INVESTIGATING MILITARY PARENTS

PERSPECTIVES ON PARENTAL

INVOLVEMENT IN THE LIVES

OF STUDENTS: IF THE MILITARY

WANTED YOU TO HAVE A FAMILY,

THEY WOULD HAVE ISSUED YOU ONE

By

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Title of Study: INVESTIGATING MILITARY PARENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON
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Major Field: TEACHING, LEARNING, AND LEADERSHIP

Abstract: This research study explored the views of Air Force parents with school-aged children ranging from preschool to high school. Six primary caregivers, consisting of military members and military spouses, shared their beliefs and experiences in one focus group interview and two individual interviews. It was found that parents construct their beliefs based on their past experiences as children, their social network's values, and their life as moving military families. All parents participated in school activities whenever possible but held stronger values in supporting their children's academic needs at home.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, I explored parental involvement among military families; this research

focused primarily on Air Force families in order to broaden the current view on parent

participation. A wealth of research has been conducted in the area of parent participation,

indicating a need for better understanding and communication between parents and

educators due to parent participation as being seen as lacking across American public

schools (El nokali, Bachma & Votruba-Drazal, 2010; Ferrera, 2009; Green, Walker,

hoover-Demsey, & Sandler, 2007). In fact, parent involvement is viewed as so important

to student success that the U.S. Department of Education (2014) allocates Title 1 funds to

schools in order to accomplish the goals under the Elementary and Secondary Education

Act, including "affording parents substantial and meaningful opportunities to participate

in the education of their children" (para 2). Frequently, when looking at parental

involvement in research, parents are usually categorized into cultural, ethnic, and

socioeconomic subgroups in order to provide multiple perspectives in an academic area

viewed as lacking by educators.

However, much of the current research neglects to cover a multicultural group that exists under very uniquely shared circumstances: the military. Few research articles have been written on military parents' perceptions, but none specifically regarding the Air Force. There are 59 Air Force bases across the country, so in communities serving military children within base schools, this research could provide greater insight into this particular demographic (Military OneSource, 2015).

The majority of military children attend school on a base, some of which are public schools while others are specified as Department of Defense Dependents Schools (DoDDS), both of which make up an estimated 120 schools across the nation and foreign territories with an American military presence (Military OneSource, 2015). In my research of parent involvement, I focused on parents who have children currently attending or have attended an Air Force Base school. All base schools have frequent turnover of students from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences, so it is likely that parents and children will have encountered two or more schools within the course of their parent's military career, allowing for comparative experiences to be discussed. Due to the overwhelming research on the misunderstanding of parent participation in civilian public schools, I explored if a unique situation in military schools generated similar views on parental involvement.

It is crucial when discussing parent involvement to acknowledge the many forms that can be considered involvement; academic achievement follows a student from school to home nearly 180 days a year, opening a wide range of possibilities for how parents can influence a child's education (Sheldon, 2002; Ferrara, 2009; Nokali, Bachman & Votruba-Drzal, 2010). Though I do believe that there are countless views on how parents

can influence their child's education, I went into this research from a teacher's perspective. I see parent involvement as attending community events on campus, assisting in the classroom learning environment, and ensuring that children receiving proper academic help and parental encouragement in the home. There are widely differing views as to what parent participation consists of and where it occurs, so it will be important to also investigate what parental beliefs aid in the development of parent roles in regard to education. In a large survey-based study done by Ferrara (2009), it is overwhelmingly apparent that there is a need for eliminating barriers between all educational and parental parties in order to have the conversation for improving attitudes and student achievement. As stated in the article, "the least vocal group in this discussion is the parent; the most vocal is the teacher," so striving to understand different subgroups of parents is important in bridging the gap between education and parents (Ferrara, 2009, p. 123).

Additionally, investigating why parents may have the beliefs and views that they do is another important aspect to the research that was questioned when creating a complete analysis. According to Sheldon's (2002) statistical research on parent roles as related to their social networks and beliefs, it was found that the majority of parents engaged in their children's learning experiences more so at home if they felt they had adequate skills and knowledge, whereas participating in the school environment was more closely related to the expectations teachers, school staff, and students had for them. How often do educators provide parent participation opportunities in a context that is not easily accessible or understood by parents? In creating a broader understanding of how

parents construct their roles academically for their children, researchers are contributing to the national conversation on student success and its ties to parent involvement.

Purpose

The purpose of this research study was to investigate how military parents perceive parental involvement when their children are in school and whether ethnic or cultural factors play a role in those perceptions. Parent participation is directly tied to student success in all of its forms: at-school support, in-home participation, or frequency of communication with school personnel (Map, 1997; Olender, 2010; Phelps, Dunham & Lyons, 2010). A study by Smreker (2003) brings forth data that compares the achievement gap within military base schools and civilian public schools, indicating a smaller achievement gap between minority students and white students and higher test scores overall. It would have been worth examining ethnic military parent perspectives in order to present a representative and clear picture of military families, but there weren't enough participants to draw conclusions on ethnicity. However, this was a distinct group because they were all socioeconomically similar due to at least one parent having a career in the military, which then provided adequate family insurance and housing. I consider the military as an underrepresented group in educational research, but see the value in comparatively analyzing ethnicity and parent participation among people who presently share nearly everything else in common. The primary research questions, found below, were intended to generate a better understanding of military parents and their present perspectives on parental involvement.

Research Questions:

- How do Air Force military families view parental involvement in their children's education?

Sub-question:

- In what ways do people of different ethnic or racial backgrounds construct their views on parent involvement?

The sub-question was made to further investigate any differing perspectives within the military. Unfortunately, there just weren't enough volunteers to make answering this question possible. In this research, I did address this question through the responses that I received from participants, but did not attempt to generalize or draw conclusions because five of the six participants were Caucasian and the group was simply not diverse enough.

Theoretical Framework

Methodology was based on grounded theory, leaving space for interpretation of collected data and developed concepts (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). I used a small group of 6 participants during the summer of 2015, who were from a Southern Air Force Base in order to conduct the qualitative study, utilizing a focus group and two individual verbal interviews. Theory was derived from voice recordings, coded transcripts, a reflective journal, and present-day research.

Importance of this Study

Answering these questions was pertinent to better understanding the estimated 350,000 Air Force personnel's perceptions of what their role is as parents with children

attending a public base school or DoDDS school. As the researcher, I chose this study

due to my current ties to the Air Force and the field of education; being an Air Force

spouse has brought about many intriguing experiences that have pushed me to look closer

at this specific group of people and their lives as parents. Just from my personal

experience of teaching for four years in an elementary school, I have discovered that the

most common issue that was constantly being addressed was the need for increasing

parental involvement; this was greatly influenced by students' low performance on high-

stakes state testing. There is currently an abundant amount of qualitative and quantitative

research on parental involvement covering several different demographic groups, but

very few done on parents within the military. The military is highly diverse ethnically,

culturally, and socioeconomically, yet all share very common values and life experiences.

I believe that the perspectives of military parents should be further explored due to the

unique nature in which they live their lives in small communities that are highly mobile;

their experiences could possibly lead to better understanding of how to improve school

views and parent views on parent involvement.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Research shows that parental involvement has very positive affects on student

performance, yet what that looks like varies (Mapp, 2013). Parents' and teachers'

differing views about parental involvement tend to clash as responsibility for student

success is passed around, creating more distance between home and school (Dixon, Elly-

Brown, Irving Peterson, Rubie-Davies, Widdowson 2011). Some teachers view parental

involvement as valuable, but this is limited because once parents become decision-

makers in the school system educators feel threatened creating even more of a rift

between the two groups (Fererra, 2009). If involving parents more in education is critical

to the success of our students and schools then teachers and parents need to come to an

understanding of what this can look like. The definition of parent involvement varies

from person to person, depending on the roles they enact in the student's life, cultural or

ethnic background, or the social networks they partake in. Involvement at school

typically ranges from volunteering in the classroom to communicating with school

personnel and involvement at home usually includes anything from behavior

modification to assisting with homework; research indicates that there are several

definitions of parent involvement, none of which should be discarded as less than the

other. What all research seems to agree upon when it comes to defining parent

involvement is that it is characterized by the intention of the parent to improve their

child's social, academic, or emotional well-being (Ferrara, 2009; Sheldon, 2002; Keith,

1998).

Through the analysis of literature, I found that there is a wealth of information

provided on the general perceptions parents have based on several characterizing factors,

including those developed through school and life experiences. The most important and

consistent agreement among the studies referred to Hoover and Dempsey's research that

developed into the theory of role construction, which is certainly an aspect of parent

involvement that can be used while researching any subgroup of parents.

I investigated the perceptions of parent involvement through military family

households, specifically Air Force Active Duty. Nearly two million of our nation's

children reside in military homes, leaving a noticeable gap in research regarding parent

involvement for this special group of students (Lesley & Sylvester, 2011). The majority

of these students attend public schools situated conveniently within base communities

across the country, whereas about a third of the nation's military dependents are able to

attend the highly regarded Department of Defense Dependents Schools (DoDDS), which

are managed by the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) and are

directed by military personnel and attended solely by dependent children (Berkwitz, Pedro, Couture, Benbenishty & Astor, 2014). When taking into account that nearly 30% of the Air Force consists of a mixture of different ethnicities and cultures, it raises the question of how different backgrounds may form existing perceptions (Air Force Personnel Center, 2014).

Parent Involvement

There appear to be a large variety of perceptions regarding parent involvement depending on parent backgrounds, cultural influences, and social groups in which one takes part. Though mostly founded in parental rearing beliefs, many roles are developed over time with personal experiences within the school environment with fellow parents and educators as discussed in the Whitaker and Hoover-Dempsey's (2013) role construction theory. This theory indicates that parents come into their position of parental involvement as their children enter school, so many of the choices they make are based on how they are received by the school and staff. A large part of this theory is understanding that parents don't always know the expectations that teachers have for them so depending on how welcoming and communicative the school is influences their levels of involvement. Furthermore, when identifying parental involvement as a missing puzzle piece in children's education, it is found that there are varying degrees and understandings of what it means to be involved, contradicting what educators may see in

or out of the classroom. Research based on general military parent perspectives shows evidence that cognitive awareness, such as constant concern and long-distance communication, are considered a form of parental involvement due to the distance that many military parents have between their children and their work (Willerton, Schwarz, Wadsworth, & Oglesby, 2011). These are some factors that should be very helpful in exploring Air Force military parent views on parent involvement.

Role Construction

Much of the research on parent involvement discusses the factors that create and develop the perceptions parents have of their role as active participants in their child's education (Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, Sandler, 2007). According to this research, different groups of parents, such as those who identify with military or non-white ethnic groups, develop their role as a parent participant early in a child's education. The idea of role construction involves several intermingling and influencing variables, as found in the surveys returned by 853 elementary parents in an ethnically diverse metropolitan area. According to Whitaker and Hoover-Dempsey (2013), a model for parent involvement frequently referred to in related research, parents begin the development of their parent involvement roles based on past experiences with being involved, which may have proven welcomed or rejected based on the social construction maintained by the school environment. Parents tend to fall into roles following social expectations that are primarily constructed by the school administration and staff and reinforced with

frequency and type of parental involvement invited by teachers, administration, and students.

These perceptions held by parents develop in such a manner that not only does the social construct of the school environment influence parent involvement, but so do the parents' personal life contexts. These variables include the ability to attend school events, the energy to assist students when needed, and the skills or knowledge they feel they either possess or lack when dealing with the school, resources or instructional content (Green et al., 2007). Life circumstances can hinder the act of getting involved in a child's school, as expressed by single working mothers in a separate qualitative study that involved interviews, who believed that the school system was situated around the schedule of two-parent, middle class white families who could be visible and active agents in their children's education during school related events on campus (Stitt & Brooks, 2014). On-campus parental involvement seems to be the rarest form of involvement, yet seems to be the most highly regarded as it serves educators and students directly, whereas at-home involvement tends to go unnoticed and not thought of as highly influential in the success of student academic performance.

Differing Perceptions

Just as important as it is to examine parent motivation for involvement, it is crucial to understand the different views circulating the meaning of parental involvement. The studies that examine differing perceptions find that there are several ways a parent

can become involved, either at school or in the home, and each is certainly influenced by parental beliefs, social networks, and school expectations (Ferrara, 2009; Sheldon, 2002; Keith, 1998). Research conducted by Ferrara (2009) indicates that the different parties included in a child's education have very different perceptions of what parental involvement is. Surveys were given to teachers, classified staff, parents, administrators, and preservice teachers in order to understand how varied the perceptions could be.

Interestingly, parents had the highest survey return rate at 88% compared with the professionals 14%-50% return rate, not including preservice teachers who returned surveys at an 80% rate. If parents aren't as involved as the teachers in this survey believe, then we should have expected this survey to receive far less feedback from families, but that was not the case.   This data demonstrates several possibilities for implications regarding parental participation, including time allotted for addressing the needs related to parental involvement. As for results of the given surveys, parents reported feeling overall welcomed into the school, but feared that school officials did not value nor did they seek parent input for school or academic improvement (Ferrara, 2009). This causes for concern since it is the nature of parents to fulfill the roles as advocates for their children; parents foster the unique understanding of their child's needs as well as the sense of immediacy in following through with particular issues.

Other fascinating findings within Ferrara's (2009) study was the fact that less than 20% of administrators had implemented ways in which parents could become involved in

the decision-making process that directly impacts their students. As for teachers, there was a call for a more active presence within the school environment, such as taking part in the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO), acting as cross-guards, tutors or photocopiers in order to assist with the seemingly increasing tedious duties teachers take on in addition to their role as educators (Ferrara, 2009). However, teachers did state the need for parents to help their children by providing safe homes and assisting with homework or good study habits, which aligned with parent views on involvement.

There is an evident disconnect between what parent involvement is and how each interpretation can be evaluated for successful student achievement. If our nation continues to base academic success on quantitative assessments, then I do believe that teachers will continue to push for more academic support in the home to ensure that students are supported from both ends. Grading each school based on results from such assessments will also affect how parents see success, which is in a number and possibly not in physical observation of academic growth or school atmosphere. I would like to explore how families view success and what aspects they tend to take responsibility for.

Sheldon (2002) presents a quantitative study in which he examines surveys given to 195 mothers in regard to how parents' social networks and beliefs predict parent involvement; we learn that the correlations between networks and beliefs is strongly tied to how involved parents are within the school environment. As cited in the article, "longitudinal studies have shown that parent involvement with students at home predicts

higher reading and writing achievement test scores and higher report card grades

(Epstein, 1991; Keith et al., 1998; Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992; Van

Voorhis, 2000)." In Keith's (1998) longitudinal study specifically, it was generally

found, through quantitatively analyzed surveys, that equal amounts of parent participation

across genders and ethnicities gained the same amount of academic achievement over the

course of a student's career. Additionally, it has been found through several studies that

parent involvement on campus is indeed rare due to several factors ranging from family

obligations to school environment and procedures (Sheldon, 2002). However, there is

less focus on how social networks influence parent perceptions and actions when

examining parent involvement. In answering the questions pertinent to this research, the

military can be regarded as a larger network that families take part in as well as any

cultural or racial subgroups that have created their own networks within the military

school environment.

In Sheldon's (2002) research, surveys were given to the parents of two urban

elementary schools, pulling data from a diverse population of parents who shared

information in regard to personal parenting beliefs as a control and social connections in

order to correlate common practices and possible social influences. In navigating the

results to a study developed for creating a better understanding of how social networks

and beliefs affect parental involvement, it was found that there is a correlation between

those groups of people who parents associate themselves with and the beliefs they have in

regard to child rearing and academic matters. Though the results can't be used

conclusively because of the many other unexamined factors in this kind of study, they do suggest further need for investigating the social networks parents participate in and the possible influencing factors that may exist among them (Sheldon, 2002).

With the majority of military members opting to live on a base, a gated and closed housing community solely for active military members, with neighborhoods further divided by rank and job classification, one can assume that there is a particular network that each military family identifies with. In addition to specially designed housing communities, these families typically have access to an on-base school, community gym, commissary (grocery store), financial services, and a Base Exchange (department store). Due to the unique settings and situations of families within the military, schools that serve the public in addition to military families can expect to see smaller military connected networks develop and persist even with incoming and outgoing military dependents.

Military Parental Involvement

There are very few research studies done in the area of parental involvement surrounding military families, where the mother, father or both parents are active duty military members. Aside from easy access to participants, my choice to look at the Air Force members families specifically stems from the differences between the military branches, including size, career options, and demographics. These differences may contribute to how certain people choose a specific branch to dedicate their time to.

The military comprises primarily of men, nearly half of whom are fathers of dependent children, prompting research to be done on military fathers' perspectives on involvement, while accounting for the prolonged periods of absences due to deployments and specialized training (Willerton, Schwarz, Wadworth, & Oglesby, 2011). During this research, several types of involvement were referred to and measured during the study based on three key domains: cognitive, affective, and behavioral, which either can occur "directly or indirectly and can take place proximally or distally" (pp. 521). In the area of cognitive involvement, fathers describe an overwhelming sense of responsibility for their children, even when away, and maintain an awareness of what kind of father they want to be or don't want to be, many times affected by their own experiences with their own father (Willerton et al., 2011). As for affective involvement, fathers' reflected on the positive and negative experiences as a military father, feelings about the relationships they held with their children at varying ages, and the reactions that they reported when experiencing challenges as a father. Behavioral involvement, from the military fathers' perspective, was as hands-on as possible including engaging in long-distance conversations and planning arrangements for childcare or sending packages when expecting to deploy. While at home fathers tended to spend as much quality time as would be allowed according to work obligations (Willerton et al., 2011).

The greatest struggle reported by military fathers was the societal expectation for fathers to be more heavily involved in their kids' everyday lives than many of them felt they could be, occupying a great deal of their thoughts when removed from the home

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(Willerton et al., 2011). The importance of this study lies in its potential to help other new military families or educators understand the underlying intentions and possibilities for parental involvement. Unfortunately this study did not look at how mothers view their roles during deployment since all three of the military caregivers in my study have been deployed as mothers.

What is most visible is the involvement one can observe as the mother's role in her child's education. Nearly 81% of the Air Force consists of males, so it can be assumed that mother's take on more child-rearing responsibilities due to the many absences that tend to exist among active duty members (Air Force Personnel Center, 2014). Military-connected schools, which are public schools serving a high population of military dependent children, have been explored through the perceptions of 3,914 military parents and their feelings on how the public school system was serving their children (Berkowitz et al., 2014). In discussing their attitudes towards the school climate and parental involvement, military parents had far more negative responses in comparison with non-military parents, reporting that information and services were not as friendly, welcoming, or easily accessed as they had expected (Berkowitz et al., 2014). This is troublesome because military families live at an installation for only a few years at a time, so quick access to information is crucial to student success in the short amount of time they have at any given school.

When considering military parents' perceptions of the public school system, another study brings to light the academic performance of military students over a two year period in military connected public schools (Phelps, Dunham, &Lyons, 2010). Though not directly related to parental involvement, there are some important findings that ought to be considered as possibly related to parental involvement. Understandably, student performance across the grade levels and genders drop during a parent's deployment, but still fall within the national average range for testing performance (Phelps et al., 2010). Though the degree of negative impact on student behavior or academic performance changes according to past experiences and how the remaining parent deals with the absence of the other, the results do align with national studies on military deployment statistics. Rossen & Carter (2012) deliver startling statistics reporting that students tend to have an overall drop in academic performance and a rise in behavioral issues, but most significantly "rates of child maltreatment and neglect increase during parental deployment because of added stress on the remaining caregiver, which can lead to additional negative academic and behavioral outcomes." The additional stress the non-deployed parent experiences with a lack of support or resources provided by military connected public schools can have negative outcomes.

Ethnic Influencing Factors

Educators and parents alike all agree that increased parental involvement tends to influence higher academic achievement. Though DoDDS schools only serve 1/3 of our

nation's military dependent students, Smrekar's and Owens' (2003) research into these special schools reports that the academic achievement is not only overall higher in these schools in comparison to our nation's public schools, but most importantly, the achievement gap in performance is significantly smaller. DoDDS schools are all managed by the Department of Defense, each resembling the same structure which interestingly enough includes a parent board that assists in the decision making processes that include administration and staff at these schools (Smrekar & Owens, 2003). How do these schools treat military families and achievement gaps so differently that they produce higher results on national tests?

Very few studies, if any, have been done on parent involvement within minority military families. Howard & Reynolds (2008) indicate that African American parents in particular tend to become involved as advocates for their children, ensuring that their children receive fair and just treatment including access to resources that can benefit their education. The possibility of racism in the educational setting was also reported as a concern for parents of African American decent, basing their perceptions on lack of diversity in the curriculum their children received in the classroom and past experiences with unfair behavioral treatment when children are found misbehaving or struggling academically (Howard & Reynolds, 2008). It was also found that socioeconomic status has a significant amount of influence on African American perceptions; working class parents tend to allow their children to attend nearby, low performing schools within their neighborhood while middle class parents tend to specifically set out and choose a school

that is best suited for their student's needs (Diamond & Gomez, 2004). The more choice

parents had in choosing the school their child attends, the happier the families reported

being with the school, whereas parents who didn't take action in choosing a better school

were left feeling as though their children weren't being taught in the best environment

possible nor were their concerns taken seriously when approaching school teachers and

administration (Diamond & Gomez, 2004). The overall consensus seemed to be that

parents of color do not typically feel completely welcomed within schools and report

feeling as though the possibility of unfair treatment toward their child is greater than that

of white children.

Conclusion

Based on the provided literature, it is evident that more research needs to be

conducted on how military caregivers perceive parent participation. If we take a closer

look at the demographics of military families and minority military families, we find that

most of the literature provided is geared toward improving the success of students, which

doesn't necessarily provide a clear and consistent picture of how military parents get

involved in education. I also find that looking specifically at primary caregiver's views

are important to consider because they are frequently left behind during deployments,

specialized training, or general duty days, to take care of the children. The education

field is rich with data driven research in the area of parental involvement since it has a

proven strong influence on student performance and school success, but more needs to be

done in order to better understand the huge population of mobile military families

participating in public education.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

I utilized the qualitative research method of grounded theory as defined by Corbin and Strauss (2015), focusing on the experiences and perspectives of participants in order to develop theory based on overall findings. In order to gain the most accurate insight into individual parents' perceptions, I used individual interviews and a focus group interview as the main source of information. Questions and discussions were geared toward exploring different aspects of the above questions, leaving room for other possible responses that arose during interactions between the participants and me. Because I will be the only person interpreting results, I decided to keep a reflection journal during the time of research in order to record rich descriptions, impressions, and thoughts that played a role in interpreting data or confronting researcher bias that were encountered. The main goal in interviewing participants was to obtain a better understanding of their viewpoints in order to fairly represent the military in the area of parent involvement.

I.   Participants

The research took place during the summer months of July and August in 2015 in the South that included a large active duty and training Air Force Base in an urban setting. The six participants consisted of military parents of preschool to high school children currently attending a base school or had experience attending a base school. Due to the time in which the research was taking place, participants were asked to volunteer primarily through a widely used military online social forum which serves as the main source of communication between spouses, military housing communities, and base operations at this particular base (See Appendix E for Social Forum Invitation). The online forum was private only to military spouses and members, requiring base confirmation of status in order to approve membership. Additionally, parents were informed of the research through the base Child Development Center (CDC) and through the base library during story time hours for children.

Very few parents showed any interest or follow-up after talking with me about the terms of the research during the first month. To bring more parents forward and agree to participate I decided to offer a small twenty-dollar Visa gift card to show that I valued their time. This did in fact bring several more people interested, but only six met the minimum requirements of being military affiliated with a child between the ages of five and eighteen. Parents seemed eager to share their opinions when first notified of the research, but committing more than three hours of their time during the summer months to a stranger was difficult to schedule for many of them.

All participants who volunteered to take part in the research initially went through the process of purposeful sampling, in which case I selected an ethnically diverse group of 6 people who were be able to answer the research questions. Purposeful sampling, according to Morse (1991), is a method that researchers use to select participants based on the particular needs of the study. In the case of this thesis, it was pertinent to investigate the views of non-white Air Force military parents in order to have a closer representation to the diversity found in the military; however only one non-white parent participated along with two white parents of biracial children. According to a 2014 military personnel survey, about 73% of Air Force individuals are white, 14% are African American, 12.9% are Hispanic, with remaining ethnicities less than 5% of the demographic; so it would have been optimal if participants consisted of four white individuals and at least two ethnically non-white individuals (Air Force Personnel Center, 2014). The group in the present study included one African American mother and five white mothers. Not only would this have provided a more representative view of military perspectives, but would have also accounted for cultural and race factors in parent involvement.

A consent form was provided to participants explaining the purpose of the research and the extent as to which their responses would be anonymously used throughout the written analysis of the research (See Appendix A for Consent Form). Due to the small community in which these parents live, work and their children attend school, it is pertinent that risk to parents' emotional and social situations were at an absolute minimum. Participating in a focus group did enhance the possibility of parents feeling exposed or judged in front of their peers, possibly leading to feelings of

inadequacy as a parent. However, the benefits of this research were intended to expand the knowledge and understanding of parent perceptions of parent involvement in order to gain a better understanding of any misconceptions that may exist.

II.   Data Collection

During the course of this research there are two roles that were taken into consideration: the researcher and the volunteer. The researcher was to collect information and process it in an unbiased manner as much as possible while taking into account any possible personal circumstances that may influence data interpreting. In my case, I came into the research as an Air Force spouse and a teacher, so it was pertinent that I understood my own views and separated them from the findings of the research. The volunteer's role was to provide honest and descriptive responses to questions that they felt comfortable answering. Together both parties have the potential to reveal valuable insight into how Air Force parents view parental involvement.

1. Focus Group Interviews

One 45-minute focus group was used as the first source of data collection in order to generate discussion on the topic of parent involvement perspectives. The focus group interview consisted of four participants, three of whom neglected to attend. My goal was to have closer to 8-12 participants, but in this case meeting everyone's scheduling needs along with my own research timeline became challenging so I went forward with the focus group members that arrived. Parents were provided a set of questions to begin and facilitate discussion, but space was left for the discussion of other related topics unanticipated by the researcher, providing further information to better inform future interviews with individual participants (See Appendix B for Focus Group Interview

Questions). The focus group was recorded and detailed notes were taken by a volunteer, who was Institutional Review Board (IRB) trained, in order to effectively reference participants and reassess the discussion based on tone, body language, and researcher verbal and nonverbal responses.

2. **Individual Interviews**

The development of interview questions was based on research questions, literature review knowledge, and data gathered during the focus group (See Appendix C and D for Individual Interview Questions). Participants were questioned individually twice for 45 minutes each in a semi-structured manner, using the same questions for each participant and allowing for follow-up questions that may not have been anticipated prior to developing interview questions (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). A wide range and list of approximately 50 questions were used over the course of two different individual interviews. Interviews were voice-recorded, noting nonverbal responses or pauses in a research notebook during the course of the interview, and transcribed for further coding and analysis. The purpose of interviewing participants individually was to provide a safe and secure space for participants to expand on their perspectives of parental involvement.

3. **Follow-Up Interviews**

In order to confirm that the data collected was interpreted as closely as possible to what the participants expressed, varied follow-up interviews will occur over email with each participant, ranging in length 1-4 emails for clarification purposes. In each email, an attachment of individual participant responses was provided along with a brief message asking for confirmation of accuracy. Allowing participants the opportunity to confirm or deny accuracy of what they said or meant gave the researcher a stronger

foundation for accurately representing each participant as the data was analyzed and discussed throughout this investigation.

III.   Data Analysis

Data analysis consisted of interpreting transcribed interviews and any journal notes that recorded unspoken information, such as facial expressions, tone of voice, or significant pauses. Thematic coding was done by dividing data into themed chunks in order to identify specific concepts that deepened the understanding of commonalities found across all of the data. Constant comparisons, according to Corbin and Strauss (2015), allow for more in-depth analysis between thematically similar concepts drawn from the data. The coded concepts and themes were clearly defined and organized into a coding binder that separated chunks of analyzed data. The coding developed from the transcriptions lead to the use and practice of grounded theory, as defined by Corbin and Strauss (2015), which evolved from the analysis descriptions in order to explain parent perspectives and possible cultural factors.

IV.   Research Ethics

1. Confidentiality

Participants remained anonymous, with the use of pseudonyms throughout the analysis of findings. In order to maintain confidentiality, participants were briefed on the importance of not discussing people involved or discussions had during the focus group. All taped and recorded interviews were kept locked in a filing cabinet to secure all data in my home office, which were deleted and destroyed upon completion of data analysis and written research.

2. Research Journal for Reflexivity

I kept a research journal to take note of my interpretations and reflections throughout the course of the research and data collection. In keeping a journal, I was able to confront possible personal bias, unconscious perspectives or positions which may have influenced the data gathered (See Appendix F for Journal Reflection Questions; Corbin & Strauss, 2015). As researcher, I am a teacher and military spouse, so both roles were confronted during the research to account for personal views that possibly entered into the research process. The research journal was used during the data gathering and during the data analysis portion of the research.

3. Validity

Three main functions of validity were exercised throughout the research, including member checks, actively being self-aware as a researcher, and constant comparisons (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Member checks occurred between the researcher and the individual participants via email in order to confirm the accuracy of data collected during interviews; this helped limit misinterpretations of data collected. As the researcher, it was crucial to be self-aware by acknowledging any bias and prior experiences due to the related discussions about the military and education that I had with participants during interviews. Constant comparisons were used to validate findings during the data analysis process, which in some cases brought forth outliers that didn't fit similar themes or concepts extracted from similar situations as described by participants. Overall, the data was collected and used in an ethical manner in order to maintain the integrity of found results.

V.   Timeline

The initial start of my research began with a proposal for research to my advisor and committee followed by IRB approval. Upon approval, I began searching for volunteers during June 2015 and obtained a group of 6 individuals to use for research. Recruitment of volunteers and interviews occurred during the months of June-August, as did all transcriptions in preparation for data analysis. Data analysis occurred from September-November of 2015 in preparation for presenting the research findings and conclusions in the fall of 2015 to the thesis and committee members at Oklahoma State University.

VI. Limitations

This qualitative research study's results were most limited by the participants used. Initially, the plan was to select participants from a wide pool of volunteers to create a multiculturally diverse group of 6-8 parents, but it proved very difficult obtaining enough volunteers. A resubmission of the research parameters were given to the IRB to allow for a change of participants from parents of only elementary students to parents of elementary, middle and high school students to widen the volunteer base. A small gift card incentive was also offered when there still weren't enough parents volunteering. Even with all of the changes to the participant qualifications there still weren't more than six people willing to give their time to interviews, limiting the ability to hand pick a group of diverse parents.

The parents that were willing to share their thoughts and experiences didn't represent the general military parent population on base that would have been satisfied by randomly selecting participants from the base school. The sub-question of this research

addressed the perspective of nonwhite races on the topic of parental involvement, but

unfortunately due to only one volunteer being African American and the rest being white,

the question couldn't be adequately answered nor could the responses be analyzed for

commonalities. There were no other non-white participants to compare her responses to

in order draw conclusions. Additionally, seeking volunteers for such a study presented

an issue because those volunteering were more likely to be available and already have a

strong opinion on parental involvement as observed during interviews. For future

research in this area, I would seek volunteers during the school year when parents are

more easily reached and I would include an open-ended response survey to all parents at

the base school to help balance the responses of parents who chose to volunteer.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this research was to explore how military parents perceive

parental involvement when their children are school-aged. Additionally, this research

sought to explore any possible ethnic factors that may have a role in constructing their

views of parental involvement. Data was collected through a focus group and two

individual interviews with participants. Each interview was transcribed, coded, and

divided into themes, which will be discussed and analyzed in this chapter to determine

conclusions drawn from this research.

To begin, a focus group was used to gather a general understanding of how

parents in the Air Force feel about their children's education and the ways in which they

become involved in it. The hour and a half taped conversation with the focus group

participants also prepared me for follow-up questioning during individual interviews. For

example, when asking the group if anybody was involved with the Air Force in any other

way aside from professionally, nobody seemed to have a response until one participant,

Jill, talked about how her husband was frequently able to get men from his squadron to

help at the base school. This led into a conversation about other volunteer opportunities the service women took part in and the resources they had all used through the base. It should be noted that the focus group had a smaller number of people in attendance than planned. Only four of the six participants took part in the group interview, so the dynamics of the group did not allow for as many perspectives as I would have hoped would come from a slightly larger group. However, the information gathered during the focus group did prove useful for allowing a look into the lives of military parents so that the questions and time spent interviewing people could be done in a more knowledgeable manner.

As the researcher, I noticed a difference in the kinds of responses I received when participants were in the focus group compared to what they chose to say during individual interviews. These parents had very few negatives views to share when in the group setting and everyone seemed very agreeable about what parent involvement was; the collective agreement was that it meant volunteering on campus, which is not what came out of the individual interviews. For this reason I am glad that I had two follow up individual interviews with each participant, because each parent had many more personal experiences to share that were both positive and negative. I speculate that being in a group setting with unfamiliar people may have caused parents to be less open about their true perspectives.

The interview process presented some new terms that will be used during this chapter. All participants utilized the Child Development Center (CDC), which is a military childcare regulated by the government that provides a set curriculum with the goal of meeting specific benchmarks geared toward preschool. Research participants viewed the CDC as a form of preschool because children are meeting set standards and being prepared for kindergarten. Many children who attend the CDC go on to attend an on-base school, which can be either a public or charter school that follows the standards mandated by the state. Another form of an on-base school is the Department of Defense Dependents School (DoDDS), which is found at overseas locations in all branches of the military and only attended by military dependents (MilitaryTimes, 2015). Some of the parents interviewed talk about their experience with off-base schools, some of which are military affiliated, meaning they serve a large percentage of military students. I chose not to turn away three participants who only had experience with their children attending the CDC, because they all viewed it as a form of preschool and believed that it had educational value.

Participants

The goal was to find an ethnically diverse group of 6-8 Air Force primary caregivers of elementary aged students; however, this proved to be difficult even with the added incentive of a small gift card in return for participation. To increase the number of participants, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved a change to include military

parents of children who attend preschool through high school grades. Several posts were made on social media websites related to the southern Air Force Base, flyers were posted at the CDC, announced at the library's story time events, and emailed to administration at the base elementary schools. Over the span of three months, a total of six military mothers gave their time to the research by taking part in individual interviews that were scheduled at the convenience of each participant and took place at their location of choice. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to protect her identity.

The first interviewee was Ashley[1], a mother of two, one who currently attends preschool on base at the CDC and one who attends Kindergarten off base near their off base home. Ashley and her husband are both officers and work at the Air Force Medical Clinic. Because both are military employees they both receive a Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH), which could either be completely consumed if they choose to live on base or saved and put partially toward an off base home. They chose the latter, as did the other two military mothers that were interviewed, Stacy and Mary (see Footnote 1). Ashley offered unique experiences as a dual-military family as well as her personal experience growing up in a military family that influenced several of her responses throughout the interviews. Though Ashley is Caucasian, her husband is from the Philippines so her children are currently growing up with two ethnic and cultural identities.

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[1] Pseudonyms were used for all participants to protect their identity.

Leslie is also Caucasian and married to a man of a different race, though other than marking Hispanic on school forms for her children, she identifies her family as typical and American without any cultural ties to her husband's ethnicity. This mother of a 6-, 11-, and 13-year-old has experienced six different duty stations, and her children have attended four different schools including on-base military schools, overseas DoDDS schools and off-base public schools. Leslie has a wealth of experience with the military lifestyle that added great variety and depth to this research.

Stacy is African American and has been an active duty Air Force employee for nine years, with over a year spent being deployed overseas. She is a single parent of a four-month-old and a five-year-old. Her children both initially attended the CDC on base, but her oldest daughter has moved on to a private off-base preschool until she is able to apply for kindergarten at the on base elementary school. Stacy believed that moving her child out of the five-year-old group at the CDC base school three quarters of the way through the school year would be in her child's best interest because the class size got larger with less adult supervision; she noticed this change in care through observation and the quality of the work her child was bringing home. Stacy plans on retiring from the military within the next couple of years in order to avoid more deployments and to pursue her dream of becoming a nurse.

Wendy is Caucasian and has been an Air Force spouse for 12 years, as well as the primary caregiver of her 19-year-old stepdaughter during that time. Like Leslie, she has

a great deal of experience with the military lifestyle and has moved several times, her daughter attending a total of nine different schools varying from on-base schools to off-base military affiliated public schools. Though her daughter has just left the K-12 school system, Wendy expressed great interest in participating in this research project because she has recently reflected on their unique experiences as a military family and wanted to share them in order help represent military families in education.

Jill is Caucasian and has been a military spouse for 16 years and a mother to a son for 8 years. Her son currently attends the on base school and has attended the CDC previously. Jill's husband has been stationed at other bases in the past, but they have spent the last ten years at this same base. Jill is also the only participant who resides on base with her family, enjoying the convenience of being closer to resources such as the Medical Clinic and Commissary as well as being a part of a small and close community.

Mary is Caucasian and an Air Force Pilot Instructor along with her husband. This dual-military family includes two children, a five-year-old entering kindergarten this year and a four year old that attends the CDC on base. Mary's kindergartener will be attending a charter school off base that best meets their educational needs for a curriculum rich in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). In addition to being a military employee, mother and spouse, Mary grew up in a military family and has attended DoDDS schools, on-base schools and public schools, which she mentions when discussing her role as a parent during the interviews.

Themes

This investigation sought to find how military parents perceive parental involvement and in what ways different ethnic or racial backgrounds construct their views on parental involvement. Different aspects of these research questions were explored through conversations that discussed military lifestyle, academic experiences, social involvement, and background influences. Semi-structured interviews were used with individuals because not every participant was able to respond to every interview question and some participants had responses that lead to further questioning to develop a better understanding of their point of views. The major topics discussed were divided thematically to make sense of the overall groups of thought and feelings in given areas. The major themes that will be discussed include: background influences, military involvement, home involvement, on-campus involvement, base schools, difficult lifestyle, and other factors.

Background Influences

Under this theme, family, prior experience, and race will be discussed. When I asked questions seemingly unrelated to individuals' backgrounds, such as extracurricular activities, parents often reflected first on their upbringing and experience and then moved on to discussing their children. In one study, several military parents made a point to say their child-rearing choices were made based on whether or not they wanted to be like their parents (Willerton et al., 2011). When discussing parental involvement with the set

of six military mothers, similar perspectives were discussed. They either had positive

experiences with their parents being involved growing up and wanted to replicate them or

they had negative experiences that inspired them to provide more for their children's

education. When asked about her parent's involvement, Ashley shared a positive

experience:

> "I grew up with my dad, and he was a single parent so he was a lot less involved.
> At his job he worked crazy hours and it wasn't very lenient for him to get out of
> work, but I just remember those times when he could and it was the most amazing
> thing ever. So I think that kind of influenced me to, um, try to be as involved as I
> can and my husband is the same way."

Ashley then goes on to discuss her most memorable experience she had with her dad

being involved: "Yeah the coolest thing was when he worked with communications

equipment, he would bring in his military radio at Christmas and have the class talk to

Santa." Though the occurrences of his presence was few and far between, the positive

impact it had on her childhood has lasted into adulthood with her children. Leslie, on the

other hand, had a negative outlook from her childhood that influenced her to become

heavily involved with her children's schooling: "Absolutely not. Yeah, no, my parents

were never involved at all, they never went to functions, they never did anything. I

remember growing up and remember my parents not being there and wishing that my

parents were there." Making the conscious decision to either be or not be like one's

parents when it comes to raising children appears to be something many new parents

consider when reflecting on their parental choices, which then affects how active they

become in their child's education.

Another background influence that was probed through two interview questions

was race:

1) What does racial ethnicity mean to you?

2) Do you think either of those plays a role in how you choose to become

involved? How so?

Race or ethnicity would seem like a category of its own, but during the questioning of

this topic participants referred to family and cultural values as factors that more heavily

constructed their views on parental involvement than race. Unfortunately, there simply

weren't enough participants with differing racial identities to draw any reliable

conclusions; five participants were white and one was African American. Each

participant had great difficulty in defining ethnicity and race, showing visible discomfort,

expressing fear of answering incorrectly, and, Mary and Leslie made the comment that it

was a "hot topic." The consensus was overwhelmingly negative and more immediately

responded to when participants were asked about whether they believed their own or

others' racial or ethnic backgrounds had any impact on their parental involvement views

and choices. This group of military mothers believed that race or ethnicity did not have anything to do with perceptions of parental involvement.

Ashley is the only mother who mentioned how her views were impacted by race; she is Caucasian and her husband is Filipino. As the mother of two biracial children, she and her husband have questioned occurrences in school, such as the event when her daughter was told she could not be a pilgrim and was assigned the role of Native American in a Thanksgiving play for her kindergarten class. Ashley states: "I got pretty upset, thinking they made her be the Indian because she had brown skin." This incident was concerning along with the fact that her daughter attends an off base school that "boasts a 90% Caucasian student population" in a community that sits right outside a very large and diverse southern city. After seeing the play and talking with the teacher, it was clear that the class was randomly divided in half and assigned either the pilgrim side or the Indian side. She admits that she may have been a bit sensitive about the whole issue, but it's something that she won't ever stop worrying about here in the south.

Ashley states that she would be involved in her child's education regardless, but that the racial issues that frequently arise here in the south are a cause for concern and does influence her to be more aware of what her children experience. Ashley goes on to explain how controversial views on race in her residential area make her pay attention to certain things her children say so that she can intervene if needed. Though her husband's family now resides in the United States, they are a very traditional Filipino family and

highly value their culture. Having those values are what both Ashley and her husband want for their children, so addressing negative experiences that may occur because of their ethnicity or culture is important to maintaining their children's positive self-images.

Military Community Involvement

This theme was developed around the repeated mention of the small community that makes the Air Force unique and the community resources that provide families with knowledge of base or area information, events, and programs. There are several opportunities within the military community to become more involved as a dependent, which seemed to overlap with educational opportunities for children. Each base has a support squadron that provides several opportunities for military members and families to take part in community events, which are communicated through emails, flyers, or base magazines (Military Times, 2015).

This particular southern Air Force Base provides volunteer opportunities, spouse support groups, adult leadership and skills-based classes, kids clubs and movie nights, sports and many more. Though these community involvement opportunities are likely to be found in many civilian communities, they are unlikely to be attended by groups of people who all come from similar lifestyles. One particularly beneficial resource found on base at either the elementary school or through the Family Readiness Center is a program for children of deployed parents. Leslie talked about one program her children participated in called Focus, which was a set of six courses that guided children and

parents through the process of coping with deployment. She believed that this helped her three children a lot and is a resource that she wouldn't have known about if her children didn't attend the school on base at their west coast duty station.

Ashley talked about a particularly fun learning experience her children were able to access through the Air Force, which was a theater company who taught children how to act and put on a play a few weeks out of the year. Stacy on the other hand took advantage of a program called Backpack Brigade, which provided lower income military members ranking E-1 to E-6 with an abundance of school supplies and informational resources in a social atmosphere with booths. Mary's sons and Wendy's daughter were able to take part in intermural sports and interest clubs that took place on base during summer months and after school at the base Youth Center. Both parents admit that some of the after school opportunities that had their children join weren't necessarily academic but did provide safe spaces for socializing with children of fellow military families. Wendy in particular struggled with allowing her child to spend time at friends' homes since she never had the ability to get to know the parents as she may have if they didn't move every few years; there was a sense of safety with her child being with military friends because her husband had direct professional contact with the service member of the household. When asked what other ways participants were involved with the Air Force, all of them were able to identify some form of participation in family events or base resources. This involvement coincided with the positive feelings towards the

military lifestyle that provided a smaller and more understanding community than they felt they could find in an average civilian community.

Being involved with their children's education and within the military community seem to have several overlapping factors that encourage all kinds of involvement. The first source of involvement in the community starts with the Key Spouse during the Permanent Change of Station (PCS) process, as mentioned by three of the participants, a role that both Wendy and Leslie enacted for their husbands' squadrons and a source that every spouse has upon arrival to a new base. A Key Spouse is the term used in the Air Force; other branches have their own names for these leaders. The role of a Key Spouse is to provide each squadron's spouse with resources, information, and updates regarding the base and their spouse's squadron (USAF Services, 2015). Key Spouses frequently monitor and update online forums that are only accessible to base spouses, allowing parents to communicate about schools, events, and a variety of resources that may otherwise be unknown unless communicated through word of mouth. Five of the participants made choices to live in certain areas and have their children attend certain schools based on the communication about others' experiences and opinions when arriving to this base. These parents sought what they believed to be the best educational choices under the circumstances of being stationed in an unfamiliar territory.

The circumstances that affected these military spouses included: moving to a base with no on-base housing or schools, leaving families to choose from multiple military

affiliated schools; moving to areas that have perceived good and bad areas to live; having to plan for moving to more than one area until firm orders come in; and moving within days or weeks of notice. These situations seem to have forced military families to make quick and hard decisions regarding school choices by relying on the opinions and experiences of those who choose to be a part of the private online forum for military families created for each military base. In the eyes of these parents, choosing the right neighborhood meant getting into high performing schools, which would lead to the best possible educational experiences for their students. Leslie looks back on her moves to different duty stations and realizes today that the military affiliated or base schools must have had lower scores because of the children's high mobility between states and curriculum along with the hardship of dealing with deployed parents. No other parents made the connection between home life and school performance.

School performance seems to be an issue on select bases. The most positive on-base experiences discussed during interviews seemed to regard bases other than the current one here in the south. According to these women, this base in particular has a very poor reputation for the elementary school and housing options in comparison with other bases they have had experiences with. These beliefs were based on what they heard from other parents or coworkers upon arriving at this base, not from their personal experience with the base school or housing. Living apart from base for two Air Force service members was due to financial reasons; it is rare for dual military families to live on base because they receive double the BAH and would therefore be paying twice as

much for housing than single military families when their housing allowances could be used for a more preferable off base house. Stacy chose to live off base because her mother lives with her to help care for her children and only dependents are able to live in base housing with service members. As for Ashley and Leslie, living off base enabled them to live closer to their new jobs, to purchase a home as an investment, and to live in a high performing school district near high-ranking schools. All women have chosen to live on a base at one time or another and all still take advantage of resources that this military base has to offer.

Base Schools

This theme is about the involvement and empathy that parents and children discussed in relation to base schools. All participants have experienced the CDC and four of the six participants have children who have attended an elementary or middle school on a military installation. Two participants, Ashley and Mary, frequently used their personal childhood experiences with base schools when discussing their current perceptions. Many of the feelings expressed about base schools had more to do with schools from previous duty stations. It is important to note that all DoDDS schools found abroad and CDC schools are run very similarly to one another whereas public or charter base schools in the United States are run by the local districts assigned by the state, which may account for varying opinions of what it's like to be a parent of a child who goes to school on base (Military OneSource, 2015).

Involvement.   When dissecting the interviews, it became clear that parents were quite involved in their children's education when they were attending a school affiliated with the duty station. Jill, Wendy, and Leslie mentioned times when base school was enjoyable to volunteer at in contrast to when their children attended regular public schools because base schools were close by and they had relationships with the teachers and parents outside of the school environment. These three parents were able to stay at home with their kids and help out with the school Parent Teach Association, fundraisers, and various tasks that teachers needed help with. Most of these involvement experiences also tended to be during the elementary years, whereas the mention of less involvement was discussed when the children reached middle and high school that are less commonly found on bases. All parents had similar perspectives when discussing the importance of involvement, viewing it as necessary for helping their children be successful in school and outside of school.

Many positive opinions were shared about the CDC, the base preschool and daycare, in particular. Stacy, Mary, and Ashley talked about the optional homework assignments and projects they would do at home to support the learning being done at the CDC. Both Mary and Stacy mentioned the benchmarks that were evaluated by the staff and themselves as a joint effort in acknowledging what growth was occurring. In fact, it was the CDC that informed Stacy that her child wasn't talking as much as the other children and to "keep an eye on it"; it turned out that a doctor visit confirmed these concerns and her daughter was able to receive speech and physical therapy services

through the Air Force's Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP). Stacy had wonderful experiences with the CDC until the class size and student-teacher ratio grew during her last year of attendance, causing her to move her child to an off base preschool until kindergarten on base started. Ashley credits the CDC at their previous base with teaching their daughter to read. She also went on to share how she supported her child's learning by listening to her read to her brother and stepping in to help when a word was mispronounced or too difficult to sound out. In addition, she was pleased that a Filipino military spouse worked at the CDC with her child and used Tagalog with her, supporting the father's attempt to teach their daughter his native language. Mary was certainly involved during her child's time at the CDC by frequently talking to staff and reading papers and emails sent home, which is how she found out about this study in the first place. She believed there wasn't a need for parent volunteers at the CDC because of the full staff they already had, but did say that parents could go in at any time to observe or take part in lessons with their children. All of the participants chose the CDC as preschool prior to attending kindergarten.

Empathy. All parents consider base schools as places where military children can feel safe and better understood than in civilian schools. Leslie saw these feelings of empathy develop in her children from the conversations she would have with them about their friends at school who were having a difficult time during a parent's absence. Ashley and Mary share these same sentiments when discussing their personal experiences from attending base schools, discussing the difficulty of constantly being the new kid but

being surrounded by other kids who have also been in that situation, which helped them connect more easily to their peers. According to Leslie, these feelings also extend to the teachers that can be found at DoDDS and base schools since some are military spouses themselves or have received specialized training in recognizing the special needs of military children. She goes on to share her views about the importance of having empathy for military students.

> Honestly, for the children it's going to be the teachers, because in the military schools the teachers are very much aware of what these children go through. They go to classes, they do skill building on what the affects are of the constant moving, with dad at war on deployment, mom on deployment, those changes that the kids go through, the teachers go through those specific trainings so they understand more. So they have that empathy and that sincere connection with them because they've been through it and they can talk to them versus the public school where there is no military affiliation whatsoever. The teachers don't know how to recognize this behavior is because dad's on deployment or this behavior is because they had moved six times in the last 13 years.

Though empathy is a shared and valued characteristic these women discussed during interviews when sharing their opinion of base schools, four of the six women felt that academic performance and the quality of the connected neighborhood were more important when considering schools for their children to attend. All parents felt that,

without a doubt, if their child had the opportunity to attend a DoDDS school during an overseas assignment, they would send their children there based on the very positive experiences they have heard from other military families. As for regular base schools at future locations in the United States, all parents said they would certainly consider their child attending these schools as long as they held high academic standards and had a good reputation.

On-Campus School Involvement

Parents believed on-campus involvement to include room moms, fundraisers, and school functions. Not all parents felt that their presence on campus was beneficial to their child's academic success and all parents believed it to be secondary to at-home involvement, which was most highly regarded as positively influencing their children's education. Whereas some parents felt that being on campus wasn't always possible due to demanding work schedules, they also viewed it as unnecessary and at times a hindrance to their child's social and academic growth.

Jill and Ashley shared instances when being in the classroom proved difficult because their children struggled to focus and were confused about whether to view the teacher or their mother as the authoritative figure. Though their time in the actual classroom during the school day was very limited throughout the school year, all of the parents expressed strong feelings about the importance of supporting the teacher and what was going on in the classroom. They would do this by either talking to the teachers

after school, communicating through email, or, very rarely, by telephone. Any issues that were expressed to parents, whether it was their child talking too much during instructional time or needing to read more challenging material, were worked on at home to support the teachers' efforts in the classroom. Some parents decided helping at the school and attending special functions were great bonding experiences with their children, but being physically present in the classroom got in the way of them learning.

Not all parents felt this way. Leslie and Wendy visited the campus regularly, sometimes even as substitutes. Both of these parents discussed how this enabled them to become more aware of what their children were learning and what kind of important assignments or tests were coming up. Another positive aspect of being on campus was the enjoyment their children had in seeing them actively supporting their teachers and schools. Interestingly, both parents also expressed how they became more aware of school politics that made them both frustrated with the school system at one point or another during their transition between bases and schools. Leslie became less inclined to come onto the campus of one base school her children attended due to lack of change among the teachers and staff. Wendy on the other hand became more inclined to try and make a difference by becoming president of the PTA, which eventually caused involvement "burnout". On-campus involvement has its perks and downfalls according to parents.

Home-School Communication. Bridging the gap between school and home became a topic that was discussed when on-campus involvement was brought up. All parents expressed strong feelings toward supporting the teacher by communicating often and assisting with their children's troubled academic areas. Jill believes the need for more communication with his teacher is what opened her eyes to the needs the school had, prompting her to come on campus more often to help where needed. Wendy, Leslie and Ashley all had experiences where they initiated communication with the teacher but never received productive feedback until grades came out or conferences were had. This was frustrating, especially for Ashley, who prefers straightforward communication so that she can support the teacher by following up at home. Leslie has always supported her children's education by checking homework and graded assignments and reteaching when necessary so that her children succeeded in the classroom. Unfortunately, when her children attended a school on the west coast graded assignments and tests weren't reported to parents until the end of a semester causing her children's grades to slip and her feeling hopeless. Participants strongly believed that home involvement was the most important factor in their children's schooling, but that they needed communication with teachers to fully support their children.

Home Involvement

This theme takes a closer look at what parents are doing at home to help their child academically. Every parent interviewed perceived home as a place for working on

areas that their children are struggling with and providing them with the support needed to succeed. Jill firmly believes that her son's struggles caused her to become more involved in his schooling and to work more with him one-on-one at home. For all participants, much of the academic struggles that were worked on at home were prompted by communication with the teacher or observations made while their children worked on homework. Stacy's daughter struggles with speech, so she makes a point to communicate with the teacher about things she can do at home to help in addition to the physical and speech therapy her child attends; the school provided Stacy with flashcards and a variety of activities that could help her daughter stay on track with the other students. Ashley and Mary have children who aren't necessarily behind but they are still always working on improving reading or math skills outside of regular schoolwork. Mary in particular sees her role as a supporter of all subjects by encouraging her children to be active through sports, learn a second language, and find an instrument that they would be excited to pursue. As put by Wendy, "My personal opinion is that education starts at home and education ends at home. They're only going to be as good as the support they have at home."

The term support was used often by participants and seemed to hold more importance than pushing for high academic performance. Leslie discussed how important education is to her and her family so they tried putting their children in a high performing charter school once moving to this base over the summer. They decided against it because their son's world revolved around football and the charter school didn't

offer that sport and their daughter wanted to attend the same school as her brother.

Supporting her son's love for a sport and positive athletic social experiences overrode the

need for attending a special school. Social growth was highly valued among academics

by other parents as well; all of the mothers strongly supported their children developing

friendships through extracurricular activities. Ashley talked about how much she valued

being able to see her daughter have different groups of friends at school, at sports, and on

base. Parents perceived one form of involvement as supporting their children's interests,

whether for academic or social growth.

Difficult Lifestyle

When parents were asked what their experience has been like as an Air Force

parent, I received some of the most in-depth answers. All but one parent began their

description with terms like "difficult," "hard," "tough," and "frustrating." Though they

all identified positive aspects of the military lifestyle, they chose to elaborate on the

challenging factors that make their experiences as parents unique in comparison with

civilian parents. The three service women expressed a need for extra planning and

coordinating with work and their spouses or co-caregivers in order to as involved as they

are. Some challenges included unpredictable absences of the Air Force participants or

spouses of participants and the demands of planning for moves.

The three mothers employed by the Air Force have all been gone more than once during their children's lives because of either deployments or Temporary Duty Yonder (TDY) assignments, which are typically for training purposes. When asked about their children's first day of school, both Ashley and Mary had missed one due to being TDY, and though they both showed feelings of disappointment, they talked about how their husbands were able to be there and communicate over the phone later about the exciting day. Stacy had an especially trying time during her deployment because, being a single parent, she had to uproot her children from their lives at this base to live in another state with her mother, who made parenting choices against Stacy's will. In addition, none of the participants had any contact with the schools or teachers about their children during times of absence. These parents struggled to stay involved in their children's lives during times of absence, especially academically, due to limited opportunities for communication with caregivers and educators at home.

Two military spouses, Leslie and Wendy, experienced absence in a different manner by being left on the home front while their spouses were deployed numerous times. Leslie believed that the most difficult part of her husband's deployments were the important moments he missed in their children's lives, such as their son's football season or their daughter's choir performances; the timing always felt especially bad during times of accomplishment for the children, causing a lot of the "tears and hurt." Wendy talked about the first deployment she experienced with her husband while living on at an Air Force Base on an island far away from home. Due to the absence of her husband and

living in an unfamiliar community, they moved back to their hometown for the entirety of

the deployment to be close to family and a familiar support network. Deployment caused

the greatest length of time away from home and the most amount of stress among parents,

a factor identified as being unique to military life and parenthood that is seen as difficult.

Preparation. Aside from the absences that families endured from their service

members, another challenging factor is the need for constant need to be prepared in the

military whether mentally, emotionally, or physically. For the primary caregivers who

are also service members, preparation means communicating with squadron leaders about

attending school events for their children, coordinating deployment and TDY schedules

so that one parent is home when the other is gone, and seeking not just quality school

programs but also finding quality daycares before and after school. Mary talked about an

instance when she didn't have a very understanding squadron leader and had to attend a

6am roll call with her child because the CDC wasn't yet open, leading her to state the

following:

> The military in general isn't family friendly. It's one of those things that if the
>
> military wanted you to have a family they would have issued you one. We make
>
> it work, but it's been a lot harder and it's cost us some good opportunities in the
>
> Air Force to ensure we have a good solid family life.

There is simply nothing convenient about having a family in the military. First,

it's obviously inconvenient for the military to deal with families, especially dual military

families like Mary's. During the interview she talked about how her children are attached to her name and not her husband's so that when they PCS it's easier for them to keep track of the kids since it's highly likely that they won't be placed at the same base again. The most accommodation the military will provide is transferring these two parents within 150 miles of each other. Mary did mention that the Air Force has made some positive changes to help new mothers by changing the time between having a baby and being deployed from six months post-birth to a year post-birth. From talking with Mary, Ashley and Stacy, it seems to come down to Air Force policy and the individual cooperation of an understanding squadron leader that makes the difference in how smoothly family life goes.

For all of the participants, preparation for upcoming moves and transitions from school to school is a huge ordeal. When considering education as a high priority, all but one parent connected the best school option, whether DoDDS or not, to the community they chose to live in. Parents wanted to live near the best schools available, which sometimes turned out to be living on base and attending a base or DoDDS school or living off base in a community with a better performing school. Five parents researched all of the options for schools before moving to this base and chose places with the highest test scores or best reputation, which then influenced where they decided to live. This base in particular has an elementary school that is perceived to have a bad reputation according to the participants, so many parents made the conscious choice to live in off base communities that still have a large military population as well as military-affiliated

schools. These mothers seem to trust and take comfort in relying on other military families for information. Overall, participants perceived deciding where their children attend school for the purpose of ensuring they receive a quality education as a form of being academically involved in their children's lives.

Other Factors

All interviews included an open-ended question asking about what other factors participants felt influenced their levels of participation. This was another area that the mothers had interesting responses to and seemed passionate about when sharing their opinions. Each participant had a range of influences they chose to mention, but the most common influences for parental involvement were discussing stay at home moms and acting as an advocate for their child.

Stay at Home Moms. Three of the six mothers, the non-service members, chose to stay at home with their children through the majority of their school years, yet all participants mentioned the ability to stay at home with one's child as the most influencing factor that allows parents to be more actively involved on campus. All of the mothers who stay at home are heavily involved in their children's schools because of their flexibility and more time available. Wendy reflected on why she chose to be a stay at home mom and why she believed others do too.

I think it's because it's the nature of the military members' career- moving. It's

hard for us to have consistent employment, it's hard because we don't know

anyone when we get to a community and a lot of times jobs are about who you

know and being connected. I also think military members usually provide a stable

income, so they're able to have a constant family member there when the military

member is gone. When a military member deploys it's hard to be a single working

parent. So for the many years that I have been a spouse, that has been a factor,

the deployment factor.

Regardless of why mothers choose to stay at home, it does give them several

opportunities for involvement. All three mothers talked about being on campus most

days of the week, taking part in the Parent Teacher Association (PTA), helping with

fundraisers, and assisting teachers when needed.

Advocate. For three parents an important factor for getting more academically

involved in their children's education had a great deal to do with their children's special

needs. All three believed that this caused them to communicate more frequently with

teachers, principals and support staff so that they could ensure their children had every

opportunity for success. Jill currently has a child with an Individualized Education Plan

(IEP) and Wendy's daughter used to have an IEP during her early elementary school

years causing both parents to attend IEP meetings on campus and to make sure that the

IEP was followed for the benefit of their child. Jill, Wendy, and Stacy were all referred

by the base medical clinic to have their children receive services off base because the schools were not able to provide the amount of speech or physical therapy needed to meet their needs. Stacy in particular is in a current position of feeling overwhelmed and concerned about her child's well being because her daughter has to attend speech and physical therapy during the school day off-campus causing her to miss valuable learning time. To accommodate the missed time, Stacy collects all of her child's missing work and reteaches it over the weekend in addition to practicing her speaking abilities so that people can understand her and so that she doesn't feel that what she says isn't that important. For parents of children with special needs, acting as an advocate increased their levels of parental involvement at school and at home.

Conclusion

Interviewing parents about parental involvement while living with a military lifestyle revealed intriguing insights into their beliefs and perceptions. It was most surprising how everyone responded very similarly, though none knew each other personally. It was unexpected that half of my participants would be Air Force members themselves and primary caregivers, but it added to the diversity of the group and types of responses received. The two groups of people, military and civilian, both offer perspectives that support studies showing parents do indeed want to be actively involved in their children's education, even if it isn't always done on campus. No matter what challenged these parents face, their children come first and they all work hard, especially

at home, to provide them with important academic opportunities. In the following

chapter, I will discuss possible implications and conclusions that came from these

interviews along with what further research needs to be done in order to completely

understand military parents' perspectives on parental involvement.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The intention of this research was to seek an understanding for how a particular group of

people viewed parental involvement. Air Force parents were chosen because of my

personal experiences that have made this lifestyle seem particularly unique because they

move to unfamiliar places every few years and are frequently separated as a family due to

career specific demands. Because of these situations, it would seem that military families

might have differing viewpoints than other groups of parents. Instead it was found that

military parents construct their perspectives just as civilian parents, though it may

generally look different depending on the given circumstances of each family. Much of

what participants expressed during interviews strongly supported the findings of

Whiteaker and Hoover-Dempsey's (2013) role construction theory of parental

involvement in civilian families as being most affected by past experiences, social

influences, and personal life contexts and knowledge.

Overall, this research revealed that some military parents are more active in their child's education at home than at their child's school because their involvement at home is more directly related to academics than their roles on school campuses.

Implications

The implication of this study is for school officials dealing with military families to be more aware of how their students' parents see their part in education and what influences those beliefs. Military parents are constantly having to research schools and communities prior to making decisions, such as selecting duty station preferences or choosing a school best suited for their child on or off base before a PCS move. Because decision making had to take place prior to moving into a home and transferring children from one school to another, parents relied information available online, through private military social forums, and through squadron coworkers or squadron key spouses. Being a part of social groups with similar beliefs and opinions on education support the findings of Sheldon's (2002) study on the positive correlations between parental involvement and social networks.

These parents relied heavily on these social connections within the Air Force network of peers and spouses, which suggest that military communities are very close. Every parent favored the opinions and experiences of other military members or spouses when it came to making decisions or obtaining information, whether they knew them personally or not. There seemed to be a strong sense of trust within this close community, but most of all the participants shared the same values in education. These findings support those found in Sheldon's (2002) study on parental involvement and

social networks, concluding that parents do in fact fall into groups with similar beliefs and levels of involvement. It is unknown whether or not there are smaller social networks within this community, but it would be worth looking at in the future so that schools can have a better understanding of how they can reach out to different groups of parents.

Action Plan. It seems that parents are making fast-paced decisions on the information most readily available to them, so I would recommend that schools develop a relationship with nearby bases. Providing military bases with resources about the schools and welcoming them to visit the campuses through upcoming events or observations in the classroom would assist in forming a line of communication between home and school while developing a positive relationship between the two. The use of technology would also be a beneficial implementation that could help parents access the most up-to-date important school information and allow for questions or concerns parents may have when transferring their students to a new location. It's important to military families that they have fast access to information that benefits their children. As for schools, being in close contact with bases allows for a better understanding for the military culture and what challenges many military families face, especially those with school-aged children. The most worthwhile plan to increase parental involvement is to welcome it through open communication.

Perceptions

Parents not only built their perceptions of involvement based on their social networks but also based on their background experiences. When discussing race, all but

one parent didn't see any affect on their involvement or the involvement of others. However, parents did believe that familial and cultural values did have a great deal to do with how they decided to rear their children. Parents were generally affected by how involved their parents were in their own education as children, causing them to either be more or less like them when they became parents themselves. If parents recognize the importance of values shared among their family and cultures, it would seem important for teachers and school staff members to also recognize that when communicating with students and parents.

Parents demonstrated these educational values by selecting areas to be more involved in based on their schedules and child's needs. Stay at home moms maximized their time at their child's school whenever possible and working moms made an extra effort to communicate with teachers to build a stronger connection between home and school. Parents of children who were struggling academically took on the role as advocate by ensuring that all resources were utilized on their children's behalf while parents of children who were thriving took on the role of supporter by pushing their children to take on more activities and learning opportunities. Overall, parents have to balance the demands of their careers or their spouse's careers along with the needs of their children.

The military seems to have a particularly demanding influence on these families, eliciting a constant sense of urgency when making decisions for their children's well being. These parents move frequently to unknown areas and are constantly forced to seek and utilize the most readily available information because there isn't much time to get situated in an area before they have to get ready for another upcoming move. When

parents aren't moving, they may be facing long-distance periods of time away from their children and spouses when they are either deployed or doing specialized training. These are unique challenges faced by parents in the Air Force that appear to affect how they view parental involvement.

Lastly, all of the parents were able to identify ways in which they were involved with their child's education at school and at home, but everyone seemed to agree that the most influential involvement occurred outside of school and included more than just academics. When being present on school campuses, parents felt they weren't involved academically but only there to help with fundraisers and field trips which they don't mind doing as long as they have the availability. This aligns with a lot of the available literature on parental involvement, indicating that parents believe that the most important way to get involved is to support their child's education at home academically, socially, and emotionally (Whitaker and Hoover-Dempsey, 2013). These parents do this by staying connected with teachers and keeping track of their children's grades and assignments so that they can intervene as needed. They also go beyond academics by helping their children develop positive social interactions through sports and extracurricular activities. It seems that parents have a greater impact on their children's education at home than on campus.

Ethnicity Factors. This research sought to understand the parental views of different ethnic groups in the military. With there only being one African American participant, answering the question in regards to racial influence on parental involvement cannot be generalized or answered satisfactorily. Future research looking into Air Force parents' perspectives should certainly include a larger ethnically diverse group of

participants because the Air Force is made up of 30% non-white racial groups. This research did include two white mothers of biracial children, a topic that was not addressed in the interview questions but should be accounted for in future research. Both mothers shared experiences unique to their family demographic and could possibly have an affect on their parental views.

Reflection

Throughout the course of this research I chose to keep a journal that addressed any personal bias that I had (see appendix F for Reflection Questions). There were two major views that were reoccurring throughout the reflection process: my interest in learning about the military and my view on school choice. Parents spoke very openly about their military experience and knowledge, especially the service members themselves, which fed into my own personal curiosity. At times during the interviews, we would get off topic talking about their careers, duty stations, and general military life. While the research certainly sought to understand how those in the military felt about parental involvement, I do believe that we could have spent more time discussing the how military life affects education.

As for school choice, parents spoke about this quite a bit and shared their opinions of each school based on testing performance, demographics, and available resources. As a teacher, it was difficult holding back my opposing opinions and knowledge on education. For example, most of the parents discussed why they did or didn't choose to have their child attend a base school at each duty assignment based on their peer's recommendations and school performance posted online rather than visiting the schools

and observing classrooms. I had to separate my opinions from the analysis of these portions of the interviews by trying to understand their perspectives as parents who value academics but lack a professional background in education.

Overall, the findings of this research would greatly benefit from surveying a wider range of parents to better capture the military parent's idea of academic involvement. After learning of these parents' opinions of their current Air Force Base and how they formed those opinions, I would like to see if others' perspectives are similar or differ across bases. If I had included technology to gain responses from a larger network of parents across all Air Force Bases in the United States, then the current findings may be further supported or more themes may emerge. Quick electronic surveys have the potential to reach and attract more people so I may also have had more participation, therefore a greater understanding of views on parental involvement.

Further Research

More research needs to be done on military perspectives on parental involvement and education. To validate the findings of this research and provide a more in-depth understanding of military parents and their perspectives, a more diverse group of volunteers would be needed. Having a group of participants who represent the Air Force ethnic population would help answer any questions regarding racial influences on parental involvement. It should also be anticipated that some primary caregivers might be the military sponsor, dual military, or a military dependent. Separating these three kinds of parents is important because they each have different perspectives about the

military lifestyle. In conclusion, continuing to research this topic would greatly improve

our understanding of the estimated 35,000 military families in our country.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Informed Consent Form

Project Title: Investigating Military Parents' Perspectives on Parental Involvement

Researcher: Carolyn Mullan, Oklahoma State University Master's Student

Purpose:

The purpose of this research study is to investigate how military parents perceive parental involvement when their children are in elementary school and whether ethnic or cultural factors play a role in those perceptions. As the researcher, I assume that parents have a variety ways in which they become involved in their elementary child's education. Widening the vision of what it means to be academically involved in a child's education, especially within a demographically diverse group like the Air Force, is important for improving on-base education.

As the participant, you will be asked to discuss different questions in regard to parent involvement and your experiences in and out of schools. Your views are an important contribution to understanding how parents and teachers can create the best possible learning scenarios for military children.

Procedures:

You will participate in three different kinds of interviews: 1) Focus Group Interview, 2) Individual Interview, and 3) Brief Follow-Up Email Interview. The Focus Group Interview will consist of 6-8 individuals who will discuss the topic of parent involvement for 45 minutes, which will be videotaped and kept confidential. The Individual Interviews will be voice recorded and occur twice, each for 45 minutes, exploring your personal views and experiences on the topic of parental involvement. The Brief Follow-Up Email Interview will serve as an opportunity for you to clarify information you provided so that your ideas aren't misrepresented.

Risks of Participation:

There are no known risks to participate due to the confidentiality of all information gathered, including demographics and location. Video and voice recordings will remain confidential and will not be released to any other party.

Benefits:

Allowing the analysis of your perspectives and experiences could potentially serve to improve parent involvement opportunities and views within elementary schools. There are several misconceptions about parental involvement according to recent data, so your participation would add knowledge to the field of education.

Confidentiality:

All information regarding participants and data collected will be kept in the locked files of the researcher. Within the written analysis of data, there will be no identification or description of any individuals, including locations and demographics, in order to completely protect all participants. Once all research has been completed and presented, all documents and recordings will be destroyed and never used again.

Contacts:

If you have any questions about the research process or information provided, please contact the researcher:

Carolyn Mullan

cmullan@okstate.edu

805-302-8503

If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chair, Dr. Hugh Crethar at 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu.

Participant Rights:

Participation in this research is completely voluntary and the participants reserve the right to withdrawal at any time.

Signatures:

I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy of this form has been given to me.

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   Date

I certify that I have personally explained this document before requesting that the participant sign it.

_____   _____

Signature of Researcher   Date

Appendix B

Focus Group Interview Questions

1. How would you describe parental involvement?

2. How do you think at-home involvement differs from in-school involvement?

3. Would anyone like to describe how they see increased parental involvement having an influence on their children?

4. How does having a elementary students, while in the Air Force, make a difference in how involved one might be in their child's education?

5. Let's discuss any positive or negative experiences you have had in regard to becoming involved in your child's education.

Appendix C

First Individual Interview Questions

1. Let's start with a brief introduction of who you are and what your background is.

2. Are either of you involved in any other way within the Air Force, other than professionally?

3. What do you or your husband/wife do within the Air Force?

4. What has your experience been like in the Air Force as a parent?

5. In what ways, if any, do you think that the experience in the Air Force is unique compared with other US public schools?

6. How many base schools has your child attended?

7. Has your child ever attended any DoDDS schools?

8. How would you compare your experiences between the schools?

9. How did your involvement in your child's education change, if at all, from school to school?

10. Were there any similarities between you and other parents at the schools in regard to participation? Differences? How so?

Appendix D

Second Individual Interview Questions

1. In what ways do you elect to become involved in your child's education at home?

2. Are there any ways a parent can become involved that may be more important than others?

3. How do you think your family influenced your current beliefs on parental involvement, if at all?

4. What are the major factors that influence levels of involvement?

5. Is there any particular ethnicity or culture you most identify with?

6. Do you think either of those play a role in how you choose to become involved? How so?

7. How does the school facilitate or encourage volunteer opportunities or on-campus meetings that include parents?

8. How often are you able to speak to school staff or your child's teachers?

9. Do you ever have opportunities to talk with other school staff who come in contact with your child?

10. Does your child attend daycare or any after-school activities?

11. If so, what prompted the choice to utilize those programs?

12. How do you think these activities help or hinder academically?

Appendix E

Social Forum Invitation

Dear Military Spouses:

I am currently conducting research for my thesis on Military Parental Involvement, as part of the graduate program at Oklahoma State University. In order to complete the research, I need as many volunteers as possible who are current military parents of elementary aged children who attend school on base. I will be selecting 6-8 participants who best fit the needs of the research questions at hand. Below you will find a document that details the research more thoroughly, including terms of participation as well as contact and confidentiality information.

Thank you for your time!

Warmest regards,

Carolyn Mullan

Appendix F

Journal Reflection Questions

1. What is personal background information may influence your own perspective on academics, ethnicity and/or parents?

2. What interview questions did you choose to go into more detail with the participant(s) compared to ones you didn't choose to go into more detail with? Why did you show more interest in some answers and not others?

3.   What stood out the most to you in each interview? Why?

4. Did you have any goals or assumptions prior to conducting research?

Appendix G

IRB Approval Letter

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date:	Thursday, May 28, 2015
IRB Application No	ED1590
Proposal Title:	Investigating military parents' perspectives on parent involvement in the lives of elementary students
Reviewed and Processed as:	Exempt

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved   Protocol Expires: 5/27/2008

Principal
Investigator(s):

Carolyn Mullan   Jennifer Job
                                                  254 Willard
Stillwater, OK 74078   Stillwater, OK 74078

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

☐ The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval. Protocol modifications requiring approval may include changes to the title, PI advisor, funding status or sponsor, subject population composition or size, recruitment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, research site, research procedures and consent/assent process or forms
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of the research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Dawnett Watkins 219 Cordell North (phone: 405-744-5700, dawnett.watkins@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,

Hugh Crethar, Chair
Institutional Review Board

VITA

Carolyn Ashly Mullan

Candidate for Degree of Master of Science

Teaching, Learning and Leadership

Thesis: INVESTIGATING MILITARY PARENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON PARENTAL

INVOLVEMENT IN THE LIVES OF STUDENTS, IF THE MILITARY WANTED

YOU TO HAVE A FAMILY THEY WOULD HAVE ISSUED YOU ONE

Major Field: Education

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in Teaching, Learning and Leadership at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in December, 2015.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Science in your major at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, California in 2010.

Experience:

2010-2013   Elementary School Teacher in San Miguel Joint School District
2013-2014   Elementary School Teacher in Petaluma City Schools District