the third stage in the evolution of home-school interactions has observed parents' growing role in

monitoring their student's educational process and moving parents directly into the classroom (Lareau, 1987).

Vincent (1996) proposed four categories to classify his observed parent–teacher relationship styles. These were the (a) independent parents, the (b) supporter or learner parents, (c) parents as consumers, and (d) participant parents. The different categories grouped parents based on their level of involvement within the school. Independent parents are passive parents with an intentional approach of minimal participation with the school (Vincent, 1996). The supporter or learner relationship views the teachers as the authoritative figure in education, with parents assuming a passive or supportive role in the relationship. The third parent–teacher relationship category depicts the role of the parent as consumers of education, identified by active participation and involvement (Vincent, 1996). This relationship has been associated with the emerging school choice trend and focuses on accountability ratings nationwide (Deslandes et al., 2015; Vincent, 1996). The fourth identified parent group is the participant parents with active involvement in their students' education and educational environment (Vincent, 1996). These parents are well informed, with distinct self-perception of equitable authority in the education process (Vincent, 1996).

The importance of parent–teacher relationships in the education process has been recognized and is a topic of ongoing research. Porter (2008) expanded on Vincent's (1996) typology framework for categorizing different parent–teacher relationships based on the communication style between parents and teachers in schools. Porter (2008) proposed the professional-driven relationships, family-allied relationships, a family-centered philosophy, and a parent-driven model that described the various communication behaviors that parents and teachers assumed. The research on parent–teacher characteristics by Porter (2008) and Vincent

(1996) was one of the primary sources of inspiration for this study to understand the elements affecting military-connected parental involvement, parent–teacher communication, and interaction within civilian schools.

Parental Involvement

Students who have parents involved and engaged in effective relationships with their teachers and schools strongly perceive a positive school environment (Wyrick & Rudasill, 2009). Researchers have noted a predictable parental involvement decline as students leave elementary schools and continue to decrease through the secondary school years (Greenwood & Hickman, 1991; Hill & Taylor, 2004). Home–school interactions are differentiated based on social class (Gillies, 2006). Gillies (2006) found a connection between the level of parental involvement and household income and social structures, with middle-class parents having more financial involvement than low-income parents’ involvement focusing on home academic support. Epstein (2018) found that educators frequently expressed the responsibility on parents to connect with teachers and administrators and reinforced the role expectations of parental involvement in education being at home.

Greenwood and Hickman (1991) expressed concerns about their findings on teachers’ perception of a lack of parental involvement to signify a lack of support and apathy. These incorrect assumptions about parents that suggest they are increasingly not meeting their expected responsibilities compared to previous generations correlate to an increased highlight of negative parenting examples in the media (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). O’Connell (1993) argued that although research supports a desire by parents to be involved in their children’s education, educators may still hold to the belief that education should be left to the professionals. The campus size is another factor affecting parental involvement (O’Connell, 1993). For example,

elementary schools are generally smaller and more accessible for parents who seek to communicate with a few staff educating their children (O'Connell, 1993). In contrast, middle-level or high schools are typically larger and involve many teachers serving a single student (O'Connell, 1993). Epstein (2018) explained two critical changes in family structure that have dramatically affected the home–school relationship: an increase in single-parent households and the number of parents working outside of the home. The additional attention to the needs of students due to parental absence increases parental concerns about the quality of school and after-school programs (Epstein, 2018).

Research indicates an increasing trend in the gap between home and school despite the many assumptions about why parental involvement declines throughout a student's educational journey (Hill & Taylor, 2004). Terms like parent engagement or parent participation are used in literature to describe the actions and efforts of the parents, focusing only on parents and significantly missing out on the opportunity to study school programs that support parents and engage community partners in shared-responsibilities actions (Epstein, 2018). As a result, Epstein (2018) suggested that school, family, and community partnerships describe the required focus on equity of involvement and responsibilities.

There is a growing demand for the promotion of parental involvement in education. Dialogue and effective parent–teacher relationships are dependent on the successful alignment of mutual goals with a consideration of military-connected parents' priorities, perceived values, and criteria for the education of their students (Epstein, 2018). The perceptual home–school gap in military-connected schools threatens the school, family, and community partnerships.

Parent Perceptions

One of the identified reasons for conflict in parent–teacher relationships is the misunderstanding of expectations and the definition of roles between teachers and parents. Bang (2018) found that the most significant barrier limiting parent–teacher collaboration was a perceptual gap between teachers and parents in understanding each other’s roles, expectations, concerns, and views. Hassan and Geys (2017) found that a vast majority of parents considered the location and racial or socioeconomic composition of a school more important than academic achievement. In contrast, teachers have consistently agreed that educators’ role is not to teach nonacademic values to students, such as respect, tolerance, and understanding (Iqbal et al., 2017). Findings by Hofflinger et al. (2019) suggested that a family’s proximity to the school, quality, and religious orientation can anticipate a school’s socioeconomic status and ethnic demographics, with the potential for segregation as a result of a parents’ priority and criteria for the education of their student. Other changes in American society are associated with a decline in parental support in the institutionalization of the education system (Curry & Holter, 2019). Recent studies report American parents expressing a positive perception of the overall school culture in elementary schools, declining significantly through middle school and lowest for high schools (Yang et al., 2021). Unlike elementary schools, high schools involve a greater number of teachers, which affects the amount and level of contact with parents (Yang et al., 2021). Research on school choice programs draws attention to the importance of parents’ gathering information and accurate data processing to evaluate a school that meets their needs (Erickson, 2017). Social networks are considered a key source of gathering and sharing information but allow for information inequality due to their reliance on personal experiences and opinions about a school (Fong, 2019). The subjectivity of school quality is apparent through the inconsistent

pattern of research findings on school evaluation. Erickson (2017) noted how parents considered various factors specific to each family's circumstance, experiences, and needs when evaluating school quality. Discrepancies in the available literature highlight the diverse understanding among parents about their role in the educational process when assessing school factors aligned to their needs (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Whitaker & Hoover-Dempsey, 2013). A parent's established school evaluation is influenced further by their perception and understanding of their role. There is a gap between what a parent perceives their role in learning and what the school does (Curry & Holter, 2019). Misunderstandings and conflicts were observed when schools did not develop shared understandings through open communication between parents and the school about parent and school roles (Curry & Holter, 2019). Research points to a need to understand social networks to supplement the school's various efforts for communication with parents (Fong, 2019).

Bauman (2014) warned about the dangers of overlooking the influence of bias in guiding the decisions of individuals and groups. The impressions of military-connected families can be persistent once established, allowing reasonably thinking individuals to behave and think irrationally (Kolbert, 2017). Wang and Jeon (2020) reasoned that individuals tend to favor their position more strongly when they have a high conviction toward a bias and will protect this position by ignoring or devaluing any information that may not be consistent with the established belief. Thus, confirmation bias influences parent perception and the tendency to embrace information that supports an already established view and reject all other information that contradicts it (Kolbert, 2017).

Teacher Legitimacy

Another factor in conflict during parent–teacher relationships may arise from parents’ perception of accountability ratings. Accountability ratings and national policies, such as the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act, required states and local education institutions to publicly disseminate accountability data, resulting in widely varying reporting formats (Jacobsen et al., 2014). There has been a heightened state and national focus on public school policies that prioritize assessment results, implementation of specific projects, and school comparison based on public reporting through an A–F rating system (Deslandes et al., 2015; Texas Education Agency, 2020). Researchers argued that this could diminish and undermine the legitimacy of public institutions as the focus on accountability data and ratings carries the potential to influence parents’ perceptions based on limited data or interactions with teachers (Deslandes et al., 2015; Epstein, 2018; Jacobsen et al., 2014). Jacobsen et al. (2014) argued that school accountability policies challenge the development of trust between teachers and parents, hindering mutual educational goals and increasing opportunities for conflict. Epstein (2018) pointed out that home–school partnerships require mutual trust and respect but require concerted action and patience to establish within school communities. O’Connell (1993) argued for public teachers to allow parents into schools as the desired school reforms necessary for school improvement are not possible by the school personnel alone. Drake (2013) described the status of legitimacy based solely on the perception and consent of internal and external stakeholders. De Pedro, Atuel, et al. (2014) consistently found that schools lacked the fiscal resources, specialized personnel, or training needed to support military-connected students.

Schools' Image, Reputation, and Legitimacy

DiMartino and Jessen (2016) explored branding and marketing behaviors used by schools in a competitive marketplace that directly influenced how parents and prospective students perceived a school and concluded that parents and students could not effectively negotiate the variety of available options for them. Parental preferences, such as responses obtained through surveys and focus groups, are potentially susceptible to response bias based on a parent's perception of social desirability for school characteristics (Erickson, 2017). The sociology concepts of corporate image and reputation analyze a school's relationships with its stakeholders. School image and reputation have increasingly become critical school management factors because of the influence that reputation has on its stakeholder's views of the school and its staff (Skallerud, 2011).

Chun (2005) explored the corporate marketing and management segments to find that a corporation's reputation strongly influenced its success. In the literature, Fombrun and Shanley (1990) defined *reputation* as an evaluative concept based on internal and external stakeholders' overall evaluation of an organization regarding its past, present, and future handling of relationships. Simply stated, reputation reflects an institution's ability and willingness to meet stakeholders' expectations (Helm et al., 2011). On the other hand, Brown et al.'s (2006) definition of reputation centered around the perception by external stakeholders about an organization. Reputation is an ambiguous and complex construct of perception due to consistent behaviors required to develop trust over time (Helm et al., 2011). Fombrun and Shanley's (1990) approach to the reputation process contends that corporate image and identity fall within the reputation construct and account for all stakeholders. Under the corporate reputation approach,

the staff associates specific values and principles to an organization that contributes to its overall reputation and its ultimate perception by external stakeholders (Helm et al., 2011).

The study of reputation is crucial in marketing, image, law, accountability, and goodwill (Helm et al., 2011). Skallerud (2011) adapted reputation to education by proposing a parent-based school reputation model that explained the correlation of parental school satisfaction as an antecedent to school reputation and the resulting parental school loyalty.

Accordingly, corporate *image* is an immediate mental picture of an organization (Balmer & Gray, 1999). Image in itself is a complex sense-making construct of a fabricated and projected impression of a group's feelings and beliefs about an organization (Dowling, 1986). Helm et al. (2011) summarized the difference between reputation and image by describing reputation as a consumer-controlled perception of an institution. In contrast, image is an institution-controlled communication to influence the portrayal of the institution (Helm et al., 2011). Brown et al. (2006) proposed corporate image management as a two-function marketing approach that focuses on understanding the staff's perceptions of the company and the consumers' decisions about organizations and their services. Brown et al. (2006) expanded on the construct of organizational image based on the institutions' intended image or what it wants others to believe about themselves and the construed image the institution believes others think about them. Service-led institutions have focused efforts on exploring the link between an organization's internal identity and external image based on the observed influence of employee behaviors on customers (Hatch & Schultz, 1997). Internal and external interactions between staff and customers are essential in reputation and image management literature (Del-Castillo-Feito et al., 2020; Helm et al., 2011). The definitions of school image as suggested by Brown et al. (2006)

and Fombrun and Shanley's (1990) corporate reputation approach (see Figure 2) are used in this study to explain a school's legitimacy.

Figure 2

Marketing-Based and Corporate Reputation Approaches to School Image and Reputation

	Brown et al.'s (2006) Marketing Approach	Fombrun and Shanley's (1990) Corporate Reputation Approach
Image (Immediate)	Construed image—What an organization believes others think.	Perception of external stakeholders.
	Intended image—What the organization wants the public to believe about them.	
Reputation (Long-term)	Perception of external stakeholders.	Combination of internal and external stakeholder perceptions and overall evaluation.

Note. Adapted from *Reputation Management*, by S. Helm, K. Liehr-Gobbers, and C. Storck, 2011, Springer Science & Business Media. Copyright 2011 by Springer Science & Business Media.

Although Brown et al.'s (2006) proposed a marketing-based image approach focusing on institution-controlled communications and actions, Helm et al. (2011) argued that Fombrun and Shanley's (1990) corporate reputation approach offered a more holistic perspective to a reputation to consider all stakeholders and the overall organization's perception over time. Brown et al. (2006) and Fombrun and Shanley (1990) agreed on the need to understand the perception of the external stakeholders when managing the reputation or image of an organization. Kotler and Keller (2014) emphasized the element of communication on the impression of an object's image on a person, directly affecting people's attitudes and actions toward that object.

Legitimacy theory in education links image and the school culture and concrete actions that shape its vision (Burlea-Schiopoiu & Popa, 2013). Suchman (1995) described the legitimacy theory as a mechanism that measures the perception of the actions of an organization as desirable, proper, or appropriate within a socially accepted system. Burlea-Schiopoiu and Popa (2013) argued that legitimacy's social perception plays a role in developing trust that supports organizations through turbulent environments. Institutional legitimacy leads to persistence as its stakeholders may be more motivated to support socially desirable and appropriate organizations (Zelditch, 2018). Legitimacy influences how parents may act toward schools and school image by influencing how trustworthy the school is perceived (Suchman, 1995). The legitimation process aims to earn, develop, and maintain the stakeholder's approval (Burlea-Schiopoiu & Popa, 2013). Deephouse and Carter (2005) described legitimacy as focusing on social acceptance from approved social norms and expectations, opposed to the process of reputation undertaking comparisons among organizations.

There is a positive and significant relationship between image, legitimacy, and reputation, demanding attention to the actions and strategies affecting institutional image and legitimacy to manage perceived reputation (Del-Castillo-Feito et al., 2020). It is no longer feasible for public schools to assume that society will blindly trust them without accountability. Therefore, studying public schools' image, reputation, and legitimacy is essential in regaining trust through intentional and targeted communication with stakeholders (Del-Castillo-Feito et al., 2020). Skallerud's (2011) reputation model further explains the construct linking a school's image measurement as an antecedent variable of parental satisfaction and predicted loyalty toward the school (Badri & Mohaidat, 2014).

Skallerud (2011) utilized elements from Walsh et al.'s (2009) customer-based reputation scale to measure reputation as a multidimensional scale. Skallerud (2011) used four pretested dimensions: (a) parent orientation, (b) learning quality, (c) safe school environment, and (d) good teachers in the adaptation of the corporate measurement scale for a parent's assessment of a school reputation. Skallerud (2011) defined *parent orientation* as the parent's perception of the school staff's ability to satisfy their needs (Skallerud, 2011). The *learning quality* dimension focused on parents' perceptions of the quality of a school's academic programs and teaching strategies (Skallerud, 2011). A parent's perceptions of students' *safety* measures evaluations of the safe school environment dimension by Skallerud (2011). Finally, the *good teachers'* reputation dimension focused on the parent's perception of how the school administration treats its teachers, the school's academic expectations, and the staff's competency.

Research has studied a school's negative image and reputation within the context of school choice factors and student retention (Jacob & Lefgren, 2007; Meier & Lemmer, 2015; Schneider & Buckley, 2002). This study adds to the educational literature on school reputation and perception of school image on home-school relationships.

Toward a Customer-Oriented Education

The debate on schooling choice has been growing in popularity over the last decade, with current policies promoting the benefits of school choice programs to students and their families (Zhan, 2018). Presently, 23 states offer school choice programs, all pursuing solutions for low-income families, special needs students, and concerns from low-performing schools (Wolf et al., 2017). Zimmer and Guarino (2013) defined *charter schools* as private, nonprofit extensions of public schools that benefit from increased instructional autonomy. Private charter schools, in particular, are well aligned with the school choice movement, whose advocates argue that school

choice promotes school quality improvement and expands options for disadvantaged families (Zhan, 2018). An integral benefit of the educational autonomy of the private school model is the school's ability to set enrollment limits, resulting in accusations of a selective admission process to favor top achieving academic students by the perceived desirable schools (Zimmer & Guarino, 2013).

McWilliams (2017) explored the growth of charter schools by students from traditional public schools in an expanding education marketplace, exposing an emerging institutional stigma against conventional public education. Deslandes et al. (2015) defined the principle of *clientelism* as an emerging environment in education where the parents' role is that of a client, being overly present and having excessive demands. Hassan and Geys (2017) found that student and staff happiness and equality of opportunities outweigh academic achievement, with ethical attributes of a school preferred over efficiency attributes. The focus on school accountability on achievement results promotes an environment of competition between schools and supports the notion of the emerging educational marketplace, with the prevalence of a clientelism culture that disproportionately empowers parents (Deslandes et al., 2015). Studies have found that charter schools advertise student academic results as equal to or better than traditional public schools (Wolf et al., 2017). More importantly, the systematic practice of skimming high-achieving students does not appear to be a factor in the observed student outcomes of private schools (Zimmer & Guarino, 2013).

Zhan (2018) found that the demand and enrollment in private education options rose in the states offering school choice programs. Increasing demand for alternative options to public education has been observed, especially in areas where public schools are underperforming to their stakeholders, driving a clientelist environment within the education market (Zhan, 2018).

Traditionally, public schools have considered students their most important stakeholders.

However, researchers argue that parents are the primary managers of school choice and control the fate of public schools (Skallerud, 2011; Zhan, 2018).

School as an Authority

Theories of power explain how a group moving toward achieving a common goal focuses on the differences among its members and the individuals' abilities to help the group reach the goal (Drake, 2013). As various group members identify and possess different resources, power relationships develop (Drake, 2013). Raven (2008) viewed power as a social influence and psychological change construct. Despite various definitions and theories on social power, they all involve influencing an individual over another and do not exist without a relationship between the individuals (Wheless et al., 1983). The study of social influences is embedded within the analysis of social power. A crucial element of social power is the understanding that individuals desire to exert their influence over others to gain or maintain power (Tyler, 2006). Epstein (2018) described the modern partnership between school, family, and community as an authority structure, with social dynamics of power distribution influenced by teachers, administrators, parents, and other community stakeholders managing the education's responsibilities.

When considering the home-school relationship and subsequential power distribution, influence is only possible to the extent that all individuals value the resource offered (Dornbusch & Scott, 1976). In social situations where groups strive for a common objective, differences in skills and abilities among individuals in their contribution to achieving the goal create social dependencies and power relationships (Hocker & Wilmot, 2017). In schools, students and parents rely on learning and academic success on educators, who possess the expertise of subject matter and control over grading practices. Coleman (2014) noted that groups in high-power

situations, such as educators, had a vested interest in the status quo, undermining those considered to be of lesser power through aggressive behaviors and strategies. However, Hocker and Wilmot (2017) found fluidity in power relationships with seemingly unequal power situations as individuals changed or found alternative sources of accomplishing their goals, thus reducing the interdependence and associated power. Power plays a significant role in social influences by affecting people's motivation, goals, and behaviors related to seeking or keeping balance or imbalance of power in relationships (Coleman, 2014).

Raven (2008) described six bases of social power that enable an agent to influence a change in another person's belief, attitude, or behavior. The bases of power include informational, reward, coercion, legitimate, expertise, and referent power. The base of *legitimate power* is accepting a power imbalance within a relationship to influence change on a lower-powered individual (Raven, 2008). For example, hierarchical societies create legitimate power through acceptable social norms that make social ranks, usually determined by age, sex, education, or position (Brett, 2000). Additionally, *informational power* relies on persuasion and communication to influence change by accepting the justification for change (Raven, 2008). The activation of a cognitive acceptance to affect change by an individual leads to socially independent behavior alterations (Raven, 2008).

On the other hand, *expert power* influences change from a perception of value to a superior insight or knowledge about an available resource (Raven, 2008). Self-promotion is a powerful strategy that sets the stage for developing a school's expert power by demonstrating superior knowledge, expertise, and achievement in their education practices (Raven, 2008). Furthermore, Tyler (2006) explored internal motivations within relationships through the lenses of intrinsic motivation and individuals' commitment to a group perspective. Raven (2008)

referred to *referent power* as an influence based on a connection between individuals that leads to a subsequent emulation of another person's change (Raven, 2008). An individual's identification with a group or the beliefs and values of an institution results in loyalty to that group (Tyler, 2006). Individuals intrinsically cooperate within the inherent motivation approach based on the reward of group membership and relationships (Tyler, 2006).

Coleman (2014) argued that power did not result from the actual possession of resources or the use of strategies but rather from the perception of power by others. Craver (2010) described cooperative outcomes in power relations, such as being candid about the actual value of their terms that allowed individuals to address all underlying interests and develop mutually beneficial relationships. For schools to gain power and perform effectively, they must consider how third parties perceive and evaluate their bases of power that influence the authority structure (Epstein, 2018; Tyler, 2006).

Social media now greatly influences parents, enabling small groups of individuals to portray an organization's positive or negative image through online word-of-mouth (Chun & Lee, 2017). With the emergence of various social media for feedback and social interactions, parents now possess greater power over their schools' image, reputation, and legitimacy (Kaul et al., 2015). Although social media communications are an essential aspect of establishing a school image through an intentional portrayal of the institution, it also constitutes the resignation of traditional forms of marketing and communication strategies that mitigate negative opinions of schools (Kaul et al., 2015). Chun and Lee (2017) coined the term online firestorm to describe the quick propagation of negative opinions by online word-of-mouth against a person, company, or group through social media networks. Chun and Lee (2017) documented the ability of social media to severely damage reputation from these online firestorms, emphasizing the speed and

volume achieved through online network clusters. These online social network clusters create situations where information can be shared and spread across connected groups, giving countless people the impression of a shared opinion (Chun & Lee, 2017). Additionally, traditional media platforms regularly resort to social media sources to report on potential stories (Anderson et al., 2014). Given the ease of public access to negative or positive comments on social media, it is understandable that researchers are concerned about school management of a school's image as a factor in educational leadership (Kaul et al., 2015). Thus, the control of public image, reputation, and legitimacy of civilian-operated schools can be a powerful instrument in developing trust between schools, teachers, and parents.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented a comprehensive background and overview of the proposed research, detailing why researchers advocate conducting this study through available literature. Then, utilizing the available literature, I discussed a conceptual framework that described the complexities of military culture, parent–teacher relationships, and school image.

Using elements from the parent-based school reputation model developed by Skallerud (2011), this study described the association between a positive home–school relationship and a school's perceived image and reputation (Del-Castillo-Feito et al., 2020). The ABC-X model of stress and coping was discussed in this chapter as a window into the military-connected family's response and resilience observed during stressful events (Mancini et al., 2018). Through the ABC-X model of stress and coping, this study evaluated the experiences of military-connected families with available resources at the time of a stressful event and its influence on a family's perception of the event (Creaser, 2017; Russo & Fallon, 2015). Ultimately, the corporate image approach concepts, as suggested by Brown et al. (2006) and Fombrun and Shanley's (1990)

corporate reputation approach, drive this study to explain how military-connected families perceive a school's legitimacy. This chapter used the available literature to illustrate the need to focus on educational leaders' reputation and image management to establish effective relationships with military-connected stakeholders. Chapter 3 discusses the proposed research methodology and design chosen for the study. Chapter 3 will also discuss data analysis protocols and my ethical considerations while framing the study's research focus to explore the established research questions.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The lack of understanding of the unique challenges of military culture by military-connected civilian schools poses a threat to the perception of school legitimacy and the development of an effective home–school relationship. A school’s lack of understanding of military culture can significantly affect the parental perception of value and desired involvement in their children’s school. This chapter describes the methodology and research approach used to explore this study’s research problem. The findings of this study contribute to the literature in family science, a field that education leaders rely on to address known barriers to home–school relationships and parent involvement with families of high transition and student mobility struggles (Esqueda et al., 2012; Mancini et al., 2018; Willerton et al., 2011).

Military-connected family culture affects parent–teacher relationships through a perceptual gap between a school’s role in what it concretely accomplishes and its beliefs about supporting students’ behavioral, emotional, and academic needs. The study’s purpose was to explore the experiences of military-connected families to understand a parent’s priorities in the perceived value of the reputation and legitimacy of schools. Chapter 3 will describe the research design, sample population, data collection process, and the study’s data analysis methods. As a previous military-connected child, I was aware of the conflicting subjectivity of the research topic and the importance of selecting the appropriate research methodology and design. The chapter includes justification and rationale for my approach to answering the study’s research questions while mitigating present bias.

Research Method

This study adopted a qualitative research methodology to describe the perspectives of military-connected families and examine the construct of parent perception of value and desired

involvement in their children's school. Most of the research used to analyze military-connected families has revolved around quantitative research methods. Previous studies on military families have relied on parental responses expressed through scale surveys and focus groups, methods that are potentially susceptible to response bias from a parent's perception of the social desirability to describe certain school characteristics (Erickson, 2017). Available literature associates school reputation with parents' emotions and opinions about the role of schools in the education of their families (Burlea-Schiopoiu & Popa, 2013; Skallerud, 2011). Additionally, because of the intangibility of educational services, parents rely significantly on a social construct and anecdotal evidence to drive their opinions on public schools (Skallerud, 2011). This study explored the opinions and beliefs of military-connected families based on their experiences. Edmonds and Kennedy (2017) argued for a qualitative research methodology to describe the relationship between how individuals made meaning of events in their lives and how those individuals have come to understand these experiences. Qualitative research methodology best captured, analyzed, and interpreted data that addressed this study's research questions' subjective nature (Given, 2008). A qualitative method was appropriate to evaluate military families' life experiences, challenges, and unique cultures. Educational leaders can benefit from an adequate understanding of military families' experiences, opinions, and beliefs about schools to improve communication, support programs, and establish better relationships with military-connected parents to benefit their students' academic and social well-being.

An essential element of qualitative methodology was the description of events through data that explored the meaning participants assigned to specific events, allowing narratives to explain theories under study (Lichtman, 2014; Roberts, 2010). Creswell and Poth (2016) noted that qualitative methodology provides a distinctive use of theoretical frameworks to inform a

study of a subjective research problem by establishing patterns or themes directly from participants' voices and promoting a call for change. This study described the complex nature of military home–public school partnerships. The conceptual framework used an abstract analytical schema for the parent–teacher relationship using the known concepts of Skallerud's (2011) parent-based reputation construct, Hill's (1958) ABC-X model of stress coping, and Epstein's (2018) spheres of influence in education. Because the study's research questions developed a theory from existing theories, a grounded theory approach was selected. Corbin and Strauss (2014) described the grounded theory approach as a systematic approach to collecting data and expanding on existing theories. Bryant and Charmaz (2007) argued that the grounded theory approach could facilitate understanding of how families experience stressful events, make sense of the world, and describe their perspective from their lived experiences. The data accessible through qualitative research methodology allowed for detailed anecdotal responses rather than the statistical calculations facilitated through a quantitative research methodology (Lichtman, 2014). The limited amount of available literature in the subject area of military culture demanded exploration and development of available theories rather than testing against any single theory, making it appropriate to use the grounded theory analytical approach (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, qualitative research methodology through a grounded theory approach that utilized multimethod data collection sources to capture otherwise intangible responses developed a context-specific theory that addressed the study's research questions.

Research Design

The qualitative method appropriate for the established research focus was that of the grounded theory approach. The grounded theory approach was initially proposed by Glasser and Strauss (1967) as a process to “ground” the study within the experience and perspective of the

participants. The work of Glaser and Strauss (1967) allows the construct of a new theory on issues of importance to researchers and participants that emerge from the participant's history and cultural context (Mills & Birks, 2014). Thus, developing a theory requires a researcher to focus on systematic steps or phases to adequately explain a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Lichtman (2014) highlighted grounded theory's approach to analyzing data, referred to by some as a constant comparative method, to inform new ideas most closely resembling quantitative research. Corbin and Strauss (2014) argued that theories developed from grounded theory research more accurately reflect the reality of its participants as the discussions emerge directly from the systematical analysis of the data. The grounded theory approach differs from other qualitative research designs by analyzing data as part of the overall research design rather than waiting until all of the data are collected (Lichtman, 2014). Theories emerging within a grounded theory approach are based on symbolic interactionism that link a researcher's developing concepts to the relationships with each other, as well as illustrate the actions, roles, and interactions as it describes the trajectory of phenomena over time (Morse, 2007). Taking this qualitative methodology prevented me from influencing the research problem with preconceived assumptions or bias due to the grounded theory approach to experiential data in gaining insight and describing the nature of phenomena (Denicolo et al., 2016).

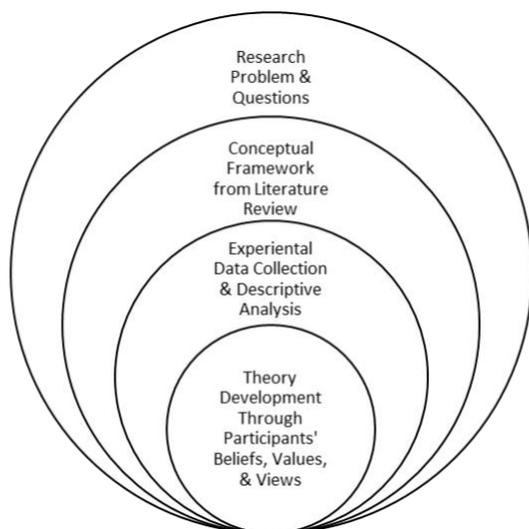
Charmaz (2006) stated that grounded theory had evolved as an inductive model for studying social constructivism or situated cognition in education. The inductive aspect of this study involved the review of the literature and the development of a conceptual framework. Purposeful sampling, conducting free-response surveys and in-depth interviews, discovering categories and themes, and ultimately referring to the literature further progressed the study's inductive process. Denicolo et al. (2016) argued that a constructivist design in the grounded

theory approach accounts for the existence of multiple realities in social research, each reality framed within the individual reference of human existence. The ontological nature of this study demanded a constructivist data analysis to the study. Military-connected families possessed multiple realities based on diverse perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences.

In a grounded theory approach, the narrative data from participants provided a detailed description that described the phenomena of military home–public school relationships from lived experiences to identify and interrelate themes and categories (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Charmaz (2006) advocated for the constructivist grounded theory approach to incorporate the researcher’s perspective to make sense of the complexities of particular worlds, beliefs, and actions. A constructivist framework described the interaction among military parents and teachers, focusing on the context of military culture to understand the interpretation of educational value and involvement from their experience (Creswell, 2013). Figure 3 illustrates the study’s proposed design within a grounded theory approach to develop a theory through the participants’ beliefs, values, and views of the research problem.

Figure 3

Constructivist Design for a Grounded Theory Research Approach



Because of the study's focus on participants' experiences, beliefs, opinions, and perspectives, a constructivist grounded theory approach was appropriate in developing a theory to explain the social construct of military-connected parents' perception of a school's role in the education of their families (Creswell, 2013).

Population

This study focused on a sizeable military-connected school district in Texas. The civilian-operated school district had a military-connected student enrollment of over 15,000 students, over 33% of its total enrollment of 45,200 students. Military students attended four high schools, a career center, an Early College High School, 11 middle schools, and 31 elementary schools within the military-affiliated district. A purposeful sampling of military-connected families of students grades nine through 12 from the six high schools in the district was the study's target population.

Study Sample

Purposeful sampling was appropriate for this study. Morse (2007) described the three essential principles to adequate sampling within the grounded theory approach to (a) the researcher's skills, (b) recruitment of appropriate participants, and (c) target and efficient sampling technique. The need for precise data collection within grounded theory demanded a careful sampling approach. As such, purposeful sampling targeted specific participants within a study who "speak for themselves" on a shared phenomenon (Morse, 2007, p. 236).

In collaboration with the district's Army school liaison officer, I recruited military-connected families in the area using a flyer directly linked to an initial open-question survey. Distribution of the flyer was possible with the assistance of the district's Army school liaison officer and school military and family life counselors, as they had direct connections to military-

connected groups. The invitation to participate in a subsequent in-depth interview was available to individuals identified as the target population through the initial survey. The in-depth interviews targeted military-connected parents of students in grades nine through 12. The decision to focus on secondary grade levels stemmed from available data indicating that parents at the high school level were not as involved in school activities as parents of elementary grades (Hill & Taylor, 2004). Existing literature had identified parents of secondary grade level students as the ideal target for understanding the external school factors that influence parents' perception based on the group's reduced interactions with teachers and involvement with the school (Deslandes et al., 2015; Epstein, 2018; Jacobsen et al., 2014). Another benefit of focusing on secondary school parents was the military families' ability to reflect on experiences with various educational settings over the families' time in service, which allowed for greater depth and data insight. I focused the survey and interview questions on how military-connected parents used available sources of information and their experiences with various school settings to understand the role construct of education and their families. The purposeful sampling used in this study enabled the confirmation of the military home-school experience, providing a detailed description of the unique military culture to describe the research problem by looking for clues, sifting and sorting, and creating a plausible case through meaningful conversations (Morse, 2007).

The study's tentative thematic framework aligned with Skallerud's (2011) parent-based school reputation categories of parental perceptions influences. The target participants for this study were purposefully selected to represent the diversity of military-connected families. The sample size was another essential question within the study design strategy. Corbin and Strauss (2014) argued that the ultimate criterion for sample size in grounded theory depends on

achieving thematic saturation. Stern (2007) argued the need for sample size in grounded theory to be representative, but unnecessary to be overly large or determined before the approval of research. As the grounded theory approach relied on constant data comparison, the final number of interviews needed for this interview depended on the thematic saturation point (Stern, 2007). Researchers have debated the optimal sample size of qualitative studies, with Creswell and Poth (2016) indicating that achieving model saturation occurs with 20 to 60 interviews. Saturation for this qualitative study became apparent during data analysis once thematic redundancies were achieved (Beitin, 2012). Saturation and triangulation were possible through the research's utilization of multimethod sources of data collection to gather thematic categories from the sizeable population sample of military-connected families in the target public school district (Creswell, 2013).

Assumptions

Participants' honesty was a critical element to the success of the qualitative research methodology. Military-connected parents are normally apprehensive about expressing sincere feedback, especially if it negatively reflects the military culture. Erickson (2017) noted how surveys are susceptible to social desirability bias, which describes the influence of a participant's response to perceived socially acceptable answers. Stern (2007) noted that the conversational approach in the grounded theory approach enables the essential information in data to stick out in the investigation, thus allowing for a greater concentration on the development of the theory. Another factor that could have affected the study was the increased focus on the struggles of educators during the COVID-19 pandemic, which could have resulted in favorable sympathetic reactions in the study. Similarly, the pandemic had created a significant interruption and

disruption to the traditional educational process that could have unwittingly skewed school characteristics and effectiveness evaluations within the study's instrument measures.

Limitations

The scope of this study targeted military-connected families with adolescent children attending a military-connected civilian high school, grades nine through 12. A limitation of this study from the target sample was the participant's association with only one service branch of the U.S. military. The limitation could have affected the generalization of study results due to the diverse family contexts and cultures available throughout the different U.S. military service branches. Additionally, a significant limitation identified by using a ground study design was the complexity of human life, namely the struggle for achieving the necessary range and depth of insight (Kim, 2015). Furthermore, there was a potential for a positivist framing of anecdotes and narratives of participants (Brandell & Varkas, 2010). Lastly, response bias was a primary concern and priority for me in this study due to the narrow target demographic, affiliation within the target school district, and my family's past military service history.

Delimitations

This study was enclosed within a family-school relationship conceptual framework, focused on collecting descriptive responses from surveys and interviews of military-connected parents with students in grades nine through 12. The military-connected participants for this research were in Texas but had backgrounds from throughout the United States. The target public school district was adjacent to a significantly large U.S. military installation within the United States. The above-average population of military-connected families in the district was ideal for recruiting the targeted participants for this study.

Role of the Researcher

Holton (2007) described the role of qualitative researchers as a critical component in the investigation process through the work with the data directly, breaking it down to essential core categories and related concepts through the process of constant comparison. Additionally, the grounded theory approach suggested a proactive engagement with the literature in the initial phases of the research process for increased insight into the research focus (Mills & Birks, 2014). I entered the field of study on military families with only a few predeterminations of judgment and personal bias about the research problem, thus driven by a sincere sense of inquiry and insight from the literature review. As an essential component of the constructivist grounded theory approach, Charmaz (2006) argued that literature review provided the fundamental ideas and research focus necessary to identify the research problem. This study's literature review inspired me regarding a potential connection between several critical theories affecting military-connected families' relationships with public schools. The careful review of available research served as the initial theoretical outline in supporting the study's empirical data and subsequent new theoretical ideas.

I was the crucial instrument in the data collection process in qualitative research methods, as described by Creswell and Poth (2016). Aligned with Charmaz's (2006) social constructivist perspective, I emphasized participants' feelings, assumptions, values, and beliefs to make decisions about crucial categories throughout the process, resulting in suggestive outcomes. However, to maintain validity, I maintained self-awareness and acknowledged bias from a prior shared experience with military culture, mobility, and education. Mills and Birks (2014) described the challenge of social researchers to effectively separate themselves as objective observers within social research, highlighting the importance of acknowledging their insight as

an inevitable element of a study's outcome. Because of the inherent bias presented by the researcher, Corbin and Strauss (2014) recommended the use of member checks and constant comparison to increase data validity, as the researcher regularly confirms the accuracy of the data collected and findings during the data analysis process. I remained in the interviewer role and as an investigative partner with participants during data collection while using the semistructured interview protocol to avoid leading questions. Additionally, due to my role as an educational leader in the district, it was important to remain abstinent in responses to comments about the district.

Materials and Instrument

The study's open-ended question survey gathered insight into participants' experiences, opinions, and beliefs about public schools. Obtaining lengthy, in-depth descriptions of a shared experience was necessary for the exploration of the research questions. The open-ended question survey targeted all military-connected families with students in kindergarten through 12th grade and served as a baseline for the conceptual analysis of the study's research focus. Additionally, this study conducted a finite number of in-depth interviews that focused on military-connected parents with students in grades nine through 12. The conceptual framework guided the focus of the open-ended questions within the survey and the in-depth interview questions used as data collection instruments. Flick (2018) proposed that a grounded theory approach should systematically use different data sources to compare differences and commonalities within themes and categories. As a starting point, I administered the open-ended survey electronically to military-connected families to formulate the context and cross-reference the conceptual framework. In addition, semistructured, in-depth interviews served as a secondary source of data in the study.

Questions used in this study originated from an established Panorama Education Family–School Relationships Survey, offering a multidimensional set of questions developed by Gehlbach (2015) to capture parent attitudes around known areas of family-school categories. Permission to use the Family–School Relationships Survey as a resource for further study of family–school research was allowable by Panorama Education, given the proper citation to their resources in the study (Gehlbach, 2015). Additionally, basic demographic information was collected from participants to disaggregate results by a family’s time in service and the number of permanent changes of station experienced by a family during their service. The survey for the study was linked electronically, using the Microsoft Office Forms project and OneDrive. The transcriptions of all subsequent military-connected family interviews were analyzed using the NVivo 12 qualitative software.

Data Collection Procedures

The study’s purposeful sampling approach captured the diversity of the military backgrounds and the experiences representative of the military family community. With the assistance of the district’s Army school liaison officer, a flyer was created and sent electronically to military parents outlining the study’s objective, significance, and assurance of confidentiality. Along with disclosing the study’s purpose, military parents received an electronic invitation to participate in the open-ended survey. Data and parental responses for the open-ended survey were unanimous, using Microsoft Office 365 and OneDrive. From the initial military family survey, qualifying families could volunteer to participate in the in-depth interviews to provide more insight into the research problem.

If agreed to participate in the interviews, only basic contact information was collected and recorded from volunteers during the survey. The initial open-question survey helped

establish baseline context for the in-depth interviews and provided codes and themes for the necessary triangulation of data (Creswell, 2013). Appendix A lists the questions of the open-ended survey. Surveys have a documented data gathering limitation that impacts a grounded theory's dependence on multiple data sources for validation and interpretation (Creswell, 2013). In this study, multimethod data sources included an initial open-ended survey, in addition to 12 in-depth interviews within a semistructured format. Denicolo et al. (2016) suggested exploring, elaborating, and developing a social construct through simple conversation. This study's conversational approach shared the study's ownership equally between the participants and me, a distinctive feature of qualitative methodology (Denicolo et al., 2016).

About 12 military-connected families with students in grades nine through 12 were screened for an in-depth interview invitation and received an additional participation consent form through email. After securing the signed consent, interviews were set up at convenient times for the participants and outside regular school hours. Video conferences through the Zoom software were set up with participants due to current health safety concerns and ease of use. Open-ended interview questions within a semistructured interview design then generated in-depth descriptions of the participants' experiences, perceptions, and beliefs needed to address the research questions. My choice of interview design originated from Beitin's (2012) argument that a conversational approach facilitates the flow of communication between the researcher and participant by removing the fear of the negative perception from responses from a group setting. A list of questions that guided the in-depth interviews is in Appendix B.

As part of a qualitative methodology, Creswell and Poth (2016) recommended the initial exploration of a research problem, with focused questions intended to understand individuals' experiences but then returning to the participants, or member checking, as necessary to gather

more details during the coding phases. Military parents participating in interviews were asked for permission for the potential of an interview follow-up as part of member checking. Member checking was an option for me that validated emerging findings from the constant comparative data analysis process (Creswell, 2013). Member checking also occurred through electronic communication. In the data analysis for common categories and themes, I persisted in gathering information through in-depth interviews to the point where the new data collected achieved thematic saturation by no longer contributing new categories to the emerging theory. Qualitative research methodology was contingent on the persistent collection of new data. However, the population sample needs to be cohesive to achieve saturation quickly. This study initially aimed for 20 interviews, of which 12 were deemed necessary.

The multimethod approach to data collection through an initial open-ended survey and subsequent interviews mitigated the challenges of achieving adequate saturation while enabling data triangulation to increase result credibility and insight (Given, 2008). Flick (2007) argued that triangulation prevents researchers from relying on preliminary assumptions and forces researchers to consider alternate explanations through comparative data assessment. Triangulation of data can provide an adequate study of the research problem from different perspectives and backgrounds to identify trends and commonalities within the military context of this study (Flick, 2007).

I was confident that the selected questions for the two selected multimethod sources of data would capture the parents' attitudes and perceptions toward school and address critical elements of the conceptual framework. I acknowledged that experience as a military-connected child brought subjectivity to the proposed investigation (Locke et al., 2004; Mills & Birks, 2014). The presence of researcher subjectivity demanded consistency in the lines of inquiry and

a semistructured design with each interview session. All interview data were digitally recorded and transcribed precisely to ensure the precision of the subsequent analysis. For security, I stored all data on a password-protected computer.

Data Analysis Procedures

The grounded theory approach describes phenomena by drawing together theoretical categories that potentially explain the research problem (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Flick (2018) described the process of qualitative analysis of the grounded theory approach as a spiral of cycles involving data collection, coding, analysis, writing, design, theoretical development, and returning to the data collection. After transcription of the first interview, data analysis began for category building through initial coding and constant comparison strategies (Kelle, 2007). Further analysis of interview data underwent open coding, axial coding, and selective coding, concluding the analysis once thematic saturation was achieved (Bryant & Charmaz, 2019). Holton (2007) proposed that the coding process in the grounded theory approach takes descriptive data through to an abstract conceptual explanation for the research problem under study.

The NVivo 12 qualitative software assisted in interpreting and coding all interview data based on the program's efficiency in uncovering patterns and categories from data. Following the grounded theory approach, early coding revolved around a line-by-line, open coding to discover emergent categories about military-connected parents' experiences and expectations of public schools (Belgrave & Seide, 2019). Transcripts were read in a group context to mitigate researcher bias and confirm thematic validity (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017). Conceptual memoing further assisted with transcription and identification of in-depth meaning noted directly from participants' narratives (Denicolo et al., 2016). Table 1 outlines the study's research focus

with preestablished conceptual categories from the literature on school-level measures that affect family–school relationships and organizational reputation construct.

Table 1

Research Focus & Conceptual Categories

Research Focus	Conceptual categories	Interview probing question
1. Military-connected families' needs and experiences with schools.	Perception of School Image	How have schools supported your family during relocations and deployments? What have schools done well in supporting your child's behavioral, emotional, and academic needs?
2. Military-connected families' involvement and interactions with schools.	Communication & Engagement Practices	How have schools communicated with you? How else did you get information about schools? How have schools encouraged a positive climate for your family?
3. Military-connected families' expectations of roles and responsibilities of schools.	Perception of Roles & Responsibilities	What have your child's schools done to ensure that your child is successful in school? What did you have to do? How did the actions of the school align with your expectations?

Additional focused coding and concept memoing were built on the analytic process by accumulating notes and comments that linked specific text to the research questions (Silver & Lewins, 2014). Through constant comparison, thematic categories and emerging concepts were drawn from the participant experiences and the growing collection of multiple narratives of the participants. Axial coding brought fractured data together through specific dimensions within categories, relating categories to subcategories (Belgrave & Seide, 2019). Denicolo et al. (2016)

posed axial coding as a process for interpretation of data by linking concepts across interviews and into conceptual groups to establish a coding paradigm. Theoretical and conceptual coding further advanced the development of the theoretical concept by progressing core categories obtained from the initial analysis into conceptual categories (Belgrave & Seide, 2019).

Additionally, data underwent triangulation through category comparison from the military family survey responses to analyze the validity of the identified themes to the conceptual framework and provided context for transferability evaluation (Leavy, 2017). The survey captured baseline measures of military-connected parents' attitudes and perceptions toward school based on the conceptual framework categories of (a) family engagement, (b) family support, (c) school climate, and (d) educational roles and responsibility. The purpose of data triangulation was to extend the research by using multiple data collection sources for comparative analysis that made the study more credible and fruitful (Flick, 2018).

I maintained a reflexive position throughout the analysis process, remaining open to new conceptual categories and using conceptual memos as a crucial part of developing an overarching theoretical framework (Denicolo et al., 2016).

Ethical Considerations

Research procedures implemented strict ethical standards by enforcing effective communication and informed consent, participation and data confidentiality, and securing data during storage. Pseudonyms were used to ensure participation anonymity and for the reference of interview participants. The entire research process adhered to a strict policy of confidentiality. In social research, the potential harm to military-connected families had been difficult to identify, as it required an understanding of the possible psychological impact of recounting challenging experiences (Byrne, 2016). I prioritized the military-connected family's well-being through

carefully drafting informed consent before participating in the study. All participants received full disclosure and information about the study's nature and intended use of the data collected. An emphasis of the communication to participants was the anonymous nature of the research and assurance that no identification of participants occurred through the responses provided (Byrne, 2016). Basic demographic information for service time, the number of permanent changes of stations experienced by the family, and qualifying characteristics were the only information collected to analyze potential variable patterns. Recorded data did not collect any information that could identify any of the participants. Pseudonyms were used in place of real names through the transcription and data analysis process. The study's ethics and participants' physical and emotional well-being were a priority in this study's research methodology. The research design and methodology aligned with the study's target for minimal risk of physical or psychological harm to all participants. As such, I submitted for an exempt review and approval by Abilene Christian University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) before initiating research activities (see Appendix C).

Chapter Summary

This chapter described the proposed methodology and research design presented in the exploration of the research focus and stated problem. The study's purpose was to explore the experiences of military-connected families to understand a parent's priorities in the perceived value of the reputation and legitimacy of schools. A qualitative methodology was applicable in this case because of the subjective nature of the research focus on military-connected families' experiences. The decision to focus on a grounded theory approach for this study revolved around exploring individuals' opinions, beliefs, and lived experiences. This chapter identified the target

population for the study and suggested a purposeful sampling strategy to identify and recruit participants for the research.

Additionally, the data source and subsequent analysis methodology were detailed, with reasoning provided for the need for multimethod data sources in the form of an initial open-ended survey and the target number of semistructured, in-depth interviews. A careful selection of open-ended questions guided the data collection to capture participants' experiences of a shared phenomenon. A constructivist framework to the study provides insight into the interaction among military parents and teachers, focusing on the context of military culture to understand the interpretation of educational value and involvement from their experience (Creswell, 2013). Chapter 4 will report on the approved study's collected data, describing its analysis and outcome.

Chapter 4: Study Results

This grounded theory study aimed to explore the experiences of military-connected families to understand a parent's perceived value and role in schools. The study focused on providing context and a foundation for understanding the perspective of military-connected families about the educational institutions that aim to support them during transition and relocations. A qualitative research methodology with a grounded theory approach was adopted to analyze the anecdotal descriptions of military-connected families' experiences and examine the construct of parent perception of the value and role of education within the military life context. The information presented in this chapter specifically focuses on addressing three guiding research questions:

RQ1: How do military-connected families develop a perception of school image?

RQ2: What are military-connected families' expectations of the communication and engagement with their student's school?

RQ3: What are military-connected parents' opinions and beliefs of public schools' responsibilities in meeting students' behavioral, emotional, and academic needs?

This chapter will begin with a narrative introduction to the characteristics and demographics of the military family participants. First, I provide context on military culture to understand elements that influence system relationships commonly associated with military family life. Subsequently, this chapter will include the data analysis strategies utilized that inform the results of this study. Data is presented in a narrative format, following the grounded theory analysis approach, highlighting key categories and emergent themes discovered through the study. Data was collected through an open-ended survey and semistructured interviews

targeting military families with students in grades nine through 12. Interviews were transcribed, coded, and categorized based on emergent themes.

Recruitment and Data Collection

The study originated in a sizeable military-connected region in Central Texas. However, military social networks and social media expanded the study's reach to include other military service branches and regions. Solicitation flyers were communicated to and posted by official army military administrators and social media websites through military spouses' social networks. Data for this study was gathered using an open-ended survey and in-depth interviews. Parental responses for the open-ended survey were kept anonymous, using a Microsoft Office 365 Form to collect the data while storing securely and remotely through Microsoft OneDrive.

A seven-question survey was used to develop a general framework for understanding military parents' opinions and beliefs on the role of education within the military culture context. Three basic demographic questions were asked in the survey to identify a connection to military service, total years of service experience, and the number of changes of station experienced by the family. Four open-ended questions prompted military families to share experiences, opinions, and beliefs about public school support, communication and engagement, and general perceptions of school culture. The study consisted of an online open-ended response survey and in-depth interview following a semistructured discussion prompt (see Appendices A and B).

Open-Ended Response Survey

The objective of the participant selection was to find a diverse group of military-connected participants with different experiences with school relocations during their military member time in service. Ninety-one military families responded to the general survey participation solicitation through official and social network communication forums. Participants

self-identified as active-duty military (52%) or previously active duty or retired (48%). Table 2 illustrates the participants' status reported on the Military-Connected Parental Survey.

Table 2

Military Parent Survey Participation Duty Status

Active-duty status	Number of participants	Participation rate %
Active-Duty	47	52
Previously Active or Retired	44	48

The military family survey captured a family's military service number of years of service. Survey participants represented a mean of 19 years of service. More than 80% of the survey respondents reported serving for at least 11 years in the service and over 25 years of association with the military culture. All survey responses were from military-connected families with at least 4.5 years of service. The frequency of reported years of service is presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Military Participants' Years of Service

Years of service	Number of participants
< 10	6
11–15	15
16–20	34
21–25	22
> 25	10

For this study, the number of permanent changes of stations (PCS) experienced by the family was recorded. The literature review highlighted that the average military child moved six to nine times or approximately three times more than their civilian counterparts (Esqueda et al., 2012). This study measured the experience of military families in relocating and transitioning students between different learning environments through a count of the number of PCS experienced during the families' years in service. Family participants in this study experienced at least two PCS, with a mean of seven PCS relocations for the sampled population and a range of more than 15 PCS for some during the service members' time in service. The frequency of the study's participant PCS experience is illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4

Military Participants' Number of PCS Experienced

Number of PCS	Number of participants
< 1	0
2 to 5	31
6 to 10	45
11 to 15	7
> 15	1

Semistructured, In-Depth Interviews

An initial pilot interview was conducted with one military-connected individual with expertise in the military culture. The practice interview allowed me to test the framing of the proposed interview questions, sharpen interview skills, and provide baseline terminology needed to enhance conversations with military families. The pilot interview facilitated the structuring of the interview questions that promoted rich narrative responses from the participants' perspectives while mitigating response bias or positive framing. All formally interviewed parents were asked

to provide insight on the experienced academic and social support offered by schools, the level of interaction and communication with the child's school, and their expectations for an effective military home-school relationship. Parents were encouraged to recount specific lived examples for their responses, allowing me to probe various situations and experiences. Each participant was asked to share both positive and negative experiences and was offered opportunities to elaborate on key concepts highlighting the school relocation experience.

Interview participants were solicited during the initial survey, where military parents with experiences with transitioning students in grades nine through 12 were asked for electronic mail contact information. A purposeful sampling of interviews of military-connected families with children in grades nine through 12 offered a greater detail of relevant and current experiences with family relocations and school transitions at various school levels. The survey identified 42 out of 91 survey participants (46%) as having a student in grades nine through 12.

Of the 42 survey participants who self-identified as having experience with at least one child in grades nine through 12 in public school, 24 volunteered to participate in the interview portion for this study, from which 12 interviews were conducted. Interviews were conducted with parents individually or as couples. Five of the 12 participants provided insight from an active or recently retired service member perspective, while the other seven participants were military spouses. The interview participants reflected the diverse experiences captured by the survey, as evident by the frequency of interview participants' PCS experience in Table 5.

Table 5*Interview Participants Permanent Changes of Station Experienced*

Number of PCS	Number of interview participants
< 1	0
2 to 5	4
6 to 10	7
11 to 15	1
> 15	0

The initial target number of interviews for this study was 20, but 12 were deemed sufficient for the study's purpose. Beitin (2012) expressed the difficulty for qualitative researchers, especially for grounded theory, to predetermine an accurate sample size before undertaking the study. This study found that theoretical saturation could be achieved with a smaller sample of interviews than previously anticipated due to the rich data available from the survey. Thomson (2011) described achieving theoretical saturation as the point where data, in this case after 12 interviews, became repetitive. Additionally, the focus of the study's research questions was narrowed after the first few interviews due to emergent themes in cross-comparison between the alternative data sources, which reduced the required number of interviews (Corbin & Strauss, 2014).

The focus of the semistructured interviews was to understand and capture the narrative experiences of military parents as they related to (RQ1) opinions on school image, (RQ2) values of communication and engagement practices with school, and (RQ3) the beliefs of the role of public schools within the military life context. I found that Research Questions 2 and 3 could be narrowed to a dual core categories perspective that emerged from the data. I refocused the interview questions on military parents' experiences interacting with school personnel and their

sources of information as part of school support. Similarly, the interview discussions focused on the military parents' beliefs about the role of public schools within a military culture based on the shared responsibility in educating and supporting military children. I prioritized opportunities to capture data in a nonevaluative format to understand a perspective of the experiences of military parents. All survey responses were anonymous, and pseudonyms were assigned to each interview participant in this study to protect all participants' identities.

Data Analysis

Survey responses were collected and verified against each question independently and against the emerging conceptual framework. Responses that were duplicated, ineligible, or erroneous were removed from the study data before initial analysis and validated as eligible for the study. Table 6 illustrates the eligible survey response rate to each open-ended question by participant military families after data scrubbing.

Table 6

Military Family Survey Participation Rates

Open-ended survey question	Eligible responses	Response rate %
Q1. "In what ways can public schools help support military children more effectively during relocation and deployments?"	83	91
Q2. "What recommendations would you make to public schools on how to improve communication and engagement with military-connected parents?"	79	87
Q3. "What are some essential things for public schools to do or know to ensure that all military-connected children are successful in the transitions to their schools?"	64	70
Q4. "What do you think schools could do to improve the social feel of a campus for transitioning military-connected students and their families?"	70	77

The study relied on systematic data collection, coding, analysis, theoretical development, and further data collection through interviews. Open coding consisted of line-by-line, in vivo coding of survey response data to produce baseline codes aligned to the grounded theory data analysis approach. Initial survey codes used participant language and facilitated the development of initial categories and the evolution of new ideas during selective coding. The NVivo 12 software allowed for work-count queries and open code grouping to identify commonalities and theoretical themes within the data. Mind-maps were created to illustrate themes, linking categories as relationships within the central themes became apparent.

Subsequent in-depth interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed using NVivo 12 transcription software to accurately capture the experiences, opinions, and beliefs in a verbatim narrative format. I read the interview transcriptions numerous times, utilizing memos and annotations to document initial impressions and reflections. Responses from interviews were also coded line-by-line, grouping emerging codes according to the baseline categories and compared regularly against the grounded theoretical framework.

Throughout the data analysis, a constant comparison was used to compare the categorization of emergent codes in the interviews to available survey codes and examine hidden assumptions in the study's research questions. Quotes and specific comments provided meaning and insight into common categories and established central themes in the study's analysis. Additionally, member checking became a part of the interview process after the fourth interview participant to cross-reference, refine, and validate emergent themes and theories from the transcript data and data collected on the survey. Member checking facilitated the refinement of the interview questions through specific intentionality to discuss the emergent themes. Member checking transformed my thinking to new possibilities for addressing the guiding research

questions. I stated and summarized emerging themes after each interview, after the fourth interview, validating the developing theoretical framework and building confidence for subsequent data collection through interviews. Interview participants were allowed to support or challenge the interpreted data by verifying the accuracy of their experiences and the generalization of model applicability.

Ultimately, the established thematic categories of this grounded theory study drew from the participant's direct experiences recorded throughout the study and compared frequently against alternative sources and member checking to validate the data and theoretical framework. This chapter details the identified codes and emergence of categories resulting from the connections made through interview discussions and constant comparison to the survey data.

Codes on School Processes and Support

A word frequency analysis was conducted using NVivo 12 on the available survey data to validate emerging codes and categories. Selective coding of the survey data produced four core categories about programs and processes offered at a school associated with the support for military students. The relationship between the four thematic categories of the study implied that school image could be influenced by the perception of the quality of the school's processes and support of the military culture. These four themes describe military families' perception of the quality and image of schools based on the (a) academic opportunities offered by schools, (b) schools' registration processes, (c) schools' acknowledgment of their military community, and (d) integration programs available for military-students within the school. The core themes evolved by finding connections between categories that addressed the study's focus on military families' perceptions of a school's image and processes and the family's definition of school support for the military community.

Academic Opportunities. Data revealed 19 open codes describing public schools' broad educational advantages and their value to military families. Open codes under this theme revealed a value for special education programs, Advanced Placement (AP) or honor courses, and other academic support schools had to offer. Of the interview participants asked about the available academic opportunities, all agreed on the role of academic opportunities schools offered to all families, not just military families, that varied based on the family's value for college or career readiness.

Interview participant Sierra described her opinion on the general academic opportunities offered by schools based on the family's high school graduation and postsecondary value.

But then now my oldest is a freshman, and so it's kind of like different. Like, first of all, academics kind of matter a little bit more because, you know, she at least is on a college track. And so, like, OK, we have to get her in classes that are going to get her where she wants to go and lead to success academically for her.

Interview participant Brynn, who homeschooled her children during her family's early school age transitions, accredited her decision to enroll her students in public school because of academic opportunities.

[In Germany] was when we actually stopped homeschooling, and the kids went into public education. They were taught in German all day long. So the teacher taught all of the lessons in German: math, history, everything. So it was an American curriculum, but it was taught in German. So the kids were learning German as their primary language there. The only thing that wasn't taught in German was English. And so the teachers were German or spoke German the entire day. [My student] did that for three years. He was in the German immersion program, and [my other student] did it for two. And so it was a

great opportunity. I think it provided them an educational experience that I couldn't at home, along with kind of shaping the way that they learn. I found that being bilingual, trilingual multilingual just fuses different neural pathways.

Another participant with eight experienced PCS expressed that because education varied from state to state, there was a significant reliance on schools to be subject matter experts on accelerated academic advancement and special programs. The sentiment was echoed by other descriptions of frustration of military families not being able to fully take advantage of academic opportunities due to missed deadlines or curriculum discrepancies.

Interview participant Madelyn shared her experience during one of her nine PCS, where the family relocated during the student's 10th-grade year. She expressed disappointment in missing the academic advantage that the school offered.

We moved into a high school where dual enrollment for college courses was offered starting junior year. The website stated senior year only and had not been updated with a change to policy. [The] current counselor did not tell us, and my son missed an entire year of potential dual enrollment [because] we just didn't know.

Haley, another interview participant, described the school's academic importance in her family's situation. Haley, whose one of 11 transitions placed her son academically ahead of the new middle school's curriculum, eventually withdrew her son from public school due to the lack of academic opportunities.

My son's situation, [he] had a great teacher, but he was academically way ahead of what was going on in that classroom, and that had been from a [state1] public school to [state2]. Great teacher, but she just had him read a book when he finished his work, which is fine. I understand she got 30 kids in the classroom, but [my son] was reading a

chapter book every two days. So I'm like, OK, this is not a good fit. That led to a super mismatch that a teacher couldn't deal with ... [my son] didn't study or listen because he had been hearing the same stuff since fifth grade.

Military-Family Registration Processes. Over 35 open codes were associated with the theme describing a school's registration process as a critical role during the relocation of military families. Selective coding of data described the challenges of military families in schools due to registration, enrollment, or varying graduation requirements across the United States. The various registration experiences during relocation narrowed the focus of the category under study in the interviews to the registration and enrollment processes pertaining specifically to military families' experiences.

Interview participant Sierra acknowledged the priority for military students' social well-being in school but pointed out that "high school increased [her] family's concern significantly on balancing social integration and academic conversations" due to the family's college plans. After that, all military families interviewed agreed about the difficulty with enrollment and registration processes of schools due to the nontransferability of credits and varying curriculum sequencing across states.

Interview participant Vicky, who experienced nine PCS during the family's time in service, emphasized the importance of effective registration processes to support military families. She described the recent challenges of registering two students at a new school.

This go-round, we were faced with people who never seemed to know the answer and just kept pushing our questions off to the next person. Also, our kids were expected to start high school with generic schedules that they could fix over the first two weeks. That was unacceptable. They had been through enough.

Similarly, a survey participant shared their family's experience attempting to register their student after relocating from a different state that utilized different terminology and curriculum expectations.

I reached out to approximately five different people in the district (secretary, counselor, admin, and the district and school registrars) about scheduling classes when we moved here this summer, and no one seemed to know the answer. The end result was my sophomore and senior being told they would get generic schedules, which were then altered.

All interview participants validated the challenges in enrollment from differing state curriculum requirements, forcing families and schools to spend extraordinary amounts of time referencing transcripts and comparing classes to identify equitable credit and curriculum requirements at each new school. Concerns with registration processes were commonly associated with the fear of losing out on academic opportunities or extracurricular classes by being misguided or instances where students mistakenly repeated classes. Five of the 12 interview participants correlated military families' academic registration struggles during registration to inadequate class placements, especially when enrolling students at secondary education levels.

Another survey participant with 10 PCS validated the value of the registration process for their student to mitigate the impact of the inability to preregister in advance. "So frustrating when you have a plan, but the counselor says sorry, that class is full."

Acknowledgment of Military Communities. In the data analysis, over 21 open codes were discovered affiliated with acknowledging the needs and complexity of the military culture. Many open codes were descriptive for public schools and educators' awareness and

acknowledgment of military culture. The thematic category defined an understanding of military culture through codes about feelings represented, appreciated, or connected to the school. One hundred percent of interview participants advocated for awareness of the complexities of military relocations and transitions. Accounts describing examples of recognizing the military culture in school resulted in consistent comparisons to DoDEA schools. Six of the 12 interviewed participants had experiences with enrollment in DoDEA schools. Interview participant Mason described the contrast between DoDEA schools and their civilian counterparts as a military institution taking care of its military community.

Everybody is military (at DoDEA), all the kids, most of the teachers are spouses or, you know, dependents. So everybody is a little more in-tune, and they already know the units that are deploying ... the teachers understand the units and what's going on in the military community. So they understand when you say Ethan's mom is deployed and the dynamic change that comes along with that.

All interview participants agreed that military communities were "more vested in making sure they informed each other, based on the understood military culture and shared experiences," per one participant's opinion.

Early in the interview process, Brynn, who had experienced eight PCS, described a noticeable difference in her family's relationship with some specific teachers. Brynn suggested that a military connection was evident with certain teachers due to the teacher's military background.

So there is a small group of people who work in education that are military family members. There are some of them you're going to run [into] like Mrs. Flowers or someone like that. They have a little bit more knowledge about how things operate, and

so I think I kind of have a different perspective on that. But it's hard for teachers to be able to recognize all those things and to know that somebody is a military child.

Utilizing member checking, participants unanimously agreed on the contrasting experience when dealing with military-connected educators instead of civilian educators. All interview participants described military-connected educators as having the knowledge and perspective necessary to identify social and academic areas of concern quickly.

When probed to reflect on the evidence that a school knew the military culture, all interview participants pointed out how they started at the front office to find evidence of the school's connection to the military. For example, interview participant Madelyn described her experience with acknowledging her family's military background in civilian schools as acknowledged at best but not truly understood.

We oftentimes have the "thank you" and "I know it's difficult," and "we will work with you," but with no action, those are empty words. Just knowing a parent's actual rank and position is important. Just as a person with a doctorate should be called Dr. Smith, a First Sergeant should be called First Sergeant Smith.

Alternatively, 12 open codes from the survey data revealed a military student's apprehension about school recognition. As one survey participant pointed out, "Military students are already going through a lot, so military appreciation for students can often feel overwhelming and make students uncomfortable." Seven of the 12 interview participants shared their student's social struggles with being recognized as military students at school during relocations. Interview participant Halley described her student's experience at a middle school after relocation.

[My student] just didn't want any attention. He just wanted to fit in. He just wanted to crawl under the table like, don't single me out, don't introduce me in front of a lunchroom. Like, I don't need everybody to know I'm the new kid.

Military-Student Integration Programs. The concept of focusing on military-student integration programs as a theme described the expressed importance for schools to offer social support to military students. Open codes from the survey responses were associated with a military family's value of integration programs through described experiences of students feeling alone, struggling to acclimate to a new school, or requiring social support. Categories under this theme were grouped into experiences with sponsorship services, counseling, or other social resources. Over 55 open codes identified the descriptors under the theme of military-student social support through school-based integration programs. The first interview question prompted discussions about the value of academic and social support that public schools offered military families. All 12 interview participants emphasized the importance of identifying and meeting military students' social and emotional needs during the integration stage in military relocations.

Interview participant Sierra explained that she had not always been so concerned academically because "academics can always be recovered," instead of the long-term impact of social-emotional setbacks. The emphasis on social support for military-connected students was cross-referenced and validated through 15 distinct references to descriptor terms of students as nervous, anxious, depressed, or afraid within the survey data.

A survey participant with six experienced PCS described a military student's relocation experience as a significant life event. "[Military kids] are frequently uprooted from everything known and forced to just jump in and figure it all out [themselves]."

Another survey participant who experienced nine PCS expanded on the importance of social integration support and counseling services at new schools by sharing their children's need for therapy throughout their public school experience due to the emotional toll of relocations.

The data's focus on social support for military students was discussed consistently throughout the interviews, as a survey participant described how their daughter "cried herself to sleep regularly during her eighth-grade year because she felt invisible." All the interview participants described their family's relocation as a significant emotional challenge for their students in their transitions and relocations, significantly affecting them emotionally.

Codes on School Communication and Parent Engagement

Initial coding of survey responses revealed the value of military families' communication and engagement with schools. Question two of the survey prompted responses about military family communication and engagement preferences, producing 79 valid survey responses. Despite this, the initial coding revealed a wide range of recommendations of strategies, preferences of communication, and communication tools that schools could use. For example, interview participant Tango shared her preference for engagement to involvement and in-person communication, which in their opinion, better meet the specific needs of military families. "Schools should open their campus to military parents. This can be done by organizing events and meets exclusively for military families. The military has a culture, so someone who understands the culture of the military should lead these meetings."

In contrast, other participants expressed a desire for a compilation of available resources targeted to communicate information specific to military families. For example, one participant suggested a welcome packet for military families.

Something as simple as a welcome packet with all of the basic info—things like bell schedules, lunch procedures, the basic operations of the school. We move so often, and schools are all so different, that having this information on hand to pass along to my children ahead of time.

After selective analysis, I found commonalities within the various communication preferences of study participants and grouped all communications based on engagement level and information source. An overview of the number of codes associated with the emergent categories discovered during selective coding is presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Survey Communication Codes Frequency

Communication approach	Instances	Frequency
School-Initiated Communications	25	32%
Military Family-Specific Information	41	52%
Mixed Communications Strategies	13	16%

NVivo 12 software facilitated a mind map of available codes that facilitated the description of these categories. Member checking focused on the commonality of characteristics in the communication approach of a school and its impact on military family transitions. Subsequent interviews focused on capturing military parents' experiences interacting with school personnel and the sources of information that informed military parents' perception of the quality and image of schools on the (a) academic opportunities offered by schools, (b) schools' registration processes, (c) schools' acknowledgment of its military community, and (d) integration programs available for military-students within the school. The emergent theme from

the connection found between categories described the idea that communication and engagement preferences could be grouped as active outreach or passive engagement categories. Codes used in describing the communication preferences and the commonality of engagement are illustrated in Table 8.

Table 8

Emerging Communication Categories

Category	Codes for communication & engagement
Passive Engagement Interactions	School Website Informational Packets Availability of School Staff Military Social Networks
Active Outreach Communication	Social Media Posts About School Events School Communications to Parents Family Workshops at School Military Representatives on Campus

Passive Engagement Interactions. Use of the school website, availability of informational packet, available military social networks, and flexible availability of school staff described forms of communication preferred as passively available to military families. The core theme for passive interaction preference was refined through interview discussions and analysis of experiences of military family engagement with schools for academic or social support for their students. Fifty-two percent of military parents preferred passive engagement communication with their schools.

Interview participant Charlie justified their preference for passive engagement based on flexibility, as described through her experience with school staff as an effective way of communication.

[Military families] need more time to discuss one-on-one or in a larger round table type group. Nothing that is publicized or on the news, just a place for some casual communication and understanding. I had issues with my SPED [special education] kiddos, and as soon as I was able to have a candid conversation, the issues were resolved, and as a parent, I had a whole new understanding.

Another survey participant with eight PCS provided further insight into the advantageous characteristics of passive engagement communications for military families, describing that military culture makes it difficult for parents to attend conventional meetings. “Often, if there are two parents, it is difficult for the service member to attend things like school conferences. Offering a virtual option has been helpful.”

One survey participant with four PCS experiences shared the specific information most relevant to military families during relocation, noting the need to consider the difficulties for military families to obtain this information if relocating after the year has begun.

[We need] school calendar, email [or] phone numbers to administrators, and counselors, and bus personnel, instructions on choosing classes, joining activities, pickup [and] drop off procedures, how parents can track grades. These things are usually given to students at the beginning of the school year, but when a [military] student arrives in the middle of the year, the parents are often left to hunt down all this info, and depending on their other responsibilities, they may not have the time to find it all out.

When asked about sources for information about a new school, every interview participant described their experience with military family sponsorships. A military sponsor is generally assigned from their gaining unit during a military family’s PCS. These military sponsorships included but were not limited to military family counselors, military family-school

liaisons, and other military family programs that bridged the communication between home and school.

Interview participant Mason shared his experience of his latest relocation, which included a sponsor's support to guide the military family through the rigorous relocation process.

When I came here five years ago, in 2016, I had a sponsor contact me even before I got here. [To] tell me about the area where should you live, what were the good schools, the bad schools. They're doing all these things to make sure I'm comfortable. My family is comfortable before they asked me to do a mission.

Interview participant Juliet detailed his experience as a sponsor himself, describing the form of communication to the needs and the level of engagement preferred by the family. In Juliet's opinion, sponsorship also benefits from the flexibility of accessibility and legitimacy of sources for information.

The sponsors have to be somebody who's a good sponsor that could pass information on. Sponsors that I dealt with, they had a good, easy transition. I helped them with things like finding a good location to live at, what school districts would be the best to go with, contact information for that school.

Consistently, all interview participants shared the impact of a military-related sponsor or liaison with expertise in effective transitions and integrations into a new community. One survey participant validated the role of military liaisons through their most memorable experience after one of their four PCS. "The easiest academic transition, we had [a sponsor] who understood the needs of military families and could petition the schools on our behalf. They were also a great resource to understanding the nuances of each school's requirements."

Active Outreach Communication. Family workshops, social media announcements, and military family representation in campus advocacy groups described active forms of communication during discussions. More than 32% of the study participants preferred an active outreach communication effort from schools or the invitation for involvement with the school. Military family involvement was categorized as active because of their dependence on the invitation from the school. Forms of involvement described virtual meeting options available during the COVID-19 pandemic. Three of the interview participants described their role and participation within a parent–teacher association, which was categorized as an active outreach based on the outgoing efforts by the school to involve parents, facilitating military parents to advocate and be better informed about school processes. However, most interviewees acknowledged a difficulty for service members, especially from single-parent households, to attend events during the school day. Fifty percent of interviewees reported having a nonservice member parent as a stay-at-home parent to focus on school involvement.

Interview participant Juliet provided deep insight into the number of military resources available to military families during relocation, noting the difficulty in correctly identifying the proper support needed.

There are so many programs that the military currently has available to service members. But not all service members are aware of these services. As an example, there's a group called ACS that is the Army Community Services, that is a main hub in the Army that service members and their families can go to ... Being aware of some of the programs out there for the military, that helps the spouse or the parent deal with relocation issues.

Member checking on subsequent interviews validated Juliet's opinion by acknowledging an inconsistency of the program's role and effectiveness in supporting military families during

transitions. When probed for attributing factors for the inconsistency, respondents commonly agreed on the dependence of these programs on similar, highly transient military-connected individuals, which may lead to inconsistent effectiveness in educating school personnel about military culture.

Interview participant Alexander, a retired service member, focused on discussing parental involvement as a critical element of the family's active communication with schools. He described the value of his family being involved at his kids' schools and the resulting perception of communication with his school.

My wife and I wanted to be involved as much as we could throughout the years, and our son is now a senior. We want to know everything that is going on at school. So when it came down to being involved, that's one of the things we always prioritized, getting involved with our kids as a military family, because we may be here for a few years ... when the parents are involved with the teachers and administrators, it makes for easier communication and easier transitions for us.

Interview participant Mason shared his experience in his involvement as an active-duty service member at local schools:

We have [military] units that sponsor a school ... that (service members) may go to and read to the kids of elementary age. That's how we [are] showing our military connection to the community in that event. They may have watchdog dads. As watchdog dads, we go and watch the kids safely cross the street. Like that, we make connections and say, hey, we care.

The School for Social or Academic Support

Over 162 codes from the total of 307 valid survey responses were associated with the military family's opinions or beliefs about the role of public schools within the military life culture. Questions one and three of the military family survey aimed to define the support and success of military students during the transition, as described by military families, which resulted in the emergent categories of schools as social or academic institutions of support. Table 9 counts the discovered instances associated with a value for schools based on military families' responses.

Table 9

School Role Categories

Category	Instances	%
Assist students in fitting in the community	108	67
Providing students with a unique educational experience	54	33

Comparison across early interview data confirmed a commonality of responses oriented toward a school's role to *assist students in fitting in the community* and *providing students with a unique educational experience*. Following interview questions sought out deeper insight into the beliefs of military families about the value of schools for military families within the emergent categories. Thematic categories described schools as either a *source of social support* or *institutions of an academic advantage for military families*.

Patterns of commonalities about schools' perceived role within military life evolved through the selective analysis of the core categories and cross-referenced with codes relevant to perceived school support and preferred communication approaches.

Interview participant Halley shared her experience withdrawing her student from public school after two and a half months due to unmet expectations by the school in providing a socially beneficial environment. As the military parent described it in the conversation,

My child didn't have a friend in the classroom, and there wasn't anybody else looking out for her. It wasn't like she had kids to eat with at lunch. I mean, she's adrift ... wasn't even acknowledged that she was a military kid.

Additionally, 49 open codes referenced descriptions for military-oriented programs within schools to support military families. All interview participants prioritized building community during the transition and utilizing military resources such as military family counselors, school liaisons, and military sponsors. All military families interviewed acknowledged their experience with at least one military-oriented program. The most popular of these programs were the Military and Family Life Counseling (MFLC) and Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC).

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a clear and logical description of the study results, transforming open codes into new theoretical possibilities through the analysis of the grounded theory methodology. Ninety-two military families participated in a solicitation to provide insight, feedback, and their experiences about the support, communication, and value of schools during the challenges of military family relocations. Categories were member checked and explored in-depth through 12 interviews with military families. Interviews were semistructured and focused on capturing data about specific experiences of military families during transitions in schools. A strategy of constant comparison analysis was used throughout the study process, relying on the NVivo 12 software for evaluating commonalities and relationships between categories to define

six themes. The four resulting themes describe (a) a school's effectiveness in communicating its academic opportunities influences military families' perception of academic value from a school; (b) a school's expertise in registration and enrollment processes influences military families' perception of the competency of a school; (c) a school's acknowledgment of the military community influences military families' perception of the social support from a school; and (d) a school's offerings of social integration programs for students influences military families' perception of a school to satisfy their needs. The result of the study is a grounded theoretical model that describes the relationships across the theme from all three guiding research questions. Chapter 5 will elaborate on the theoretical implications of the presented framework and the study's connection to the existing literature.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Literature on the parent–teacher relationship identifies a perceptual gap between the school’s role in what it concretely accomplishes and beliefs about how it should support students’ behavioral, emotional, and academic needs (Bang, 2018; Culler et al., 2019; D’Agati, 2015; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Research suggested an exploration of home–school goals and a further study of parents’ priorities and perceived value of the role of education (Palts & Harro-Loit, 2015). This qualitative grounded theory study explored the experiences of military-connected families to understand the perceived value and role of schools within the military culture. As a result, this study provides context and a foundation for understanding the perspective of military-connected families about the educational institutions that aim to support them. This chapter summarizes the arguments and conclusions from the study.

This study followed Skallerud’s (2011) parent-based reputation linked parents’ perception of school image through the assessment of a school on four pretested reputation dimensions: (a) parent orientation, (b) learning quality, (c) safe school environment, and (d) good teachers. This study found elements that fell within the descriptions of three of the four reputation dimensions. The first reputation dimension of parent orientation framed parents’ experiences with a school staff’s ability to satisfy their needs. Secondly, the learning quality reputation dimension was also evident in the parents’ opinions on the quality of a school’s academic programs and support services. Thirdly, the good teachers’ reputation dimension was observed through military parents’ beliefs about a school’s academic expectations and the staff’s competency.

Theoretical Model of Military Families' Perception of School Image

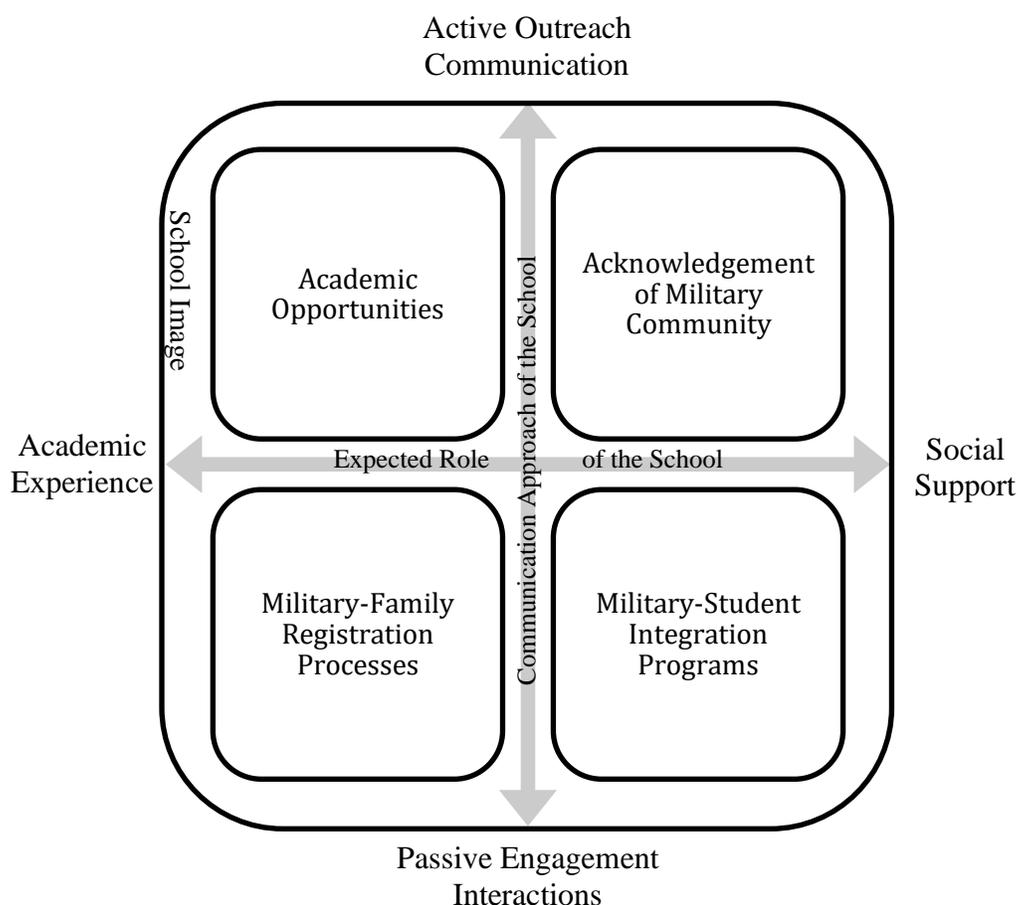
This study relied on a qualitative research and in-depth data analysis approach, guided by three research questions:

RQ1: How do military-connected families develop a perception of school image?

RQ2: What are military-connected families' expectations of the communication and engagement with their student's school?

RQ3: What are military-connected parents' opinions and beliefs of public schools' responsibilities in meeting students' behavioral, emotional, and academic needs?

Data analysis uncovered four military-family themes from the theoretical relationship between the central core categories of school image, communication, and the role of schools. The resulting themes were (a) a school's effectiveness in communicating its academic opportunities influences military families' perception of academic value from a school; (b) a school's expertise in registration and enrollment processes influences military families' perception of the competency of a school; (c) a school's acknowledgment of the military community influences military families' perception of the social support from a school; and (d) a school's offerings of social integration programs for students influences military families' perception of a school to satisfy their needs. The grounded military families' perception of school image model theory is illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure 4*Theoretical Model of Military Families' Perception of School Image*

Following Skallerud's (2011) parent-based school reputation model, this study formulates the concept that military parents' perception of school image, legitimacy, and reputation can be influenced through (a) schools' ability to satisfy their needs, (b) programs and support quality, and (c) the staff's competency. Military-connected families' insight on the role of communication on parent engagement with schools during relocation uncovered a different perspective on describing involvement. The model of theory suggests a relationship between the engagement of military families with school and communication of a school's understanding of military culture and needs during relocation. Aligned with the marketing-based image approach Brown et al. (2006) proposed, a school's communicated understanding, representation, and

connection to military culture can influence a military parent's perception of a school's quality in supporting the military community.

Thematic categories also found a connection in the characterization of the role of schools in the military life culture that resulted in the expressions of schools as both a source of social support and institutions for the academic advantage of military students. When compared against the conceptual framework, the study links the intended role of schools based on the value assigned by military families and how they are perceived to support military students' emotional and academic needs.

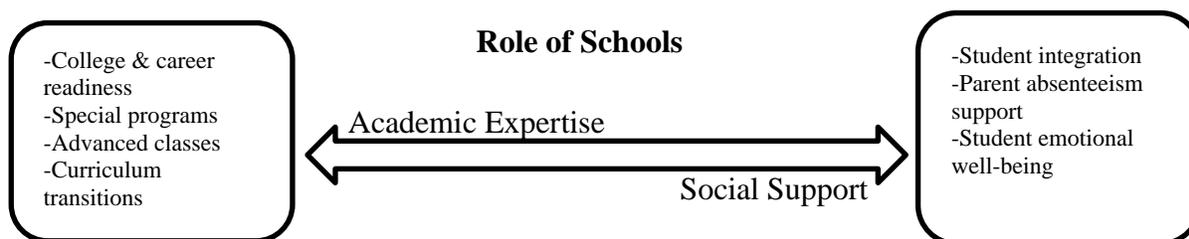
Parent Orientation Reputation Dimension

Skallerud (2011) described the school reputation dimension of parental orientation based on a school's ability to satisfy the needs of its parents. This study revealed military families' reliance on what could be described as "blind trust" of schools to support new students during military culture's challenging and emotionally delicate circumstances. Epstein (2018) argued that dialogue and effective parent-teacher relationships depend on the successful alignment of mutual goals considering parents' priorities, perceived values, and needs in the education of their students. This study found an expectation of military families about the role of schools as institutions of academic expertise in mitigating curriculum challenges and offering social integration support into a community. Many military families revealed a priority for support efforts from schools for their student's social integration into the new school environment and the community. Interview discussions within the focus on the academic role of schools also revealed a high investment by military families to mitigate curriculum gaps and identify missed essential skills at new schools during transitions. The increased complexity, especially in high school, of nontransferability of credits and curriculum sequencing across states, uncovered the

reality for military families of the struggle experienced during the registration process and its significant impact on students academically. Data supports the characterization of schools as both a source of social support and institutions for the academic advantage in the school's role in satisfying military families' needs, as presented in Figure 5.

Figure 5

Schools' Parent Orientation Reputation Dimension



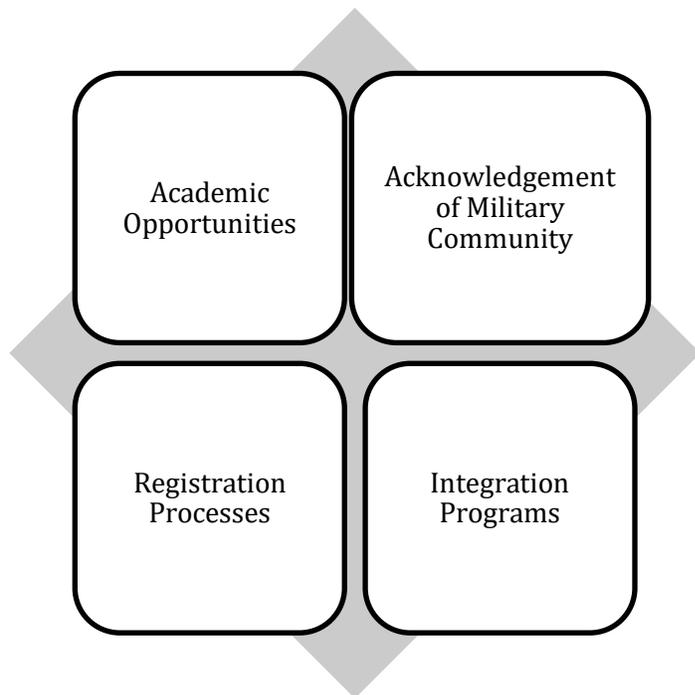
Learning Quality Reputation Dimension

Within the reputation dimension of a school's product and service quality, this study revealed the experiences of schools' efforts in supporting military families during relocations and deployments (Skallerud, 2011). Military families were very consistent in expressing the value of the social support and academic advantage offered by public schools within the military culture. Registration challenges, in particular, emerged as a common descriptor for the effort, usually family-dependent, in attempting to quickly learn new curriculum terminology, requirements, or standards at each new relocation. The study also revealed military families' dependence on schools in how unique academic opportunities and programs of the receiving campus were communicated to military families. Military families' priorities in the evaluation of a public school's product and learning services center around the (a) academic opportunities offered by schools, (b) schools' registration processes, (c) schools' acknowledgment of its military

community, and (d) integration programs available for military-students within the school, as illustrated in Figure 6.

Figure 6

Schools' Products and Services Quality Reputation Dimension



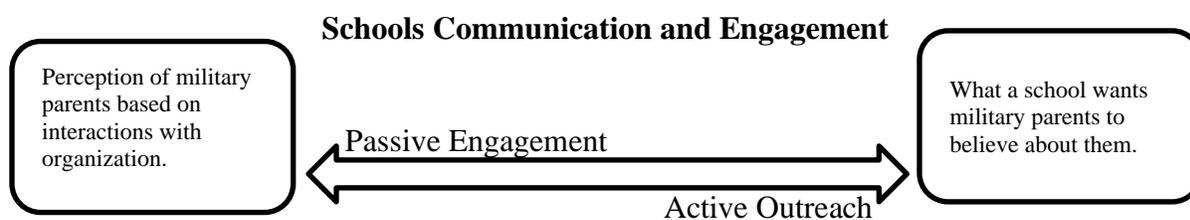
Good Teachers' Reputation Dimension

This study found elements from Skallerud's (2011) reputation dimension of good teachers based on parents' perception of the academic expectations and the staff competency of a school. Kotler and Keller (2014) emphasized the role of communication on the impression of an object's image on a person, directly affecting people's attitudes and actions toward that object. Dowling (1986) defined *image* as a complex sense-making construct of a fabricated and projected impression of a group's feelings and beliefs about an organization. Data reflects schools' challenges in offering adequate academic support to military families associated with the time needed to adequately address the complexity and diversity of military student

transcripts, a general lack of knowledge, or a standard terminology across states. This study also found the role of communication in a school's ability to display understanding, connection, and expertise of the challenges of military culture. Exploring the military culture highlighted a need for military families to feel represented, understood, and connected to their new schools during relocations. A school's understanding of military culture appeared significant in parental perceptions of effective interactions between parents and the schools, which supports the cultural knowledge gap within public schools as an explanation for the parental perception contrast between the image of public schools and DoDEA schools. The unexpected finding revealed a new perspective on a school's communicated knowledge and expertise in supporting military families' challenges in perceiving a school's legitimacy. The study's final characterization of military families' expectations of communication and engagement with schools is illustrated in Figure 7.

Figure 7

Communication of Academic Expectations & Staff Competency Reputation Dimension



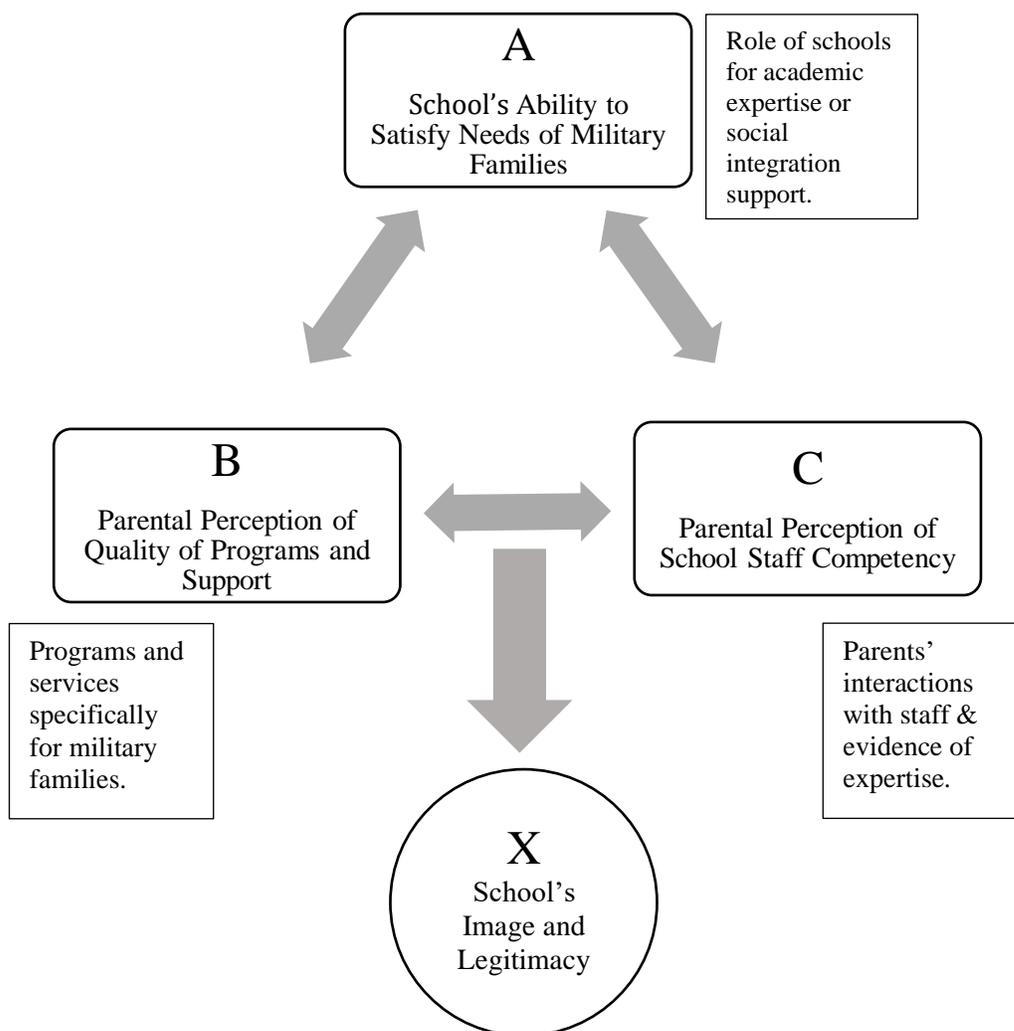
Theoretical Implications

Based on this research, this study framed the theoretical model of military families' perception of school image as a tool to manage resources and communication for the support of military families' during school transitions. The theoretical framework for this study described how military families construct a perception of school support based on (A) a school's ability to

satisfy their needs during the transition, (B) the perceived quality of programs and services for military families, and (C) a parent’s perception of a school’s academic expectations and staff competency, that results in (X) the influence of a military family’s perception of the school image and legitimacy. This study’s theoretical model focused on the correlation between a family’s perception of available resources at the time of transition and its influence on military families’ perception of the event, as illustrated in Figure 8.

Figure 8

Application of Theoretical Model of Military Families’ Perception of School Image



A school can use the theoretical model of military families to evaluate the school's practices on families' perception of support and to focus communication efforts on programs and processes that inform and improve the school image. The application of this study's theoretical model framework can assist in influencing the perceived value of public schools through the intentional effort to display superior insight, expertise, and achievements within the military culture. The self-promotion and communication approach proposed by this study's theoretical framework can be a powerful tool in developing social expert power that results in mutually beneficial relationships between military families and their schools (Raven, 2008). This study found that cultural awareness is a critical component related to military families' perception of support during a transition. The findings of this exploration are meant to initiate discussion into schools' practices that influence a parent's opinion of a school's image, leading to school actions that improve the overall experience for military families through the marketing management process. A sample framework for applying the military family support theoretical model as recommended by this study is summarized in Table 10.

Table 10*Military Family Support Theoretical Model Framework*

Academic expertise		Social support	
Academic opportunities	Military-family registration processes	Acknowledgment of military community	Military-student integration support
Communication efforts focused on available academic advantages for military families, including frequent progress monitoring to ensure military students are placed at the adequate academic level, timely and accurately.	Academic subject matter expertise in enrollment with varying curriculum terminology, sequences, and class placement scenarios.	Evidence in school communications of knowledge, understanding, and value of the military culture.	Offering of services and programs targeting the social integration of military-students to the new campus and community.
Sample Questions	Sample Questions	Sample Questions	Sample Questions
Is the school staff scheduling conferences with military parents frequently to assess academic placement or the impact of deployments?	Are there military-family workshops at the school to address curriculum questions and concerns for transitioning families? Methods?	Are there military advocates involved in the school improvement planning?	Does the school have a military-connected student sponsorship program or other forms of school programs that support social integration?
How is the school promoting its academic advantages for military students?	Is clear, timely, and applicable information available to transitioning military families using diverse methods of delivery?	Does the school actively recruit for military representations and partnerships for representation in campus-level advisory committees?	What is the level of advertisement made for these programs?

Raven (2008) argued for self-promotion as a powerful strategy that sets the stage for developing a school's expert power by demonstrating superior knowledge, expertise, and achievement in their professional practice. With the emergence of social media as an impactful

tool in communicating information to individuals and connected groups, schools now have a social network forum to influence school image through an intentional effort to communicate what they want the public to believe about them. I argue that by focusing on the management of public image, reputation, and legitimacy of schools as perceived by military families, trust between schools, teachers, and military parents can create an internal identity that further reinforces the overall evaluation of all stakeholders.

Limitations

The study focused on exploring parents' perceptions about the image of schools based on the expectations for communication, involvement, and the role of the institutions. A significant limitation is the complexity of human life, namely the struggle for achieving the necessary range and depth of insight (Kim, 2015). The research responses described a complex and challenging military culture of frequent transitions and changes for all family members. The limitations of this study included restriction in the analysis of the data to basic commonalities evident among the participants relating to topics that they prioritized and applicable to their situations. Additionally, the study was not designed to identify the perceptual gap between parents and school staff to determine the differences in perception between these two stakeholders in supporting military families.

Suggestions for Future Research

More research is needed about military culture and the impact of transitions on military families. Validating the results of this research should be done through more focused studies that orient the theoretical model to real-world application. Specifically, it would be sensible to explore the theoretical model from a quantitative lens and gather a more significant data sample from transitioning military families to measure satisfaction with a school's reputation and image.

This research could include using Gehlbach's (2015) Family–School Relationships Survey Likert scale to capture a statistical image of military families' evaluation of the academic and social support provided to military children and the overall learning climate of schools. It would also be beneficial to capture detailed demographics of military families, include the number of school-age students of each military family, and analyze for differences and commonalities within alternative groupings.

Another recommendation for future research would be for a mixed-method study to explore the difference between the construed image of what a school believes military families think of them against the intended image of a school's efforts for what they want their military families to believe about them. The qualitative portion of this suggested study should include interviews with school staff and administration to gather insight into ideologies and perceptions used to manage school resources in support of military families during transition and integration.

A third suggested area of future research is to conduct a quantitative exploration into the role of school administrators in managing school communication about the academic advantage of public school programs and services for military families. This study should emphasize measuring the evaluation and perceptions by both internal and external stakeholders in defining what college and career readiness of military students compared to their civilian peers is. This research could include a longitudinal study to measure variations between military and civilian students during and after high school.

Finally, the impact of the military culture on military families with children with disabilities was subtle but meaningful in this study. There was a profound articulation of the added complexities and challenges in the relocation of military-connected students who were faced with social and academic transitional difficulties. Further study into the special education

system and military families' experiences with navigating disability services during relocations is warranted through a qualitative case study approach. Of particular interest were federal policies attempting to mitigate the access and challenges of transitioning special education students that seem to demand extensive knowledge and expertise to implement effectively.

Chapter Summary

There are an estimated 1.2 million school-age children and adolescents of U.S. active-duty military members, with over 650,000 currently enrolled in the United States and 250 military-connected civilian K–12 public schools (DoDEA, 2020). Esqueda et al. (2012) estimated that the average military family moves six to nine times or approximately every 2.9 years throughout their school-age years, three times more than their civilian counterparts. This study promotes an increased cultural awareness for school administrators and staff who deal with military families about the challenges and experiences of transitioning military families.

Military families were ideal for studying the broad implications of family life context on the role of public schools in support of highly transient groups. The limited understanding of the complex cultural challenges of military-connected families created an exceptional opportunity to explore the military culture and the perceptual gap between military-connected schools that impede the development of positive military home–school relationships. This grounded theory study focused on the association between a school's perceived image and reputation as a barrier to the school–home relationship involving military families. The military family culture was found to have unique challenges and needs for public schools in supporting military students' emotional and academic needs during their frequent relocation and transitions.

The study's theoretical model of military families' perception of school image proposes an alternative look into public school strategies for its support of military families during

relocation and transitions. The theoretical application allows for a systematic evaluation that identifies areas of weakness, strengths, and concerns from a shared responsibility perspective from stakeholders with a common goal of supporting transitioning military families and their students. The grounded theoretical model allows for understanding factors valued by military families that influence the perceived quality of services and programs offered for support during relocations. The model can assist educational leaders in influencing the perceived value of public schools through the intentional effort to display superior insight, expertise, and achievements within the military culture. The self-promotion and communication approach proposed by this study's theoretical framework can be a powerful tool in developing school image and subsequently mutually beneficial relationships between military families and their schools.

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Appendix A: Initial Military Family Survey

Interviewee Information

Are you a military-connected family?

How many years have you and your family been in the military?

How many permanent changes of stations have you and your family experienced during your service in the military?

Do you currently have a student in grades nine through 12?

Open-Ended Questions

1. In what ways can public schools help support military children more effectively during relocation and deployments?
2. What recommendations would you make to public schools on how to improve communication and engagement with military-connected parents?
3. What are some essential things for a school to do or know to ensure that all military-connected children are successful in the transition to their schools?
4. What do you think schools could do to improve the social feel of the campus for transitioning military-connected students and their families?

We would love to hear more in detail about your family's experience during school relocations! If you would be interested, we would like to offer an opportunity to be considered for an in-person interview to provide enhanced feedback on your experiences on this topic. If selected to participate in this portion of the research, you will be asked to:

- Complete a one-hour interview with me through video conference software. We will choose a time convenient for you.

If interested, please provide your name and email for the best contact.

Appendix B: Interview Instrument

Interviewee Information

Are you a military-connected family?

How many years have you and your family been in the military?

How many permanent changes of stations have you and your family experienced during your service in the military?

Do you currently have a student in grades nine through 12?

Interview Questions and Probes for Military-Connected Families

School Image

How much academic and social support do public schools offer military families?

Probe Questions:

- How have schools supported your family during relocations and deployments?
- What have schools done well in supporting your child's behavioral, emotional, and academic needs?

Communication and Engagement

To what degree are military families involved with and interact with their child's school?

Probe Questions:

- How have schools communicated with you?
- How else did you get information about schools?
- How have schools encouraged a positive climate for you?

School Role and Responsibilities

In your opinion, who should be primarily responsible for school success?

Probe Question:

- What have your child's schools done to ensure that your military-connected child is successful in school?
- What did you have to do?
- How did the actions of the school align with your expectations?

Appendix C: IRB Approval Letter

ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

Educating Students for Christian Service and Leadership Throughout the World

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
320 Hardin Administration Building, ACU Box 29103, Abilene, Texas 79699-9103
325-674-2885



Dear Jorge,

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I am pleased to inform you that your project titled

(IRB# 21-199)is exempt from review under Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects.

If at any time the details of this project change, please resubmit to the IRB so the committee can determine whether or not the exempt status is still applicable.

I wish you well with your work.

Sincerely,

Megan Roth

Megan Roth, Ph.D.
Director of Research and Sponsored Programs