"Two Crowds": Adolescents from Military and Nonmilitary Families

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"Two Crowds": Adolescents from Military and Nonmilitary Families

A dissertation Presented

by

Michal Setti Parnes

Submitted to the Graduate School of Education

Lesley University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

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Jewish Educational Leadership Specialization
"Two Crowds": Adolescents from Military and Nonmilitary Families

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Approvals

In the judgment of the following signatories, this Dissertation meets the academic standards that have been established for Doctor of Philosophy Degree.

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Abstract

Children from military families comprise nearly 4% of the entire school-age population of the United States, and over 80% of those children attend public schools serving both military and nonmilitary student populations (Ruff and Keim, 2014). The purpose of this phenomenological study was to gain an understanding of how high school students from military and nonmilitary families experience their social interaction. Primary data sources included individual interviews with 14 current or recent students of both groups and a focus group interview with nine current or recent high school students. Thematic analysis of the data led to four findings that illuminated the phenomenon of social interaction between students from both backgrounds. First, participants recognized the distinctive nature of their social experience and emphasized its deep and long-standing impact. Second, participants reported that they often needed to rely on their own intentional efforts to initiate and maintain interaction. Third, participants indicated that, from their perspectives, school personnel were not attentive to the nature and nuances of the distinctive social fabric. Finally, it appeared to them that leaders of both military and nonmilitary communities and school personnel did not adjust policies and practices to accommodate and build off the opportunities of this atypical social mix. The findings (a) indicate the need for school personnel and leaders of both communities to consciously facilitate social interaction of adolescents and (b) illuminate unrecognized opportunities in this context to foster mutual understanding, the pursuit of which is fundamental to life in a democracy.

Keywords: military and nonmilitary communities, adolescent social interaction, democratic education, leadership
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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my bright sun (Nata - my husband) and shining stars (Itai, Shira and Dana – my children). I love you to the moon and back and would have never completed this journey without your encouragement, wisdom, and support. This dissertation is also dedicated to my Senior Advisor, Dr. Paul Naso, who genuinely illuminated my path and nurtured my professional and personal growth.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Across the United States, from school system to school system, it is possible to see countless beliefs about how to conduct public education. The face and aims of schooling make their appearance in communities in quite varied ways. Boyle and Burns (2012) elaborate on this variability stating that “American public education has multiple goals…For some [people the goal] may be student achievements. For some, it may be ensuring equal educational opportunity…And for still others, it may be ensuring social and moral order” (p.2). Hansen (2011) further underlines the importance of the social aspect within the public education system noting that schools may present an opportunity for teachers and students to develop an openness to new people, ideas, and experiences. Not only can public school systems function as a mechanism to enhance individual academic achievements and skills, but they may also provide students with opportunities through which to engage with a diversity of ideas, experiences, and social groups and individuals who encounter various life experiences. More specifically, public school systems in a democratic society should be attentive to social aspects, including (but not limited to) navigating cultural and social differences and assigning meaning to the social reality within the school setting. Gutmann (1992) emphasizes public schools’ obligation in a democratic society to represent equally all students of varied backgrounds and provide them with the same equal opportunities. Similarly, Greene (1996) refers to the social component within the nature of education, mentioning that “education, after all, has to do with engaging live human beings in activities of meaning-making, dialogue, and reflective understanding of texts, including the texts of their social realities” (p.305). And Dewey (1916, 1925, 1927) views the school system as a social entity for children to create a shared space through a genuine and productive dialogue around their experiences and social realities. Ultimately, Gutmann (1992), Greene
(1996), and Dewey (1916, 1925, 1927) point out that public school systems should consider the social aspect in relation to the nature of education and its primary purposes.

One such instance when the social facet may be especially evident is when public schools across the country have the opportunity to operate as a vehicle for individuals to experience an atypical diverse social blend when they, for example, serve children from both military and nonmilitary families. According to the Department of Defense Report (2018), many communities across the United States have schools with student bodies in which a notable percentage of the students are from military families. This military population may bring to both local communities and public-school settings their rich life circumstances since they experience multiple relocations domestically and abroad (i.e., Germany, South Korea, and Japan).

Additionally, this group of children may also benefit those local communities and schools because it is not uncommon for the military families (whose children attend a given school) to have cultural, social, or economic backgrounds quite different from the communities where their children attend school. According to the Department of Defense Report (2018), the military population consists of 70.8% white members, 16.8% African American members, 4.4% Asian members, 1% American Indian or Alaskan Native members, 1% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander members, and 2.5% multi-cultural members, and 3.5% are considered as other/unknown. Similarly, children from the local community may enrich the children from military families with their sociocultural backgrounds, as is the case of Hawaiian public schools. Berg (2008) expounds on this potential benefit describing how Hawaiian public schools—where military families comprise 8% of the total student population—navigate this social integration as an opportunity for children of military families to experience Hawaiian cultural values, including cooperation, helping others, and responsibility.
Social commingling of children from military families and their nonmilitary peers (from the local community) may result in some barriers, as mentioned in Ruff and Keim (2014), but it may also present a fascinating opportunity for enhancing the sociocultural awareness and social capital of both groups. The challenges described by Ruff and Keim (2014) indicate the importance of understanding how young people develop this awareness and acquire that capital in such contexts. Accordingly, my own interest in examining the nature of this social capital stems from my personal experience living within a community in the Northeast region of the United States in which children from military families comprise at least 30% of students in local public schools. Many of those military families live in town (and not on a military base) and fully participate in the community’s social activities. In other words, there is an ongoing social interaction between children from military families and their nonmilitary peers, both on school and community levels. Also, my routine interactions with military families in the community have fascinated and engaged me personally. But they have also kindled an interest in examining more systematically how members of a community experience this phenomenon and what can be learned from those lived experiences about the vitality of communities and the educational opportunities they offer young people. Ultimately, the country’s diverse demographic composition and some substantial events in its history enhanced my interest in learning about communities consisting of varied voices, backgrounds, and experiences.

Statement of the Problem

Most of the recent literature regarding children from military families has explored this population’s distinctive life circumstances and the emotional and academic challenges these children face. For instance, the scholarly works of Berg (2008), Ruff et al., (2014), and Cole (2016) address the challenges this population encounter, including dealing with the deployment
of a parent, coping with a parent’s brain injury, or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD),
adjusting to various school cultures and academic requirements, or experiencing on average
nine school transitions from Kindergarten to high school graduation. However, while there is
some established understanding through literature regarding this population’s life conditions
and emotional and academic challenges, there is limited scholarship on the nature of social
interaction between students from military families and their nonmilitary peers.

Moreover, the majority of current literature regarding students from military families is
groundedinthevoicesofstakeholderswithinthemilitarysystem,educatorsinDepartmentof
Defense (DoD) schools, scholars, and additional actors who portray the life circumstances of
children from military families. Little attention, however, has been placed on the authentic
voices of students who encounter this uncommon social reality. Furthermore, Risberg, Curtis,
and Shivers (2014) elaborate on the possible incomplete understanding of some school
personnel regarding the social blend of these two groups mentioning that these educators neither
served in the military system nor have any personal experiences with military culture. Thus,
school personnel may have insufficient recognition of this distinctive social reality.

The scholarly accounts of Greene (1996), Gutmann (1999), and Dewey (1916, 1925,
1927) regarding the purposes of public schools in a democratic society indicate another angle for
the need to examine this research problem. Greene highlights the substantial role of social
interaction in public schools, where diverse social and cultural voices “come together” (p. 312).
Gutmann highlights the idea of democratic education focusing on how the students should bring
their varied backgrounds into the social dialogue, and Dewey emphasizes the responsibility of
educators in a democratic society to ensure a social and educational system in which individuals
become able to engage in a dialogue and critically analyze their and others’ social reality and experiences.

It is critical to examine this social phenomenon due to the considerable number of children from military families who attend public schools across the country in which both military and nonmilitary student populations are in attendance. According to Ruff and Keim (2014, p. 103), children from military families comprise nearly 4% of the entire school-age population and encounter an atypical set of experiences and conditions. These authors (2014) also report that over 80% of military children attend public schools that serve both military and nonmilitary student population (the other children from military families are either home-schooled or attend schools located on military bases).

Overall, it is essential to closely examine this social phenomenon in public school settings in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of how the social voices of students of disparate backgrounds come together or pull apart. A thorough awareness of this uncommon social sphere may fill a gap in the scholarship. But, in the practical sphere it might provide concrete insights into the incomplete understanding of some community stakeholders and school personnel who work with these diverse social groups.

**Purpose of the Study**

The primary purpose of this phenomenological study was to develop a comprehensive understanding of the nature of social interaction between military students and their nonmilitary peers from the perspectives of the adolescents themselves. The researcher asked current and recent high school students from both backgrounds to describe their lived social experiences in attending public high school in which both groups are in attendance. This study also inquired about identifiable steps and activities that current and recent high school students from both
populations found effective in enhancing this social blend. Lastly, this study presented what the study participants believed would benefit this exceptional social fabric’s quality. The following three questions guided the course of this study:

- How do current and recent high school students from both military and nonmilitary families describe their shared social interactions when they attend or attended a public high school that serves both military and nonmilitary students?
- What activities and steps, on the behalf of their school, community, and families, do current and recent high school students from both military and nonmilitary families report as effective in introducing and fostering social interaction between the two populations?
- What recommendations do current and recent high school students from military and nonmilitary families believe will enhance the social interaction?

**Definition of Terms**

This section outlines the terms used in this study.

**Active Duty**

Full-time duty in the active military service of the United States, including active duty or full-time training duty in the Reserve Component. Also called AD. (Retrieved from [https://fas.org/irp/doddir/dod/jp1_02.pdf](https://fas.org/irp/doddir/dod/jp1_02.pdf))

**Active Guard and Reserve**

National Guard and Reserve members who are on voluntary active duty providing full-time support to National Guard, Reserve, and Active Component organizations for the purpose of
organizing, administering, recruiting, instructing, or training the Reserve Components. Also
called AGR. (Retrieved from https://fas.org/irp/doddir/dod/jp1_02.pdf)

**Children from a Military Family**

For the purpose of this study, children from military families are defined as children of a
current member (in active duty, active guard, or reserve service) of the United States
Military System.

**Department of Defense Components**

The Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Military Departments, the Chairman of the Joint
Chiefs of Staff and the Joint Staff, the combatant commands, the Office of the Inspector General
of the Department of Defense, the Department of Defense agencies, Department of Defense field
activities, and all other organizational entities in the Department of Defense. Also called DoD.
(Retrieved from https://fas.org/irp/doddir/dod/jp1_02.pdf)

**DoD Schools**

Department of Defense schools provide pre-Kindergarten through grade 12 education to children
of military servicemembers. Those schools are located on military bases across the country and
overseas.

**Deployment Planning**

Operational planning is directed toward the movement of forces and sustainment resources from
their original locations to a specific operational area [across the country or abroad] for conducting
the joint operations contemplated in a given plan. (Retrieved from
https://fas.org/irp/doddir/dod/jp1_02.pdf)
Public High Schools

Public schools are designed for adolescent students, typically between the ages of 15-18, and comprise grades 9 through 12 or 10 through 12.

Social Capital

Putnam defines social capital as “features of social life-networks, norms, and trust that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives” (as cited in Field, 2008, p.35).

Significance of the Study

Current and recent high school students from military families and their nonmilitary peers who attend or attended a public high school (in which both groups are in attendance) experience an atypical social phenomenon. The social interaction between these two groups may create social and cultural barriers, but it may also create a fascinating opportunity for them to enhance their understanding of community and develop the social capital and civic capacity needed to connect with individuals from different backgrounds. Knowledge regarding this uncommon social interaction may help school personnel (including schools without military students but with discrete populations), leaders of both military and nonmilitary communities, parents of both backgrounds, and future generations of students within public schools.

Delimitations of the Study

The participants in this study were limited to current and recent high school students who attend or attended a small number of public schools located near a military base in the Northeastern region of the United States. The experiences of this small sample of 14 participants
were not necessarily representative of adolescents or high school students who attend or attended various public high schools (that serve both military and nonmilitary populations) in other regions of the country. Namely, because this study presented only the selected participants’ perceptions, there was no intention to generalize findings beyond the study’s participants’ lived experiences.

**Review of the Literature**

This section introduces the literature that informed this study and was organized according to four areas of focus. The first body of literature considered the distinctive life circumstances of military families and the various challenges this population through the work of scholars, including Berg (2008), De Pedro, Atuel, Malchi, Esquenda, Benbenishty and Astor (2014), and Cole (2016). The second area of focus included a literature review examining human development theories and adolescents’ emotional and social well-being. The third area of focus considered social interaction theories in order to explore the importance and potential benefits of interactions within a socially diverse setting, beginning by introducing a theory of social capital and its various aspects through works of scholars including Bourdieu (1977), Coleman (1988), Field (2008), and Putnam (2000). This section also addressed the importance of social capital to the individual, community, and society through the academic works of (Dewey, 1914, Greene, 1996, Gutmann, 1999, Putnam, 2000, Hansen, 2013, and Gutmann as cited in Sardoc, 2018). Namely, this section included broader views on the ways in which the idea of developing social capital within a community may foster a sense of civic engagement and sustain democratic principles of pluralism, inclusion, fairness, equity, and a sense of obligation to others’ backgrounds and the public good.
The last area of focus included a review of literature related to explanations or theories of leadership that are oriented towards fostering social interaction, understanding the complexity of social fabric, and bridging the diversity of values and backgrounds. This literature review considered several leadership approaches, including the eco-leadership (Western, 2008), ethical (Preedy, Bennett & Wise, 2002), servant (Greenleaf, 1977, Cerit, 2010), and democratic (Woods, 2005 and Kilicoglu, 2018) leadership approaches. Then, this section considered scholarship concerning educational leaders’ responsibilities in bringing diverse social and cultural voices together in a common space and the connection between education and public education through the scholarly works of Dewey (1916, 1925, and 1927), Greene (1996), Gutmann (1996), Pepin and Aiken (2009), Marzano (2003), and Sanders (2006).

It was critical to examine leadership approaches and scholarly works regarding the connection between education and democratic values since they considered leadership as a force that enables and facilitates the coalescing of and mutual understanding among disparate groups. Overall, the four areas of literature provided insights into the nature of social interaction of adolescents from both military and nonmilitary families. These sections of literature will be discussed in Chapter Two.

**Design of the Study**

This section introduces the method and procedures that guided the study. It also provides information regarding the study's organization, the setting and selection of participants, and the researcher’s role within this study. Also, the anticipated procedures for data collection, data management, and data analysis will be described.
In particular, this qualitative study employed a phenomenological research approach in order to explore the social experiences of adolescents from both military and nonmilitary families who attend or attended public high school (in which both student populations are in attendance). Creswell and Poth (2018) state that a “phenomenological study describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon” (p.75). The advantage of using this research approach is that it directly presents the voices of adolescents from both military and nonmilitary families who encountered a similar yet specific social phenomenon. Also, the primary locations for recruiting participants were three communities located in the Northeastern part of the U.S; they are in close proximity to a single military base. As primary sources of data, I interviewed 14 participants (four current students from military families, four current students from nonmilitary families, three recent high school students from military families, and three recent high school students from nonmilitary families) individually. In addition, a focus group discussion was conducted with some of these individuals on their shared social interaction.

My role within this study was multifaceted as I live in a community in which military families comprise at least 30% of students in local public schools, and my family members and I have personal experience regarding social interaction between these two groups. Therefore, my role was to be aware of my own responses to this experience and optimally control her biases regarding this research topic. Also, I needed to reflect upon her obligation to maintain a neutral position throughout both individual and focus group interviews and had an obligation to avoid “taking sides” (Creswell, 2014) or reframing the social relationship between the participants. The interview’s questions were articulated in a way that the participants
understood that I did not have any prior knowledge or experience regarding the nature of this social phenomenon, the participants’ feelings, or how did they experience the phenomenon.

Data collection procedure consisted of three phases. The first phases included conducting online surveys that were used for recruitment purposes by identifying suitable candidates for the study and gain some initial sense regarding the social phenomenon. The second phase was associated with conducting individual interviews, and the last one related to conducting a focus group interview. Times and locations of interviews, both individual and focus group, were scheduled to best suit the study participants. Interview locations included local community centers, coffee shops, or any other locations preferred by the participants. Furthermore, all interviews were conducted after school hours and at a time that did not interfere with any of the interviewees' extra-curricular activities. After conducting both individual and focus group interviews, I sent a copy of several following questions to the study’s participants to give them additional opportunity to share their experiences and feelings with regard to the discussed phenomenon. Finally, artifacts were another potential source of data. I inquired about sources such as school web page posts and any students’ creative expressions (essay, art piece, poem, speech, blog post, and more) that might be relevant to this topic. These sources provided further insights into the experiences and feelings described by the participants.

All interviews were audio-recorded, and the data collected from those interviews are kept secure and confidential. Survey data, recordings, and transcriptions were only viewed by me and are stored on a password-protected computer that only I can access. Actual names of the participants, the schools, or the communities are known only to me and were changed to protect
the participants’ privacy. Upon completion of the dissertation, all transcripts and paper copies will be destroyed.

Throughout the data analysis process, I recognized possible units of meaning (that were coded manually) using open coding to develop the initial meaning units and categories. Then descriptive codes were further formed with each round of reading both individual and focus group interviews’ transcripts until data saturation (widest possible range of codes) was developed (Merriam, 2009). Similar codes were placed into sub-themes and themes according to the relationships between the codes and their meaning. Namely, the themes constructed as part of the process to explain the phenomenon, similar to analysis methods described by Creswell and Poth (2018) and Saldaña (2016). More specific information on the method and procedures guided the study, setting and selection of participants, the researcher’s role, data collection, management, and analysis is discussed in Chapter Three. Chapter Four includes more details on how the analysis unfolded and the findings.

**Chapter Outline**

Chapter One is titled Introduction and contains an overview of the organization of the dissertation, the Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, and Guiding Research Questions. Chapter Two is titled Literature Review and contained four bodies of literature that informed the study. Chapter Three is named Methods and Procedures and considers the methods and procedures for collecting data to address the research questions. Chapter Four is titled Findings and contains a detailed analysis of the findings and their connection to the research guiding questions. Chapter Five is titled Summary, Discussion, Future Research, and Final Thoughts. It summarizes the study,
discusses the findings and their implications, details areas for further research, and shares final thoughts.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews theoretical, research, and professional literature to consider existing scholarship related to the social engagement between adolescents from military and nonmilitary families who attend the same public high school. This chapter is organized according to four main sections beginning with characteristics of military families. The second section considers an examination of the issue of human development and the emotional and social well-being of adolescents. The third section regards social relations theories in order to explore the importance and potential benefits of interactions within a socially diverse setting. This section also examines ideas about how developing social capital within a community may foster a sense of civic engagement and sustain democratic principles that encourage diversity of backgrounds, values, and experiences. The last section reviews literature related to explanations or theories of leadership that are oriented towards social interaction, inclusion, and connectedness. Then, this section considers scholarship concerning educational leaders’ responsibilities in bringing diverse social and cultural voices together in a common space. Combined attention to all of these bodies of literature provides insights into the nature of social interaction of adolescents from both military and nonmilitary families and its facets.

Characteristics of Military Families

According to the Department of Defense report (2018), there are 2,101,134 military personnel and 2,627,805 family members (including spouses, children, and adult dependents). Overall, 41.2 percent of military personnel have children, and there are 1,650,464 children from military families. The category with the highest percentage is children between birth and five years of age (37.8%), followed by six to 11 years of age (32.1%), and 12 to 18 years of age.
(23.6%). Fewer children are between 19 and 22 years of age (6.5%). According to this report, school-aged children from military families are likely to experience frequent school transitions.

The report (2018) also describes that this overall military force consists of 70.8% white members, 16.8% African-American members, 4.4% Asian members, 1% American Indian or Alaskan Native members, 1% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander members, 2.5% of members reported themselves as multi-cultural, and 3.5% are considered as other/unknown. Figure 1 displays the racial backgrounds of members of United States Military.

**Figure 1**

![Racial Background of Members of the United States Military](image)

This report (2018) also indicates that the majority of active-duty enlisted members (87.3%) are stationed in the United States and U.S territories. The next largest number of this population are stationed in East Asia (6.4%) and Europe (5%). Figure 2 displays the possible stations for active-duty enlisted members of the United States military.
Military families’ transience is an extensive issue and has various implications for both military and nonmilitary populations. Military population’s transience results from forced transitions, often occurring with less than 30 days’ notice (Gomez & Yebenitz, 2012). Berg (2008) asserts that “unlike most of our citizens, military families have no choice in where they live, work, and raise their families” (p.41). Military transience is clearly defined as when a parent (or both parents in rare cases) must transfer from one duty station to another one, and the military personnel’s dependents (spouse, children, and/or other adult dependents) move with him or her. The new designated duty station can be in a different state or even outside of the United States. Ultimately, transience among children from military families is nonvoluntary and originates primarily within the military system due to the organization’s requirements and training programs. The next section observes the struggles students from military families face as compared to their nonmilitary peers.
Challenges for Students from Military Families

Students from military families face multiple challenges. Research on military children suggests the following factors as main challenges for this population: (a) frequent school transitions (Berg, 2008); (b) inconsistent academic standards and curriculum (Sherman & Glenn, 2011, Sundhinaraset, Mmari & Blum, 2010, and Ruff et al., 2014); (c) parent deployment (Esqueda, Astor, & De Pedro, 2012, Cole 2016, and Aronson & Perkins, 2012); (d) coping with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) of their parent (National Center for PTSD, 2017, Sayers, Farrow, Ross, & Oslin, 2009); (e) restructuring their human and social capital (Bradshaw, Sudhinaraset, Mmari & Blum, 2010); and (f) adjusting to a new school culture (Bradshaw, Sudhinaraset, Mmari & Blum, 2010). An explanation of each of the preceding points is discussed below.

According to Berg (2008), students from military families relocate an average of three times as often as other children and attend from six to nine schools during their K-12 school years. Berg states that the “Army shows average military family moving every three years and nine times over a 20-year career, not including deployments that separate parents from children” (p. 42). Berg presents an example of a typical schooling sequence for a 13-year-old military child, suggesting that a child from a military family at that age might experience five relocations and school changes. These relocations might include adjustments to various public-school districts (in the U.S.), adjustment to overseas (i.e., Germany, Korea) DoDEA (Department of Defense Education Activity) schools, and adjustment to DoDEA schools across the U.S.

School transitions may involve adjusting to different school climate, social conditions (of both the school and the local community members), or different academic requirements and curricula. Accordingly, Sherman and Glenn (2011) assert that “with each move to another state
and school, military children encounter the challenges of slow transfer of records and differences in school curricula, which increase frustration with the transition process for parents and students” (as cited in Ruff et al., 2014, p.10). Sundhinaraset, Mmari, and Blum (2010) explore the different academic requirements and curricula across various states that could result in educational gaps for military children. For example, missing core curricular themes such as multiplication and fractions can increase the likelihood that a student will have to repeat a grade. Another issue that may constitute a challenge for children from military families is the variation from state to state regarding the yearly cut-off date for kindergarten eligibility.

This population also experiences limited access to extracurricular activities. Ruff et al. (2014) have found that students involved in sports who relocate throughout the school year may miss their tryouts for teams or an alternative situation in which the new school does not offer the same sports programs these students experienced in their previous school(s). Ruff et al. (2014) also emphasize another factor that limits access to extracurricular activities, stating that “new military students may find that student government elections happened before they entered to the school” (p. 105). This population may experience educational and academic gaps as well as limited access to extracurricular school activities due to their unique conditions, resulting in feelings of anxiety and frustration.

Deployment of a parent is another major difficulty not experienced by nonmilitary children. The recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have increased the rate and frequency of deployments. Esqueda, Astor, and De Pedro (2012) reported that between 2001 and 2012 approximately two million children experienced at least one parental deployment. Studies indicate that parental deployment has a negative impact on children from military families. Cole (2016) finds that separation from a deployed parent and living in a single-parent home (or with...
another guardian) may: (a) increase misbehavior and aggression issues in the classroom; (b) increase personal anxiety and stress; and (c) result in risk-taking behaviors including self-injury and sexual promiscuity. Aronson and Perkins (2012) also underscore this struggle, stating that “studies have found that children and youth do more poorly in school and have decreased social functioning during parental deployment” (p. 516). Ultimately, parental deployment is a distinctive struggle placed on military children. Various studies clearly indicate a negative impact of parental deployment on the whole family, including but not limited to behavioral and mental issues, academic stress, and decreased social functioning.

The challenge of being in the presence of individuals suffering from PTSD is another hardship experienced frequently by children of military families. According to the National Center for PTSD, this phenomenon can occur through experiencing any trauma: “A trauma is a shocking and dangerous event that you see or that happens to you. During this type of event, you think that your life or others' lives are in danger” (National Center for PTSD, 2017). Sayers, Farrow, Ross, and Oslin (2009) elaborate on the difficulties of post-deployment, stating that “75% of recently returned OIF [Operation Iraqi Freedom] and OEF [Operation Enduring Freedom-related to the war in Afghanistan] veterans reported some type of family problems…these problems included feeling disconnected from family, children being afraid of them, and confusion as to their role in the family” (as cited in Aronson & Perkins, 2012, p. 516). Overall, children from military families do not only face hardship during parental deployment; these students also must cope with adjustment hardships of their parent post-deployment. These difficulties include PTSD or other challenges as the parent adjusts back to the family routine and to a different setting.
With each school transition, transient military children must deal with the stress of creating new social relationships alongside the pain of leaving friends behind and adapting to a new school setting at inconvenient times throughout the school year. Bradshaw, Sudhinaraset, Mmari and Blum (2010) examine stressors affecting transient military students during their transitions into a new school setting and find that a key stressor related to frequent relocations is the “challenge of initiating and sustaining close friends” (p. 91). They also described how difficult it was for them to separate from their long-term friends and stated how their friends would treat them differently or pull away from them in preparation for an upcoming move.

In addition to students’ concerns associated with establishing social interactions and “adjusting to the physical building and adapting to the culture and context of school and the broader community” (Bradshaw, Sudhinaraset, Mmari & Blum, 2010, p. 91). Nevertheless, student transience affects not only transient students but also the nonmobile students who are their classmates (as discussed in Chapter Four). The following section examined educational opportunities for military students.

Educational Experiences of Military Students

Military families face a distinctive set of life circumstances. Children who are born to military families live in a transitory state and experience multiple social and cultural environments. Depending on the circumstances and organization at each military base, children in the military population may participate in one of two educational frameworks: (a) Department of Defense Education Activity Schools (DoDEA), which are located on military bases and serve only students from military families; and (b) public schools, that serve both students from military and nonmilitary families. Regardless of the context, families also have a homeschooling option.
As mentioned previously, there are 1,650,464 children from military families, and the data on numbers of students attending each educational setting (DoDEA schools, home schooling option, and public schools that serve both military and nonmilitary families) change rapidly due to the transitory nature of the military system. Ruff et al. (2014) assert that children from military families “[comprise] nearly 4% of the nation’s entire school-age population” (p. 103). Indeed, the vast majority of children from military families attend public schools (over 80%, though some scholars suggest this number is closer to 90%; Ruff et al. 2014). According to the Military Child Education Coalition (EMC-21) report (2012, p. 98), approximately 117,000 children are homeschooled and Esquenda, Astor, and De Pedro (2012) mention that approximately 88,000 students are enrolled in DoDEA schools across the country and worldwide.

In essence, children and adolescents from military families experience frequent school transitions as well as certain life circumstances of military families (i.e., parent deployment, coping with PTSD of the parent, attending educational settings with diverse backgrounds, and restructuring their social capital and social interactions). But adolescents from military families (as adolescents from nonmilitary families) may also face universal issues and feelings of vulnerability and confusion involving biological, psychological and social changes that typically occur in this life phase. It is not apparent that researchers who have studied the experiences of children from military families have examined the nature of their social interaction with their nonmilitary peers.
The Nature of Adolescence

Definitions of Adolescence

Adolescence is a life phase marked by physiological, cognitive, and psychosocial changes. According to Spear (2000), adolescence refers to the transitional process of progressing from the immaturity and social dependency of childhood to the achievement of independence and self-sufficiency in adulthood. Similarly, Dahl and Gunnar reported that “adolescence is a key developmental time involving biological, psychological, and social changes, including challenging academics, extracurricular activities, relationships (peers, romantic interests, family), risk-taking behaviors, and emotional sensitivities” (as cited in Williams, Turner-Henson, Davis & Soistmann, 2017, p. 65). Notably, there is consensus within the literature regarding adolescence as a transitional period between childhood and adulthood involving biological, psychological, and social changes.

Scholars, historically, have suggested varying frameworks for defining the term of adolescence. Arnett (2006) reports that Hall’s publication in 1904 regarding the aspects of adolescence is widely viewed as a foundation for scholarly and scientific research in this field. Arnett (1999) also emphasizes that Hall’s definition of adolescence includes themes of “storm and stress, conflicts with parents, and mood disruptions.” Shanahan, Erickson, and Bauer (2005) make a similar argument when they report that “Hall’s Adolescence of 1904 greatly influenced subsequent research in thematic terms. Such themes include an interdisciplinary approach to the study of youth, the formative role of context, and the malleability of adolescents as individuals and of adolescence as a phase of life”. (p. 38) Overall, numerous scholars have suggested varying frameworks for defining the term of adolescence.
Theoretical Perspectives on Adolescence

Steinberg’s (2016) discussion of adolescent development organizes relevant theories according to three categories: biosocial, organismic, and contextual.

Biosocial Theories

Steinberg (2016) indicates that biosocial theories mostly emphasize “the hormonal and physical changes of puberty as driving forces” (p. 8), and these biological changes primarily shape the adolescent’s development. Steinberg also argues that Hall’s legacy presents the main ideas of biosocial theory. Hall’s scholarly work published in 1904 mentioned the assumption that human development is influenced mostly by physiologic forces including hormonal changes rather than environmental ones. Further, Steinberg indicates that Hall’s (1904) conception of adolescent development was influenced by Darwin’s (1859/1979) theory of evolution in which development is shaped by pre-determined physiologic changes. In sum, biosocial perspectives suggest that physiological factors shape adolescent development.

Organismic Theories

Organismic theories present an additional perspective for understanding adolescent development. Ford and Lerner (1992) argue that these theories acknowledge the impact of physiological factors but support the idea that environmental factors need also to be considered. Steinberg (2016) introduces several key organismic theoreticians including Freud (1923/2010), Piaget, (1966) and Erikson (1959). Freud’s (1923/2010) theory focused on human development beginning in the period of infancy. He focused on psychosexual conflicts experienced by the individual and developed five stages in chronological order positing the individual should go through all these phases during her or his life journey.
Although Erickson’s (1959) child development theory might be grounded in Freudian psychoanalytic philosophy, Erickson focused on psychosocial aspects rather than psychosexual conflicts experienced by the individual. Erickson’s developmental stages theory consists of eight areas of conflicts: basic trust versus mistrust, autonomy versus shame and doubt, initiative versus guilt, industry versus inferiority, identity versus identity diffusion, intimacy and solidarity versus isolation, and three stages of adulthood (Erickson, 1959). Steinberg (2016) concludes that “according to Erickson, the challenge of adolescence is to resolve the identity crises and to emerge with a coherent sense of who one is and where one is headed” (p. 9). Ultimately, both Freud (1923/2010) and Erickson (1959) are organismic scholars who propose theories for human development considering conflicts between the factors as described above. However, the social perspective in Erickson’s philosophy diverges from Freud’s emphasis which based on internal biological factors.

Piaget’s (1966) organismic theory presents additional progress with regard to understanding childhood development. He outlines four phases of development that are associated with cognitive changes among children and adolescents. More specifically, according to Piaget’s theory, one of the most meaningful changes in adolescence involves the development of formal operational thought and the capacity to form abstract ideas, think deeply, and analyze hypothetical problems. Indeed, this cognitive ability evolves from both internal biological and intellectual changes.

In conclusion, Whereas Hall’s and Darwin’s theories tend to emphasize biosocial factors, Freud’s, Erikson’s, and Piaget’s theories focus on organismic aspects. These organismic philosophies consist of a series of developmental phases which individuals should pass through during their transition from infancy to adulthood and emphasize the connection between
biological changes and environmental forces. More precisely, Freud in his theory identifies the internal psychosexual factors, Erikson emphasizes the social ones, and Piaget highlights the cognitive aspects.

**Contextual Theories**

Biosocial theories rely heavily on physical aspects and organismic theories underscore the interaction between biological changes and environmental factors. According to Steinberg (2016), contextual theories, on the other hand, focus on the context in which behavior occurs and stress that setting plays a substantial role in understanding adolescent development. Further, Steinberg explains that social learning theories “emphasize the ways in which adolescents learn how to behave, but in contrast to behaviorists, they place more weight on the process of modeling and observational learning” (p. 9). Gestsdottir and Lerner (2008) make a similar argument, reporting that adolescents are products of their environment. Indeed, according to these theories, family members, peers, and school staff play a crucial role in the adolescent’s development and support their social and emotional growth.

Some scholars tend to stress the contextual and cultural characteristics of human development rather than rigid developmental phases, such as those proposed by Piaget and Erikson. Lerner, Lerner, De Stefanis and Apfel, (2001), for instance, argue that human development in general and adolescent development more specifically are shaped by the dynamic relations between the individual and a certain context. Lerner et al. (2001) present the idea of Developmental Systems Models (DSM), mentioning that these models “integrate both individual and contextual levels of analysis in a relational manner—ones that place substantive emphasis on understanding the diversity of adolescent development” (p. 9). In other words, DSM do not examine the adolescent developmental period in terms of a universal phenomenon
but rather emphasize dynamic and diverse interactions between the adolescent and her or his context as central factors in her or his development.

In addition, the idea of DSM has much in common with Vygotsky’s theory (1978). His theory emphasizes the importance of social interactions and the community in the process of learning and making meaning. Vygotsky’s theory also considers the connections between people and the sociocultural setting in which they interact in their shared experiences. Accordingly, Heckhausen (1999) stresses the role of environmental aspects in the field of human development. He presents the idea of the adaptive role of external constraints in scaffolding individuals’ efforts to regulate their own development. In other words, Heckhausen further stresses that the process of one’s effort to regulate and navigate his or her sociocultural setting may bring this individual into meaningful human development. In conclusion, contextual theories do not observe human development in general and adolescent development specifically as a ubiquitous phenomenon determined by external factors, but rather observe developmental changes as shaped by the dynamic interaction between individuals and their sociocultural settings. Contextual theories, therefore, help to explain differences in adolescents’ developmental journeys.

**Characteristics of Adolescent Development**

Characteristics of adolescent development fall into five core categories: physical, psychosocial, and intellectual, social, and ethical. Lerner et al. (2001) elaborate on physical developments, stating that “adolescence is a period of rapid physical transitions in such characteristics as height, weight, and body proportions and hormone changes are part of this development” (p. 12). Psychosocial development, alongside physical development, marks this remarkable stage of the life cycle. Caskey and Anfara (2007) report that during adolescence, “emotional and psychological development is characterized by the quest for independence and
identity formation” (p. 3). Gestsdottir and Lemer (2008) further point out that this journey of self-discovery may impair feelings of vulnerability and confusion as adolescents become more aware of the differences between themselves and others.

Intellectual development is another aspect of the adolescent’s developmental journey. This development refers to the changing ability to comprehend, process, adapt, and apply new information (Caskey & Anfara, 2007). Accordingly, Piaget (1966) argues that the capacity for abstract thought is developed during the period of adolescence, and thus may result in the ability to construct deep meaning, analyze and synthesize data, process complex ideas, and reflect upon values, thoughts, and behaviors. Similarly, Manning (1993) suggests that during adolescence, most youths begin to think abstractly, reflectively, and critically and are able to make thoughtful choices based on their own meaning and understanding of the circumstances.

Social development is another aspect of change at this stage of the life cycle. It refers to the individual’s quest for social interactions with other individuals and groups. Manning (1993) suggests that adolescents report that the need for acceptance by peers increases during this stage of development, while the need for adult approval may decrease meaningfully. Similarly, Crosnoe and Johnson (2011) report that developing social interactions with peers is critical for enhancing one’s social identity development. These authors also suggest a central role of the local community in one’s social capacity growth mentioning that “because adolescents have limited mobility, neighborhoods can powerfully structure their lives physically and socially” (p. 7). Notably, the social circumstances of a certain community or neighborhood may also affect the adolescent’s social development.

Finally, Crosnoe and Johnson (2011) suggest that schools are a major ecological setting in which adolescents spend a large proportion of their time. According to the authors, the social
and academic spheres in schools may promote opportunities for creating social networks and contexts in which the adolescents operate, and thus their social capacity may be enhanced. In sum, peers, local community, families, and school settings are crucial factors in the journey of an adolescent’s development.

Another aspect of social development is the issue of moral and ethical development of adolescents. Kohlberg (1980) developed a theory regarding moral development suggesting that there are six stages that individuals experience during their development: (a) punishment-obedience orientation (early childhood) when right and wrong behavior is determined by what is punished by authorities; (b) instrumental-relativist orientation (late childhood) when the right action is determined by what satisfies one’s own needs and an emphasis is placed on fairness and exchanges with others; (c) interpersonal concordance (preadolescence) when one’s motivation and interest become an important consideration and social approval becomes a central factor in moral behavior; and (d) law and order orientation (adolescence-adult). At this stage, the individual “shows respect for rules and authority, which are now considered essential to the maintenance of the social order. One is motivated by the appeal to be a good citizen through doing one's duty and helping to maintain a functional society” (Larsen, 1981, p. 663). Kohlberg mentions that most adults are stage-four thinkers: (e) social-contract legalistic orientation (adult) where law is important but there is some flexibility to negotiate and discuss protections of individual rights to serve the public good; and (f) universal ethical-principle orientation (adult), the highest stage of moral reasoning, which is enhanced by deep commitment to the “values of justice, equality, and the dignity of individual human beings” (Larsen, 1981, p. 664). In conclusion, Kohlberg’s theory sheds light on adolescent’s moral development elucidating that
this stage, youth start developing some civic awareness and an interest in maintaining a functional society.

Similarly, Hart and Carlo (2005) argue that moral development evolves while adolescents start considering their own values and ethical behaviors toward others. Comparably, Caskey and Anfara (2007) report that “young adolescents start to view moral issues in shades of grey rather than strictly in black and white. They start to consider complex moral and ethical questions yet are unprepared to cope with them” (p. 3). Adolescents’ moral capacity and civic awareness increase during the period of adolescence along with biological, social, and cognitive changes.

In essence, adolescence is a remarkable period of human growth and development situated between childhood and adulthood. Whereas some theories emphasize the biological aspects of this period, other philosophies address its organismic facets and the role of contextual circumstances. Furthermore, recent sources (Gestsdottir & Lerner, 2008; Caskey & Anfara, 2007; and Steinberg, 2016) tend to perceive physical, psychosocial, cognitive, social, and moral changes as interrelated and overlapping factors that simultaneously shape the adolescent’s growth. Adolescent’s journey of self-discovery as well as the possible discrepancy between one’s physical growth and emotional and social development may impart feelings of vulnerability and confusion as the adolescent becomes more aware of the differences between him or her and others. These feelings of confusion and vulnerability may present challenges for many adolescents, but they might be even more meaningful to adolescents (who attend public high school in which both military and nonmilitary student groups are in attendance) who experience distinctive social conditions and life circumstances.
Social Interaction Theories

History of Studying Social Interactions

Ideas related to social relationships and social mechanisms and their importance to communities have been discussed in various contexts in the past two centuries. For instance, social interaction was addressed by Alexis de Tocqueville’s in a reflection on his journey to North America in 1831 (Field, 2008). De Tocqueville (1832/1994) described the crucial role of development of social connections in enhancing a society’s economy and the civic participation and well-being of its citizens. Similarly, in the early part of the 20th century, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber presented social theories regarding the nature of society and how roles and hierarchies function within society. Rao and Singh (2018) explain that both Weber and Durkheim addressed the importance of social interactions between individuals within economic systems and exchanges mentioning that the economic system is greater than the sum of the individuals.

Over the last four decades, however, social relations theories have become more prominent in social science fields. Many theories considered social ties and relationships between individuals to be resources for enhancing both the individual and the collective (Coleman, 1988, Lin, 1999, Putnam, 2000). Lin (2001) argues that the concept of social capital has become crucial for understanding the social ties between individuals and the possible benefits of these social connections for the whole group. Lin (1999) defines social capital as social relationships and the potential benefits of these interactions. Field (2008) further suggests that by developing social connections between individuals, “people are able to work together to achieve things they either could not achieve by themselves or could only achieve with great difficulty” (2008, p.1). Although scholars (i.e., Bourdieu, 1977; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000)
continue to emphasize the importance of social capital, they endorse a variety of theoretical approaches, which are described below.

**Various Approaches to Considering Social Capital**

Social capital is a concept emphasizing social interactions, networks, and resources (Alder & Kwon, 2002; Coleman, 1988; Field, 2008; Putnam, 2000). This idea is cross-disciplinary and is associated with various fields, including political science, education, sociology, economic, and anthropology. Some scholars (e.g., Alder & Kwon, 2002; Bourdieu, 1977; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000) emphasize the central role of social capital in shaping circumstances for individuals and societies and described its various implications. This section presents different approaches to understanding social capital from three leading sociologists: a European sociologist, Bourdieu, who highlights forms of inequality and two North American sociologists, Coleman and Putnam, who underscore the role of social capital in social and civic conditions.

**Bourdieu’s Approach to Social Capital**

Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) indicate that social capital is the sum of the resources that are available through an individual’s networks and connections. Likewise, Bourdieu (1977) considered social capital to be tied to economic and cultural capital. According to Bourdieu (1986), economic capital is the “root of all other types of capital” (p. 252). Cultural capital (Habitus) is defined as a collection of symbolic elements such as skills, general knowledge, posture, mannerisms, experiences, and more that the individual acquires through being part of a particular group. (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977/1990). More precisely, Bourdieu and Passeron (1977/1990) claim that there is an ongoing reproduction of the existing social order in which a
single sociocultural group with rich economic, social, and cultural capital takes control over other sociocultural groups.

The broader capital theory discussed above is also associated with relationships between schools and the social order. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977/1990) conclude that “the harmony [between school and social order] appears to be perfect, this is because the objective structures produce class habitus and in particular the dispositions and predispositions which, in generating practices adapted to these structures, enable the structures to function and be perpetuated” (p. 204). In other words, social, economic, and cultural capital, according to Bourdieu, are associated with educational achievements and outcomes. Rogošic and Baranovic (2016) further explain that according to Bourdieu’s theory, “social institutions, such as schools and colleges, contribute to the creation of social inequality, as they support the culture of a dominant class by helping it to convert its cultural capital into wealth” (p. 91).

In sum, Bourdieu’s theory incorporates the idea of social capital as part of a broader social theory emphasizing the combination of economic, cultural, and social capital. According to this theory, social capital does not stand by itself. Instead, it is part of a social mechanism in which a dominant sociocultural and economic group has control over other sociocultural and economic classes. Similarly, Portes (2000) notes that Bourdieu considers social capital as an instrument that may empower and benefit the privileged class, sustaining the current social order. Ultimately, Rogošic and Baranovic (2016) stress the pessimistic and determinist aspect of Bourdieu’s social capital theory, highlighting that limited social, cultural, and economic capital may prevent social mobility and support the reproduction of social and economic inequality. Coleman, however, offers a different approach, stressing other facets of social capital as described below.
Coleman’s Approach to Social Capital

Coleman, an American sociologist, also regards the notion of social capital. Like Bourdieu, Coleman’s interest in social capital stemmed from his attempt to describe social conditions and academic achievements, but the nature of his definition was different. Coleman considers social capital to be the “structures of relations between actors and among actors” (1988, p. 302). Some elements of social capital, according to Coleman, are based on the integration of an “agentive and rational actor” (Coleman) with structuralist constraint, and both agency and structure are crucial elements in developing social capital. Similarly, Field (2008) concluded that Coleman’s (1994) definition of social capital bridged both the individual and the collective. Coleman views social capital as a “capital asset for the individual” but believed it is built from “social structural resources” (as cited in Field, 2008, p. 28)

Coleman’s (1988) conceptualization of social capital centered on understanding the creation of social capital as well as the potential benefits of its development. He considers the social connections between individuals and their networks to be resources. Rogošic and Baranovic (2016) suggest that, according to Coleman’s (1988) work, the “boundaries of individual social capital become a characteristic of the community” (p. 85). Notably, Coleman points out that while social capital addresses social ties, the function of it is not limited to individual actors and may include group actors as well as other collectives.

Coleman’s theory (1988) elaborates on the creation of social capital among children and adolescents. He emphasizes the importance of family-based social capital in the process of developing a child’s or adolescent’s social capital and suggested that children’s connection with their parents is a central factor in creating social capital. Coleman also regards other important
actors in developing children’s social capital including actors in schools and the wider community. He (1994) defines social capital of children and young people as the set of resources that inhere family relations and in community social organization and that are useful for the cognitive or social development of a child or young person. These resources differ for different persons and can constitute an important advantage for children and adolescents in the development of their human capital. (as cited in Field, 2008, p. 27)

Coleman’s conceptualization of social capital is frequently used by researchers (Field, 2008). His description of social capital sheds light on the means used to create this form of capital and the possible resources developed by creating networks. This differs from other conceptualizations of social capital, which described social ties or the connection between social capital and maintenance of the existing social order. Unlike Bourdieu, Coleman’s view brings individual agency into the concept of social capital and does not support the idea that the individual is fully dominated by structure. He also emphasizes the functionalist perspective of social capital and described this type of capital in terms of its creation and its role in fostering human capital. Coleman illustrates the central role of family members, actors in schools, and the wider community as critical elements in developing the human and social capital of children and adolescents.

**Putnam’s Approach to Social Capital**

Putnam’s (2000) approach to social capital regards the civic meaning of social interactions. Field (2008) argues that Putnam’s professional background in the field of political science grounded his approach to social capital in elements drawn from that area, including democracy, shared objectives, public good, and the civic sphere. Putnam defines social capital
as “features of social life-networks, norms and trust that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives” (as cited in Field, 2008, p.35). In other words, according to Putnam, social capital is built on a strong sense of trust between the individuals, networks, and norms and these interactions are crucial factors in solving community and national issues.

Putnam (2000) delineates between two forms of social capital: bonding (or exclusive) and bridging (or inclusive). Notably, bonding social capital refers to social resources that link to one’s community and intimate network. He states that “bonding social capital is good for understanding specific reciprocity and mobilizing solidarity” (2000, p. 22). Bonding social capital is characterized by strong ties within one’s close community and personal interactions. It highlights terms of solidarity, “thick” trust between individuals, and homogeneity. Examples for bonding capital may include “ethnic fraternal organizations, church-based women’s reading groups, and fashionable country clubs” (Putnam, 2000, p. 22). Bonding social capital is based on social interactions or memberships that are exclusive (i.e., where there are some conditions of race, gender, class, etc. to apply for the organization) and emphasizes ideas of homogeneity and sameness with regard to bringing people together.

Conversely, bridging social capital refers to ties with resources that extend outside of the individual’s close community or network. Putnam (2000, p. 22) asserts that “bridging networks… are better for linkage to external assets and for information diffusion.” Also, aspects of bridging social capital, according to Putnam, may “generate broader identities and reciprocity, whereas bonding social capital bolsters our narrower selves” (2000, p. 23). Putnam considered bridging social capital to be the social lubricant or “WD-40” (p. 23) for relationships and indicated that bridging social capital entails diversity of relationships and promotes appreciation of variance. In sum, bridging social capital is based on social networks that are considered
inclusive (i.e., where membership is not restrictive), and provides an opportunity for one to foster social ties with diverse individuals who are not from her or his immediate group of relatives, friends, community members, and others with whom there is ongoing close contact.

Putnam (2000) makes a connection between the “thick” trust of bonding social capital and the “thin” trust of bridging social capital. More specifically, “thick” trust is primarily built in the form of “strong” ties (e.g., with relatives, close friends, and lifetime acquaintances) while “thin” trust is primarily developed in the form of “weak” ties (e.g., with distant acquaintances from different circles of the individual). Granovetter (1973) further notes that weak ties are invaluable in finding jobs and developing political allies since this kind of relationship exposes the individual to a broad and diverse network and thus accessibility to important outside resources. Similar to Granovetter, Putnam (2015) indicates that “weak” ties enable connections to “wider and more diverse networks… [such] ties are especially valuable for social mobility and educational and economic advancement” (p. 208).

Whereas developing bonding social capital and “thick” trust may help enhance loyalty to the group, increase its unity, and develop a sense of “in-group” belonging, bridging social capital and “thin” trust are grounded in relationship diversity, bringing people from various sociocultural and religious backgrounds together, and developing a broad and rich identity. However, according to Putnam (2000), these two forms of social capital may develop simultaneously and dynamically.

**Social Cohesion According to Putnam.** Putnam (2000) mentions several resources for bringing people together, including civic participation, recreational activities, religious activities, connections in the workplace, informal social networks, as well as voluntary and philanthropic activities. He demonstrates that memberships in civic organizations are key for nurturing one’s
skills needed for developing a rich civic fabric. For instance, Putnam argues that “churches and religious organizations have unique importance in American Civil society” (2000, p. 65). He stresses that religious organizations are much more than religious entities and that they provide an opportunity for individuals to create relationships, to acquire social skills, to strengthen informal networks, and to share community interests. According to Putnam (2000), churches and other religious organizations may nurture civic skills and norms and foster moral values of cooperation, trust, and respect for others. Putnam (2015) also claims that religious involvement among youth is associated with a wide range of positive outcomes: they have more friendships with high-performing peers and “are more involved in sports and other extracurricular activities, and are less prone to substance abuse (drugs, alcohol, and smoking)” (p. 224). Ultimately, Putnam (2000) considers religious participation of any kind as a crucial mechanism for enhancing one’s social capital and civic virtue.

Putnam also suggests that vocational community can be a resource for creating social networks and bringing diverse people together. He proposes that workplace-based networks play a meaningful role in one’s life due to “features of contemporary American work life---more time at work, [and] more emphasis on team-work” (p. 90). Indeed, these workplace circumstances may foster informal social capital and personal relationships between women and men from diverse religious, socio-economic, and racial backgrounds at work. He asserts that the format of the modern workplace promotes collaborative contacts among peers and enables individuals to interact with peers with varied life experiences who strive toward workplace growth and success together.

Informal social connections, in contrast to formal memberships in civic organizations, are associated with “less organized and purposeful, [and] more spontaneous and flexible
[interaction]” (Putnam 2000, p. 94). Some of the activities Putnam includes in his description of informal social connections are sharing a barbecue picnic in the neighborhood, gathering in a reading group at the bookstore, participating in sport clubs or activities, playing board games together, going out to movie or restaurant with friends or peers from the workplace, and having a spontaneous conversation in line at a restaurant (Putnam, 2000). Putnam also suggests that, although formal connectedness might be associated with educated individuals with high incomes, “informal social involvement is common to all levels in the social hierarchy” (2000, p. 94).

Putnam also links altruism, philanthropy, and volunteering endeavors with the ideas of social capital and social network development. He highlights Dewey’s distinction between “doing with” and “doing for” (as cited in Putnam 2000, p. 116) when discussing some actions that are charitable and altruistic. According to Dewey, people who participate in person and take an active role in their social networks while working toward the shared goal of helping others are “doing with.” In contrast, those who do not actively participate in the network but give money (or other things) are “doing for.” Putnam maintains that “doing with,” but not “doing for,” is representative of social capital, as it involves using social networks and interactions to accomplish the goal of helping others. According to Putnam, “both philanthropy and volunteering are roughly twice as common among Americans as among citizens of other countries” (Putnam, 2000, p. 117), and such activities may enable people from various settings to come together for the benefit of the community or individual members of society.

Putnam (2000) also describes circumstances that can pull individuals apart, identifying four factors that may have contributed to the deterioration of civic involvement in the United States over the last five decades. First, he suggests that “pressures of time and money, including the special pressures on two-career families, contributed measurably to the diminution of our
social and community involvement “(p. 283). In addition, mobility and sprawl may also be factors in this decrease in civic involvement. According to Putnam (2000), suburbanization, commuting, and sprawl are highly prevalent in this era and may negatively affect the rate of civic involvement, which requires a long-term commitment.

Putnam also suggests that electronic entertainment, specifically television, might provide the individual with an enjoyable pastime but negatively affect her or his degree of social capital. Finally, Putnam cites generational differences as a critical factor in the decrease of social capital over the last three decades. He suggests that people born in the 1920s and 1930s tend to be more socially connected than later generations, largely as a result of social habits and values developed during the World War II era. Putnam proposes that these four elements may work in conjunction to reduce the degree of social capital in the United States. Overall, Putnam has explored social capital through a political science lens and has examined the historical, social, and technological factors that may bring individuals together or pull them apart.

To summarize, Bourdieu, Coleman, and Putnam view social capital as a force that shapes one’s actions and well-being. However, whereas Bourdieu considers social capital as a mechanism used by elite groups to perpetuate inequality and maintain the social and economic hierarchies, Coleman places the rational actor within a structure of networks and institutions and emphasized the action and function involved in developing social capital. Putnam’s view centers on the civic meaning of social capital. Putnam describes various forms of social capital and explores the content and structure of social networks as well as the implications of these interactions for civic virtue and the public good. These three theoretical approaches present key viewpoints for understanding the nature of social capital and the contexts in which it develops.
The following section explores the importance of developing social capital for the individual, the community, and society.

**The Importance of Social Capital to the Individual, the Community, and Society**

Scholars ranging from Dewey (1914) to Putnam (2000) to Hansen (2013) have asserted how qualities and types of social ties may benefit individuals, local communities, and the national community in a democratic society. Putnam (2000) suggests that “people whose lives are rich in social capital cope better with trauma and fight illness more effectively” (p. 289), which positively affects their well-being. Putnam (2000) also notes that there are positive associations among the sense of trust between individuals, the richness of social networks, sense of happiness, and openness to diverse people. Furthermore, according to Putnam, being trusting and trustworthy with social capital enables very direct and effective communication between individuals in social and economic transitions based on mutual confidence.

Moreover, Putnam (2000) asserts that high levels of social capital allow community members and citizens to resolve collective issues more easily, given the involvement of active society members who trust each other, cooperate, and strive for the betterment of the society. Further, social capital may widen the awareness of social networks and their natures. Putnam (2000) argues that people who have active and rich “weak” and “strong” social ties “develop or maintain character traits that are good for the rest of society” (p. 288), such as which may enhance the quality of civic sphere and democratic organizations.

Putnam’s assertions may coincide with ideas from cosmopolitanism theory, which is focused on how developing social capital may benefit the individual and the community. Hansen (2013) elaborates on the notion of cosmopolitanism, emphasizing the importance of teachers and students learning to “fuse reflective openness to new people, ideas, values, and
practices with reflective loyalty to local communities and ways of life” (p. 35). Hansen suggests that a blend of experiences and backgrounds is immensely valuable in the process of understanding and shaping one’s identity. According to Hansen, tensions between individuals may be productive and beneficial for one’s grasp of—and reflection upon—her or his identity. This scholar asserts that a cosmopolitan-minded system of education would be one that seeks to foster in students the ability to negotiate social, personal, and cultural differences in their school environments and beyond.

The notion of cosmopolitanism is particularly useful in examining the potential benefits of the interaction between military and nonmilitary adolescents. The military population consists of families of various racial backgrounds that often experience multiple relocations domestically and abroad, to countries, including Germany, South Korea, and Japan (Department of Defense, 2018). The exposure to various backgrounds—and the experience of living in various countries, states, and civilian communities—may benefit both military families and members of local communities in which their children attend school.

In particular to this study, the shared social sphere in public schools (in which both student groups are in attendance) could be associated with “new” life experiences and backgrounds of both groups (military and nonmilitary). Therefore, this exceptional social fabric could provide opportunities for students from both military and nonmilitary backgrounds to develop openness to “new” people with various ideas and life circumstances. This process may shape their identity while negotiating with “traditional” (known) elements (i.e., values, experiences, and life conditions) and “new” ones.

Some scholars maintain that fostering abilities that have been identified as social capital heighten concern for the public good and uphold the importance of experiences with people of
different religious and social backgrounds, values that are crucial in the process of developing and maintaining the civic sphere of a democratic society. The American philosopher-educator John Dewey (1916/1944) regards the importance of including diverse experiences, suggesting that democracy is not simply “a form of government” but rather a way of life that is shaped by the participation and contribution of all its members. Dewey further argues that democracy is premised on the idea of equality. This suggests that it is critical for each individual to have equal opportunity to contribute to the resolution of common social issues and that all individuals are considered capable of engaging with a variety of ideas to shape the public domain.

Likewise, Dewey articulates the relationship between school practice and democratic theory. The blending of students with various life experiences and views represents an opportunity to participate in what Dewey (1927) referred to as the creation of a “Great Community” (p.43). According to Dewey (1916), this community comprises a variety of ideas and experiences, and the “conflict of peoples at least enforces intercourse between them and thus academically enables them to learn from one another, and thereby to expand their horizons” (p. 100). In sum, engaging with a variety of opinions and individuals could be a valuable resource for creating a great community; the tensions between values and experiences benefit not only the group, but also sustain the democratic principle that encourages diversity of backgrounds, life experiences, values, and ideas.

Similar to Dewey, Gutmann (1999) highlights the connections between school practices and democratic theory. In her book, *Democratic Education*, Gutmann elaborates on this relationship, noting that public schools in a democratic society have the responsibility to equally represent a diversity of sociocultural voices, life experiences, and personal values (1999). Gutmann’s discussion is premised on the idea that education is a matter of public interest and
should therefore be subject to the decisions of a democratic citizenry based on its diverse perceptions and sociocultural experiences. Furthermore, Gutmann argues that one of the main purposes of a just system of education is to form prospective citizens who are democratic in character and public disposition. These citizens should have mutual respect for others, are open minded, and thus engage with diverse values, opinions, and backgrounds. Further, these individuals are able to navigate this diversity as an opportunity for personal and communal growth and to shape the common culture actively and collectively based on their own values and not on those of an external authority.

In addition, Gutmann (as cited in Sardoc, 2018) suggests that “diversity and excellence go hand-in-hand” (p. 249). Diversity, according to Gutmann, is a step toward developing an optimal academic community in which “people from diverse religions and socioeconomic backgrounds, cultural and political orientations, races and ethnicities, and genders….” (p.250) join together and collectively create a respectful learning environment (Sardoc, 2018). Gutmann further argues that this engagement enhances individuals’ lives and the disposition of society, and it may enable us to better understand our world. Ultimately, Gutmann perceives diversity as essential in practicing democratic values and in developing a civic vision that is shaped by its members’ different life experiences, preferences, and backgrounds.

The theories of Dewey and Gutmann coincide with Greene’s scholarly work. Greene highlights the substantial role of social engagement in public schools, in which diverse social and cultural voices come together optimally to enhance the civic element of society. Greene (1996) claimed that meaningful teaching should include moral responsibility towards society with consideration of the various needs, values, and backgrounds of the students. She also stated that “education, after all, had to do with engaging live human beings in activities of meaning-making,
dialogue, and reflective understanding of a variety of texts, including the texts of their social realities” (p. 305).

Greene (1996) also describes the negative impact of schools in homogeneous communities in which sociocultural codes may sustain the ownership of particular groups over others and replicate the current social order, similar to Bourdieu’s theory. By presenting this viewpoint, Greene (1996) emphasizes the importance of developing a rich civic space formed by optimal regard for including all sociocultural voices while these diverse perspectives are integrated toward creating a shared quality. According to Greene, society members’ shared effort to enhance the civic sphere employing moral values is critical to the endurance of a democratic society. Finally, Greene (1996) demonstrates that only where “persons with diverse backgrounds come together” (p. 312) are democratic values and genuine civic virtue created.

In conclusion, the idea of social connections was introduced more than 150 years ago, but this concept has received increasing attention over the last four decades. There is a consensus among scholars that social capital is associated with social relationships, but scholars place different emphasis on the meaning of this term and its applications. For instance, three founding theorists in the study of social capital, Bourdieu, Coleman, and Putnam, describe this concept and its role in people’s lives in different ways. More precisely, whereas Bourdieu views social capital as an instrument used by elite groups to perpetuate inequality and the social hierarchy, Coleman emphasizes the action and function involved in developing social capital, and Putnam describes the civic meaning of social capital in addition to its benefit to individuals and local communities. Putnam further distinguishes between two elements of social capital: bonding capital, which is associated with ideas of homogeny and solidarity, and bridging capital, which relates to ideas of diversity of people, life experiences, and backgrounds. Likewise, the vast
majority of the literature (i.e., Dewey, 1916; Coleman, 1988; Gutmann, 1999; Greene, 1996; Hansen, 2013; Putnam, 2000), suggests that bridging capital is essential for developing and sustaining moral values and enhancing the nature of the individual, the local community, and society as a whole in a democratic country.

In relation to this study, it is critical to consider the ideas of social capital and social relations theories in order to better understand the nature of the social interaction between adolescents from military families and their nonmilitary peers on school and community levels. The social contact between these two groups of adolescents may affect their social capital, as well as the nature of social fabric of their school and community. Bourdieu’s theory may be a call for educational and community leaders to plan and conduct programs according to values of social justice and fairness regarding this distinctive social sphere. Coleman’s theory may shed light on the central role of family members, peers, actors in schools, and the wider community as critical elements in developing the human and social capital of adolescents. And Putnam’s theory may offer the civic meaning of the discussed social engagement, and its benefit to individuals, local communities, and a society as a whole.

Leadership Theories and Social Interaction

Historical Background of Leadership

Leadership has been a pivotal factor for mankind since the ancient world. Cotterell, Lowe, and Shaw (2006) discuss the nature of leaders mentioning that “in the ancient world, no less than today, the qualities to be found in the good leader as well as the bad leader have caused intense debate” (p. viiii). These scholars further describe several aspects of leadership and the nature of the interaction between the leader and his or her followers in the ancient era. In particular, Cotterell et al. (2006) emphasize the central role of courage in conducting effective
leadership as Egyptian rulers did. They further elaborate on the importance of risk-taking among leaders as Pharaoh Thutmose III did, and on the way, the Chinese ruler Wuling identified paths to motivate his people toward their optimal performance. The ancient world considered the ideas of leadership and in many respects those ideas continue to shape the perception of leadership in the modern era.

Leadership discourse that emerged at the beginning of the 20th century considers the importance of the leader’s characteristics and presents him or her as a charismatic individual, who implies a high degree of control and efficiency and maintains hierarchy within the organization (Western, 2008). This scholar presents the idea of the leader as a controller stating that “the controller leadership discourse is born from scientific rationalism and the industrial revolution…relegated the worker to being a cog in a machine, mirroring standardization and mechanization within the mass production of the factory” (p. 11-12). Consequently, a leader as a controller strives to maximize the organization’s production and effectiveness through control and neither take into consideration the employees’ perspectives nor promote any organizational dialogue between various ideas.

Nevertheless, a paradigm shift has emerged during the last decades of the 20th century with regard to the understanding of leadership approach. Fielder (1967) questions the idea of a universal leadership approach highlighting the importance of situational factors, including leader-members relation, task structure, and position of power. His discussion explains the role of situational conditions and provides insights into the idea that particular leadership functions might be effective in one setting but not in another. This assertion, alongside external pressures (sociocultural, technological, and global changes) of the post-modern era, have reshaped the
nature of leadership approaches. Recent leadership theories underscore aspects of collaboration, respect for diversity, and developing a collective effort towards the organization’s growth.

**Leadership within Educational Systems**

The reforms mentioned above coincide with the historical paths of leadership that occurred in educational systems in the U.S. The history of American public education is marked by an enduring tendency to perceive schools through a universal lens, emphasizing a clear organizational structure and efficiency. According to Dufour and Eaker (1998), as American public schools became parts of larger systems, they initially followed an industrial model in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, stating, “the uniformity, standardization, and bureaucracy of factory model soon became predominant characteristics of the school district” (p. 21). Because of this origin, administrators have tended to evaluate schools in market terms, prizing efficiency, usefulness, and profit.

Some studies (e.g., Gutmann 1999, Woods, 2005) have suggested that schools should no longer use a universal approach focusing on efficiency with mandated goals. But instead, embed values of respect for diverse backgrounds, fairness, and developing common human good based on each individual’s values and life experiences. The educational leadership domain has become connoted with increasing complexity during the last three decades. It has been reshaped by tensions between the demands of external stakeholders at the state and federal level and between internal forces at school (Bryk et al., 2009). Given these circumstances, various leadership approaches have emerged, including the eco-leadership, ethical, servant, and democratic leadership approaches. Notably, these approaches are orientated towards fostering social interaction and understanding the complexity of the social fabric. The following sections discuss these emergent leadership approaches.
Leadership Approaches that Value and Foster Social Interaction

Eco and Ethical Leadership Approach

Western (2008) coins the term eco-leadership approach, which has been shaped according to the 21st-century dynamic world. This approach seeks to uphold ethical values of fairness, honesty, social responsibility, and “strong networks which enable difference to flourish” (p. 196). Western argues that the eco-leadership discourse does not place emphasis on ideas of control and effectiveness but rather focuses on an understanding of the connectivity between the organization members and reliance. At the heart of this discourse is human ecology that upholds ideas of humans, social interaction between them and their relationship to the environment (Western, 2008).

Further, Western suggests that eco-leadership has three essential qualities: (a) connectivity (holism), or “how we relate and inter-relate with the ecologies in which we work and live” (p. 196); (b) Eco-ethics that concern “acting ethically in the human realm and with respect and responsibility for natural environment” (p. 196); and (c) leadership spirit that “acknowledges the human spirit, the non-rational, creativity, imagination, and human relationships” (p.196). Notably, the eco-leadership approach is based on three qualities that are associated with social responsibility: respect for all the organization’s members; an ability to navigate the diversity of values and backgrounds towards the organization’s growth; and adoption of an ecological view that highlights conditions of a particular organization.

Eco-leadership theory may be associated with ethical leadership approach. This approach describes relationships that are based on the moral values of human dignity, diversity, and inclusion (Preedy, Bennett & Wise, 2002). Scholars such as Eranil and Özbilen (2017) further
suggest that ethical leadership reflects a view of the world based on equity, social justice, fairness, and a sense of obligation to others’ backgrounds and the public good.

Shields and Sayani (2005) propose that leadership may be instrumental for bridging the divide between diverse values, beliefs, and needs held by members of the school community and the practices of the school. Leadership may create a culture that “eschews binaries—we, you, they, us, other—and one that is careful not to essentialize the very complex, always dynamic lived realities of individuals and groups” (p. 395). Gerstl and Aiken (2009) further claim that school leaders’ ethical values should be the foundation for bringing various backgrounds and social voices together. Overall, school leaders should be clear about their values for equity, social justice, inclusion, and fairness. They also should critically reflect on the best means through which to convey these ethical ideas to the members of their school communities through collaborative engagement and shared vision.

**Servant Leadership Approach**

Greenleaf (1977) coins the term servant leadership approach and argues that servant leaders regard the needs of others first and ensure that “other people’s highest priority needs are being served” (p. 13). He (1977/2002) further argues that this leader is also committed to identifying some means for building community among the organization’s members stating, all that is needed to rebuild community as a viable life form for large numbers of people is for enough servant-leaders to show the way, not by mass movements, but by each servant-leader demonstrating his or her unlimited liability for a quite specific community-related group. Greenleaf (1977/2002, p. 53)

Similarly, Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) suggest that a servant leader is not positioned at the top of a hierarchy but rather is situated at the center of the organization and
interacts with individuals from all levels of the organization. These scholars also maintain that “the central dynamic of servant leadership is nurturing those within the organization and understanding their personal needs” (p.17). Spears (2010) further elaborates on Greenleaf’s theory explaining that a servant leader is deeply committed to the development of every individual within his or her organization. Spears explains that “a servant leader recognizes the tremendous responsibility to do everything in his or her power to nurture the personal and professional growth of employees and colleagues” (Spears, 2010, p.29).

Some scholars consider the servant leadership approach with regard to schools and educational leadership practices. For instance, Cerit (2010) argues that educational leaders should tend to focus on the organization’s members, emphasizing caring for them and serving their personal needs. According to Cerit (2010), servant leaders should strive to foster a nurturing educational setting that promotes each individual’s growth.

The nature of servant leadership may align with some scholars’ academic works regarding the purposes of public education. For instance, DuFour and Eaker (1998) contend that the central educational goal “is to serve all students.” Gutmann (1992) emphasizes the obligation of public schools in a democratic society to serve all students from various social backgrounds and provide them with the same equal opportunities. Similarly, Webster (2017) argues that “a significant aim of education pertains to the sorts of people students are becoming” (p. 340). This ontological focus involving the identity and being of students as well as the value and meaning they give to their activities. According to Webster, schools should serve all students with the opportunities to make meaning of their actions towards enhancing their critical thinking skills and development.
Overall, the servant approach in the context of educational settings emphasizes the needs of parents, students, school personnel, and community members before the needs of the leader. In particular, servant leadership may be very relevant to educational settings that serve students from various social backgrounds and life experiences. The following section addresses ideas of democratic leadership that, in similar to servant leadership, endorses ethical values, although its nature is different.

**Democratic Leadership Approach**

**Connection between Education and Democratic Values.** The discussion regarding the relationship between democratic values and education is ancient and has been discussed through the works of philosophers in ancient Greece. In Aristotle’s *Politics*, he emphasizes the connection between the fields of education and politics, stressing that education enhances the stability of regimes and their nature. Aristotle argues that “the best laws, though sanctioned by every citizen of the state, will be of no avail unless the young are trained by habit and education in the spirit of the constitution, if the laws are democratical democratically, or oligarchically, if the laws are oligarchical” (Book 5, part IX, p. 126).

In particular, Aristotle emphasizes the crucial role of education in developing future citizens who collectively enhance the civic sphere and its democratic nature. Similar to Aristotle, Dewey (1916) believes that democracy begins in the school setting. He emphasizes that democracy is premised on the idea that no selected group should make the decision for others, but rather each individual should have the opportunity to contribute her or his input to the social sphere and problem-solving. In particular, Dewey stresses the importance of bringing diverse values together and argues that the blend of many and varied ideas may result in a higher quality of ideas and that this quality may optimally serve and benefit the group as a whole.
Nevertheless, Dewey (1916/1944) clarifies how his idea of the democratic conception is different from Aristotle’s because of who is regarded as a future citizen.

Greene (1996) also elaborated on aspects of inclusion and connectedness, mentioning the importance of individual reflection on and ownership of their various social backgrounds. She also pointed out potential conditions in schools that might inform social dynamics, and through which intentional effort could be made to “make all persons with diverse backgrounds to come together” (p.312). In other words, Greene (1996) indicates the responsibility of educators to build conditions for diverse individuals to come together in speech and action towards creating a school community which is dynamically shaped by the interaction between various values and backgrounds.

Similarly, Pepin and Aiken (2009) discuss the connection between democratic values and the nature of education in the 21st century. They assert that in this era, more than ever, educational leaders of public education in the United States face unique organizational conditions. Some of these circumstances are associated with restrictive mandates on education imposed by state and federal policymakers (Wa, 2007, as cited in Gerstl-Pepin & Aiken, p. 407). Additional conditions may be related to the heterogeneous nature of the student population, specifically in terms of “race and ethnicity, social class, gender, national origin, native language, sexual orientation, and physical disabilities” (Riehl, 2000 as cited in Gerstl-Pepin & Aiken, p. 408). These unique organizational aspects require educational leaders to deeply reflect on effective paths to serve the needs of all students and practice the core values of democratic leadership, including inclusion, pluralism, and equity.

**Practices for Democratic Values in Education.** Similar to Gutmann’s philosophy, Marzano (2003) highlights the school personnel’s responsibilities in bringing diverse social
voices together in a shared space mentioning that “parents have no obligation to communicate with school. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the school to initiate communication and provide an atmosphere in which parents desire such communication” (p. 48). However, Marzano also proposes concrete steps and conditions for establishing and sustaining an inclusive school setting in which the voices of students and families of various backgrounds are heard and incorporated into the school’s fabric and practices.

Marzano (2003) addresses three elements and conditions (communication, participation, and governance) that are critical in developing strong ties between school, community, and family. According to Marzano, a viable partnership between school, community, and family promotes an inclusive, just, and democratic school environment. In particular, Marzano argues that effective communication with the parents may include providing daily and weekly access to information related to school, using websites providing information regarding the students’ conditions “in the major languages of the families” (p.49), and conducting parent-teacher conferences.

Participation in the day-to-day running of the school is the second feature of effective community involvement. Encouraging parents and community members to volunteer at the school by working as teachers’ aides, lunchroom and playground monitors may lead to deep connections and convey the message that “school values and welcomes not only their [patents] ideas but also their physical participation” (Marzano, 2003, p.48). The third feature, governance, “requires the establishment of specific structures that allow parents and community some voice in key school decisions” (p.48). This participation is related to the idea of democratic values in which “people affected by decisions of a public institution should be involved in making those decisions” (Tangri and Moles, 1987, as cited in Marzano, 2003, p.48). Further, parents’
participation in these formal structures may convey the message that their voices can make a difference and that they are meaningful partners in shaping the school agenda. Overall, Marzano suggests the three elements of communication, participation, and governance as critical components in deliberately fostering an inclusive and just school setting.

Similar to Marzano, Sanders (2006) suggests specific conditions and factors for creating and sustaining a pluralistic school setting in which diverse voices (of students, families, and community members) are heard, included and involved in the decision-making process. Some of these ideas are associated with an effective partnership team, principal leadership, and external support. According to Sanders, effective teams comprise of all school members, families, and community members who are divided into several groups and are collectively responsible for planning and implementing school, community, and family activities in order to achieve some of the school goals and discuss the school particular conditions and nature. These teams include diverse sociocultural voices and various perspectives and regularly meet once per month.

In addition, Sanders (2006) claims that a school principal's genuine openness to parent and community involvement may lead to dialogue and constant communication between school personnel, families, communities, and students. This scholar also introduces the notion of external support. This type of assistance may include some support provided by the state level (i.e., professional training opportunities, funding, or incentive grants), but it also includes some support provided by the district level (i.e., administrative support or professional training). Overall, both Marzano (2003) and Sanders (2006) suggest concrete steps for creating and sustaining a viable and inclusive school setting in which various voices are heard and continuously shape the school's nature and conditions. But these concrete practices are also associated with the concept of democratic leadership, as discussed below.
Democratic leadership considers ideas of inclusion, collaboration, shared vision, diversity of views and backgrounds, as well as consideration of all voices in the decision-making process (Kilicoglu, 2018). Woods (2005) further elaborates on these democratic values stating that democratic leadership aims to create an environment in which people are active contributors to the creation of the institutions, culture, and relationships they inhabit” (p. xvi). He also demonstrates that this nature of leadership considers ideas of inclusion, “respect for diversity, and acts to reduce cultural and material inequalities (p. xvi)

Not only does Woods (2005) advocate a commitment to principles of inclusion, social justice, diversity, collective responsibility, and connectedness between people, but he also describes the leaders’ responsibilities in bringing diverse social voices together in a shared space. These leaders, according to Woods, build conditions for democratic process and participation within the organization. They also strive to develop conditions that facilitate social interaction between the various individuals and bring their voices together. Leaders who employ democratic approaches aspire to utilize a diversity of values, opinions, lived experiences, and backgrounds as a resource to benefit the organization and its nature. Notably, these leaders strive to consciously foster a setting that promotes dialogue between various voices towards the enhancement of the group and its moral quality.

In conclusion, this section considers leadership theories and additional academic works examining their connection to the field of education. The sources cited the obligation of educational leaders to bring diverse social conditions, experiences, beliefs, and backgrounds together in a particular common space. This responsibly should include intentional efforts of
school leaders to affirms moral values and utilize diverse voices and experiences towards the enhancement of the public good as is expected in a democratic society.

Conclusions

This chapter examined existing theoretical research and professional literature related to the nature of social interaction between high school students from military and nonmilitary families who attend or attended public high schools in which these two groups are in attendance. It reviewed literature related to distinctive life circumstances of adolescents from military families (i.e., Berg, 2008, De Pedro, Atuel, Malchi, Esquenda, Benbenishty & Astor, 2014, and Cole, 2016). Also, it considered scholarship regarding adolescents’ development and their emotional and social well-being (i.e., Steinberg, 2016, Lerner et al. Caskey& Anfara, 2007, and Kohlberg, 1980) as well as social interaction theories (i.e., Bourdieu 1977, Coleman, 1988, and Putnam, 2000). Finally, this chapter also presented literature regarding prominent leadership theories as eco-leadership (Western, 2008), ethical (Preedy, Bennett, & Wise, 2002), servant (Greenleaf, 1977, Cerit, 2010), and democratic (Woods, 2005, Kılıçoğlu, 2018) leadership approaches as well as considered scholarship concerning educational leaders responsibilities in bringing diverse social and cultural voices together in a common space (i.e., Dewey 1916, Dewey 1925, Dewey 1938, Greene 1996 Gutmann, 1999, Marzano, 2003, Sanders, 2006, Pepin & Aiken, 2009, and Gutmann as cited in Sardoc, 2018). All these bodies of literature provided some insights into the nature of social interaction of adolescents from both military and nonmilitary families who attend or attended a public high school serving these two student populations.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This chapter discusses the study design and the rationale for the research method, which is qualitative phenomenology. It also provides information on the role of the researcher and recruitment and the selection of the participants as well as explains ethical considerations within this study. The development of the instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis procedures are also discussed including the coding procedures. Finally, this chapter provides information regarding the delimitations and validity of the study.

Overview of Research Design

This phenomenological study presents the lived experiences of current and recent public high school students who attend or had attended public high schools located near a military base in the Northeastern region of the United States. Notably, these schools serve students from both military and nonmilitary families. In particular, this study sheds light on the nature of social interaction between students from military and nonmilitary families including eight current high school students (four from military and four from nonmilitary families) and six recent high school students (three from military and three from nonmilitary families). The 14 study participants came from three different public-schools in the Northeastern region of the country. The number of students from military families in these schools ranged from several percent to consisting about 40% of the school’s population. The current high school students attend various grade levels (from 9th to 12th grade), while the recent high school students completed their high school years between the years of 2016 to 2018 and were between 18 and 21 years old at the time of conducting the study.
In addition to reporting on their lived experiences regarding the social interaction between students from military homes and students from nonmilitary homes, the study also sought participants’ descriptions of strategies, steps and actions provided by the local community, local public high schools, and families, which they perceived as effective in fostering such social interaction. Additionally, they were asked about their recommendations on ways to enhance this social interaction. The following questions guided the direction of this study:

- How do current and recent high school students from both military and nonmilitary families describe their shared social interactions when they attend or attended a public high school that serves both military and nonmilitary students?

- What activities and steps on the behalf of their school, community, and families do current and recent high school students from both military and nonmilitary families report as effective in introducing and fostering social interaction between the two populations?

- What recommendations do current and recent high school students from military and nonmilitary families believe will enhance this social interaction?

In summary, the purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the ways in which these two populations experienced their connection to the shared school and community in the social context, and the common and distinct ways they reported these interactions within these social settings.
Orientation

This study employed a phenomenological research approach in order to explore the social experiences of high-school students from military families and their nonmilitary peers (who attend or attended a public high school that includes both populations). Notably, the majority of current literature regarding students from military families is grounded in the voices of stakeholders within the military system, educators, DoDEA schools, scholars, and additional actors who describe the life circumstances of children from military families. Little attention, however, has been placed on the authentic voices of students who encounter this distinctive social blend between students from both military and non-military families. Creswell and Poth (2018) state that a “phenomenological study describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon” (p.75). Accordingly, this study attempted to describe how these two groups experienced the connection to their shared school and community, their interactions within that context, and the elements all research participants have in common.

Bloomberg and Volpe (2016) argue that a phenomenological approach focuses on deriving the meaning of the “lived experiences of people” (p.32), finding patterns and themes among those experiences, and imbuing meaning into the participants’ descriptions. Creswell and Poth (2018) elaborate on methods of constructing data procedures for a phenomenological research approach by mentioning that this particular approach is often based primarily on “in-depth and multiple interviews… of individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon” (p.79). Similarly, Merriam (2009), points out that phenomenological studies focus on understanding experiences from the participants’ viewpoint and strive to ascertain the essence of the experience and the underlying structure of the phenomenon. To summarize, according to
Creswell and Poth (2018) as well as Merriam (2009) using a phenomenological research approach may lead to a composite meaning and understanding of this population’s practices and may result in a description of the essence of this phenomenon.

This study was developed according to a social constructivist approach as well as contextual theories. Creswell and Poth (2018) describe the social stance as the understanding that one’s worldview and reality are socially constructed and “individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live…and develop subjective meaning of their experiences” (p.24). This approach also highlights the idea that meanings and views vary because individuals may bring different prior experiences to the phenomenon or experience the phenomenon differently. Similarly, contextual theories (Steinberg, 2016) focus on the context in which behavior occurs and stress that setting plays a substantial role in understanding adolescent development. Overall, both social constructivist approach and contextual theories shaped the nature of this study.

Semi structured individual interviews as well as focus group interviews were employed to explore the nature of social engagement between adolescents from military and nonmilitary families and to gain a better understanding of the aspects of these adolescents’ experiences that relate to this special population mix in their high school setting. The study, furthermore, examined the common and distinct elements among those experiences and described the broader phenomenon of social engagement between public high school students from military and nonmilitary families.
Role of the Researcher

My role within this study is multifaceted due to both my prior and current experience. Almost thirty years ago, I served in the Israeli Military System. Therefore, I have some familiarity with some of the military characteristics mentioned by the military participants of this study. Furthermore, I currently live in a community in which military families comprise at least 30% of students in local public schools. Many of these families live in town and are fully integrated into the community social activities and thus meaningfully shape the nature of the community. My family members and I routinely have personal experience with this social blend. Ultimately, my role as a researcher is to be aware of my past military experience as well as my current responses to this social mix while maintaining an optimal separation between my own social practices and the participants’ responses.

Maxwell (2005) asserts that the goal of a qualitative study is not to eliminate the influence and background of the researcher but rather to understand it and use it productively. Therefore, in order to ensure the most accurate and honest responses and outcomes in this study, it was necessary to understand and reduce the possible bias that I might have. Indeed, multiple steps were taken to control and reduce the potential bias. The study included participants from several public high schools located in three different local communities. Some participants lived on a military base while others lived in various civilian communities. Also, while conducting both individual and focus group interviews, I made a point of maintaining a neutral position and avoided “taking sides” (Creswell 2014). My questions addressed both opportunities and difficulties related to this social engagement and were presented in a way that clearly indicated a lack of prior knowledge or experience regarding the discussed topic.
Furthermore, study participants were informed about this study either by a distribution of hard copy flyers or by some community leaders who reached out to individuals they thought might be interested in participation in this study. In other words, recruitment for the study was done in a manner that guaranteed complete detachment between the researcher and potential study participants. Also, I relied on my senior advisor and my doctoral committee members throughout the research process to inquire about whether my perceptions and experiences were affecting the quality of the study’s data collection, data analysis, or results. Finally, collecting data throughout multiple venues including individual and focus group interviews helped ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the data.

Recruitment and Selection of Participants

The primary locations for recruiting participants were several communities located in the northeastern region of the U.S., where there are homes of personnel from a nearby military base. In particular, recruitment and selection of participants included stages of announcing the study, then interesting potential participants, and finally determining a sample of these participants according to certain criteria mentioned later in this section. Steps for announcing this study included distribution of hard copies of two flyers, one directed at recent students (as shown in Appendix A) and containing two links: (a) a link to a survey for recent high school students from nonmilitary families; (b) a link to a survey for recent high school students from military families. The other flyer was directed at current students (as shown in Appendix B) and also included two links (a) a link to a survey for parents of current high school students from nonmilitary families; (b) a link to a survey for parents of current high school students from military families. Both
flyers also contained, in addition to the links to the initial study surveys, brief explanations of the study.

The flyers were distributed in two ways:

- Flyers of both types were posted on bulletin boards located in community centers and meeting places in the communities mentioned earlier. Pick-up copies of the flyers were also left next to the bulletin boards at the front desk of these centers.

- A few community leaders known to the researcher assisted by personally distributing the flyers within their communities. The researcher emphasized to those community leaders that their assistance is limited to only three responsibilities: passing along the flyers; using only the following words to explain the study: “the purpose of the study is to learn more about the social interaction between high school students from military and nonmilitary families”; and elucidating that participation in the survey is voluntary and the potential participants may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any point in time. Furthermore, I stressed explicitly to the community leaders that they are only passing along the flyers and should neither urge nor advise anyone to participate in the study.

A survey instrument was used to identify possible candidates based on certain participation requirements. This instrument was also used to develop some sense of the general experiences of recent and current high school students regarding this social blend, as described later in the section of phases of data collection. This study employed a non-probability sampling in which the participants were selected from the population in a non-random manner and had to meet particular criteria.
More specifically, one criterion for current high school students from military families was for them to have gone through no fewer than three school transitions. These multiple relocations, which are typical for children in military families, may shape various social perspectives and experiences regarding the discussed social mix. Also, current high school students from nonmilitary families had to have lived within the local community for at least three years and during that period had to have attended only local public schools. Living in the community for at least three years may provide these children with numerous experiences within this social blend. Furthermore, the participants had to be chosen from no less than three different grades of high school in order to gain varied angles of this social combination.

Recent high school students had to meet certain criteria as well. They had to be between the ages of 18 and 21; having relatively recent descriptions of this social interaction. They or their families had to be current residents of the community where they had attended high school. This was done in order to ensure that they still had some level of social connection to their community. Criteria for recent high school students from military families also included no less than three school transitions during their school-years due to family relocation in order to ensure various social experiences and perspectives with this social blend. And these participants had to have attended a public high school that serves both military and nonmilitary students, for at least one full school year. This was done to ensure that they had an in-depth experience with this social blend. As mentioned previously, recent high school students from nonmilitary families had to have attended a public high school that includes both military and nonmilitary student populations.

Six recent high school students from nonmilitary families completed the online survey (Appendix C). Three fully met the study’s inclusion criteria and were willing to continue to the
next phase of the study (the interview phase). Two others met the inclusion criteria but were unwilling to continue, while the sixth respondent did not meet inclusion criteria. Amongst recent high school students from military families, 12 completed all or part of the online survey (as shown in Appendix D). Of those, three fully met the inclusion criteria and were willing to proceed to the next phase, while six did not meet the criteria. The remaining three completed only part of the survey and did not leave contact information.

Nine parents of current high school students from nonmilitary families completed the online survey (appears as Appendix E). Four of them fully met the study criteria and were willing to suggest to their children to participate in the interview phase of the study. One of the children did not meet inclusion criteria. Two parents were not interested in their children’s participation in the study despite meeting the criteria, and two more parents did not complete the whole survey. Seven parents of current high school students from military families completed the online survey (appears as Appendix F), met inclusion criteria and expressed their willingness to suggest the study to their children. Eventually, however, only four parents agreed to have their children proceed to the next phase, namely, the interviews. Six more parents of current high school students from military families completed the survey in part and did not leave their contact information. In total, 14 participants continued to the phase of individual interviews. They included eight current high school students - four from military and four from nonmilitary families and six recent high school students - three from military and three from nonmilitary families, and all of them met inclusion criteria.

Table 1 displays the numbers of participants in various phases of the study.
Table 1

Information on Participants of Surveys and Individual and Focus Group Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrument</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Respondents met the study requirements and participated in individual interviews</th>
<th>Participants in focus group interview</th>
<th>Respondents to focus group interview questions after the focus group was already conducted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Electronic survey respondents</td>
<td>6 Recent students from nonmilitary families</td>
<td>3 recent students from military families</td>
<td>2 recent students from nonmilitary families</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12 Recent students from military families</td>
<td>3 recent students from nonmilitary families</td>
<td>1 recent student from a military family</td>
<td>1 current student from a military family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9 parents from nonmilitary families</td>
<td>4 current students from military families</td>
<td>3 current students from nonmilitary families</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7 parents from military families</td>
<td>4 current students from nonmilitary families</td>
<td>2 current students from military families</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ethical Considerations**

This study was designed to minimize any known risk to participants. All identifying details of this study’s participants including their names and ages are kept confidential. More particularly, there is no use of actual names, places, or any other information that might reveal the participant’s identity. Also, all responses to the online survey questions were anonymous,
unless the responder selected to share her or his contact information and name. Data related to
this study, both digital and hard copy, are kept in a secure manner, such that only the researcher
has access to it. The data will be kept in that secure manner, for up to five years after the
completion of the study, when it will be destroyed in appropriate ways (deletion for digital data
and shredding for hard copies). All participants or their parents (for participants who were
minors) signed informed consent forms mentioning the participants' rights and protections during
the process and including their willingness to participate and their agreement for the information
they provide to be used in the study. One copy of the consent form was given to the participants
(or their parents in case of minors) and a second copy was kept by the researcher. Minors also
signed a youth assent form (appears as Appendix I) and the voluntary nature of participation was
made clear to them, including the choice of non-participation with no penalty, even when
opposed to their parents’ wishes. The copy of the consent form directed at recent high school
students protocol appears as Appendix G, and the copy of the consent form directed at parents of
current high school students appears as Appendix H.

The researcher emailed to each study participant (or her or his parent if the participant is
a minor) an agreement several days prior to conducting the focus group interview. According to
this agreement, each participant is obligated to protect others’ privacy by not discussing others’
details (including names, locations, views, or any other information) outside the group. The
focus group consent form also advised each participant to introduce information during the
session only if they feel comfortable sharing in a group forum. This advice was also spoken in
person at the beginning of the focus group session. The copy of the focus group interview
agreement appears as Appendix K and all participants signed this agreement and received a copy
of it.
Furthermore, during the group discussion, the researcher was careful not to share any personal information on opinions, thoughts, or experiences divulged by the participants during the individual interviews. The researcher also made every effort to facilitate the focus group in an attentive and respectful manner, trying to be heedful to any discomfort or uneasiness felt by participants and respond to those feelings. A $25 Amazon gift card was given to each participant who proceeded to the individual interview stage. The researcher made it clear to all participants that their withdrawal from the study after this point will not require returning the gift card. It should also be noted that the completely voluntary nature of participation in the study was present and stressed during every step, as was the freedom to withdraw from the study at any point in time without penalty.

Instrumentation

This section considers how the data collection instruments used in this study were developed. It includes information on the development of four electronic surveys and the development of both individual and focus group interview protocols.

Development

Instruments consisted of three elements (a) four electronic surveys administrated using Qualtrics software; (b) semi-structured individual interviews; and (c) a semi structured focus group interview. The electronic surveys included two questionnaires for recent high school students (both from military and nonmilitary families) comprising questions regarding demographic information including gender, age, and ethnicity. They also included Likert type scale coded items as well as open ended questions regarding the social interaction that is the concern of this study. The other two electronic surveys for parents of current high school students both from military and nonmilitary families comprised questions about basic
demographics including the age of their child, grade level, gender, and length of time living in the community. These surveys also included an open-ended question regarding a general sense of the participants with regard to this shared social interaction. Also, before constructing the surveys, the researcher gave a careful thought with regard to what information should be gathered based on certain criteria for selecting this study’s participants. All four surveys are included as Appendices C, D, E, and F.

Individual and focus group interview questions included a series of structural and descriptive questions addressing the guiding research questions and aiming to elicit the participants’ thoughts and experiences related to the discussed topic, namely, social engagement. Descriptive questions were used to elicit participants’ perspectives on their experiences about shared social interaction. Structural questions were used to emphasize the differences respondents noticed in their experiences. Both individual and focus group interview protocols were developed specifically for this study and were based on models provided by Creswell and Poth (2018) and by Weiss (1994). These protocols are included as Appendices J and L.

Bloomberg and Volpe (2016) explain the reasons for a focus group interview mentioning that a focus group is essentially a group discussion that centers on a selected topic while the participants are usually “selected because of their shared cultural and social experience” (p.157). Employing a focus group interview within this study (in addition to conducting individual interviews) offered several advantages. First, Bloomberg and Volpe (2016) argue that this method is socially oriented, and its format is often more natural and relaxed than a one-on-one interview. This format may foster a “permissive atmosphere that elicits a range of opinions, feelings, and ideas resulting in a more complete and revealing understanding of the issues will be obtained” (p.157). In addition, these scholars also argue that the format of a group discussion
may provide the participants with an opportunity to better understand the differences in their perspectives.

More specifically to this study, a focus group discussion might enhance participants’ understanding of their experiences regarding the discussed social blend and the common and distinct elements within these interactions and experiences. Conducting a focus group discussion indeed provided an additional venue for collecting data, but it also enhanced the credibility of the study and its dependability (showing that findings are consistent and could be repeated). Finally, the focus group interview presented the Respondents with the opportunity to “make a face-to-face communication and come together” (Greene, 1996, p.312) with others who experience the same phenomenon and created an open space in which moral and social values that related to the participants’ experiences, were discussed in an open and comfortable atmosphere.

**Connection to Guiding Questions**

During the development and revisions of the individual and focus group interview questions, a maximal effort was made to ensure that each interview question relates to at least one guiding question. A table considered the alignment between the guiding questions and the survey/interview questions is described in Appendix M.

**Interview Pilot**

The electronic surveys as well as the individual interview protocols were piloted to check clarity, to test the technical aspect of the electronic survey, and to solicit suggestions for additional interview questions and improvements. The survey’s pilot was conducted with parents of current high school students, one from a nonmilitary family and one from a military family and with a recent high school student from a nonmilitary family and one from a military
family. The pilot for the individual interview instrument was conducted with a recent high school student from a nonmilitary family and another one from a military family, as well as a current high school student from a military family and one from a nonmilitary family. The interviewees found all the questions relevant to the research topic and their wording clear. The current high school student from a military family remarked on the “balanced” questions regarding the opportunities and difficulties related to the research topic. She also commented on the pleasant atmosphere created during the interview and concluded that this pilot had been a positive experience for her.

Both recent and high school students mentioned the great importance of investigating this topic and the student from the military family noted that while he is often asked about his experiences living in a military family and the related multiple relocations, he has never been asked about social engagement between students from military and nonmilitary families. He expressed his feelings that “it is important to learn about this engagement since most of the military kids attend public school and get together with civilian students and communities.” Neither the pilot participants nor their responses were included in the study.

Data Collection Procedures

This section describes the methods and phases of data collection as well as the steps and activities taken to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants.

Data Sources

The data analyzed in this study came from multiple sources. Transcripts and field notes from individual and focus group interviews were the primary sources of data. Responses to electronic surveys also served as data sources. Also, follow-up emails were sent to the study
participants after conducting both individual and focus group interviews in order to provide them with the opportunity to further share their experiences and feelings.

**Data Collection Procedure**

The data collection procedure consisted of three phases. The first phase included the process of conducting four online surveys. As indicated earlier, these surveys included: (a) a survey for recent high school students from nonmilitary families (appears as Appendix C); (b) a survey for recent high school students from military families (appears as Appendix D); (c) a survey for parents of current high school students from nonmilitary families (as shown in Appendix E); and (d) a survey for parents of current high school students from military families (appears as Appendix F). Demographic information and responses providing some sense of the general experiences of recent and current high school students regarding the discussed topic were collected digitally and captured using an online Qualtrics survey (Appendix C, D, E, F). In other words, the surveys were used for recruitment purposes by identifying suitable candidates for the study and gain some initial sense regarding the social phenomenon discussed in the study.

The second phase of the data collection procedure was associated with conducting individual interviews. Based on the demographic information gathered throughout the online surveys, 14 study participants were selected and interviewed in individual interviews (four current high school students from a nonmilitary family, four from military families, three recent high school students from nonmilitary families, and three from military families). The third phase of the study related to conducting a focus group interview. All 14 study participants were given the opportunity to participate in the focus group interview. Eight took part in the focus group interview. Seven participants attended in person and another one participated via Skype. A ninth participant, who was not able to attend the focus group interview, responded to the focus
group interview questions by a later phone conversation after the focus group interviews was already conducted. The other five participants were offered the opportunity to respond to the focus group interviews but did not follow up. This interview was conducted in a community center room, reserved especially for this purpose and void of anyone other than the study participants and the researcher.

The communication in both types of interviews was conducted in a face-to-face format, except for one interview over the phone (in the case of focus group interview) and two over e-mail (in the case of individual interviews) as per the participants’ request. Study participants were given copies of the questions. All participants were given the opportunity to be interviewed twice (once in an individual interview format and the once in the format of focus group interview) in a span of approximately six weeks. After each interview, follow-up questions were sent by e-mail to the interviewees in order to give them the opportunity to further elaborate on their experiences and feelings. Also, reflective notes were taken by the researcher during both the individual and the focus group interviews.

At the beginning of the digital survey, the individual and the focus group interviews participants were reminded that participation was voluntary, and withdrawal was allowed at any time without penalties or negative consequences. To ensure accuracy of the information collected from the individual and the focus group interviews all interviews were audio-recorded, with the agreement of the interviewees. The recordings of all interviews were transcribed, and all study participants were offered transcripts of their individual interviews as well as of the focus group interview (in case they had attended the focus group discussion).

In conclusion, the data collection procedure consisted of three phases (a) four electronic surveys administered via Qualtrics software; (b) semi-structured individual interviews; and (c)
A summary of the three phases of the data collection procedure is described in Figure 3.

**Figure 3**

The Three Phases of Data Collection Procedure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1:</th>
<th>Phase 2:</th>
<th>Phase 3:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conducting four electronic surveys directed at (a) recent high school students from nonmilitary families; (b) recent high school students from military families; (c) parents of current high school from nonmilitary families; (d) parents of current high school students from military families.</td>
<td>Conducting individual interviews with eight current high school students (four military and four nonmilitary) and six recent high school students (three from each group). Occurred during the first six weeks of data collection phase.</td>
<td>Inviting all study participants to attend focus group interview. Eight participants attended this group discussion (seven in person and one remotely). The ninth participant responded to the focus group interview questions via phone in a format of an individual interview. All other participants were given the opportunity to respond to these questions but were available to do so.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Management and Security

Many steps were taken to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants in this study. All participants were de-identified so that they appeared only by ID numbers and pseudonyms in the file and database that contained the information from the individual and focus group interviews. Qualtrics software was used to run the surveys included in the study. The software makes it impossible to track anyone completing the survey, unless they chose to leave their personal contact information. Thus, only those who considered participation in the individual interview phase and provided contact information could be traced.

In this study, there is no use of the participants’ names, places of residence, or any other details that may reveal the participants’ identity. Also, all collected data were revised as needed so that events, people, or other information do not identify a community, school, or participant. As indicated in the focus group interview protocol (appears as Appendix L), the discussion in this interview concentrated on general observations rather than on individual experiences. Each participant signed a confidentiality agreement (as shown in Appendix K) to protect others’ identity and privacy outside the study. Digital data were stored on a secure, password-protected server (OneDrive) and only the researcher has access to it. The hard copies of the study are kept in a locked bag belonging to the researcher, in a locked cabinet at the researcher’s house. All data are kept for up to five years after study completion and will then be deleted from the OneDrive sever or shredded as appropriate.

Data Analysis Procedures

This section discusses the data analysis process and describes the coding procedure.

Creswell and Poth (2018) assert that “data analysis is qualitative research consists of preparing and organizing the data…then reducing the data into themes through a process of
coding and condensing the codes, and finally representing the data in figures, tables, or a
discussion” (p.183). Saldaña (2016) further elaborates on developing the coding process
suggesting that “the qualitative analytic process is cyclical rather than linear” (p.68).
Accordingly, the analysis of data collected in this study was conducted in multiple rounds. The
researcher read through the transcripts of both individual and focus group interviews as well as
the online surveys’ responses multiple times in order to optimally capture possible units of
meaning.

Individual and focus group interviews transcripts, surveys responses, and field notes
(notes that were taken by the researcher while conducting both individual and focus group
interviews) were coded manually using open coding to develop the initial categories and
meaning units. Saldaña (2016) emphasizes the importance of open coding mentioning that this
type of coding primarily related to the first cycle of the coding process through which the
researcher “reflects deeply on the contents and nuances of [the] data and begins taking ownership
of them” (p.115).

The codes were further formed with each round of reading both individual and focus
group interviews transcripts until data saturation (widest possible range of codes) was developed
(Merriam, 2009). Descriptive codes were used following the initial code development cycle.
Saldaña (2016) further explains that “descriptive coding summarizes in a word or short phase-
most often a noun-the basic topic of a passage of qualitative data” (p.102). Thus, descriptive
coding allowed the researcher to achieve a level of specificity that might have been absent in the
initial code development cycle and to provide a portfolio of topics for developing categories.
During the development phase of descriptive coding, the meaning of the codes was elucidated.
For instance, the code opportunity represented a continuum of meaning ranging from opportunities for district and school (indirect opportunity for students) to opportunities that directly benefit the student (i.e., social interaction and personal growth benefits).

Following the re-arrangement, the codes were “brought together” based on their shared characteristics and were placed into categories. In other words, the codes were formed several times and grouped based on their shared meaning towards the development of themes.

Validity

According to Maxwell (2005), validity refers to the credibility or “truth” of descriptions and interpretations of the findings. Maxwell asserts that validity “has to be assessed in relation to the purposes and circumstances of the research, rather than being a context independent property of methods or conclusions” (p. 279). In other words, validity is based on procedures and evidence that optimally enhance the credibility of its conclusions. Maxwell further explains the concept of validity threat, which can be defined as “particular events or procedures that could lead to invalid conclusions” (p.281).

This scholar also suggests some important strategies testing the validity of conclusions and the existence of potential threats to those findings. In particular, four strategies suggested by Maxwell (2005) were used in this study to test the validity of the conclusions and existence of potential threats to those findings including “rich” data, searching for discrepant evidence and negative cases, triangulation, and comparison. This study included “rich data” collected through electronic surveys responses and intensive individual as well as focus group interviews. Secondly, the researcher also searched for discrepant evidence relying on her senior advisor and
her doctoral committee members’ feedback throughout the research process to check her own 
“biases, assumptions and flaws in [the] logic and methods” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 284).

A strategy concerned with triangulation was also applied in this study. This tactic 
emphasizes ideas of “collecting information from a diverse range of individuals and settings and 
using a variety of methods” (p.284). Accordingly, the researcher of this study collected data 
from a diverse range of individuals who came from several school districts located in various 
communities (four current high school students from military families, four current high school 
students from nonmilitary families, three recent high school students from military families, and 
three recent high school students from nonmilitary families). The researcher also used various 
sources for data collection including electronic surveys, individual and focus group interviews.

This research furthermore used a comparison of different time periods in several settings 
as this study addressed the experiences of both recent and current high school students which 
reduced the risk for validity threat. More specifically, at the time of conducting the study, the 
current high school students attend various grade levels (from 9th to 12th grade) while the recent 
high school students completed their high school years between the years of 2016 to 2018 and 
were between 18 and 21 years old at the time of conducting the study.

Also, some of the study participants have experience with other settings. For example, 
recent high school students have experience with both high school setting and college 
environments, and military participants have experience with both DoDEA schools and various 
public schools serving both military and nonmilitary student population. Also, the validity of 
this study’s conclusions “depended substantially on a process approach” (p.286) in that the 
participants explained in detail not only their experiences with this social blend, but also how and 
why certain steps and activities orchestrated through school, community, and family were
beneficial. In conclusion, four strategies were applied in this study to test the validity of its conclusions and reduce its threat.

**Delimitations**

Participation in this study was limited to current and recent high school students from a small number of public high schools located near a military base in the Northeastern region of the United States. The experiences of the eight current and six recent high school students are not representative of adolescents or young adults who attend or attended various such mixed (serving both military and nonmilitary populations) public high schools in other settings. Due to the small number of participants, this study may present only the perceptions of the selected participants and are not intended to be generalizable. Also, the data collection venues used in this study were developed only for the purpose of this study and were not used in any other research. Finally, this phenomenological study investigated the meaning of lived experiences of the participants from the participants’ perspectives. In other words, this study’s data and findings are based only on the participants’ views and impressions and not on the voices of school personnel, leaders of both communities, and families.

**Summary**

This chapter discussed the study design and the rationale for the research method, which is qualitative phenomenology. It also provided information on the setting and the selection of the participants and explained ethical considerations and the role of the researcher within this study. The development of the instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis procedures were also discussed including the coding procedures. Finally, this chapter provided information regarding the validity and delimitations of the study. The next chapter examines the results of data analysis and the findings of the study.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Restatement of the Purpose of the Study and Research Guiding Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine the lived experiences of current and recent public high school students who attend or had attended public high schools located near a military base in the Northeastern region of the United States. The study explored the following guiding questions: How do current and recent high school students from both military and nonmilitary families describe their shared social interactions when they attend or attended a public high school that serves both military and nonmilitary students? What activities and steps on behalf of their school, community, and families do current and recent high school students from both military and nonmilitary families report as effective in introducing and fostering social interaction between the two populations? What recommendations do current and recent high school students from military and nonmilitary families believe will enhance this social interaction?

The data collection for this study took place over a two-month period, during which two categories of both military and nonmilitary family members---parents of current high school students and recent high school students completed electronic surveys. Also, during this period of time, eight current high school students (four from military and four from nonmilitary families) and six recent high school students (three from military and three from nonmilitary families) participated in the phase of individual interviews. Eight of the study participants also participated in the focus group interview phase of data collection (seven participants attended in person and another one participated via Skype). After the focus group interview, one of the
participants who was unable to attend the focus group session contacted the researcher to suggest an individual phone interview, thus making further data collection possible for that participant.

This chapter reports the data analysis and the findings that result from that analysis. It begins with an explanation of how the analysis was conducted and then introduces the participants with information about them, their backgrounds, and their communities. The remaining sections of the chapter introduce the themes that arose from the data analysis and present the findings for each of the study’s guiding questions.

**Description of Three Settings**

Study participants came from three public high schools and communities located near each other in the Northeastern region of the country. These communities are homes to personnel assigned to a military base in the area. Because there are no DoDEA schools (these schools are located on a military base and serve only children from military families) located in the discussed area, the base’s formal website presents a list of public high schools in the area serving both military and nonmilitary student populations. In general, students from military families residing on this base are assigned to one of two particular school districts based on their residential location on base. Students from military families residing off base attend schools in towns where they reside. Notably, the three public high schools in which this study’s participants are or were in attendance are included in the military base website list mentioned above and receive some level of financial assistance through the Impact Aid Program.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, there are many local school districts across the United States that include within “their boundaries parcels of land that are owned by the Federal Government or that have been removed from the local tax rolls by the Federal

Since 1950, Congress has provided financial support to these local school districts through the Impact Aid Program. This program was designed to provide financial aid to local school districts with concentrations of students residing in several places, including in Indian lands or near military bases. According to the Impact Aid Payments Overview report (2018), Impact Aid is used to support all the students in the school district, like local tax revenue, and can be used for any purpose including but not limited to teacher salaries, instructional materials, extracurricular activities, and facilities. Consequently, the range of the Impact Aid varies and is based on the number of eligible federally connected students in a certain school district.

In particular, the three districts discussed in this study (Lincoln, Norwood, and River Ridge) receive various levels of financial assistance through the Impact Aid Program. These regional districts are located in a rural area consisting primarily of many small towns that each includes fewer than 3,500 residents, most of whom are white of European ancestry. The majority of public high schools (grades 9 to 12) in this area (that serve only nonmilitary student population) are attended by less than 450 students. Some of those schools’ student populations number less than 140 students, namely an average of 35 students per grade level. The ethnic composition of these high schools is nearly 95% white and only about 5% other ethnicities (Native American, Asian, Hispanic, African American, or two or more races). The rate of students eligible for free lunch in these schools varies, but in almost all the schools it is lower than the US national level (which stands at approximately 51.8%, retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d16/tables/dt16_204.10.asp). Turnover of students in these districts is rare and the student body is stable in terms of numbers and of similar student
backgrounds. These schools do not receive any level of financial assistance through the Impact Aid Program since they do not serve military student population. The following section considers individually the contextual backgrounds of the three high schools affiliated with three various school districts.

**Lincoln High School**

Lincoln School is located in a town with a population of less than 3000 residents. The unemployment rate within the community is approximately equal to the US national average, which, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, stood at approximately 3.6% at the beginning of 2020 (https://data.bls.gov/timeseries/LNS14000000). The ethnic composition of this community is approximately 83% white, and the rest consist of other ethnicities (Native American, Asian, Hispanic, African American, or two or more races). At the time this study was conducted, the school consisted of approximately 1000 students, approximately 80% of whom were white and the rest were of Native American, Asian, Hispanic, African American, or mixed ethnicity. Approximately 40% of the Lincoln High School student population was connected to the military, although percentage changes often due to deployments, reassignments, discharges, and other military reasons. Therefore, this school receives very high levels of impact aid. Some of the students from military families that attend this school reside on the military base and some of them live within the local civilian community.

The school website prominently displays relevant information to military families regarding the school liaison officer and other programs or services available for military families within both the school setting and the military system. Finally, this school offers the Junior Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (JROTC) program to both military and nonmilitary high school students. Participation in this program is voluntary and participants are not obligated to serve in
the U.S Army upon completing the program. JROTC program is directed at high school students from both military and nonmilitary families. The presence of this program at school indicates an intention to include military facets within the educational setting, but it also adds an opportunity in which students from both military and nonmilitary families are likely to come together through a program operated by the military system.

**Norwood High School**

Norwood school is located in a community with a population of more than 4000 residents. The unemployment rate within the community is a little greater than the US national average (which stood at approximately 3.6% at the beginning of 2020). The ethnic composition of this population is approximately 80% white and the rest consist of other ethnicities (Native American, Asian, Hispanic, African American, or two or more races). At the time of conducting this study, the school consisted of approximately 1000 students approximately 80% of whom were white and the rest were of Native American, Asian, Hispanic, African American, or two or more races). Less than 15% of Norwood High School student population was connected to the military within this school, although the percentage changes often due to deployments, reassignments, discharges, and other military reasons. Therefore, this school receives some level of Impact Aid. Most of the students from military families that attend this school district reside in the local civilian community. The school website prominently displays relevant information to military families regarding the school liaison officer and other programs or services available

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1 According to the Department of Defense, the JROTC curriculum encourages participants to further develop leadership skills and community involvement. The program also introduces the high school students to military customs, uniform inspections, physical fitness training and military history. This program is conducted by the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps and is taught as an elective course at more than 3,000 high schools nationwide. (Retrieved from https://www.defense.gov/ask-us/faq/Article/1775385).
for military families both within the school setting and the military system. However, the JROTC program is not offered within this school district.

**River Ridge High School**

River Ridge school is located in a community with a population of approximately 3000 residents. The unemployment rate within this town is approximately equal to the US national average (which stood at approximately 3.6% at the beginning of 2020). The ethnic composition of this community is nearly 95% white. At the time of conducting this study, the school consisted of approximately 450 students. Nearly 95% of whom were white, and the rest were of Native American, Asian, Hispanic, African American, or two or more races. Less than 10% of River Ridge High School student population was connected to the military within this school, although the percentage changes often due to deployments, reassignments, discharges, and other military reasons.

Among the three school districts, River Ridge School District receives the lowest level of Impact Aid. Most of the students from military families who attend this school district reside in a local civilian community. The school website prominently displays relevant information to military families regarding the programs and services available for military families both within the school setting and the military system. However, the JROTC program is not offered within this school district.

In summary, the 14 study participants came from three different public-school districts in the Northeastern region of the country. The number of students from military families in these schools ranged from several percent to comprising about 40% of the school’s population. All these school districts are located in a rural area, receive their eligible level of Impact Aid, and have relatively low minority enrolment. Also, these three schools display on their websites
relevant information to military families regarding the services and programs (including the program of MFLC) available specifically for them. The presence of this information on the website indicates the district’s recognition that a portion of their community requires specialized information to facilitate their acclimation to community and their ability to simultaneously navigate both military and civilian life. Nevertheless, the mission or vision statements of these districts do not include any mention of the social interaction between the military and nonmilitary student population or any goal regarding this unique social engagement. Table 2 displays the details and contexts of the three educational settings.
Table 2
Details and Contexts of the Three Educational Settings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Lincoln High School</th>
<th>Norwood High School</th>
<th>River Ridge High School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of students</td>
<td>≈1,000</td>
<td>≈1,000</td>
<td>≈ 450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial composition</td>
<td>≈ 80% white, the rest consisted of other ethnicities</td>
<td>≈ 80% white, the rest consisted of other ethnicities</td>
<td>≈ 95% white, the rest consisted of other ethnicities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact Aid program level</td>
<td>very high level of funding</td>
<td>some level of funding</td>
<td>lowest level of funding compared to Lincoln and Norwood schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of students from military families</td>
<td>≈ 40%</td>
<td>&lt;15%</td>
<td>&lt;10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military families</td>
<td>some reside on base</td>
<td>most reside off base</td>
<td>most reside off base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School website</td>
<td>displays relevant information to military families</td>
<td>displays relevant information to military families</td>
<td>displays relevant information to military families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JROTC</td>
<td>is offered</td>
<td>is not offered</td>
<td>is not offered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>&lt;3,000</td>
<td>&gt;4,000</td>
<td>≈ 3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment Level</td>
<td>the unemployment rate is approximately equal to the US national average</td>
<td>the unemployment rate is a little higher than the US national average</td>
<td>the unemployment rate is approximately equal the US national average</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial composition of community</td>
<td>≈ 83% white, the rest consisted of other ethnicities</td>
<td>≈ 80% white, the rest consisted of other ethnicities</td>
<td>≈ 95% white, the rest consisted of other ethnicities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Description of Participants’ Backgrounds

This study sheds light on the lived experiences of eight current high school students (four from military and four from nonmilitary families) and six recent high school students (three from military and three from nonmilitary families) regarding the nature of social interaction between students from military and nonmilitary families. The 14 study participants were recruited from regional school districts in three communities in the Northeastern region of the U.S., which are home to personnel of a military base located in the vicinity of these three communities.

Study participants’ backgrounds and demographic information varied. The current high school student group included eight participants, four from military and four from nonmilitary families. The group consisted of three females and five males, five are white, two are African-American (nonmilitary participants), and one is Hispanic (a military participant). At the time of the interviews, one student was in 9th grade, two were in 10th grade, one in 11th grade, and four in 12th grade. As mentioned earlier, these students attended three different public high schools each in a different school district. Two of the current students from military families lived on the base during their high school years. Table 3 displays the demographic backgrounds of participants who were current high school students.
Table 3

Demographic Backgrounds of Current High School Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Military Association</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Racial Background</th>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Residency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maddy</td>
<td>Military</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>10th grade</td>
<td>Off base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liam</td>
<td>Military</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>11th grade</td>
<td>Off base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucas</td>
<td>Military</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>12th grade</td>
<td>On base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver</td>
<td>Military</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>12th grade</td>
<td>On base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>Nonmilitary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>9th grade</td>
<td>Off base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Nonmilitary</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>10th grade</td>
<td>Off base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>Nonmilitary</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>12th grade</td>
<td>Off base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liz</td>
<td>Nonmilitary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>12th grade</td>
<td>Off base</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The recent high school student group included six participants, three from military and three from nonmilitary families. Two are female and four are male, five are white, and one is Asian (a military participant). All are college students. Two graduated in 2016, one in 2017, and three in 2018. Of the three recent high school students from military families, one lived on base for part of his high school years while the other two lived in the local community. Table 4 displays the demographic backgrounds of participants who were recent high school students.
The following section describes the process of identifying units of information that contribute to developing codes, categories, themes, and a broader context of the data.

**Thematic Analysis**

According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2016), Thematic analysis “is an attempt to reconstruct a holistic understanding of the study” (p.243). This process includes discovering codes to represent units of meaning, categorizing the coded data, identifying themes across the data, and discovering patterns in how those themes are related. Bloomberg and Volpe (2016) assert that during the analysis, the researcher shares “multiple perspectives supported by quotations” (p.207) that yield a more cohesive picture of the phenomenon. These perspectives and procedural approaches for data analysis guided the management and organization of data for this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Military Association</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Cultural Background</th>
<th>Year of HS Completion</th>
<th>Residency During HS</th>
<th>College Attendance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>Military</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>On base</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nate</td>
<td>Military</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Off base</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dave</td>
<td>Military</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Off base</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lily</td>
<td>Nonmilitary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Off base</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>Nonmilitary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Off base</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>Nonmilitary</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Off base</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The analysis of data collected in this study was conducted in multiple rounds. The researcher read through the transcripts of both individual and focus group interviews as well as the online surveys responses multiple times in order to recognize possible units of meaning. Individual and focus group interviews transcripts, surveys responses, and field notes (notes that were taken by the researcher while conducting both individual and focus group interviews) were coded manually using open coding to develop the initial meaning units and categories.

Then descriptive codes were further formed with each round of reading both individual and focus group interviews transcripts until data saturation (widest possible range of codes) was developed (Merriam, 2009). Similar codes were placed into themes and sub-themes according to the relationships between the codes and their meaning. In particular, data analysis was performed based on a flexible and interpretive approach; that is, codes, categories, and themes were not defined in advance but have evolved with multiple rounds of reading the transcripts. In other words, a general inductive approach was used relying on reasoning in which themes emerge from the data through multiple iterations of data analysis.

The data analysis of this study led to five primary thematic categories. The first category concerns how the participants have come to understand their common experience as students from both military and nonmilitary backgrounds who attend the same public high school. This category includes two themes focusing on participants’ awareness of the distinctiveness of the social phenomenon; and what it has meant to them to have experienced the phenomenon. The second category addresses the participants’ understanding of their part in the social connection. This category includes two themes concerning the participants’ own efforts to establish and maintain the social interaction.
The third category examines how, according to the participants’ views, families from both backgrounds engaged with the social connection. This category includes a theme addressing the factors and conditions associated with families that influenced and shaped the social interaction. The fourth category concerns what participants notice about community conditions that promote or interfere with social interaction, and what they recognized as opportunities communities have to support the interaction. This category includes three themes focusing on factors and conditions associated with nonmilitary community that influenced and shaped the social interaction; factors and conditions associated with the military community that influenced and shaped the social interaction; and participants’ suggestions for enhancing the nature of the social interaction. The fifth category regards four themes addressing factors and conditions associated with the school system that fostered and hindered the social interaction; recognition of school staff members of reception of entering students and their distinctive life conditions; intentional guidance provided by school leaders; and school personnel’s responsibility to enhance the quality of ties between school, both communities, and families. Table 5 displays the five categories and their corresponding themes. It provides an overview description of the emergent themes that will be presented and explained in this chapter.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category #1</td>
<td>Awareness of participants of the distinctive nature of the experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category #2</td>
<td>Participants’ part in the social interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category #3</td>
<td>Families engagement with the social connection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category #4</td>
<td>Community support and possibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category #5</td>
<td>School-based support and possibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categories</td>
<td>Themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categories</td>
<td>Assigning meaning to the experience and its implications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category #2</td>
<td>Factors and conditions associated with participants that fostered or challenged the interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category #3</td>
<td>Factors and conditions associated with families that fostered or challenged the interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category #4</td>
<td>Factors and conditions associated with the nonmilitary community that fostered or challenged the interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category #5</td>
<td>Conditions associated with the school system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categories</td>
<td>Themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categories</td>
<td>Recognition of school staff members of the reception of entering students and their distinctive social conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category #4</td>
<td>Suggestions for community activities intended to enhance the social interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category #5</td>
<td>Intentional guidance provided by school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categories</td>
<td>Themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categories</td>
<td>School leaders’ responsibility to enhance school, both communities, and families ties</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following sections present themes that were established based on multiple iterations of data analysis. In some instances, themes were broken down further into sub-themes. Each theme starts with a brief introduction which is followed by data analysis supported by participants’ statements. It should be noted that identifying tags were used to help orient the reader to the speaker’s background. To illustrate, a recent student from a military family (RSMF), a recent student from a nonmilitary family (RSNF), a current student from a military family (CSMF), and a current student from a nonmilitary family (CSNF).

**Meaning of the Experience**

The first category captures the experiences, feelings, and perspectives described by the participants regarding the social interaction. This category includes two themes: (a) participants are aware that attending high school together represents a distinctive social experience; and (b) participants assign individual meaning to this social experience.

*Participants Are Aware That Attending High School Together Represents a Distinctive Social Experience*

All participants expressed their awareness of the distinctive social situation present within their public high schools. Participants’ reports revealed four aspects indicating the distinctive nature of the social circumstances: (a) that the individual has a sense of separation (geographic and social) based on where he or she resides and/or the community (military or non-military) with which he or she identifies; (b) that the participants regarded the existence of two “crowds” (term used by participants); (c) that there is a dynamic and unpredictable school and community climate; and (d) that the social blend and school character are unique compared to other high schools in the area. Although the four aspects are related, they are discussed
separately supported by a table displaying quotes from participants that represent supporting data for each aspect.

Many participants reported that they individually experienced geographic separation. They reported that the restricted access to the military base contributed to the distinctive social conditions within their high school and that meant that they never “hung out” (Emma). But some participants also described the sense of social separation between these two groups mentioning that some military students (who lived on or off base) were officially part of the school setting but socially they “had never become part of the school” (Lucas, CSMF) and the nonmilitary community.

Participants’ reports also revealed a second aspect of the distinctive nature of their high school settings. They reported on the social fabric of the school in terms of two “different crowds” (term used by participants) or communities that were brought together to a shared social environment. Many participants referred to the contrast between students from military and nonmilitary families. They reported that while students from military families often have roots in an urban setting and spend considerable time “in different settings” (Liz, CSNF) of the country and abroad, most students from nonmilitary families have roots in a small-town setting and do not travel outside of their immediate region. Interestingly, many participants from military families tended to describe their nonmilitary peers as having common characteristics because of their affiliation to the nonmilitary community. In other words, they referred to their nonmilitary peers as belonging to one big homogenous community and not a collection of individuals who have various life experiences and backgrounds.

Similarly, many nonmilitary participants referred to their military peers as belonging to one big homogenous community and not as individuals with varied backgrounds and life
conditions. Namely, the first categorization of participants from both backgrounds was based on one’s affiliation to a military or nonmilitary community and not on one’s personal characteristics. Overall, according to participants’ reports, the social conditions within their high school setting were distinctive due to the atypical composition of the student body consisting of two principal communities.

The third aspect is associated with the dynamic, unpredictable, and transitory nature of the schools’ enrollment. Participants perceived their high school social setting as distinctive (with regard to this aspect) due to four reasons: (a) the high rate of transient individuals; (b) the short and unpredictable time they were stationed in the area; (c) the idea that parents or students themselves did not have any choice since the military system made the decision and arrangement for them; and (d) the fact that group of military students (not only individuals) moved away from school at the same time.

Finally, all participants identified the distinctive social fabric of those schools and their features as compared to area schools that do not include these two student populations. They referred to the size of the school, its dynamic nature, and its vibrant social setting compared to other area schools and perceived these atypical elements as “an advantage” (Tom, CSNF). Table 6 displays the data from which this theme emerged, organized according to the four aspects just presented.
### Table 6

**Examples of Data Supporting Four Aspects of Distinctive Social Circumstances**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects</th>
<th>Sense of separation</th>
<th>Social fabric consisted of two primary communities</th>
<th>Dynamic and unpredictable climate</th>
<th>Particular school characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I never hung out with them because these friends lived on base and it was really hard to interact with them after school because of that”</td>
<td>“a lot of people from the military saw that when they moved here, they were immediately thrown to that, that was a sort of crowd … [there were] those who lived here their entire lives and the military ones”</td>
<td>“there were sometimes during high school when students from military families would come and stay only for several months… it was unpredictable”</td>
<td>“a lot is different there because the people that are military bring different perspectives” Emma (CSNF)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“all you want to do is get your friend, but you cannot because the base and you cannot get on the base”</td>
<td>“there are people that live here for all their lives and kids that live here for short periods… there are ‘towny’ kids and ‘militaries”</td>
<td>“sometimes they are just staying in the area for a year… and it is hard to answer how long military kids are staying in the area… [because there was always] a huge range… this was always a temporary situation” Lily (RSNF)</td>
<td>“I think that if I were in a regular school with no military kids, I would see the same kids all the times so [here] I just getting to learn about those other cultures [that military kids experienced during their various relocations] and places” Liz (CSNF)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“many students from military families graduated but had never”</td>
<td>“nonmilitary kids all have similar experiences… these kids have gone to school”</td>
<td>They “went to 9, 10 or 11 different schools in 12 years… military”</td>
<td>“it is always an advantage… instead of just let’s say you are in your class with...”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
become part of the school [and the nonmilitary community], and that is sad” Lucas (CSMF) together since Pre-K” Sam (RSMF) kids are coming in and out” like a 100 kids… you just get a bunch of new kids” Tom (CSNF)

nonmilitary kids “have different backgrounds… and they do not understand” the military life circumstances. Lucas (CSMF) “having a group of military friends and they have to move away [at the same time]” Liz (CSNF) “unique experience” because of military and nonmilitary social mix. Oliver (CSMF)

“a lot of people have not left the area or the state ever” Maddy (CSMF) “the military kids do not control where their parents get stationed they just go wherever they are supposed to go” Dave (RSMF)

military kids “go through the same experiences, like the moving all-around constantly and then making and losing new friends… They kind of just understand [each other], it is like the connection” Emma (CSNF)

Liz (CSNF) “I come from a small town… they have been in different settings…”

Not only was the complex and distinctive context shaped by these four aspects, but it was also influenced by elements that span these classifications. Liam (CSMF), for example,
explained how the distinctive social blend allowed him to be affiliated with both military and nonmilitary communities. He described how in his high school setting, he tended “to stick together with other military kids,” but he also stated, “some of my best friendships are with the kids that are from the area.” Liam further explained how during his high school years, he tended to use facilities located in both communities mentioning that he enjoyed varied shopping and entertainment experiences located on the base. Still, he also described how he used a “ton of things [varied shopping and entertainment experiences] off base.”

Overall, all participants expressed appreciation of the idea of public schools serving both military and nonmilitary student populations. They valued the concept of school as being a meeting place for students from varied backgrounds and life circumstances. Dave (RSMF), for example, asserted that public schools that do not serve varied student populations “are missing out big time.” Throughout the data, there were no indications that the participants objected to the idea of including the two student populations in their school. Rather, they recognized the value of such an environment with remarks such as “I always enjoyed going to schools that were not only for military children.” (Sam, RSMF), “it is interesting and a good experience to have” (Liz, CSNF). Overall, it was evident from participants’ accounts, that they were aware of their distinctive and complex high school environment due to the four aspects mentioned above. But they also imbued their experience with personal meaning, as explained in the following theme.

*Participants Consciously Make Sense of This Social Experience and Consider Its Implications for Them Personally and for Their Community*

It was evident in the participants’ remarks that they individually made meaning of the experience and considered its consequences for them personally and for their communities.
They reflected on their values and participation within this social sphere and also considered the quality of this experience and its effects. Many participants presented a broader view of this experience and contended that it enhanced their ability to deal with various life circumstances and social situations. The following section discusses the interpretation of this distinctive experience as it applies to the growth of their personal identity as well as the enhancement of both school and community settings.

**Participants Assigned Personal Meaning to the Experience.** Perceptions among participants indicated that not only were participants aware of the distinctiveness of this social experience, but they also actively engaged in making sense of these social circumstances. This theme of giving personal meaning included three subcategories: (a) cumulative effect of the experience on the participants; (b) self-development of the participants; and (c) making sense of the experience in the context of the wider society.

**Cumulative Effect of the Experience.** Many participants interpreted this experience in a personal context. They did not identify this social phenomenon as one-time impact during their high school years. Instead, they emphasized its development over time, the deep and long-standing meaning of this experience, and its cumulative effect on their lives. They noted that this cumulative effect enhanced their capacity to interpret and cope with other experiences. Lily (RSNF) described how the special social environment during her high school years (compared to other schools or communities that do not include both groups) made her more socially resilient, enabling her to deal with the diverse and complex environment she encountered in college more effectively. She asserted that

the experience of moving to college was different, but it was much easier for me because I met people from different races, cultures, religions, and backgrounds my
whole life… so it was not the little girl from a small town showing up in college…I obviously do not think that I would be inclined to go so far away [ in terms of her college’s location which is very far from her home town] if I would not have experienced this [attending high school that serves both populations]

Oliver (CSMF) added that this experience of attending high school with people that “are so different from me” [the nonmilitary community members] made him “able to easily adapt to different environments.” Overall, participants, when reporting on their personal gain from the experience, often expressed the value in terms of a cumulative and overall effect of being in this social mix and not as a result of a single fact or aspect.

**Self- Development.** Participants revealed that their “self” was directly shaped and enhanced by others within their distinct social surroundings. They recognized these social relationships as beneficial for the development of their identity and self-awareness, as well as perceived the social experience as a source for enhancing their ability to examine their values, approaches, and beliefs. Some participants indicated that this experience enhanced their cultural awareness. Liz (CSNF) described how this environment caused her to be more aware of the various places (states across the U.S. and countries overseas in which military students lived) and cultural differences of people from other countries or other backgrounds stating “you get to learn about different backgrounds, you see different cultures that you would have not seen where you live [without having the military population in school], or this person lived in Hawaii, and they may have different traditions there.” Dave (RSMF) added that “they have been in Germany, they have been in Italy, they have been in the United Kingdom… Virginia, Rhode Island, Georgia and Canada…” Lucas (CSMF) explained that “you have the opportunity to see a part of life that you did not know it exists like unique activities in this area, I have never lived in such a
rural place before, so that is different.” Participants’ statements described opportunities to learn about and be exposed to various places, languages, and life experiences.

Lucas (CSMF) and others discussed self-development when they noticed that their identities were affected by the dynamic social setting and its members. Lucas explained:

I sort of form my own personality around the people I am with [nonmilitary and military] so obviously my personality is very very different from what I was when I went to Europe [several years ago]. I think that it [his personality] was developed by the locations I moved to, I came to an area that is more rural than I lived in the past.

Both Ben (RSNF) and Lily (RSNF) reported that in college, when meeting new people and introducing themselves, they tended to talk about the transient enrollment and atypical social environment at their high schools and how it impacted their personalities. Lily, for instance, stated that “I told them [her college peers] that many of my graduating class were military kids… I am also a kind of explaining that we interacted with hundreds of kids during the year… [who were stationed in the area for] a huge range of time.” Many participants recognized this distinctive social space as an essential factor in the development of some facets of their identity and self-awareness.

Participants, however, recognized that the military students’ backgrounds, which included multiple relocations stateside and abroad, provided a richness to the group’s interactions, whereas the nonmilitary students traveled less and had limited experience outside their local area. Lily (RSNF) explained that military families “come from different places and
bring cultural aspects” to this small town. Liam (CSMF) added that “in an area like this, you would probably see like 95% white majority if there was not a military base near the school.”

Some participants valued the experience for its helping to enhance their communication skills in dealing with different kinds of people. Lucas (CSMF) noted, “because of our mix of students [students from military and nonmilitary families, who are different from each other—according to Lucas’s view] there are more opportunities to meet people. I have taught myself how to talk to people, how to introduce myself, how to get out a little bit more, and network better.” John (CSNF) reported “I like making new friends from military families, talking to them about their lives and what it is like... you learn how to communicate better with people from different backgrounds.” In other words, some participants, including Lucas (CSMF) and John (CSNF), attributed their increased ability to communicate and connect effectively with individuals from varied backgrounds to their experiences with the social mix they experienced within their high school.

Other participants further elaborated on the idea of understanding others’ life experiences and backgrounds by talking of empathy for others’ emotions and struggles as being beneficial for individual and collective growth. Carol (RSNF) recalled “They [military family students] told me that it is hard sometimes because they do make friends and then they leave them…it is hard moving from school to school.” Carol, like many others, valued the opportunity to identify with and better understand other people’s emotions and experiences. Lucas (CSMF) added that this social experience provided him with the “opportunity to learn about a rural place,” the life experiences of its community members, and their “unique activities.” It was evident from participants’ reports that they had a sense of acquiring new understanding of others’ life experiences, activities, and attitudes.
Finally, although many participants valued the enhancement of personal growth, they tended to emphasize that these enhancements and self-development processes were not immediate; they required time for the social interaction to become more established especially because of the geographic separation (military base), existence of two “crowds” (term used by some participants) with “different” (term used by participants) life circumstances, as well as the dynamic nature of the school. For instance, Liam (CSMF) commented “it took a few months before I was comfortable with them [nonmilitary peers]….it takes some time to break down the barriers.” Lily (RSNF) explained how technical barriers including the geographic separation made “it harder” for her to establish social connection with military students once they relocated to the area. Tom (CSNF) explained that “it takes several weeks or more” for the transient students “to get used to the new school” and be available for establishing social connections with their nonmilitary peers. Overall, it was evident from many participants’ statements that it could take several months to establish some social interaction, but the nature of social connections strengthened over time and was a crucial component in forming their personality. But many participants (including Lucas (CSMF), Oliver (CSMF), Lily (RSNF), Emma (CSNF), Liz (CSNF), Maddy (CSMF), also revealed that there have been many cases in which they and other students have had a hard time establishing a social interaction with students from the “other crowd” (term used by Oliver (CSMF), Lucas (CSMF) Lily (RSNF), and others) even after a long time.

**Connection to the Wider Society and Democratic Values.** Participants revealed that diverse people, values, and life situations enriched their high school social space and added to its authenticity. They also described how they individually made meaning of this spectrum of life experiences, values, and people, and clearly considered this diversity as an advantage. Emma
(CSNF), for example, suggested that varied opinions and life experiences created a composite and vibrant social space where students had the opportunity to contribute to the well-being of the group. She explained,

So when you have the mix of military and nonmilitary kids, it provides a lot of conversations and it is very interesting because you have people agree and people disagree, and you have like people saying I have been here, and people say ok but maybe it was just your experience so it is very interesting.

Oliver (CSMF) described a climate in which the individuals welcomed, engaged, and celebrated the full diversity of experiences explaining,

For the most part, people think that …this kid is not like us, he has different stories to tell and different stories for me to learn from or you know different perspectives for me to listen to and maybe change my perspectives and adapt to how he is thinking.

It was evident that Oliver and other participants perceived diversity of people, life experiences, and backgrounds as an opportunity for making a personal meaning and benefiting the quality of the group and its members.

Some participants focused on the exchange between these two distinct backgrounds, life circumstances, and perceptions. Namely, they did not introduce the interaction in terms of a civilian community accepting or hosting students from military families but emphasized the reciprocal influences and mutual benefits that are possible when these varied backgrounds are brought together. Lucas (CSMF) advanced this idea by stating “so I guess what I personally
have seen the most is like an exchange of cultures… the families that moved here, they bring their culture with them to this area.” Lucas went on to elaborate on how the military students learn about the “rural” area and its members’ life conditions, activities, and approaches. Overall, participants stressed the notion of mutual influence and dialogue between students from military and nonmilitary families.

A number of participants reported that this experience helped them better understand their essence and role as society members locally and globally. For example, Oliver (CSMF) offered his realization that students from both military and nonmilitary families at his school are also members of the wider society and citizens of this country stating “[we] have the same rights and [we] have the same citizenship.” Oliver’s statement indicates his recognition that his high school experience is not a separate social event detached from the rest of society. Rather, this experience is integral to the fabric of the wider society.

Oliver (CSMF) added that the nature of this social experience, including its difficulties and obstacles, “goes from the smallest level like school to community level to nationwide.” Similarly, Dave (RSMF) reported “These opportunities allow you to be a better global citizen, not just a citizen in a country you live in, probably the United States.” Liz (CSNF) echoed this idea reporting that the experience led to better understanding one’s position and responsibilities as a member of a diverse society. She explained that this experience brought “the urban part” in terms of social diversity and life experiences to the discussed social sphere and made her also reflect on “how to welcome these [military] kids.” Liz’s comment revealed her awareness of others and the need to take into account others’ distinctive conditions and needs.

In conclusion, the essence of this theme is associated with the participants’ process of making personal meaning of the social experience. Whereas this section discussed the impact of
For Participants, Personal Meaning Also Included General Ways the Affiliation Benefits the School and Community. Participants also valued benefits that were more extrinsic in their nature and were provided directly to the schools or districts. In particular, several participants identified financial aid provided to school through the Impact Aid Program as a meaningful benefit. “I feel like we get a lot more aid, we get more money because so many students [from military families] coming to our school.” (Ben, RSNF). Oliver (CSMF) also declared “we definitely do get a little more funding.” Military participants, similar to nonmilitary participants, mentioned the financial benefit through the Impact Aid Program. However, military participants referenced the program less frequently compared to the nonmilitary participants.

Some participants also expressed appreciation for opportunities associated with extracurricular programs. They reported on the JROTC program operated by the military system at school. Carol (RSNF), for example, stated “I think our JROTC program seems to be better because we have military students in with us.” Emma (CSNF) added that “this program is very helpful for military and nonmilitary. It is a military program for high school…they are teaching about leadership and other things…this class integrates both military and nonmilitary.” Notably, although some participants mentioned the existence of the JROTC program at their school, none of the participants revealed that he or she took part in this program.

Some military participants, similar to some nonmilitary participants, mentioned the presence of JROTC at school, but they also mentioned the Military Family Life Counselor (MFLC). This program supports only service members, their families and survivors with non-
medical counseling worldwide. Nate (RSMF) reported that “it was a group that brought all military kids together.” Similarly, Liam (CSMF) described the goal of this program as creating a group of military kids who sat together during lunchtime and discussed their struggles related to parent deployment, social aspects, and additional issues of concern to military families. Notably, some military participants mentioned the MFLC as a benefit provided to school with this social mix. However, they also perceived it as a barrier for students from military families since this program is directed only at students from military families, and this may result in some separation between military students and their nonmilitary peers. This difficulty will be addressed more directly later in this chapter.

Another benefit recognized by some nonmilitary and military participants was associated with the enhancement of extracurricular activities, particularly sports teams. Some participants reported that the athletic skills of students from military families strengthen the quality of sports teams at school. Tom (CSNF), for instance, stated that “in sports teams and stuff, us as players, we love having new players [from military families], sometimes they are really good so that helps us a lot.” Similarly, Sam (RSMF) declared that “It made our sports team a lot better.”

Most of the participants also valued the opportunity for enhancement of curricular aspects. Emma (CSNF) reported that the rich life circumstances of students from military families “open up a lot of interesting conversations especially in social studies class.” Whereas some nonmilitary participants tended to emphasize the opportunity to learn from the military population about cultures and regions domestically and abroad, some military participants tended to consider themselves as the source of sharing this knowledge through curricular activities as Maddy (CSMF) added “sometimes when we learn something in social studies… I say I have been there and they [nonmilitary kids] will ask me about it.” Maddy’s comment revealed the
opportunity she was given to develop an identity as a knowledgeable and worldly-wise person within a curricular context.

Some participants from nonmilitary families credited the financial benefits provided to the local community; these benefits strengthened the vitality of the local community and offered its residents more varied shopping and entertainment experiences. Lily (RSNF) expounded this benefit stating “many people my age like my sister and friends [say] how nice and good it is [having military population] for the economy of the area. There are many shops and different places that we would not be able to sustain if we would not have the base here.”

In conclusion, this theme discussed what participants reported about making meaning of this experience. Participants from both backgrounds made sense of this experience and its consequences for them personally. They described how this experience enhanced their personal identity as well as helped them understand their position within the broader society. But participants also made sense of this experience in relation to their school setting and community. They emphasized the formal benefits provided to the school and community but also underscored how this experience shaped the social and civic fabric of these two factors. The following section examines how participants portray their own involvement in the combined social sphere and their efforts to encourage or enhance interaction.

**Participants’ Part in the Social Connection**

This category concerns the agency of participants regarding their social experience and considers factors and conditions associated with the participants that influenced and shaped the social interaction.

*Participants Consciously Strive to Develop and Sustain Social Interaction with Their Peers*
Many participants revealed that they needed to rely on their own resourcefulness to initiate and continue their social interactions with their peers from the other subgroup. They explained that the circumstances required additional steps and intentional efforts to increase the interaction of military and nonmilitary students. In these instances, they perceived themselves as creators of a positive social sphere and expressed a sense of responsibility to bring together students from both groups. In particular, they had come to understand that this interaction did not develop spontaneously but rather required special and intentional efforts to find time and physical space. Lily (RSNF) described her willingness to create space and time in order to get to know a student from a military family stating:

She moved in at the beginning of my senior year. So I kind like understood that it was not easy for someone to move in in her or his senior year and trying to get fit into a group of people, so me and my friend continually invited her to many things, like go together to ice cream shop.

Similarly, Tom (CSNF) described a situation in which he interacted with a new student from a military family and “tried to make him welcomed” by introducing himself during a lunch period. Liam (CSMF) added that he tried to create space for these two groups of students at the soccer field but not as a part of a school team practice. These statements indicated that some of the participants recognized the need to reach out and become bridge builders and strived to create the necessary time and space conditions in order to interact socially during and after school hours. These reports further revealed that these efforts were purely student initiative and not arranged or facilitated from above, by the school system. However, many participants also
expressed a sense of frustration and disappointment related to these efforts, as described later in this chapter.

**Participants Recognized Personal Factors and Conditions that Fostered or Challenged the Social Interaction**

Remarks of participants from both backgrounds identified influences from their personal backgrounds that stirred their desire to reach out.

**Values from Families and Personal Moral Imperatives as Fostering Conditions.**

It was evident from some participants’ remarks that their moral principles motivated their efforts and actions. They described how these values helped them “adopt an open-minded attitude” (Oliver, CSMF) towards this social interaction and “welcome” (Dave, RSMF) the spectrum of cultures and people. They also perceived this distinctive social mix as an opportunity “to learn from different perspectives and adapt…your thoughts [accordingly]” (Oliver, CSMF). Notably, some participants revealed that their personal values shaped their receptive approach and motivated their efforts to create and sustain the social interaction with the members of the other group. Some participants hastened to add that their receptive approach was formed primarily by their parents’ values and philosophies. Liam (CSMF) credited his efforts and actions to his parents, mentioning that “kids are ultimately influenced by their parents.” Lily (RSMF) described how the receptive, inclusive, and “welcoming approach of her mom” guided her own behaviors and views regarding this social engagement.

**Obstacles to Social Interaction.** All participants identified attitudes or conditions that impeded or interfered with social interaction of students from military and non-military families. In particular, some of the participants declared that they know some students from both military
and nonmilitary families who had adopted a less receptive attitude towards this social mix.

Liam (CSMF) asserted that several military students felt unwelcomed within this shared social sphere. He further described some nonmilitary members’ feelings of frustration and jealously towards military students occupying some positions in sports teams, stating “I heard nonmilitary kids complained about a military kid who comes for the area for two or three years… and he takes the captain position or something like that.” Lily (RSNF) elaborated on this description of less receptive individuals and noted that in some instances nonmilitary community members lack openness toward military families or appear unwilling to interact with them. She stated that “a big difficulty would be a non-receptiveness from the nonmilitary community… it is more like… I do not want them here; they do not belong here to our community… they like their kids to play only with [nonmilitary] kids who live in their street.” Some nonmilitary participants, therefore, were aware that some nonmilitary kids and their families held less receptive views, intentionally avoided interaction and relationships with students of diverse backgrounds, and they strived to maintain the homogeneous nature of the community.

Additional participants declared concern about close-mindedness across groups mentioning the less receptive attitude of some students from military families. Emma (CSNF) explained that some military children tended to surround themselves with only friends from military families, stating “I think that some military kids tend to stick together, but not all of them… some usually cliqued together and are comfortable with [each other]…I think they stick together with people who go through the same experiences.” Lucas (CSMF) and Oliver (CSMF), on the other hand, observed that some military students underestimated and disrespected the insular nature of nonmilitary communities because many of these rural community members had never left their hometown or state. Similarly, Oliver (CSMF)
emphasized how the intolerance of a few students from military families “might ruin it [shared setting] and that was not fun.” In conclusion, some participants from both military and nonmilitary families emphasized the less receptive approach of some students from both military and nonmilitary families which negatively shaped the shared setting.

Some participants reported that despite their efforts to reach out to others their initiatives were often ineffective due to lack of appropriate conditions such as space, time, and affirmation. Some participants also expressed disappointment regarding missed opportunities to interact with the other community members. Emma (CSNF), for example, described a situation in which a new girl from a military family moved in, she was in 11th grade, and I am from a different grade level. She was very nice and I wanted to become a friend with her but because of the gap in years and we did not have classes together it was hard… so I did not get to know her so much.

Lucas (CSMF) also expressed difficulties associated with these interactions stating, “you do not pull somebody from a school, throw him in a new environment and not expect some sort of problems to arise.” Lucas also shared his challenging experiences, noting “it definitely has not been always positive; I have had pretty crappy experiences trying to get to know people…there were times when I felt outcasted.” Although Lucas had the motivation to engage with other students, his statements revealed some sense of frustration and hope for some meaningful support with this issue. Similarly, Maddy (CSMF) expressed her sense of frustration, mentioning that despite her multiple efforts to establish social relationships with her nonmilitary peers, she felt “left out” of the nonmilitary student population.
Moreover, although many participants described their sense of responsibility for creating and sustaining this interaction, they reported that the conditions of developing this social space varied. John (CSNF) stated that this social interaction might be challenging for students “who are shy.” Similarly, Oliver added “for people who are more extroverted, who are more out, who are always ready to go into a crowd of people …I think it is very easy for them. For those who are more introverted, it could be difficult.” Lucas (CSMF) observed that the typical activities and occasions offered by school for establishing and sustaining these social connections are not suited for all students since “many people are not talented in sports or music, so it is very difficult in that regard.” Overall, participants reported that their initiatives were often not effective due to limited conditions. These challenges stemmed from limited opportunities, space and time within the educational system, participants’ personalities, as well as insufficient external support. While this section considers the participants’ part in establishing the social interaction, the following section examines the families’ part in establishing this connection as described by participants.

Participants Noticed Ways that Families’ Conditions Fostered or Hindered Social Connections Across Groups

Participants revealed that some parents from each community welcomed this diverse setting and strived to enhance its quality. Tom (CSNF) described the mutual efforts of his parents as well as the parents of “his best friend who lived on base” to coordinate time and place to have meetings between the two kids. Lucas (CSMF) explained how his mom would go to the military gate “to pick up a friend” [nonmilitary kid] who came to their house located on the base. Dave (RSMF) added that the efforts of some parents to “attend school sport games” and to create some relationships between the other group during the games. Overall, it was evident in participants’
(from both populations) reports that special efforts and additional steps were taken by some parents (from both backgrounds) in order to create opportunities for social engagement.

While these approaches of some families appeared to support the social blend, some participants from both groups were also aware of families that adopted a less receptive approach. Maddy (CSMF) shared that “I feel like they [nonmilitary families and their children] are very judgmental.” Liz (CSNF) explained that “not a lot of parents [nonmilitary] are willing to take the children to places [activities available for both populations] because it does not benefit them.” Maddy (CSMF) and Liz’ (CSNF) statements acknowledged that due to the less receptive approach of some of the parents, little effort and time went into fostering the social interaction. But these comments also revealed a certain disregard for the other group’s families.

Weak connections between the families from both backgrounds were another obstacle for enhancing this social interaction. It was evident from participants’ reports that sporting events were among the few occasions that bring these families together. Liz (CSNF) referred to the “award ceremony events” conducted at school where her mom had the opportunity “to meet parents from military families.” It is important to note, however, that these opportunities were coincidental, and available only to specific student populations: students who played any kind of sport for the school teams as well as students who received any awards for their academic achievements.

Community Conditions That Promote or Interfere with Social Interaction

This category regards factors and conditions related to both military and nonmilitary communities that fostered and hindered the social interaction. It also considers participants’ suggestions for enhancing the nature of the social interaction.
Participants Recognized Factors and Conditions Related to the Nonmilitary Community that Fostered or Challenged the Social Interaction

Remarks from participants indicated that they recognized encouraging conditions in the nonmilitary community that benefited the social interaction. While participants from both populations commented on the good intentions and efforts of some members of the nonmilitary community as fostering interaction, only participants from nonmilitary families provided actual examples.

Some participants commented on a receptive, inclusive, and welcoming atmosphere in the nonmilitary community. Emma (CSNF) recalled that “this is a really small town and most people who grew up here stay here …and the people that are military bring different perspectives because they lived everywhere …and you get to learn about new things.” Ben (RSNF) added that “they might do things differently and it brings just like a different culture and a different aspect to the area which is good because we need that.” Dave (RSMF) added that “some local kids are opened up” to the distinct social conditions. These remarks revealed that some of the nonmilitary participants acknowledged that belonging to this social blend helped them take a more “open-minded” (term used by the majority of participants including Maddy, Liam, Lucas, Oliver, Dave, Lily, Emma, and Liz) and appreciate the spectrum of life experiences and backgrounds.

Only participants from nonmilitary families, however, were specific about actions taken by nonmilitary community leaders and members. Lily (RSNF), for instance, discussed a nonmilitary community leader who brought these two groups together through sports activities and summer programs. She recalled that “there is a community leader that does a lot for the community bringing together kids from military and nonmilitary including sports activities after
the school hours and on the weekends. But besides sports, this community leader runs summer programs like camp.” Emma (CSNF) referred to an additional activity that brought these two populations together, stating “there is a book club at the library.”

More recognizable to participants were conditions in the nonmilitary community that impeded interaction between the groups. While it was clear that the values of some nonmilitary community members may be crucial to the social blending of these two groups, some participants from both groups reported that they witnessed or recognized a “closed-minded” (term used by most participants) attitude towards this interaction. For instance, Emma (CSNF) stated that “so sometimes the people who stayed here (local] I think they are very closed-minded, not open to many ideas.” Liam (CSMF) added that “there are a lot of people here that think the same way and do not particularly enjoy having other kids or other people intrude on their space.” Maddy added “some [local] people are very judgmental because they do not want to hang out with other people.” Lily (RSNF) echoed this point of view, surmising that the origin of this negative attitude of some nonmilitary individuals stems from the fact that “military kids get discounts anywhere and they get their housing paid.” Overall, Maddy, Lily, and others’ statements revealed that some of their peers were not open to interaction between the groups or did not approve of courtesies or privileges being available to members of the other group.

In addition, while military participants identified themselves as members of both military and nonmilitary communities, participants from nonmilitary families affiliated only with the nonmilitary community. Liz (CSNF) stated that “military kids have the community on base but also the community near school [nonmilitary community].” John (CSNF) described his lack of connection to the military community, sharing that “I have never been on base [although he lives within this local community for his entire life].”
Furthermore, only participants from military families recognized the lack of effective communication between nonmilitary leaders and the military community. Lucas emphasized this gap as a crucial obstacle, stating:

The kids that were born and raised here they know who to talk to if they want to get into Boy Scouts or girl scouts. Maybe somebody that is military... does not know how to get into it… I mean like you really have to go out and find things in the community.

Liam (CSMF) added that nonmilitary community leaders should physically go to school and inform the students directly about the activities and programs operated by them. Lucas, Liam and other military participants’ reports indicated that a poor connection existed between nonmilitary community leaders and the military population.

Moreover, Emma (CSNF) advised nonmilitary community leaders to re-examine the nature of their programs and activities and to offer programs and activities that do not have time sensitive enrollment and are continuously open to new participants joining. She explained that “if they would host [other activities] like capture the flag at the park or big game where one could just get together … and make friends. I think that would be very beneficial.” Emma’s statement provided some insight regarding the opportunity to bring optimal numbers of children and their families together through the nonmilitary community activities other than sports.

**Participants Recognized Factors and Conditions Related to the Military Community that Fostered or Challenged the Social Interaction**

Remarks from participants identified encouraging conditions in the military community that benefited the social blending. Two participants from a nonmilitary background imagined that attraction to the novelty of military life might increase interaction. Lily (RSNF), for
example, explained that this distinctive social mix with “military population gives ideas to the local people to get some military career.” Liz (CSNF) echoed this idea and explained that “it was kind of enlightening because they tell you about their parents’ positions, about other military stuff and it was interesting to learn about the military stuff.” It was evident that nonmilitary participants’ curiosity about the military environment was an incentive for some increase in interaction.

The space between the communities was also evident in remarks by some military participants about three activities that were available for both military and nonmilitary populations and conducted on base (or by military community leaders). Lucas (CSMF) referred to the “annual festival” conducted on base, and Dave (RSMF) added that “many people go to this event from all over the places…they probably go for the concert and food and it brings people together.” Lucas (CSMF) mentioned an additional activity (conducted by military community leaders) describing when “the general and staff give some speeches off base.” The third activity concerned “the color run. You just run 5 km and you get paint on your face all the time and I know they opened it to nonmilitary families also.” (Dave, RSMF). Overall, although there was general agreement in participants’ remarks on each community, specific examples for each community were provided only by participants from that community.

However, all participants identified challenging factors and conditions associated with the military system that inhibited the quality of the interaction. These conditions and factors are associated with limited access to the base and less receptive attitudes of some military community members. Notably, the majority of participants from both groups indicated that the limited access to the military base presented a crucial barrier in developing and sustaining social interactions between nonmilitary students and their military peers. Ben (RSNF) stated “I feel
like the only time that it would be maybe hard to see military students is when they live on base and you cannot get on base… because you do not have a military ID.” Tom (CSNF) echoed that idea asserting “our graduation parties…the ones that were on base, there were not many people that could go because not everyone has a military ID and it is kind of hard.”

Lucas (CSMF), who resides on base, elaborated on this obstacle and explained that “another annoying thing is living on base, just bringing people [non-military] on base. I had to call my mom to come down [to pick my non-military friends from the gate] I do not like it, it is really annoying.” Liam (CSMF) elaborated,

Say you [have] a group of four friends, two of them are military, two of them are not. One of the friends, who lives on base, wants to have everyone over that weekend. The two kids who do not have any sort of military background, they live off base and live here for their entire lives. There are local kids so how they can get on base and be able to hang out with friends beside someone come off base and pick them up?

Overall, indications of participants from nonmilitary families as well as military participants who reside or resided on base revealed that getting together requires pre-planning; entry and transportation arrangements; and spur of the moment decisions are not possible. These conditions appeared to challenge developing and sustaining the social engagement.

Furthermore, while it was evident that the attitudes of some nonmilitary community members may be a critical factor for the success of the social blend, some participants from both groups commented that some military members had adopted a less receptive approach toward this social blend. Dave (RSMF) referred to the less receptive attitude of several military students. He portrayed these students by explaining how “these kids [who had the attitude said]
we are not from here, you are stuck in this crappy town the rest of your life.” Oliver (CSMF) added that these kids can “ruin” the shared space. Nonmilitary participants also related similar observations. Emma (CSNF) mentioned that she was aware of a few military students who did not “open up because they knew they are going to stay for several months in the area.” Emma’s statement revealed that the less receptive approach might result from a willful keeping of distance because of the short period of time they were stationed at a particular base.

However, Not only did participants describe factors and conditions related to both communities that fostered and hindered the social interaction, but they also had suggestions about how leaders of both communities and their members could improve the social interaction and tap the potential of the discussed social fabric.

**Participants Suggested Community Related Activities Intended to Enhance the Quality of the Social Interaction**

Participants had suggestions for enhancing the social interaction and consciously establishing conditions within the community that make it possible to create and sustain this engagement. For instance, Liz (CSNF) presented an idea about how to bring these communities’ members together. She explained that the military community should “hold more events open to both nonmilitary and military community members.” She mentioned that on the base there are “informative classes like health classes ... and financial skills classes and open gym,” and that all of these activities are available only for the military community members. She suggested finding ways to open up these activities to both populations in order to allow nonmilitary individuals to be affiliated with the military family and enjoy its facilities. Lucas (CSMF) echoed this idea and advised the military community leaders to ease access to the base as well as to conduct more events on base. He continued by stating, “I do not know what you have to say or do to who to
get them to open the gates, yes just open the gates.” Similar to Liz’s statement, Lucas also suggested “having more events like the annual festival because this event is sometimes the only time some people can go on base in their entire lives.”

Participants from both backgrounds including Dave (RSMF), Lily (RSNF), and Emma (CSNF) advised to create more opportunities for both communities’ members to come together in and out of school. Dave advised both communities members “to establish a book club,” and Lily suggested the parents make an effort to develop “friendships with their kids’ friends.” Overall, it was evident in participants’ statements that they attached great importance to intentionally create favorable conditions to bring these two groups together.

School-based Support and Possibilities

The following category examines school-based factors and conditions that both fostered and challenged the social interaction. It also presents multiple ways participants envisioned that school leaders could recognize students’ varied life circumstances and consciously bring these two groups together.

Participants Acknowledged School-Based Factors and Conditions that Fostered or Challenged the Social Interaction

Fostering Conditions. Participants identified a variety of ways school staff members encouraged or enhanced the quality of the social interaction such as: (a) curricular aspects and activities; (b) extracurricular aspects and activities; and (c) the stable atmosphere of the local school. Participants recalled specific but isolated examples of instances when teachers modified curriculum or instruction with the purpose of increasing contact and understanding between the two populations. Emma (CSNF), for example, recalled an activity in her social studies class by a teacher, she added, who happened to be a military veteran. She explained “in this class we had
to do research on your partner [from a military family] that means interviewing them, taking notes, finding out about their experiences and we had to present it to the whole class.” Lily (RSNF) revealed an additional instance in which Spanish teachers created some social groups consisting of military and nonmilitary student populations and conducted some activities with them, and Oliver (CSMF) added that “this interaction during labs for science” brought students from military and non-military families into closer contact. Notably, Emma, Lily, and Oliver’s statements revealed that in their high school setting, there were several teachers who adjusted the curriculum or organized instruction intentionally. According to the participants’ reports, however, these were purely individual efforts by a few teachers, not initiatives arranged or facilitated by the school’s administration or embedded in the school’s agenda or curriculum.

In addition, many participants identified the central role of extracurricular activities in bringing these two populations together. Emma (CSNF), Dave (RSMF), and other participants credited the Welcome Club program in their school. Dave explained that “they [Welcome Club members] definitely try to welcome kids, whether be military or nonmilitary but usually military kids moving into this place.” Emma (CSNF) added that “this club had a meeting every month and at the beginning of the year they have a welcome party.” However, although some participants reported the existence of a “Welcome Club,” none of them mentioned that he or she took part in such a club.

Also, many participants recalled several other extracurricular activities that fostered the shared social sphere. For instance, Liz (CSNF) acknowledged stated that “we had a fair for kids to just enjoy after school, we had video games and sports tournaments and dances that any of the students could come.” Lily (RSNF) also described the school play as a venue for establishing social connections between these two populations and that when “the play is starting to pick
up…the kids that did not get to know many of the kids, starting to get mixed together, they are no longer seen as black and white but very integrated.” According to Lily’s report, the school play was an opportunity for breaking the “divide” (term used by participants) between new students from military families and the local ones.

In addition, across all of the interview and focus group data, participants mentioned 34 times that school sports are an encouraging venue for enhancing the social blend. Sam (RSMF) shared that “for me, I made most of my friends [from nonmilitary families] through sports and our friendships started the same way. I was the new kid and going to practice every day we just connected because we enjoyed the same things.” Lily (RSNF) added that “I had a couple of different experiences …both times it was through sports…we just started playing and getting to know each other more.” Maddy (CSMF), however, shared that because she was not accepted to any sports team at her school, she felt “left out” (Maddy) and experienced some social barriers with regard to developing and sustaining social interactions with the nonmilitary population. According to Maddy, not being on a sports team made her less able to cross the divide and connect with her nonmilitary peers.

Notably, several participants from military families reported that attending the public high school provided them with a more stable educational and social setting. They revealed that in their experience, the turnover of teachers and students from military families within DoDEA schools is very high. However, the community of teachers, school leaders, and civilian students at public school is very stable compared to DoDEA schools. To illustrate, Liam (CSMF) reflected on his experiences in DoDEA school stating

It was all military and it was on base… it was a lot different to be around all military kids because everything changes really really quickly. I had kids that
they moved in for the school year and the next school year they were not there. Then up to the end of the year, half of my class changed because so many kids are coming in and out, at the same time you just have to deal with seeing a ton of new faces you are not getting attached to anyone in particular...this kind of school [public school with this unique social mix] is definitely something I prefer a lot more to any experience I had with school on base. Just because you have some consistency, your teachers generally stay the same. You get to see some of the same kids grow up with you until you move.

Lucas (CSMF) elaborated too on the opportunity in this kind of public school to experience the continuity of social interaction with nonmilitary students, reporting that in DoDEA schools, “I did not get really close to them [other military kids] because I knew they might leave soon.” He also described how he benefited from experiencing consistent and deep social relationships with nonmilitary students in public schools. Overall, participants acknowledged many supportive components that enhanced social engagement, but they also elaborated on challenging factors as described below.

**Challenging Conditions.** Participants also recognized conditions in their schools that inhibited the degree of interaction or affected the quality of interaction (a) limited recognition by educators of military life circumstances; (b) social barriers; (c) isolation; (d) lack of intentional guidance; and (e) weak ties between school, both communities, and families.

Participants discussed the limited recognition of school personnel regarding military life circumstances as a discouraging element in establishing and maintain the interaction. Liam (CSMF), for instance, explained,
they [the guidance counselor or other school staff] have not gone throughout this process, and guidance counselors that have been in this area for their entire life and went to a college nearby [are] never going to be able to really understand the experiences of one of those military kids and them trying to tell this military kid how to make things easier, can only make things worse.

Participants from military families also mentioned a limited understanding of their academic circumstances due to multiple relocations and varying academic requirements in different states across the country. Nate (RSMF), for instance, declared that “I think that the only difficulty I have heard other people running in… [is] the issue of classes.” Lucas (CSMF) added that “the worst thing I have seen is somebody has taken some class their freshman year of high school and coming to school [in a different state] and have to take it again senior year to graduate, to get this state diploma.” These statements from Liam and Lucas represent inconsistent academic expectations that military students may deal with due to transience. These feelings of frustration regarding insufficient recognition of military students’ academic struggles may negatively affect the willingness of these students to enhance the shared social setting and engage with its varied members.

Although military participants appreciated the stability of the student population when they are in a non-DoDEA school, they also recognized differences in their social engagement with peers in each setting. They explained that the social interaction with their nonmilitary peers (public school settings) is different from the social engagement with their military peers within DoDEA schools. They emphasized that these two social contexts are quite distinct and being adept at reading both contexts requires very different lenses.

To illustrate, Liam (CSMF) stated,
So because on different military bases, you have schools that are just military kids, sometimes coming from a place like that, and then going to a school that is mixed and you kind of do not know how to relate to other non-military kids, so it takes a little bit to adapt but after you find what sort or sets you apart from kids or will keep you the same, it makes it easier to integrate.

Maddy (CSMF) described another social struggle about leaving friends in her old school and creating new friendships in the new one. She stated that “it is very hard to make friends and it is very hard to move away from friends once you make friends, and then it is hard to make friends all over again.” Oliver (CSMF) added that “it has taken an emotional toll when you have been in an area for some years, you have made some pretty good friends and then well you have got to move.” These comments described the hardship of leaving friends in a previous school and creating new friendships in a “new” school due to frequent relocations.

Also, many participants described the complex social structure of the school consisting of two student populations: the “militaries” and the “towny” (Lily, RSNF). Lily further explained

There is another thing… which is the towny talk. So if you are local they [military kids] call you “towny” So technically I am a towny, then there are the militaries. The “towny” kids are considered by the military kids as kids who have their own type of language, like a kind of accent, and they tend to deal with fishing and other local activities.

Lucas (CSMF) revealed how this distinctive social structure and “divide” (term used by participants) challenged his social adaptation into the school setting stating “when I first got here, it was hard got to know people who lived here their entire life. “what I found out when I got here was that the military students were referred to as ‘militaries’… they were grouped like
that.” It was evident from participants’ accounts that the school social divide challenged the interaction between these two groups.

As mentioned previously, only participants from military backgrounds reported on the Military and Family Life Consultants (MFLC) program operated by the military system and conducted at school. This program supports only service members, their families, and survivors with non-medical counseling worldwide. Five participants from this background discussed this program and its operation, reporting that “it was a group that brought all military kids together [during school hours and in its space].” (Nate, RSNF)

Similarly, Dave (RSMF) discussed that “they get you out of classes…just talk how it is going,” and Liam (CSMF) added that “they pulled me out of lunches with other kids and you only sit with military you don’t get as much time to eat or anything like that because you are talking.” These participants criticized the operation of this program within the school setting because it isolated military kids from their nonmilitary peers and from some of the routine activities at school (lunchtime and classes). Liam (CSMF) claimed that “I think the MFLC program needs to be changed almost completely. [They force you to be there] and I have to get my mom to speak with them and force them to remove me because I hated it.”

Dave (RSMF) also emphasized the idea of isolation striving to explain the rationale of this program “because they [some MFLC consultants] are worried that you would not fit in with the nonmilitary kids they really try like push you hard for only sit with military kids.” While Dave elaborated on the military counselors’ approach, Lucas (CSMF) appealed to the school leaders and explained that “military kids just wanted to be treated the same.” Lucas believed that school staff members should perceive the military student population as an integral part of the school and “give them [military kids] opportunities to integrate and get into the society.”
Overall, participants from the military emphasized the negative consequences of the MFLC program and other such activities conducted at school. These implications, according to military participants, resulted in feelings of isolation and frustration.

All participants acknowledged that social interaction was created during the routine spaces and activities of the school setting: such as classes, lunchroom, lockers area, and extracurricular activities (e.g., school sports, clubs, and the school play). For example, while Ben (RSNF) recalled his experience to get to know a student from a military family through “French class,” Oliver (CSMF) explained that students get to know their nonmilitary peers “in your surroundings like your locker buddy or even if you are just walking down the hallways or lunchroom.” These examples revealed that although the routine school structure did have components that enable some interaction, school staff, according to participants, tended not to take advantage of opportunities that have the potential to facilitate more meaningful interactions between the groups.

In some instances, participants mentioned what appeared to them to be the absence of an intentional plan by school personnel and wanted school staff to take more ownership of fostering interaction within this shared social setting. Liz (CSNF) and Liam (CSMF) referred to the insufficient guidance regarding the seating both in the classrooms and cafeteria spaces. Liz stated that “students sit next to the kids they know” and Liam added that “kids that just move in they like stick in the corners in the cafeteria.” In addition, Lily (RSNF) stated that “I cannot think about something that was especially for the purpose of social interaction [between these two groups] and I feel there should have been.” Similar to Lily, Maddy (CSMF) wished that school personnel “would help them [to get together through] clubs or other activities.” Liam (CSMF) explained that this social interaction may be challenging for “someone, whether military or
not…who is not naturally talented [in the fields of sport or art]…if you do not have anything that particularly sets you aside from everyone else this can be very hard.”

An additional hindering factor was associated with the idea of weak ties between school, both communities, and families. Participants acknowledged unsatisfactory communication and partnership between school, communities, and families. Liam (CSMF) described the weak ties between the school and the nonmilitary community urged school staff and nonmilitary community leaders to work together. Liam appealed to nonmilitary community leaders “to branch out with the school, to go to school, the place where you [students] have to be and then start offer to people [the nonmilitary community’ activities].” Liam’s statements conveyed the message for school staff and nonmilitary community leaders that they should operate as partners adjusting themselves to their distinctive social fabric (consisting of military and nonmilitary populations).

Participants’ accounts also revealed that the connection between the school and the military community was centered mostly on military programs operated by the military system and conducted at school, such as the JROTC program and the MFLC program. Overall, participants revealed that weak connections between school, communities, and families wasted an optimal opportunity for positive social interaction.

To conclude, participants from both populations acknowledged factors related to the school system that encouraged and discouraged the development of optimal social interaction. Most of the reports of nonmilitary participants coincided with those of the military participants, although some were different. However, Not only did participants describe factors and conditions related to the school system that fostered and hindered the social interaction, but they
also had suggestions about how school personnel could improve the social interaction and tap the potential of the discussed social fabric.

**Participants Expected School Personnel to Think More Carefully about How They Welcome New Students from Military Families and Become More Cognizant of Their Varied Backgrounds as They Welcome Them to the School**

Some participants appealed to the school leaders to handle transitions for entering students more effectively. Maddy (CSMF) suggested that the school should establish some method of ensuring that all school staff members would “know if you are military or not once you move to school.” Maddy noticed the need for a systematic and organized structure that informs all staff members about entering students rather than informing some teachers sporadically. Maddy further emphasized that this recognition would allow teachers to take into consideration military students’ emotional and academic needs during a time of transition, so “they would not just throw work at you,” and they will be aware of “your problems” (Maddy).

Emma (CSNF) referred to both students and teachers’ awareness by stating that in “some classes we only introduced ourselves and then ok now here are the materials.” Emma seems very much aware of the abruptness and how that must make matters difficult for incoming students. Liam (CSMF) described another example of a lack of teachers’ acknowledgement of students’ varied personal, academic, and social circumstances. He asserted that the different life circumstances of teachers from nonmilitary backgrounds kept them from really “understand[ing] these experiences.” Therefore, Liam encouraged school leaders, counselors, and other staff members to be more aware of the various needs and life conditions of military students and to try to reflect on the experience “from freshman in high school [lenses] and not adult [ones].” In other words, Liam’s comments revealed the responsibility of school leaders and teachers to learn
about military students’ life conditions and adjust their professional and personal approach to the particular social fabric within the school setting.

Liam (CSMF), Dave (CSMF), and other military participants appealed the school leaders also to reconsider their perception of the shared social sphere at school and avoid conducting programs that are available only for military students like the MELC program.

Participants Envisioned Ways for School Leaders to Become More Intentional in Guiding Students Toward Improved Social Interaction Between Students from These Two Communities

It was evident from the participants’ remarks that they observed that school staff members had the opportunity to improve the social interaction between these two groups if school leaders adapted policies, programs, and practices specifically for this distinctive social interaction. Participants suggested that school leaders and other staff members should develop an intentional plan in order to foster the social engagement. For instance, Liz (CSNF) offered some steps for creating space and time for bringing these two groups together through an organized plan and an intentional effort by school leaders and other staff members. She explained,

if the teachers would conduct events for each grade where the teachers and students leave the classrooms and they walk around getting to know each other so that way when somebody [a student] asked about another person [student] they do not say ooh who is that but instead they say I know who you are talking about.

Liz’s statements revealed the necessity for teachers to consciously consider giving special opportunities for bringing these two populations together. These windows for communication should be conducted, according to Liz, outside the classroom where there is some opportunity to have a genuine and deep interaction that would not be related to the regular school programs.
While Liz referenced creating opportunities for physical space and social meaning outside the classroom, Emma (CSNF) emphasized these elements within the classrooms and as part of social learning. Emma discussed that “there were classes that we did not talk in, so if a kid moved in we did not talk to him or her… so I think it is very important to talk to your classmates and work with them and teachers can help with that.” Emma’s remarks amounted a desire for teachers to create intentional opportunities in their pedagogy, enabling the students to socially and academically engage with each other. She suggested a plan focusing on teachers who would aim to create an environment in which students are active contributors to the creation of the classroom and school climate.

Liam (CSMF) suggested teachers take into consideration the military participants’ academic circumstances (due to multiple relocations) in planning the teaching methods and objectives. In other words, he called upon the teachers to be more adaptable and conscious professionals and

not be afraid if you are in a mixed community to have a mixed curriculum. Do not make one particular thing that you have done during 25 years of teaching and say I can do that because it worked so far. Because it might not work for those [military] kids.

Finally, Lucas (CSMF) asked that school staff members recognize military students as an integral part of the school climate who would like to integrate with the nonmilitary kids. But he also called upon them to provide opportunities that enabled the students to engage socially with each other. He stated that “the military kids just wanted to be treated the same right? So give them the opportunities to integrate and get into the society.” Lucas’s statement is a request for school leaders to reconsider their approach toward the position of military students. But it is also
a call for them to actively engage with these distinctive student populations by offering opportunities and making intentional efforts to bring these two groups together.

Participants Emphasized the Responsibility of School Leaders to Strengthen the Quality of Ties between School, both Communities, and Families

Participants’ remarks emphasized the obligation of school leaders to promote meaningful partnership due to their role and nature. Lucas (CSMF) stressed that a public school has a meaningful impact and a major role in developing that partnership, stating “so I guess all the kids have to go to school so there is always an interaction there.” Lucas emphasized that the starting point of developing optimal partnerships should occur in the school setting due to its mandatory attendance and routine activities. Liz (CSNF) added that “the school should be utilized more” in creating cooperation between these factors. Participants also provided specific steps and activities for improving these ties presenting these steps as part of a school plan and intentional effort to affirm and celebrate the range of students’ backgrounds and life experiences. For instance, Liam suggested a way to enhance the connections between the school system and the military community, stating

there is definitely enough time in school activities that most of us [military and nonmilitary students] can go to, between 3:00 to 5:00 P.M. where you could take a bus with kids to the community center on base and they just play sports and it allows people to be on base for enough time and it does not feel like …you go to this place once a year and you allow people to experience it [the nature of the military community].

Liam’s statement indicated his willingness to bring the nonmilitary students to the military
sphere and make them feel part of this community. But according to Liam’s ideas, this activity should be conducted during the school schedule, conveying the message that the school system and the military community are active partners that work together toward creating and enhancing this social interaction.

Liam (CSMF) also emphasized the need for nonmilitary community leaders to cooperate with school communicating their programs and activities within the school setting itself. He explained that “if you have leaders from a nonmilitary community [they should] go in the schools and offer that [their activities and programs].” Liz (CSNF) echoed this idea and explained that to create better communication between school, families, and both communities’ members, “they [nonmilitary community leaders] need to go to the school with their announcements and have some posters… so it will be easier to create relationships.”

Participants including Dave (RSMF), Lily (RSNF), and Emma (CSNF) advised to create more opportunities for families to come together in the school. Emma stated that the award ceremony was almost the only time her mom could meet parents of military families, and she hoped for more opportunities for families of both communities to interact. Dave (RSMF) also hoped for more events and opportunities for families from both groups to come together and not only on school “sports events.” Overall, it was evident in participants’ statements that they attached great importance to the ties between families for creating vibrant shared settings both in school and two communities.

Finally, Lily (RSNF) wished that some families would reflect on their “non-receptive approach” and their hesitation to engage socially with the “other group members.” She also highlighted the perception of social diversity as a “good thing in anything in life” and hoped that
school personnel would work with both communities’ members on understanding the potential and benefits of spectrum of values and experiences is an advantage for personal growth.

In conclusion, this category regarded how participants described school-based factors and conditions that fostered and hindered the social interaction. Participants called upon school personnel to enhance their awareness of the students’ varied life conditions and of their responsibility to consciously bring these two groups together. They also urged school leaders to create conditions for bringing diverse voices together.

Findings

Data analysis included both deductive and inductive elements in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of the findings concerning the social phenomenon. First, data were presented (in a deductive aspect) through transcripts of both individual and focus group interviews as well as participants’ responses to online surveys. The analysis also included an inductive facet focusing on discovering codes, categorizing them, identifying themes, identifying the findings based on previous themes, and describing the essence of the phenomenon. That is to say, the data were reduced while their meaning extended considerably (Bloomberg and Volpe (2016).

Data relevant to the first research question, “how do current and recent high school students from both military and nonmilitary families describe their shared social interactions when they attend or attended a public high school that serves both military and nonmilitary students?” yielded three themes from the participants’ lived experiences and responses. These themes addressed: (a) awareness of participants of the distinctive nature of the experience; (b) assigning meaning to the experience and its implications; and (c) participants’ intentional efforts
and initiatives for creating and maintaining the social interaction. Themes a and b formed the basis for Finding 1, and theme c formed the basis for Finding 2.

**Finding 1: Participants Recognized the Distinctive Nature of the Social Experience, Assigned Meaning to It, and Emphasized Its Deep and Long-standing Impact**

Participants from both military and nonmilitary families expressed their awareness of the distinctive social setting of their high school setting. They emphasized that this social distinctiveness stems from four aspects: (a) sense of geographic and social separation associated with some of the students; (b) social sphere consisting of two primary communities; (c) dynamic, unpredictable, and transient school climate; and (d) unique social blend and school characteristics compared to other high schools in the area. Not only were the participants aware of the distinctiveness of their social experience, but they also actively engaged in making sense of these social circumstances and readily shared the meanings they considered. They did not identify this social phenomenon as an individual and coincidental social event occurring during their high school years. Rather, they reflected on the deep and long-standing meaning of this experience and its cumulative effect on their lives. Participants interpreted this experience in a personal context recognizing this social interaction as beneficial for the growth of their identity and self-awareness. In some instances, they also perceived this social experience as stirring a moral imperative about how to accept others and to value mutual respect between diverse groups. Finally, at various times they suggested that the nature of this social interaction was associated with egalitarian values such as inclusion, equal opportunity, and pluralism.

**Finding 2: Participants Indicated that They Relied on Their Own Intentional Efforts and Agency to Facilitate the Social Experience**
Participants revealed that they needed to rely on their initiatives and their own resourcefulness to initiate and facilitate the social interaction. This perspective was often coupled with examples showing how these distinctive social circumstances and atypical social reality required additional steps and intentional efforts to increase the interaction of military and nonmilitary students. In these instances, they expressed their power and sense of responsibility to bring students from both groups together. They explained that this interaction did not develop spontaneously but rather required special and intentional efforts and steps. Nevertheless, participants also described how some of their (and their peers’) efforts and initiatives fell short due to some factors and conditions related to both school and communities’ settings beyond their control. Overall, participants consciously strived to develop and sustain the social interaction and create a rich and respectful shared setting.

The second research question “what activities and steps on behalf of their school, community, and families do current and recent high school students from both military and nonmilitary families report as effective in introducing and fostering social interaction between the two populations?” yielded five themes: (a) factors and conditions associated with participants that fostered or challenged the social interaction; (b) factors and conditions related to families that fostered or challenged the social interaction; (c) factors and conditions associated with the nonmilitary community that fostered or challenged the social interaction; (d) factors and conditions related to the military community that fostered or challenged the social interaction; and (e) factors and conditions associated with the school that fostered or challenged the social interaction. Theme e is associated with Finding 3, and themes a, b, c, d, and e relate to Finding 4.

In particular, participants revealed that efforts conducted through the school and both communities’ routine activities (i.e., curricular and extracurricular activities, school cafeteria
setting, school hallways setting, and some community events) only allowed them to develop social contact in its most general sense. Participants further noticed that these steps and activities often did not intentionally create a productive social engagement and respectful learning environment benefiting the students’ individual lives, the lives of their community, and society. Participants also commented that the receptive or non-receptive approaches of some families might be a fostering or challenging condition for creating and sustaining social interaction. They also explained that the social and geographic separation between the two “crowds” (a term used by participants) challenged the establishment of social interaction between students from military and nonmilitary families.

Analysis of data related to the third research question, “what recommendations do current and recent high school students from military and nonmilitary families believe will enhance this social interaction?” identified suggestions for activities and steps through which the school, both communities, and families would consciously enhance the social interaction. In particular, the third research question yielded four themes from the participants’ lived experiences and responses. These themes addressed: (a) recognition of school personnel of the reception of entering students and their distinctive social reality and life conditions; (b) intentional guidance provided by the school system; (c) school leaders’ responsibilities to enhance school, both communities, and families ties; and (d) suggestions for community related activities intended to enhance the social interaction. Theme a is associated with Finding 3, and themes a, b, c, and d relate to Finding 4.

Finding 3: Participants Indicated that from Their Perspectives School Personnel Were Not Attentive to the Nuances of the Distinctive Social Fabric and Its Particular Nature
Participants indicated that from their perspective as students, school leaders and other staff members were not fully cognizant of the particular nature of this social setting and its diverse challenges and opportunities. They also revealed their impression that school staff members did not recognize the different life circumstances of students both during a time of transition of new students into the school and during school routine activities (curricular activities, cafeteria setting, and more). Participants also acknowledged that what they regarded as insufficient recognition of the pluralistic and distinctive nature impeded social engagement and the development of a productive social sphere. In effect, participants maintained that the distinctive social reality of the students required some special awareness of that reality, recognition of differences in student groups, and inventive ways for unifying the groups.

Finding 4: Participants Indicated that It Appeared to Them That School Personnel and Leaders of both Communities Did not Consciously Adjust Policies and Practices to Accommodate and Build off the Opportunities of the Distinctive Social Setting

Participants revealed that school staff members and leaders of both communities welcomed this particular social interaction by conducting routine school activities and routine community events and activities. However, they expressed their wishes that leaders of both communities and especially school personnel would have created more favorable conditions for establishing social connections between these two student groups. Furthermore, participants imagined that these leaders and school personnel could have taken more ownership of the challenge of increasing and strengthening the enrichment of interaction in this distinctive social sphere. They perceived school personnel and leaders of both communities as not working together towards creating a social environment in which its members engage productively with
each other, develop some unity across divides, and utilize these social circumstances towards personal and collective growth.

It was evident from the participants’ remarks that they observed that school staff members and leaders of both communities had the opportunity to improve the social interaction if they had revised and adjusted their steps, programs, and curricula to this distinctive social interaction. They suggested that school personnel and leaders of both communities would enhance their awareness of the atypical social fabric, deeply reflect on this uncommon social reality, and consciously develop intentional guidance.

**Essence of the Phenomenon**

The social phenomenon of attending a public high school that serves both military and nonmilitary student populations is distinctive and multifaceted. In this study, participants presented evidence of appreciating the opportunity of being students within this diverse educational setting. They emphasized the deep and long-standing impact of this social experience on their lives and assigned meaning to this social phenomenon in a personal context. Participants also indicated that they relied on their own agency and intentional efforts to initiate and facilitate this distinctive social interaction. While the data revealed encouraging aspects regarding the meaning of this social interaction for the study participants and their agency to facilitate it, evidence also demonstrated that participants commented how some of their efforts (and some of their peers’ initiatives) fell short due to insufficient guidance and support related to some factors and conditions associated with the school and both communities. Moreover, participants wished that leaders of both communities and school personnel would create appropriate conditions for establishing social interaction between these two populations. They also wished that these personnel would take more intentional steps towards promoting such
engagement. Based on their experience of the phenomenon, participants recognized the power of their own actions to enhance the social connection but also identified some challenges in establishing and sustaining the social interaction and suggested possible steps and activities for adults to enhance the nature of this atypical social reality. In other words, participants saw opportunities for school personnel and leaders of both communities to modify policies and develop more intentional practices to enhance student interaction in this distinctive social environment.

**Summary**

In this chapter, the analysis of the data from electronic surveys, individual and focus group interviews was examined to determine the findings of the study. Additional details about the data analysis were explained. The contexts of the three settings as well as participants’ backgrounds were described. Each of the three guiding questions was discussed and findings were explained in relation to each guiding question. Finally, the essence of the phenomenon of social interaction between students from both military and nonmilitary families was presented. The next chapter is devoted to discussing the findings found in Chapter Four. It considers the connections between the findings and relevant bodies of literature, implications of the study, and opportunities for further investigation.
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the lived experiences of current and recent public high school students from both military and nonmilitary families who attend or had attended public high schools serving these two student populations. Individual and focus group interviews as well as online survey responses were used to obtain current and recent high school students’ perspectives on this uncommon social blend and their experiences attending schools with this social blend. Participants in this study included six recent high school students (three from military and three from nonmilitary families) and eight current high school students (four from military and four from nonmilitary families). The 14 study participants were recruited from regional school districts in three communities in the Northeastern region of the U.S., which are home to personnel of a military base located in the vicinity of these three communities.

This chapter provides a summary of the essential points made in Chapters One through Four and discusses this study’s findings and implications. It begins with a synopsis reestablishing the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, and the research guiding questions. Brief synopses of the literature review and the design of the study are also presented. It continues with a section that restates the findings, discusses their connection to existing literature, and identifies connections across the findings. In addition, implications and recommendations for practice and scholarship are also considered. This chapter concludes with opportunities for future research and final thoughts.
Study Summary

In Chapter One, I provided an overview of the entire study and explored my own interest in this research topic. I also discussed the statement of the problem, mentioning that while there is some established understanding through the scholarly literature regarding the distinctive emotional and academic circumstances of students from military families, there is limited scholarship on the nature of social interaction between students from military families and their nonmilitary peers. Moreover, the majority of the current literature regarding students from military families is grounded in the voices of stakeholders within the military system, educators in DoDEA schools, scholars, and additional agents who describe the life circumstances of children from military families. Little attention, however, has been placed on the authentic voices of students who encounter this distinctive social blend. Chapter One also considered the primary purpose of this study, which was to explore the essence of the phenomenon of social interaction between adolescents from military and nonmilitary families (through the perspectives of the students themselves).

The following three questions guided the course of this study: (a) How do current and recent high school students from both military and nonmilitary families describe their shared social interactions when they attend or attended a public high school that serves both military and nonmilitary students?; (b) What activities and steps, on behalf of their school, community, and families do current and recent high school students from both military and nonmilitary families report as effective in introducing and fostering social interaction between the two populations?; and (c) What recommendations do current and recent high school students from military and nonmilitary families believe will enhance the social interaction?
The literature review in Chapter Two was organized according to four main sections beginning with data and analysis of the characteristics of military families. The second section considered scholarship that examines the nature of adolescence, the issue of human development, and the emotional and social well-being of adolescents. The third section regarded social interaction theories in order to explore the importance and potential benefits of interactions within a socially diverse setting. This section also included broader views on the ways in which the idea of developing social capital within a community may foster a sense of civic engagement and sustain democratic principles that encourage diversity of backgrounds, values, and experiences. The last section reviewed literature related to explanations or theories of leadership that are oriented towards social interaction, inclusion, and connectedness. This section also discussed the scholarship concerning educational leaders’ responsibilities in bringing diverse social and cultural voices together in a common space. Combined attention to all of these bodies of literature provided insights into the nature of social interaction of adolescents from both military and nonmilitary families and its facets.

Chapter Three was an explanation of the research design and methodology used to construct and conduct this scholarly work. I described the phenomenological research approach I employed for this qualitative study and the theoretical foundations that guided the inquiry. Also, in Chapter Three, I delineated how the data from online surveys and both individual and focus group interviews were collected, organized, and analyzed. Chapter Four contained the analysis of the data, specifically showing the themes that emerged from participants’ perspectives offered in their responses to the survey and both individual and focus group interviews. The data analyzed led me to four findings. These findings are associated with the discussed social phenomenon and, ultimately, provide answerers to the three research questions that guided the
Discussion of Findings

This section presents the findings, regards their meaning in light of existing scholarly literature, and provides “interpretative insights into these findings” (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2016, p.253). The findings are presented as follows:

- **Finding One**- participants recognized the distinctive nature of the social experience, assigned meaning to it and emphasized its deep and long-standing impact.

- **Finding Two**- participants relied on their own intentional efforts and agency to facilitate the social experience.

- **Finding Three**- participants indicated that from their perspectives school personnel were not attentive to the nuances of the distinctive social fabric and its particular nature.

- **Finding Four**- participants indicated that it appeared to them that school personnel and leaders of both communities did not consciously adjust policies and practices to accommodate and build off the opportunities of the distinctive social setting.

This study’s findings have much in common with theories and scholarly works related to the discussed social phenomenon as described below.
Adolescents’ Awareness and Agency in Relation to the Social Phenomenon

Finding One of this study revealed that participants recognized the atypical nature of the social context within their high school years and consciously made sense of this specific context and interactions for them personally and for their community. In particular, they recognized the distinctive social blend as beneficial for the development of their identity and self-awareness. Lucas (CSMF), for example, described how his “self” was directly shaped and enhanced by his peers stating that “I sort of form my own personality around the people I am with.” Oliver added that attending high school with people that “are so different from me” made him “able to easily adapt to different environments.” The idea that one’s identity is shaped by dynamic relations between the individual and particular peers and context may be further understood in light of scholarly accounts of Vygotsky’s (1978), Lerner et al. (2001), and Crosnoe and Johnson (2011). These academic works which establish how social interactions influence the processes of learning and making meaning, provide theoretical basis for what Lucas, Oliver and others reported about their lived experience.

Some participants made sense of the experience in the context of the wider society and democratic values of tolerance, pluralism, and inclusion. Oliver (CSMF) reported that the nature of this social experience, including its difficulties and obstacles “goes from the smallest level like school to community to nationwide.” Liz (CSNF) explained that the discussed social blend made her reflect on “how to welcome these [military] kids.” Liz’s comment revealed her awareness of others and the need to consider others’ atypical needs and conditions. These reports find support in the scholarship. Hart and Carlo (2005) argue that moral development evolves while the adolescent starts considering her or his values and ethical behaviors toward
Finding Two described how participants perceived themselves as agents for improving social interaction and expressed a sense of responsibility to establish a positive social sphere. Tom (CSNF), for example, described a situation in which he interacted with a new student from a military family and “tried to make him welcomed,” and Lily (RSNF) expressed her willingness to create space and time in order to get to know a student from a military family. However, participants explained how some of their efforts (and some of their peers’ initiatives) fell short due to insufficient conditions (in terms of time, physical space, and resources) within the school and both communities’ settings. For example, Maddy (CSMF) mentioned how despite her multiple efforts to establish social relationships with her nonmilitary peers, she felt “left out” of the nonmilitary student population.

It was also evident among participants’ reports that they perceived the uncommon social mix as a social opportunity and resource. For example, Oliver (CSMF) stated that it was a “unique experience” because of military and nonmilitary social mix. Tom (CSNF) echoed this idea mentioning that “it is always an advantage.” It is possible that participants developed some social connections that were not limited only to themselves but might benefit the school and both communities. Participants’ remarks regarding their agency and perception of social interaction as a resource could be examined in light of Coleman’s (1988) theory of social capital. Coleman considers social capital to be the structures of relations between actors and among actors” (p. 302). He considers the social connections between individuals and their networks (i.e., classmates, agents in schools, family, and community members) to be resources, and his view
brings agency and ownership to the individual. He also points out that while social capital helps form social ties, its function is not limited to individual actors and may include group actors and other collectives (i.e., family, school, or local community).

Finally, participants revealed that they strived to establish formal and informal social connections with their peers. For instance, Oliver (CSMF) described how he strived to establish some social connections during formal activities through the school as “labs for science.” Lily (RSNF) reported how she invested special efforts to get to know a student from a military family, inviting her “go together to ice cream shop.” The participants’ impressions coincide with Putnam’s social cohesion approach (2000) focusing on several resources for bringing people together (i.e., memberships in formal civic organizations and informal social networks) and on how these activities may foster the skills needed for civic engagement.

Overall, when examining Findings One and Two in the context of other scholarship, it is evident that these findings are consistent with social interaction theories and scholarly works addressing the emotional and social well-being of adolescents. It is also possible to consider Findings Three and Four in light of existing theories relevant to the purposes of schooling and educational leadership, as discussed below.

**Schooling and Democratic Leadership in Relation to the Social Phenomenon**

Finding Three revealed that participants tended to portray school personnel as being insufficiently attentive to the nuances of the distinctive social fabric in their communities and its particular nature. According to the participants, school staff members did not recognize or take into account the different life circumstances of students both during a time of transition of new
students into school and during routine school activities. Liam (CSMF), for instance, explained they [school staff] have not gone through this process and guidance counselors that have been in this area for their entire life and went to college nearby [are] never going to be able to really understand the experiences of one of those military kids.

Maddy (CSMF) suggested that the school should establish some method of ensuring that all school staff members would “know if you are military or not once you move to school” and that may allow school personnel to be aware of “your problems” (Maddy).

Finding Four concerned the participants’ impressions that school personnel and leaders of both communities did not consciously adjust policies and practices to accommodate and build off the opportunities of the distinctive social setting. Lily (RSNF) stated “I cannot think about something that was especially for the purpose of social interaction [between the two groups], and I feel there should have been.” Similar to Lily, Maddy (CSMF) wished that school personnel “would help them [to get together through] clubs or other activities.”

Participants’ reports associated with Findings Three and Finding Four invite consideration of three spheres of scholarly thought that influence leadership approaches (a) leadership approaches that orient towards connectedness, fairness, and inclusion including eco-leadership (Western, 2008) and ethical leadership (Preedy, Bennett & Wise, 2002); (b) servant leadership approach (Greenleaf 1977/2002) that mostly regards the needs of the organization’s members and strives to the development of every individual within the group; and (c) approaches that consider egalitarian ideas of inclusion, pluralism, and equity but also emphasize the leader’s responsibility to bring various voices together (Dewey, 1916, Dewey 1925, Dewey 1927, Greene, 1996, Gutmann 1999, Woods, 2005, and Gutmann in Sardoc 2018).
Eco leadership approach (Western, 2008) seeks to uphold ethical values of inclusion, fairness, and awareness of the organization’s members’ diverse backgrounds, experiences, and values. It also considers the ecological view that highlights the particular and distinctive conditions of the organization. The Eco leadership approach is associated with ethical leadership discourse. Eranil and Qzbilen (2017) suggest that ethical leadership reflects a view of the world based on equity, social justice, fairness, and a sense of obligation to others’ various backgrounds and the public good. In particular, participants might have experienced the social phenomenon differently if it were more apparent to them that school and community leaders were attempting to create an “integrated community” in which all its members are valued, respected, and provided with equal opportunities to thrive socially, emotionally, and intellectually.

Also, participants might not have perceived “two crowds” (a term used by participants) if within the teaching program of the school, they were encouraged to consider how issues of fairness, ethnicity, tolerance, pluralism, and equity were especially relevant to their communities. Participants’ social experiences might have been different if they participated in more facilitated dialogue (i.e., through curricular activities or focus group discussion) between the students from both military and nonmilitary backgrounds.

Participants’ descriptions and experiences suggested that a servant leadership approach was not being practiced. Greenleaf (1977/2002) argues that servant leaders make especially important their obligations to the needs of members of their organization. Cerit (2010) considers the servant leadership approach with regards to educational settings mentioning that educational leaders should strive to address every student’s circumstances and foster a nurturing educational environment that promotes each individual’s growth. In particular to this study, the findings, in light of servant leadership ideas, underscore the need for educators to consider carefully (a)
whether they recognize the particular needs of their students and (b) whether their programs and practices are responsive to those needs.

The third consideration is associated with military and nonmilitary participants’ impressions that school staff and leaders of both communities did not create conditions (in terms of physical spaces, time, and resources) to establish and sustain social interaction between the two groups. Participants’ reports are not consistent with a democratic leadership approach as explained by Woods (2005). This theory considers ideas of inclusion, collaboration, shared vision, diversity of views and backgrounds, as well as consideration of all voices in the decision-making process (Kilicoglu, 2018). Leaders who employ democratic approach, according to Woods (2005), strive to develop conditions to facilitate social interaction between the various individuals and bring their voices together. They also aspire to utilize a diversity of life conditions, backgrounds, and values as a resource and opportunity to benefit the organization and its nature.

Also, participants revealed some sense of division and separateness between the two primary groups mentioning that “many students from military families graduated but had never become part of the school” (Lucas, CSMF), or “there are people that live here for all their lives and kids that live here for short periods… there are “towny” kids and “militaries” (Lily, RSNF). In particular, the participants’ varied descriptions of the separation between the two student populations fall short of the ideal images of schooling in a democratic society as depicted by philosophers and scholars (Dewey, 1916, Dewey 1925, Dewey 1927, Greene, 1996, Gutmann 1999, Marzano, 2003, and Gutmann in Sardoc 2018), focusing on the responsibility of school personnel to incorporate the social component into the nature of education, include all social and cultural voices in the common sphere, and nurture the students’ civic capacity.
It was evident that participants experienced some degree of a setting comprised of a variety of ideas and experiences as Lucas (CSMF) mentioned that this social experience provided him with the “opportunity to learn about a rural place,” the life experiences of its community members, and their “unique activities.” Lily (RSNF) explained that “military families “come from different places and bring cultural aspects” to this town.

The blending of students with various life experiences described by the participants represents an opportunity to participate in what Dewey (1927) referred to as the creation of a “Great Community.” According to Dewey (1916), this community comprises a variety of ideas and experiences, and the “conflict of peoples at least enforces intercourse between them and thus academically enables them to learn from one another, and thereby to expand their horizons” (p. 100). However, it was evident from participants’ remarks that they observed that school personnel and leaders of both communities had the opportunity to enhance the quality of this “Great Community” only if they adjusted their steps and programs to this particular social fabric and intentionally tapped its social and civic potential.

Participants revealed the necessity for teachers to consciously consider providing special opportunities for bringing the two groups together and developing a shared social space. Liz (CSNF), for instance, advised that the windows for communication should be conducted outside the classroom where there is some opportunity to have a genuine and deep interaction that would not be related to the regular school programs. She stated “if teachers would conduct events for each grade where teachers and students leave the classrooms and they talk around getting to know each other…” The idea of a deep and genuine communication presented by Liz could find support in Dewey’s philosophy of education.
In *Experience and Nature* (1925), Dewey opens Chapter Five stating that “of all affairs, communication is the most wonderful” (p.132). According to him, genuine communication is a vicarious condition providing individuals with the opportunity to learn about the spectrum of human thoughts, feelings, experiences, and contexts. The process itself “creates responsibility for accuracy and vividness of statement and thought” (1916, p.9) and urges the group members to come to a deeper understanding of who they are. Dewey (1925) further explains how in light of reflective inquiry, dialogue, and mutual understanding, “something is made common in at least two different centers of behavior. To understand is to anticipate together; it is to make a cross-reference which, when acted upon, brings about a partaking in a common, inclusive, undertaking” (p.141). Namely, Dewey believes that only through genuine dialogue a shared social space is developed.

For Dewey, the connection between communication and democracy is crucial. He states that “Democracy will have its consummation when free social inquiry is indissolubly wedded to the art of full and moving communication” (1927, p.350). Democracy, according to Dewey, cannot be attained in the absence of democratic ideals gained through effective communication such as tolerance, social responsibility, fairness, and inclusion. But, for Dewey, educators in a democratic society must ensure a social and educational system in which individuals become able to engage in a dialogue, continuously engage with their environment, critically analyze their and others’ social reality, and eventually make a change in their local community and the society. The scholarly account of Dewey coincides with Greene’s philosophical inquiry. Greene (1996) stresses the obligation of educators in a democratic society to make possible the opportunity to create “moments for recognition, moments for face-to-face encounters among the diverse newcomers in our schools. It is when spaces open among
them, when their diverse perspectives are granted integrity that something they can hold in common may begin to emerge” (p.312).


Ultimately, the findings of this study, along with the cited scholarship, point to the need for a renewed understanding of the nature of social interaction when adolescents from military and nonmilitary families attend the same high school. One inherently associates with the crucial role of education in a democratic society. In schools with these two groups, there is an opportunity to develop a social and academic community “in which people from diverse religions and socioeconomic backgrounds, cultural and political orientations, races and ethnicities, and genders… “(Gutmann as cited in Sardoc 2018, p. 250) join together and create and maintain genuine and effective communication with each other and with their environment. Similarly, this study reveals that socially diverse communities with a mix of military and nonmilitary families provide a context rich in opportunities to introduce and study civic practices when members cannot presume that they have common backgrounds or prior experiences. Overall, this study’s findings have much in common with existing literature. The process of discovering the relatedness to existing scholarship and the search for internal consistencies and inconsistencies informed the discussion of implications that follows.
Implications and Recommendations for Agents of Both Communities, Educational Practitioners, and Scholarship

Limitations

Before considering the implications of the findings for both practitioners and scholars, it is necessary to reaffirm the limitations of this study. The participants in this study were limited to current and recent high school students from a small number of public high schools located near a military base in the Northeastern region of the United States. The experiences of the eight current and six recent high school students were not selected or presumed to be representative of adolescents or young adults who attend or attended various such mixed (serving both military and nonmilitary populations) public high schools in other settings or regions of the country. Due to the small number of participants, this study might present only the perceptions of the selected participants that were not intended to be generalizable. Finally, the data collection venues used in this study were developed only for the purpose of this study and were not used in any other research. While these limitations are important to keep in mind, this study still provided some insights into the nature of social interaction between high school students from both populations. It also emerged some possible implications and recommendations for leaders of both military and nonmilitary communities, families, school personnel, and scholars.

Implications for Agents of Both Communities and Educational Practitioners

Given the findings of this study, there is clearly a need to consider more deeply the factors and conditions associated with the social interaction of students from military and nonmilitary families who attend the same high school. In particular, it is essential to consider various facets and definitions of the term community focusing on the idea that not only is a
community defined as a geographical or physical area, but it should primarily be approached as a social and civic resource (Putnam, 2000). Namely, it is not enough to bring individuals from various backgrounds together into a physical or geographical space; there is also a need to reflect on the social nature and identity of the community and imagine how to consciously facilitate this exceptional social identity.

In relation to this study, it is critical that leaders of both military and nonmilitary communities and educational practitioners would understand their atypical population mix as a valuable social resource. They should also be aware that the distinctive social fabric (consisting of military and nonmilitary populations) requires special attention and guiding principles customized to the composition of their community. Therefore, in the first place, it is important that leaders of both communities and school personnel identify who are their “clients” (in both communities and the school settings) and what are these clients’ social needs and life circumstances. In order to deeply understand and meet these individuals’ needs, it is vital to survey parents, both communities’ members, and students’ perceptions and experiences.

Once these agents have a deep awareness of the social needs and conditions of individuals (from both military and nonmilitary backgrounds), they need to define the particular social “DNA” of the group. They also need to be prepared and able to address its ever-changing nature, brought about by the military students’ high mobility. Leaders, therefore, need to adopt an inquiring stance toward their communities reflecting on what are the common elements among all the individuals from both backgrounds? what may bring and keep them together? what may distinguish these individuals from other individuals within other possible communities? what are the contextual factors that shape the social nature of their community? what are the roles of
leaders of both communities and educators in facilitating this social interaction? how to utilize this distinctive social fabric as the basis of the community and school’s practices and vision? and how to use this exceptional social mix as a resource for establishing and maintaining a vibrant school and community settings? Overall, it is critical that leaders of both communities and educational practitioners take into account the group’s members’ distinctive needs and circumstances and reflect on the particular social fabric of their communities. It is also important that these leaders utilize the social DNA as the foundation of both communities and school settings’ vision and practices while keeping in their mind that they must facilitate the social engagement through deliberate efforts and planning (since it does not develop spontaneously), as discussed later in this chapter.

They should strive to develop a social space shaped by the individuals (from both military and nonmilitary backgrounds) and continuously address the questions, challenges, and opportunities the individuals encounter in their real-life context. Also, leaders of both communities and educators should create some guiding principles addressing the needs and voices of both “temporary” (military individuals) and permanent (nonmilitary individuals) group members and create conditions for improving the dialogue between the two groups; some of these concrete principles are discussed in detail in the recommendation section.

Additionally, there is a place for these leaders, members of both communities and educational practitioners, to recognize the social and civic meaning of this uncommon social sphere. In particular, these agents should be cognizant of the civic meaning and opportunities associated with this mix and tap the civic potential of this blend by utilizing a variety of life circumstances and social backgrounds towards enhancing the common good of both
communities and the school setting. Ultimately, this diverse social sphere creates some opportunities for all actors (members of both communities, families, and practitioners) to strengthen their democratic habits, create some common good that is greater than themselves, and follow the premise in Dewey’s statement that “democracy must begin at home, and its home is the neighborly community” (as cited in Putnam, 200, p.337).

Alongside the implications mentioned above, there are some implications that are applicable only to educational practitioners. According to findings, participants indicated that from their perspectives, school personnel were not attentive to the nuances of this uncommon social mix and its particular nature. They also revealed that it appeared to them that school personnel and leaders of both communities did not consciously adjust policies and practices to accommodate and build off the opportunities of this distinctive social fabric. Therefore, it is essential for educational practitioners to reflect on their role in light of addressing the connection between schooling and democracy.

For instance, in his book, *Democracy and Education*, (1916/2012), Dewey argues that one of the purposes of educators in a democratic society is to enhance the student socially, intellectually, and emotionally, simultaneously, in a sphere where school and community interact with each other, and there is continuous learning between them. According to this philosophy, educators in a democratic society should strive to foster the growth of individuals who value diversity, who are both self-regulated yet aware of others’ needs and conditions, and are receptive yet perform critical thinking skills to analyze various approaches.

Educational practitioners within this kind of public school should perceive all students as a whole striving to enhance their academic achievements and emotional and social well-being.
These educational practitioners should emphasize a commitment to a democratic system that honors and cultivates just, respectful, and pluralistic social and civic space. They should also be responsible for fostering experiences among students from both military and nonmilitary groups that build their appreciation for democratic living and socially diverse environments.

Finally, educational practitioners need to reflect on the idea that school systems are part of the local community and the wider society. Namely, there should be ongoing communication and learning between the local community members, the larger society values, and the school system. School, local community, and society should be reflections of one another, and the purposes of education should align within the egalitarian principles of the society. Similarly, Dewey (1938) claims that only full exchange between the school and community enables the society to be vital, dynamic, and growing stating that “the essential point is that isolation makes for rigidity and formal institutionalizing of life, for static and selfish ideals within the group” (p. 99). Therefore, educational practitioners should initiate and facilitate a viable partnership between the school, both communities, and families. All these agents should collectively develop a shared vision focusing on establishing and maintaining a social and civic dialogue and exchange between individuals from both military and nonmilitary backgrounds while addressing democratic ideas of fairness, equity, and inclusion. Indeed, given the nation’s increasingly diverse population, it is critical to facilitate a social and civic dialogue within any educational setting in the U.S. not only those serving military and nonmilitary student populations.

In essence, this section considered the implications of the study for leaders of both communities, members of both communities, and educational practitioners. It regarded the necessity for leaders of both communities and educational practitioners to enhance their
recognition of the diverse needs and conditions of the group members (or students), and to reflect on the particular group identity and nature. This section also considered the need for all agents to gain a deep understanding of their role as facilitators of this ongoing social dialogue and to navigate this social mix as an advantage. The following section considers practical steps and strategies to translate this acknowledgment into practice.

**Recommendations for Agents of Both Communities and Educational Practitioners**

Once a school community deeply recognizes its diverse social composition, it is especially important to articulate a shared vision through establishing a committee consisting of leaders of both communities, families (from both backgrounds), local organizations’ members, students, and school personnel. This committee's members should acknowledge the idea that “who we are” is continually changing and consider the atypical social blend as a community asset, not a burden (as expected in a democratic society).

An additional suggestion (implied by the current study) is associated with the idea of presenting the military base as an integral part of the nonmilitary community, rather as a “magical place” (Liam, CSMF), which some of the nonmilitary individuals have never visited (although they live in the area for their entire life). Thus, leaders of both communities should establish a shared committee addressing ideas to optimally convey the sense of social and geographic unity without compromising military base security. This committee could strive to create norms and routine practices (i.e., weekly movie night directed at families from both groups), emphasizing the message that both communities play a role in enhancing the quality of the social mix while still maintaining security concerns (associated with the military base).
It is essential that leaders of both communities acknowledge that good democratic habits are important nationally in support of governmental politics but also highly relevant to the immediate needs of the local community. Therefore, these leaders should collectively develop community norms and “habits,” providing conditions for individuals to engage with one another (Woods, 2005, Kilicoglu, 2018), establish weak and strong ties (Putnam 2000), and develop a vibrant and dynamic social and civic sphere. For instance, they should initiate and sustain ongoing community discussions between varied voices by conducting civic forums and focus groups (consisting of families from both backgrounds); these conversations may be an avenue to effectively address community issues (including its exceptional social mix) and enhance the group’s moral and democratic quality.

Another opportunity to tap the potential of the distinctive social mix and bridging the two disparate groups is by investing intentional efforts to create social interaction within the informal social sphere (coordinating events for information, recreation, and entertainment purposes). In communities with this social blend, familiar social gatherings can have even greater importance when they are acknowledged as a mechanism for bringing military and nonmilitary families together. Bowling leagues, food festivals, book clubs, sports activities, lectures conducted by professionals from both military and nonmilitary communities, comedy nights, and other meetings in which individuals may share their point of interests serve the obvious purpose but could also become important bridging activities. Notably, these activities could be directed at members of both military and nonmilitary communities, could be advertised effectively (ensuring that the information on the activities reaches all families from both groups), and should be conducted at both “civilian” and “military” (on base) communities centers. Overall, these
activities would develop some routine practices to bring “temporary” and “permanent” individuals together and continuously enhance the social core of both communities.

Furthermore, leaders of both communities could ensure that roles and positions within community boards such as the Chamber of Commerce are available for both military and nonmilitary individuals. Namely, the voices of both groups could be fairly included, heard, and brought into the decision-making process within all boards or other social-civic organizations. These efforts underscore the idea that diversity within their community boards and organizations is fundamental for building an inclusive experience for both populations.

Similar to leaders of both communities, educational practitioners could take concrete steps to build conditions for developing and sustaining social and civic dialogue. These educators along with parents and students from both backgrounds could develop a shared school vision (Marzano, 2003, Sanders, 2006). This act should create a school climate that actively and continuously brings diverse voices together and enhance social and civic exchange.

In addition, due to the dynamic and unpredictable nature of the student population (within this kind of public schools), there are good reasons for educators to establish more systematic practices for assisting entering and exiting students from military families. For instance, practitioners could institute more thorough procedures for welcoming students and expediting the manner in which teachers and other staff members become acquainted with each student’s background. Thus, teachers and staff would be able to prepare for the reception of new students, including those from military families, and assist them with their distinctive emotional, social, and academic needs during a time of transition. As part of this procedure, educators could take into account new students’ prior academic achievements and provide them with an academic continuity based on these experiences. Such a responsive and inclusive approach to
new students during their time of transition may assist them with social, emotional, and academic growth during the time of relocation and after that.

Also, educational practitioners could strive to ensure that voices of parents from both military and nonmilitary backgrounds are being fairly represented, heard, and brought to the decision-making process within all organizations related to school (i.e., Parent Teacher Association (PTA), school board, school committees, and more). Similarly, they must discover processes that make it possible for students from both backgrounds to be represented fairly in student government positions and roles. Overall, educational practitioners must be aware of the values of social justice, fairness, and inclusion in maintaining the school’s forums and boards.

Moreover, according to the participants’ remarks, most educators have not served in the military system and thus do not have personal experiences with its culture and circumstances. Therefore, based on their reports and an idea mentioned in a scholarly work (Risberg, Curtis, and Shivers, 2014), it is recommended for the district and school personnel to utilize some external support (Sanders, 2006), organize and attend workshops (conducted by the district or several local districts) that educate on the nature of military life and involve school personnel, military and nonmilitary families, and leaders of both communities. The goals of such professional development should (a) enhance the awareness of the nonmilitary population regarding the military population’s distinctive life experiences and exceptional emotional, social, and academic needs; (b) strengthen the understanding of the nonmilitary students social and emotional needs in relation to this social mix; and (c) establish a detailed and shared plan for assisting the needs of all the students within this particular educational setting.
Other practical suggestions are associated with curricular and extracurricular aspects of school life. For instance, according to participants’ statements, the MFLC program conducted at school created a sense of separation between students from military families and their nonmilitary peers. In particular, participants mentioned that this program strives to support only the emotional and social needs of students from military families and through “getting [military students] out” (Dave, RSMF) from classes, lunch times, and other school activities. According to participants’ accounts, this physical separation interfered with social engagement and the creation of social relationships. It would follow, therefore, that school personnel and MFLC counselors find ways to support military students’ emotional needs without creating physical separation or challenging the integrated social experience.

Also, based on participants’ accounts, schools with this social mix would benefit from extracurricular programs or activities that do not require pre-requisite experiences or involvement in prior community programs. These clubs, activities, and events should include all students and not be dependent on skills or experiences attained earlier in their school experience. In other words, participation in these activities should be open to all students and shaped by values of fairness, inclusion, and equal opportunities.

An additional practical suggestion is related to the connection between the school’s curriculum and the “content” of the students’ life circumstances. For example, the particular social blend of the school population could easily become a regular reference point for discussions of democratic values in social studies classes. Social study teachers could use the students, who have experienced life in other parts of the country or even the world, as a valuable and interesting source of knowledge for their classmates. They could include in the curriculum
first-hand accounts from parents and students describing the place they lived in, the different cultures, lifestyles, and populations and thus open up the world to the local students in a more immediate and intimate manner. English language teachers could focus on material describing different social or cultural circumstances in various settings, thus making the studies more meaningful to the specific social mix. They could also ask students from both military and nonmilitary backgrounds to write essays or poems or even plays describing their challenges as well as possible benefits of this atypical social blend. Furthermore, advisory time (a regularly scheduled period of time during the school day when teachers meet with small groups of students for the purpose of discussion on various issues) should be devoted to creating a dialogue between multiple and diverse voices from military and nonmilitary backgrounds.

Finally, participants from both military and nonmilitary populations emphasized the responsibility of school personnel to promote partnerships between school, families, and both communities. They conveyed the message that school staff, leaders of both communities, and families should be active partners who work together to establish and enhance social interaction. Based on these accounts and scholarship addressing ideas of democratic education and social justice (Dewey 1914/2012, Dewey 1938/2015, Bourdieu 1977, Gutmann, 1992, Marzano, 2003, Greene 1996, and Gutmann in Sardoc, 2018), educators within this kind of school must initiate, facilitate, and sustain a viable partnership with both communities and families through a detailed plan, routine meetings, and set of practices that are continuously evaluated and improved. This partnership should be the social and civic mechanism of all agents within the school, families, and both communities.
While this section regards implications and recommendations for agents of both communities and educational practitioners, the following section considers some prospective opportunities for research.

**Implications for Future Research**

As shown in Chapter Two, there is a robust body of literature discussing the distinctive needs of students from military families and their life circumstances. This literature suggests that children from military families comprise nearly 4% of the total school-age population. Ruff and Keim (2014) report that over 80% of children from military families attend public schools that serve both military and nonmilitary student populations. The current study investigates a new perspective of the nature of the social interaction between the military students and their nonmilitary peers and paves the way for many more questions worthy of pursuing in future studies.

This study did not examine a number of demographic features and other factors that may offer new insights into the field and should be considered in future studies. Further research is needed to determine the possible impact of gender on the nature of social interaction between students from military and nonmilitary families. To the best of my knowledge, no such study has been done as of yet and it might be invaluable to compare the social experiences of boys and girls in relation to the discussed social blend. Also, it might be worthy of exploring the possible impact of age on the nature of the social interaction examining the current lived experiences of adults from both groups. Finally, it is also possible to look in-depth at this topic of interest through a case study research approach by examining single or multiple units of settings in
various regions of the country or exploring the nature of the social experience for students from military families during the time a parent is deployed.

Final Thoughts

This study presented the lived experiences of recent and current high school students who attended or still attend a public high school that serves both military and nonmilitary student populations. Working on this dissertation caused me to look deeper into my own identity as an immigrant, educator, mother of children who attend a public school of the kind described in the study, and as a member of a community that includes both military and nonmilitary residents. Within this journey, I encountered my own uncertainties, challenges, and rewarding experiences during the last 12 years living through multiple relocations across countries and regions. This dissertation helped me reflect on my own paths to navigate various social environments I encountered with every move, and on the way I used my life experiences for personal growth.

Living in a community that is close to a military base and consists of both military and nonmilitary families helped develop my feeling of belonging to this country and supporting the United States. Furthermore, this experience gave me insights into the exceptional life conditions experienced by military families that include frequent relocations, coping with a parent who has PTSD, dealing with family separation due to deployment, and more. These encounters taught me a large deal on navigating through the challenges of life. Also, through the process of conducting this research and writing this dissertation, I have learned that the heart of this study is not only about military and nonmilitary groups who come together within a shared space. Rather, I have realized that this research topic is applicable to any educational or community setting that serves diverse racial, cultural, socioeconomic, or religious backgrounds of individuals.
Ultimately, this study emphasizes the obligation of any educational system or community in a
democratic society to serve its members regardless of their racial or sociocultural backgrounds,
atypical life circumstances, what religion they practice, whether English is their native language,
or any other factor.

This study also helped expand my awareness of the complexity of this distinctive social
fabric. As mentioned in chapter four by participants from both backgrounds, the discussed social
sphere included two main groups, one of military and one of the nonmilitary (“local”) student
populations. However, this research showed me that this social fabric includes many other social
groups that are “located between” these groups. Some of these “other” social groups were
associated with military retirees who settled in the area after completing their military services.
Other social groups included immigrants, like my own family, who moved to the area in recent
years and clearly are not military. Not surprisingly, the discussed atypical social reality is
complex and dynamic and requires some thinking on how to include all social and cultural
groups (for instance, a message posted by a school principal wishing all families Merry
Christmas does not include families who do not celebrate Christmas or families who celebrate
both Christmas and other non-Christian holidays).

This work revealed a multitude of subtleties in my awareness of the democratic nature of
the discussed social sphere. I have first-hand experience of the potential benefit of a diversity of
backgrounds and life experiences among people. I firmly believe that in the process of shaping
my identity, the blend of backgrounds, values, and experiences was invaluable. This coincided
with Hansen’s (2013) theory that tensions between individuals may be productive and beneficial
for one’s grasp of—and reflection upon—her or his identity. This journey also enhanced my
understanding of the term “democracy.” Democracy is so much more than a system of government in which the citizens elect their representatives. Egalitarian values of pluralism, inclusion, equal opportunity, and equality should be the milestones of our daily lives. These democratic principles should be recurring elements across all aspects of individuals’ lives including in education, community life, workplaces, and everywhere else where people come together and interact. As the American philosopher, Dewey stated, “democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living of conjoint communicated experience” (1916).

Moreover, our nation’s recent sociopolitical events made me reflect on the necessity for schools in a democratic society to be driven by democratic principles of mutual respect, tolerance, inclusion, equity, social justice, empathy, shared social responsibility, and fairness. If participants in a school community are not engaged in a dialogue around questions and experiences they encounter in real-life contexts or do not strive to understand others’ thoughts and life conditions through productive communication, how can they develop a deep understanding of the external world and wider society? Therefore, participants in a school community should develop democratic habits thinking in terms of integration and creating a shared space, not in concepts of a social and cultural divide. Also, it is possible that the social phenomenon described in this study is not a single case but joins a collection of communities or schools across the country characterized by some degree of social division. Therefore, it is critical to create unity across plurality within those communities and actively establish and maintain genuine communication between socially diverse groups in order to keep our country’s democratic essence alive.
Furthermore, the participants shared a precious gift—the description of their lived experiences during their high school years; I am very appreciative of their honest, in-depth, and insightful comments. It was important to me to create a dissertation title consisting of a term (“two crowds”) used directly and frequently by some participants. For instance, Lucas (CSMF) stated you “automatically thrown to that…that was a sort of crowd”. Also, this title conveys the participants’ authentic impressions explaining that within the social composition of “two crowds” the individuals are less important than the category to which they belong (for instance, many military participants referred to their nonmilitary peers as belonging to one big homogenous community and not as individuals with varied backgrounds and life conditions). Lastly, the articulation of this title also sheds light on the participants’ impressions that they might have experienced the social phenomenon differently if their voices were intentionally and genuinely brought together as part of a civic awareness.

As did the participants of this study, I too extended great efforts to establish social connections, but occasionally these efforts fell short. As a community member, I did not see any specific plan by community leaders or school personnel to consciously bring these social groups together. Indeed, regular community and school activities were conducted, but these programs were not part of any agenda or deliberate plan to create optimal conditions for bringing together these two groups. I wished for better guidance that utilizes this social opportunity towards establishing a nurturing social setting that creates unity across diversity and celebrates democratic values of equity, pluralism, and inclusion.

Finally, I want to express the direct connection that exists between this study’s content and the Jewish values and education stemming from my Jewish roots. Not only does a holistic Jewish
educational approach (within non-orthodox Jewish educational settings) provide insights on one’s religious identity, but it also regards Jewish ethics, moral values, and optimal well-being. The sources of Jewish values are associated with three separate concepts “mitzvot” (commandments), “middot” (measures) and “musar” (instruction) (Merson, 2018). Mitzvot are religious requirements stemming from the Torah (the Pentateuch) or Rabbinic precepts. Middot are associated with moral values or soul traits (Jaffe as cited in Merson, 2018, p.55) including tolerance, trust, mutual respect, and fairness. In the current era in the United States, the concept “mussar” links to mindfulness and reflective practices focusing on Jewish values (Eisenberg as cited in Merson, 2018).

It is possible to think on Jewish ethics and “middot” in light of this study’s content, understanding how moral values (associated with middot) may serve as a bridge between different values, life circumstances, and backgrounds presented within both Jewish and Non-Jewish communities. I want to conclude with an anecdotal story. “In the Jerusalem home of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, the first chief rabbi of Israel, visitors can see letters that he signed as ‘Servant of Israel’… he regarded himself as the servant of his people” (Brown, 2009, p.38). As educators and leaders in a democratic society, we should strive to regard ourselves as the servant of our community’s members. We should also seek to address these members’ particular needs by initiating and maintaining a dynamic shared sphere shaped by all voices and nurtures its members’ social and civic capacity.
References


(Original work published 1977)


Sanders, M. G. (2003). Community Involvement in Schools: From Concept to


Appendix A: Flyer Directed at Recent High School Students

Are you a recent high school student who attended a public high school that serves students from both military and non-military families?

- If the answer is yes, we would like to invite you to participate in a study about social interaction between high school students from military and non-military families.

Participation in the study will include taking part in an online survey. There is also some possibility that additional stages for participation may include an individual meeting and a group discussion.

***Please note, participation in the study is based on additional criteria that you have to meet in order to participate in the study. Please visit the following website and take a few minutes to fill out the survey:

*Survey for recent high-school students from non-military families: www.survey1.com

*Survey for recent high-school students from military families: www.survey2.com
The note mentioned below is included in the second page of the flyer.
For the purpose of this study, a military family is defined as a family in which one parent or both parents are a current member (in active duty, active guard, or reserve service) of the United States Military System.
Appendix B: Flyer Directed at Parents of Current High School Students

Adolescents are growing and learning together.

Are you a parent of a high school student who attends a high school that contains students from both military and non-military families?

If the answer is yes, we would like to invite your daughter or son to participate in a study about social interaction between high school students from military and non-military families.

Participation in the study will include taking part in an online survey. There is also some possibility that additional stages for participation may include an individual meeting and a group discussion.

***Please note, participation in the study is based on additional criteria that your daughter or son has to meet in order to participate in the study.

Please visit the following website and take a few minutes to fill out the survey.

*Survey for non-military families: www.survey3.com
*Survey for military families: www.survey4.com
The note mentioned below is included in the second page of the flyer.
For the purpose of this study, a military family is defined as a family in which one parent or both parents are a current member (in active duty, active guard, or reserve service) of the United States Military System.
Appendix C: Survey for Recent High School Students from Nonmilitary Families

My name is Michal Setti Parnes, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Graduate School of Education at Lesley University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. I am conducting a research study regarding the issue of social interaction between high school students from military and nonmilitary families and this survey is a first stage of this study. For the purpose of this study, a military family is defined as a family in which one parent or both parents are current members (in active duty, active guard, or reserve service) of the United States Military System.

The purpose of this survey is to learn more about you; the level of your connection to the local community during and following your high school years; and the nature of interaction between children from military and nonmilitary families. Your responses to this survey will be strictly anonymous (unless you select to share your information in order to be considered as a potential candidate for participation in additional stages of this study) and your digital data will be stored in secure computer files. Also, your responses to this survey will be used as a source of data for this study.

Participation in this survey is voluntary. You are allowed to withdraw from the survey at any time and skip any questions. Dropping out of the survey at any point does not carry any penalties or negative consequences. Finally, it should be noted that this survey is the first phase of the study; at the end of this survey you will be asked to consider the possibility of continuing to the interview stage of the study. Your participation in the survey should take no longer than 20 minutes.
If any problem in connection to the research arises, you can contact the researcher: Michal Setti Parnes at 617-218-7407 and by e-mail at msettipa@lesley.edu or the Lesley University sponsoring faculty, Dr. Paul Naso at 617-349-8284, pnaso@lesley.edu

*There is a Standing Committee for Human Subjects in Research at Lesley University to which complaints or problems concerning any research project may, and should, be reported if they arise. Contact the Committee Chairpersons at irb@lesley.edu*

Clicking the “yes” button below indicates that you are 18 years of age or older, that you understand that participation in this survey is completely voluntary, that your responses to this survey will be used as a source of data for this study, and that you can stop taking the survey at any point in the process.

a. **Yes**, I am 18 years of age or older. Also, I understand that my participation is voluntary and that data from this survey will be used for scholarly research. I also consent that my responses will be included in this scholarly study.

b. **No**, I do not want to participate in the study.

1. Gender: Please specify your gender.
   a. Female
   b. Male
   c. Gender non-conforming

2. Ethnicity Origin: Please specify your ethnicity.
   a. White
b. Hispanic or Latino

c. African American

d. Asian/Pacific Islander

e. Other

3. Did you attend a public high school that includes both students from military and nonmilitary families?

a. Yes

b. No

If the participant answers “b” (no), then the following message will be appeared. Thank you so much for your participation in this survey. We greatly appreciate your time, but the remaining questions are not applicable to you since they refer to students who attended a public high school that includes both students from military and nonmilitary families. Thank you!

4. What year did you complete high school?

a. 2018

b. 2017

c. 2016

d. Any other time prior to December 2015

If the participant answers “d” (any other time prior to December 2015), then the following message will be appeared. Thank you so much for your participation in this
survey. We greatly appreciate your time, but the remaining questions are not applicable to you since they refer to recent students who completed high school after December 2015. Thank you!

5. Age: Is your age between 18 and 21 years?

a. Yes

b. No

If the participant answers “b” (no), then the following message will be appeared. Thank you so much for your participation in this survey. We greatly appreciate your time, but the remaining questions are not applicable to you since they refer to recent students who are between the ages of 18 and 21. Thank you!

6. Have you attended a public (not private) high school for a period of at least two years?

a. Yes, I attended public high school for a period of at least two years.

b. No, I did not attend public high school for a period of at least two years.

If the participant answers “b” (No, I did not attend public high school for a period of at least two years), then the following message will be appeared. Thank you so much for your participation in this survey. We greatly appreciate your time, but the remaining questions are not applicable to you since they refer to students who attended public high school for a period of at least two years.
7. Do you live in the same community in which you lived during your high school years?
   a. Yes
   b. No

   If the participant answers “b” (no), he or she will be directed to the question below.

8. Does your family live in the community where you went to high school?
   a. Yes
   b. No

   If the participant answers “b” (no), then the following message will be appeared. Thank you so much for participating in this survey. We greatly appreciate your time, but the remaining questions are not applicable to you since they refer to recent high school students who have moved out of the community, but their family still lives in the community.

   If the participant answers “b” (no) in question number seven and “a” (yes) in question number eight. Then he or she will be directed to the following questions.

9. The goal of the following questions is to gain a better understanding regarding the level of your connection to the community in which you lived during your high school years. Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements (1-10):
In answering the questions please refer only to the community in which you lived during your high school years.

In general, I trust people in this community.  

In general, I feel supported by the community.

In general, I feel obligated to help people in this community.

I communicate easily with people from this community.

Only a few community members know me.

I feel as if I am part of this community.

I care about this community and what happens in it.

I communicate with members of my family who still live in this community.

10. In what places, beside school, did you interact with adolescents from military families?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
11. You have attended a public school that serves both students from military and nonmilitary students. Please comment on how these two groups interacted with each other?

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________


This survey is a first stage and there will be additional phases of this study. It is possible that the additional phase may include an individual interview and group discussion for the purpose of gathering additional information about high school students who attended a public high school that includes both military and nonmilitary student populations. Some recent high school students who take part in this survey will participate in the second phase of the study. The second phase will include one face to face individual interview (that may last approximately 60 minutes) and one or two face to face group interviews (that may last approximately 60 minutes each). Interviews will be conducted in any public place including local public centers (i.e., art, music, sports, and religious centers), coffee shops, or any other public place that would be convenient for you. Interviews will be scheduled at your preference and the expected time of your commitment should be 10 weeks.
All information from these interviews will be confidential by the researcher. Data collected will be coded with a pseudonym, the participant’s identity will never be revealed by the researcher, and only the researcher will have access to data collection.

Also, participants who may participate in both individual and group interviews will be compensated for their time and effort with a gift card of $25. They will receive this gift card at the beginning of the individual interview. Finally, withdrawal from the study at any point during the interviews process does not create any negative consequences or penalty and participants who choose to withdraw from the interviews stage will still receive their payment of $25.

12. Do you wish to be considered for participating in additional stage of the study?

a. Yes, I would like to be considered for participation in follow up stages of the study.

b. No, I do not wish to be considered for participation in follow up stages of the study.

If the participant answers “a” (yes) then the following message will be appeared.

Thank you so much for participating in this survey. Thank you also for your willingness and time. Are you willing to leave me your contact information (email address, phone number or any other contact avenue) in order to schedule a time for interviews in the next few months? (Please keep in mind that if you leave your contact information, your responses for this survey will be no longer anonymous).

I indicate my interest in being contacted about participation in interview(s) and to provide my contact information:

Name (Please print) ______________
If the participant answers “b” (no) then the following message will be appeared.

Thank you so much for participating in this survey. I greatly appreciate your time and help.
Appendix D: Survey for Recent High School Students from Military Families

My name is Michal Setti Parnes, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Graduate School of Education at Lesley University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. I am conducting a research study regarding the issue of social interaction between high school students from military and nonmilitary families and this survey is the first stage of this study. For the purpose of this study, a military family is defined as a family in which one parent or both parents are current members (in active duty, active guard, or reserve service) of the United States Military System.

The purpose of this survey is to learn more about you; the level of your connection to the local community during and following your high school years; and the quality of interaction between children from military and nonmilitary families. Your responses to this survey will be strictly anonymous (unless you select to share your information in order to be considered as a potential candidate for participation in additional stages of this study) and your digital data will be stored in secure computer files. Also, your responses to this survey will be used as a source of data for this study.

Participation in this survey is voluntary. You are allowed to withdraw from the survey at any time and skip any questions. Dropping out of the survey at any point does not carry any penalties or negative consequences. Finally, it should be noted that this survey is the first phase of the study; at the end of this survey, you will be asked to consider the possibility of continuing to the interview stage of the study. Your participation in the survey should take no longer than 20 minutes.

If any problem in connection to the research arises, you can contact the researcher: Michal Setti Parnes at 617-218-7407 and by e-mail at msettipa@lesley.edu or the Lesley University sponsoring faculty, Dr. Paul Naso at 617-349-8284, pnaso@lesley.edu
There is a Standing Committee for Human Subjects in Research at Lesley University to which complaints or problems concerning any research project may, and should, be reported if they arise. Contact the Committee Chairperson at irb@lesley.edu

Clicking the “yes” button below indicates that you are 18 years of age or older, that you understand that participation in this survey is completely voluntary, that your responses to this survey will be used as a source of data for this study, and that you can stop taking the survey at any point in the process.

a. **Yes**, I am 18 years of age or older. Also, I understand that my participation is voluntary and that data from this survey will be used for scholarly research. I also consent that my responses will be included in this scholarly study.

b. **No**, I do not want to participate in the study.

1. **Gender**: Please specify your gender.
   a. Female
   b. Male
   c. Gender non-conforming

2. **Ethnicity Origin**: Please specify your ethnicity.
   a. White
   b. Hispanic or Latino
   c. African American
   d. Asian/Pacific Islander
e. Other

3. Did you attend a public high school that includes both students from military and nonmilitary families?

a. Yes

b. No

*If the participant answers “b” (no), then the following message will be appeared. Thank you so much for your participation in this survey. We greatly appreciate your time, but the remaining questions are not applicable to you since they refer to students who attended public high school that includes both students from military and nonmilitary families. Thank you!*

4. What year did you complete high school?

a. 2018

b. 2017

c. 2016

d. Any other time prior to December 2015

*If the participant answers “d” (any other time prior to December 2015), then the following message will be appeared. Thank you so much for participation in this survey. We greatly appreciate your time, but the remaining questions are not applicable to you since they refer to recent students who completed high school after December 2015. Thank you!*

5. Age: Is your age between 18 and 21 years?
6. Have one of your parents or both been a military member in your years of high school?
   a. Yes

   b. No

   If the participant answers “b” (No), then the following message will be appeared. Thank you so much for your participation in this survey. We greatly appreciate your time, but the remaining questions are not applicable to you since they refer to recent students whose one of their parents has been a military member in their years of high school. Thank you!

7. Have you experienced three or more school transitions during your K-12 grade years?
   a. Yes

   b. No

   If the participant answers “b” (no), then the following message will be appeared. Thank you so much for your participation in this survey. We greatly appreciate
your time, but the remaining questions are not applicable to you since they refer to recent high school students who experienced three or more school transitions during their K-12 grade years. Thank you!

8. Did you attend a full school year in a public school (that includes military and nonmilitary students)?

   a. Yes, I attended a full school year in this kind of public school.

   b. No, I did not attend a full school year in this kind of public school.

   If the participant answers “b” (No, I did not attend a full school year in this kind of public high school), then the following message will be appeared. Thank you so much for participation in this survey. We greatly appreciate your time, but the remaining questions are not applicable to you since they refer to students who attended a full school year in this kind of public school.

9. Do you live in the same community in which you lived during your high school years?

   a. Yes

   b. No

   If the participant answers “b” (no), he or she will be directed to the questions below.

10. Does your family live in the community where you went to high school?

    a. Yes

    b. No
If the participant answers “b” (no), then the following message will be appeared. Thank you so much for participating in this survey. We greatly appreciate your time, but the remaining questions are not applicable to you since they refer to recent high school students whom have moved out of the community, but their family still lives in the community.

If the participant answers “b” (no) in question number nine and “a” (yes) in question number ten, then he or she will be directed to the following questions.

11. The goal of the following questions is to gain a better understanding regarding the level of your connection to the community in which you lived during your high school years.

Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements (1-10):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In answering the questions, please refer only to the community in which you lived during your high school years.

In general, I trust people in this community.  1  2  3  4

In general, I feel supported by the community.  1  2  3  4

In general, I feel obligated to help people in this community.  1  2  3  4
I communicate easily with people from this community. 1  2  3  4

Only a few community members know me. 1  2  3  4

I feel as if I am part of this community. 1  2  3  4

I care about this community and what happens in it. 1  2  3  4

I communicate with members of my family who still live in this community.

1  2  3  4

12. In what places, beside school, did you interact with adolescents from nonmilitary families?

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

13. You have attended a public school that serves both students from military and nonmilitary students. Please comment on how these two groups interacted with each other?

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
This survey is a first stage and there will be additional phases of this study. It is possible that the additional phase may include face to face individual interview and group discussion for the purpose of gathering additional information about high school students who attended a public high school that includes both military and nonmilitary student populations. Some recent high school students who take part in this survey will participate in the second phase of the study. The second phase will include one face to face individual interview (that may last approximately 60 minutes) and one or two face to face group interviews (that may last approximately 60 minutes each). The expected time of your commitment should be 10 weeks.

Interviews will be conducted in any public place including local public centers (i.e., art, music, sports, and religious centers), coffee shops, or any other public place that would be convenient for you. Interviews will be scheduled at your suitability. All information from these interviews will be confidential by the researcher. Data collected will be coded with a pseudonym, the participant’s identity will never be revealed by the researcher, and only the researcher will have access to data collection.

Also, participants who may participate in both individual and group interviews will be compensated for their time and effort with a gift card of $25. They will receive this gift card at the beginning of the individual interview. Finally, withdrawal from the study at any point during
the interviews process does not create any negative consequences or penalty, and participants who choose to withdraw from the interviews stage will still receive their payment of $25.

14. Do you wish to be considered for participating in additional stage of the study?

a. Yes, I would like to be considered for participation in follow up stages of the study.

b. No, I do not wish to be considered for participation in follow up stages of the study.

*If the participant answers “a” (yes) then the following message will be appeared.*

Thank you so much for participating in this survey. Thank you also for your willingness and time. Are you willing to leave me your contact information (email address, phone number or any other contact avenue) in order to schedule a time for interviews in the next few months? (Please keep in mind that if you leave your contact information, your responses for this survey will be no longer anonymous).

I indicate my interest in being contacted about participation in interview(s) and to provide my contact information:

Name (Please print) ___________________________

Date _______________________________________

Contact information ________________________________
If the participant answers “b” (no) then the following message will be appeared.

Thank you so much for participating in this survey. I greatly appreciate your time and help.
Appendix E: Survey for Parents of Current High School Students from Nonmilitary Families

My name is Michal Setti Parnes, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Graduate School of Education at Lesley University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. I am conducting a research study regarding the issue of social interaction between high school students from military and nonmilitary families and this survey is the first stage of this study. For the purpose of this study, a military family is defined as a family in which one parent or both parents are current members (in active duty, active guard, or reserve service) of the United States Military System.

The purpose of this survey is to learn more about your demographic information and better understand your or your child’s general experiences regarding this interaction. Your responses to this survey will be strictly anonymous (unless you select to share your information in order that your child be considered as a potential candidate for participation in additional stages of this study) and your digital data will be stored in secure computer files. Also, your responses to this survey will be used as a source of data for this study.

Participation in this survey is voluntary. You are allowed to withdraw from the survey at any time and skip any questions. Dropping out of the survey at any point does not carry any penalties or consequences. Finally, it should be noted that this survey is the first phase of the study; at the end of this survey you will be asked to consider the opportunity for your adolescent child to take part in the study. Your participation in the survey should take no longer than 20 minutes.

If any problem in connection to the research arises, you can contact the researcher: Michal Setti Parnes at 617-218-7407 and by e-mail at msettipa@lesley.edu or the Lesley University sponsoring faculty Dr. Paul Naso at 617-349-8284, pnaso@lesle.edu
There is a Standing Committee for Human Subjects in Research at Lesley University to which complaints or problems concerning any research project may, and should, be reported if they arise. Contact the Committee Chairperson at irb@lesley.edu

Clicking the “yes” button below indicates that you understand that participation in this survey is completely voluntary, that your responses to this survey will be used as a source of data for this study, and that you can stop taking the survey at any point in the process.

a. **Yes**, I understand that my participation is voluntary and that data from this survey will be used for scholarly research. I also consent that my responses will be included in this study.

b. **No**, I do not want to participate in the study.

1. Gender: Please specify your child’s gender.
   a. Female
   b. Male
   c. Gender non-conforming

2. Ethnicity Origin: Please specify your child’s ethnicity.
   a. White
   b. Hispanic or Latino
   c. African American
   d. Asian/Pacific Islander
3. Does your child currently attend a **public (not private)** high school that includes both students from military and nonmilitary families?
   
a. Yes
   
b. No

*If the participant answers “b” (no), then the following message will be appeared. Thank you so much for participating in this survey. We greatly appreciate your time, but the remaining questions are not applicable to you since they refer to students who attend public high school that includes both students from military and nonmilitary families. Thank you!*

4. Have you lived in the community for at least three years?
   
a. Yes
   
b. No

*If the participant answers “b” (no), then the following message will be appeared. Thank you so much for participating in this survey. We greatly appreciate your time, but the remaining questions are not applicable to you since they refer to current high school students who have lived in the community for at least three years.*

5. In what grade is your child?
   
a. 9th grade
   
b. 10th grade
c. 11th grade

d. 12th grade

Open response question

6. Based on your child’s experiences in school, how would you describe the social interaction between military and nonmilitary high school students?

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

7. This survey is a first stage of the study and there will be additional stages of this study. It is possible that the additional phase may include an individual interview and group discussion for the purpose of gathering additional information about high school students who attend a public high school that includes both military and nonmilitary student populations. Some high school students whose parents participated in this survey will take part in the second phase of the study.

The second phase of this study will include one face to face individual interview (that may last approximately 60 minutes) and one or two face to face group interviews (that may last
approximately 60 minutes each). The expected time of your child’s commitment should be 10 weeks.

Interviews will be conducted in any public place including local public centers (i.e., art, music, sports, and religious centers), coffee shop, or any other public place that would be convenient for the study’s participant. Both individual and group interviews will be conducted after school hours and at a time that does not interfere with any of the student’s extra-curricular activities. All information from these interviews will be confidential by the researcher. Data collected will be coded with a pseudonym, the participant’s identity will never be revealed by the researcher, and only the researcher will have access to data collection.

Also, participants who may participate in both individual and group interviews will be compensated for their time and effort with a gift card of $25. They will receive this gift card at the beginning of the individual interview. Finally, withdrawal from the study at any point during the interviews process does not create any negative consequences or penalty and participants who choose to withdraw from the interviews stage will still receive their payment of $25.

Are you interested in your child being considered for participating in additional phases of this study?

a. Yes, I am willing to suggest to my child to participate in the follow-up stages of the study.

b. No, I am not willing to suggest to my child to participate in follow-up stages of the study.
If the participant answers “a” (yes) then the following message will be appeared. Thank you so much for participating in this survey. Thank you also for your consideration in including your child within this study. Are you willing to leave me your contact information (email address, phone number or any other contact avenue) in order to be in touch regarding the possible participation of your child in the study? (Please keep in mind that if you leave your contact information, your responses for this survey will be no longer anonymous).

I indicate my interest in having my adolescent child participate in this study and providing my (the parent) contact information. I also confirm that I am the legal guardian of my adolescent child with the ability to approve my adolescent child’s participation in this study.

Name of the parent ________________________

Date____________________________________

Parent’s contact information ______________________________

If the participant answers “b” (no) then the following message will be appeared.

Thank you so much for participating in this survey. I greatly appreciate your time and help.
Appendix F: Survey for Parents of Current High School Students from Military Families

My name is Michal Setti Parnes, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Graduate School of Education at Lesley University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. I am conducting a research study regarding the issue of social interaction between high school students from military and nonmilitary families and this survey is the first stage of this study. For the purpose of this study, a military family is defined as a family in which one parent or both parents are current members (in active duty, active guard, or reserve service) of the United States Military System.

The purpose of this survey is to learn more about your demographic information and better understand your or your child’s general experiences regarding this interaction. Your responses to this survey will be strictly anonymous (unless you elect to share your information in order that your child be considered as a potential candidate for participation in additional stages of this study) and your digital data will be stored in secure computer files. Also, your responses to this survey will be used as a source of data for this study.

Participation in this survey is voluntary. You are allowed to withdraw from the survey at any time and skip any questions. Dropping out of the survey at any point does not carry any penalties or consequences. Finally, it should be noted that this survey is the first phase of the study; at the end of this survey, you will be asked to consider the opportunity for your adolescent child to take part in the study. Your participation in the survey should take no longer than 20 minutes.

If any problem in connection to this research arises, you can contact the researcher: Michal Setti Parnes at 617-218-7407 and by e-mail at msettipa@lesley.edu or the Lesley University sponsoring faculty, Dr. Paul Naso at 617-349-8284, pnaso@lesley.edu
There is a Standing Committee for Human Subjects in Research at Lesley University to which complaints or problems concerning any research project may, and should, be reported if they arise. Contact the Committee Chairperson at irb@lesley.edu

Clicking the “yes” button below indicates that you understand that participation in this survey is completely voluntary, that your responses to this survey will be used as a source of data for this study, and that you can stop taking the survey at any point in the process.

a. Yes, I understand that my participation is voluntary and that data from this survey will be used for scholarly research. I also consent that my responses will be included in this study.

b. No, I do not want to participate in the study.

1. Gender: Please specify your child’s gender.
   a. Female
   b. Male
   c. Gender non-conforming

2. Ethnicity Origin: Please specify your child’s ethnicity.
   a. White
   b. Hispanic or Latino
   c. African American
   d. Asian/Pacific Islander
   e. Other
3. Does your child currently attend a public (not private) high school that includes both students from military and nonmilitary families?
   
a. Yes
   
b. No
   
If the participant answers “b” (no), then the following message will be appeared. Thank you so much for participating in this survey. We greatly appreciate your time, but the remaining questions are not applicable to you since they refer to students who attend public high school that includes both students from military and nonmilitary families. Thank you!

4. How long has your son or daughter attended his or her public school?
   
a. More than a year.
   
b. Less than a year
   
If the participant answers “b” (less than a year), then the following message will be appeared. Thank you so much for participating in this survey. We greatly appreciate your time, but the remaining questions are not applicable to you since they refer to current high school students who have attended their public school more than a year. Thank you!

5. How many times has your child changed schools during his or her school years?
   
a. One or two times
   
b. Three times
   
c. More than three times.
If the participant answers “a” (one or two times) then the following message will be appeared. Thank you so much for participating in this survey. We greatly appreciate your time, but the remaining questions are not applicable to you since they refer to students who changed schools at least three times. Thank you!

6. In what grade is your child?
   a. 9th grade
   b. 10th grade
   c. 11th grade
   d. 12th grade

Open response question

7. Based on your child’s experiences in school, how would you describe the social interaction between military and nonmilitary high school students?

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

This survey is a first stage of the study and there will be additional stages of this study. It is possible that the additional phase may include an individual interview and group discussion
for the purpose of gathering additional information about high school students who attend a public high school that includes both military and nonmilitary student populations. Some high school students whose parents participated in this survey will take part in the second phase of the study. The second phase of this study will include one face to face individual interview (that may last approximately 60 minutes) and one or two face to face group interviews (that may last approximately 60 minutes each). The expected time of your child’s commitment should be 10 weeks.

Interviews will be conducted in any public place including local public centers (i.e., art, music, sports, and religious centers), coffee shop, or any other public place that would be convenient for the study’s participant. Both individual and group interviews will be conducted after school hours and at a time that does not interfere with any of the student’s extra-curricular activities. All information from these interviews will be confidential by the researcher. Data collected will be coded with a pseudonym, the participant’s identity will never be revealed by the researcher, and only the researcher will have access to data collection.

Also, participants who may participate in both individual and group interviews will be compensated for their time and effort with an Amazon gift card of $25. They will receive this gift card at the beginning of the individual interview. Finally, withdrawal from the study at any point during the data collection process does not create any negative consequences or penalty and participants who choose to withdraw from the interviews stage will still receive their payment of $25.

8. Are you interested in your child being considered for participating in additional phases of this study?
a. Yes, I am willing to suggest to my child to participate in follow-up stages of the study.

b. No, I am not willing to suggest to my child to participate in follow-up stages of the study.

*If the participant answers “a” (yes) then the following message will be appeared. Thank you so much for participating in this survey. Thank you also for your consideration in including your child within this study. Are you willing to leave me your contact information (email address, phone number, or any other contact avenue) in order to be in touch regarding the possible participation of your child in the study? (Please keep in mind that if you leave your contact information, your responses for this survey will be no longer anonymous).*

I indicate my interest in having my adolescent child participate in this study and providing my (the parent) contact information. I also confirm that I am the legal guardian of my adolescent child with the ability to approve my adolescent child’s participation in this study.

Name of the parent ________________________

Date____________________________________

Parent’s contact information_______________________

*If the participant answers “b” (no) then the following message will be appeared.*

Thank you so much for participating in this survey. I greatly appreciate your time and help.
Appendix G: Letter Requesting Participation and Consent for Recent High School Students

Title: Social engagement between adolescents from military families and their nonmilitary peers.

Faculty Advisor: Paul Naso, Ed.D. Lesley University. (pnaso@lesley.edu)

Researcher: Michal Setti Parnes, Lesley University, doctoral candidate in Educational Leadership. (msettipa@lesley.edu)

Description of the research and your participation:
You are invited to participate in the research project titled” Social engagement between adolescents from military families and their nonmilitary peers.” The purpose of this research is to better understand the quality of social relationship between adolescents from military families and their nonmilitary peers. You are invited to participate in this study since you attended a public high school that serves students from both military and nonmilitary families.

Your participation will entail two main steps. First step will include one face to face individual interview that will last approximately 60 minutes. Second step will entail one or two face to face group interviews that will last approximately an hour for each of a group interview. It should be noted that a copy of the agreement of participation in a focus group interview will be emailed to you one week prior to conducting the focus group interview. You will be asked to sign this agreement and return it to the researcher prior to the day of conducting the focus group.
After conducting the individual and one or two group interviews, I will email the interviewees with following questions in order to give them additional opportunity to share their experiences and feelings regarding the interview questions. Responding to follow up questions after the interviews should take no longer than 20 minutes.

The interviews will take place in any public place including local public centers (i.e., art, music, sports and religious centers), coffee shops, or any other public place that would be convenient for you and that you consider comfortable to discuss this topic. All interviews will be recorded electronically and will be transcribed. The transcription will be made available to you to verify that it is accurate and complete. You will be given an Amazon gift card of $25 at the beginning of the individual interview for your participation in one individual and one or two group interviews. However, participants who choose to withdraw from the research at any point will still receive their payment of $25. Your duration of commitment including participation in a single individual interview and one or two focus group interviews will take approximately 10 weeks.

It should be noted that the researcher may present the outcomes of this study for academic purposes (i.e.; articles, teaching, conference presentations, supervision etc.)

Risks and discomforts:

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research. Identifying details will be kept confidential by the researcher. Data collected will be coded with a pseudonym, the participant’s identity or location will never be revealed by the researcher, and only the researcher will have access to data collected. All transcripts will be kept in a
password protected file on the researcher’s personal laptop. After up to five years
subsequent to study completion, all hard copy materials of this study will be shredded, and
all digital data will be deleted from the secure digital server.

**Potential benefits:**
Participants will be compensated for their time and effort with an Amazon gift
card of $25. It is also possible that this research may benefit prospective teens from
both military and nonmilitary families. Likewise, this study may benefit teachers
and community stakeholders who work with these populations.

**Voluntary participation and your rights:**
Participation in this research study is voluntary. You have the right to refuse to
participate or withdraw from the study at any time. You will not be penalized in any way
if you decide not to participate in, or to withdraw from this study. Any and all of your
questions will be answered at any time and you are free to consult with anyone (i.e.;
friend, family) about your decision to participate in the research and/or to discontinue
your participation.

If any problem in connection to the research arises, you can contact the researcher:
Michal Setti Parnes at 617-218-7407 and by e-mail at msettipa@lesley.edu or the Lesley
University sponsoring faculty Dr. Paul Naso at 617-349-8284, pnsao@lesley.edu

**Questions:** I will be happy to answer any questions you have about the study.
You may contact me at 617-218-7407 or email me to msettipa@lesley.edu
with any questions or concerns.
Consent:

By signing below, you state that you are 18 years of age and older and you agree to participate in this research study. Your signature below will indicate that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant; that your questions have been answered satisfactorily, that you have read and understood the information provided to you regarding this study, and that you consent that your responses will be used by the researcher for the purposes of this study. You will receive a copy of this consent form.

_______________________________
Participant’s Name

_______________________________
Signature of Participant

_______________________________
Date

_______________________________
Researcher’s signature

There is a Standing Committee for Human Subjects in Research at Lesley University to which complaints or problems concerning any research project may, and should, be reported if they arise. Contact the Committee Chairperson at irb@lesley.edu
Sincerely,

Michal Setti Parnes

617-218-7407

msettipa@lesley.edu
Appendix H: Parental Permission for Participation of a Child in a Research Study

**Title:** Social engagement between adolescents from military families and their nonmilitary peers.

**Faculty Advisor:** Paul Naso, Ed,D. Lesley University. (pnaso@lesley.edu)

**Researcher:** Michal Setti Parnes, Lesley University, doctoral candidate in Educational Leadership. (msettipa@lesley.edu)

**Description of the research and your child’s participation:**
Your adolescent child is invited to participate in the research project titled “Social engagement between adolescents from military families and their nonmilitary peers.” The purpose of this research is to better understand the quality of social relationship between adolescents from military families and their nonmilitary peers. Your adolescent child is invited to participate in this study since he or she attends a public high school that serves students from both military and nonmilitary families.

His or her participation will entail two main steps. First step will include one face to face individual interview that will last approximately 60 minutes. Second step will entail one or two face to face group interviews that will last approximately an hour for each of a group interview. It should be noted that a copy of the agreement of participation in a focus group interview will be emailed to you one
week prior to conducting the focus group interview. Your child will be asked to
sign this agreement and return it to the researcher prior to the day of conducting
the focus group.

After conducting the individual and one or two group interviews, I will email the
interviewees with following questions in order to give them additional
opportunity to share their experiences and feelings regarding the interview
questions. Responding to follow up questions after the interviews should take no
longer than 20 minutes.

The Interviews will be conducted in any public place including local public
centers (i.e., art, music, sports, and religious centers), coffee shops, or any other
public place that would be convenient for your adolescent child and that he or she
considers comfortable to discuss this topic. All interviews will be recorded
electronically and will be transcribed. The transcription will be made available to
your adolescent child to verify that it is accurate and complete. Additionally, all
the interviews, both individual and group, will be conducted after school hours and
at a time that does not interfere with any of the student’s extra-curricular activities.
Also, prior to the interviews, I will hold a personal meeting with your son or
daughter to explain to him or her the purpose of the study and ensure that he or she
understands that participation in this study is voluntary and dropping out from the
study at any point does not carry any penalties or consequences.

Your adolescent child will be given an Amazon gift card of $25 at the beginning of the
individual interview for your participation in one individual and one or two group
interviews. However, participants who choose to withdraw from the research at any point
will still receive their payment of $25. You child’s duration of commitment including participation in one individual interview and one or two focus group interviews will take approximately 10 weeks.

It should be noted that the researcher may present the outcomes of this study for academic purposes (i.e., articles, teaching, conference presentations, supervision etc.)

**Risks and discomforts:**

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research. Identifying details will be kept confidential by the researcher. Data collected will be coded with pseudonym, the participant’s identity or location will never be revealed by the researcher, and only the researcher will have access to data collected. All transcripts will be kept in a password protected file on the researcher’s personal laptop. After up to five years subsequent to study completion, all hard copy materials of this study will be shredded, and all digital data will be deleted from the secure digital server.

**Potential benefits:**

Participants will be compensated for their time and effort with an Amazon gift card of $25. It is also possible that this research may benefit prospective teens from both military and nonmilitary families. Likewise, this study may benefit teachers and community stakeholders who work with these populations.

**Voluntary participation and your rights:**

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You have the right to refuse to participate or withdraw your child from the study at any time. You and your child will not be penalized in any way if you or your child should decide not to participate in, or to
withdraw from this study. Any and all of your and/ or your adolescent child’s questions will be answered at any time and you are free to consult with anyone (i.e.; friend, family) about your decision to participate in the research and/or to discontinue your participation.

If any problem in connection to the research arises, you can contact the researcher: Michal Setti Parnes at 617-218-7407 and by e-mail at msettipa@lesley.edu or the Lesley University sponsoring faculty Dr. Paul Naso at 617-349-8284, pnaso@lesley.edu

Questions: I will be happy to answer any questions you have about the study.

You may contact me at

617-218-7407 or email me to msettipa@lesley.edu with any questions or concerns.

Consent:

I hereby confirm that I am the legal guardian of my adolescent child with the ability to approve my adolescent child’s participation in this study. Also, I have read this parental permission form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give my permission for my child to participate in this study, and consent that my child’s responses will be used by the researcher for the purposes of this study. You will receive a copy of this consent form.

________________________________
Print Name
There is a Standing Committee for Human Subjects in Research at Lesley University to which complaints or problems concerning any research project may, and should, be reported if they arise. Contact the Committee Chairperson at irb@lesley.edu

Sincerely,

Michal Setti Parnes

617-218-7407

msettipa@lesley.edu
Appendix I: Youth Assent Form

My name is Michal Setti Parnes and I am a doctoral student at Lesley University. I am working on a study about students who attend public high schools that include students from military families as well as nonmilitary families.

The purpose of the study and how it is conducted

You are invited to participate in the research project named “Social engagement between adolescents from military families and their nonmilitary peers.” The purpose of this research is to better understand the quality of social relationship between adolescents from military families and their nonmilitary peers. You are invited to participate in this study because you attend public high school that includes students from both military and nonmilitary families.

Your participation will include two main steps. First step will include one face to face individual interview that will last approximately 60 minutes. Second step will include one or two face to face group interviews that will last approximately an hour for each of a group interview. It should be noted that a copy of the agreement of participation in a focus group interview will be emailed to your parent one week prior to conducting the focus group interview. You will be asked to sign this agreement and return it to the researcher prior to the day of conducting the focus group.
Also, after conducting the individual and one or two group interviews, I will email you following questions in order to give you another opportunity to share your feelings about the interview questions. Responding to follow up questions after the interviews should take no longer than 20 minutes.

The interviews will be conducted in any public place including local public centers (i.e., art, music, sports, and religious centers), coffee shops, or any other public place that would be convenient for you and that you feel comfortable. All interviews will be recorded electronically and will be transcribed. The transcription will be made available to you to verify that it is accurate and complete. Additionally, all the interviews, both individual and group, will be conducted after school hours and at a time that does not interfere with any of your extra-curricular activities.

You will receive an Amazon gift card of $25 at the beginning of the individual interview for your participation in one individual and one or two group interviews. But if you choose to discontinue with the research at any point you will still receive your payment of $25. Your period of commitment including participation in one individual interview and one or two focus group interviews will take approximately 10 weeks.

**Participation in the study**

Your participation in this study is completely your choice and your decision. You do not have to participate in this study even if your parent or parents wish you to participate. You can decide not to participate right from the beginning or you can
choose to drop out at any time during the study. Whatever you choose carries no consequences and no punishment in any form.

**Harm, risks or benefits to participants in the study**

Participation in this study carries no risk or harm. You will receive an Amazon gift card of $25 for your time and effort. Also, we hope this study will help us learn more about the special difficulties and issues students face in that kind of school and maybe make it possible to relieve some of them in the future.

**Personal Information**

I can guarantee that your answers both in the individual and the group interviews will be kept completely confidential with the highest degree of security.

Any time you wish to drop out of the study, contact me at the contact information presented below. In such case your answers up to that point will be destroyed.

Again, there is no penalty for dropping out.

I am happy to answer any questions you have about the study. Please contact me at the contact information presented below.

**Contact Information**

Michal Setti Parnes at 617-218-7407 or msettipa@lesley.edu.

If any problem in connection to the research arises, you can contact the researcher: Michal Setti Parnes at 617-218-7407 and by e-mail at msettipa@lesley.edu or the Lesley University sponsoring faculty Dr. Paul Naso at 617-349-8284, pnaso@lesley.edu

**Agreement**
By signing this form, I agree to be in the study described above and consent that my responses will be used by the researcher for the purposes of this study.

Child’s Name: ________________________________________________

Child’s Signature: __________________________________________

Date: ______________

You will receive a copy of this form.

msettipa@lesley.edu

There is a Standing Committee for Human Subjects in Research at Lesley University to which complaints or problems concerning any research project may, and should, be reported if they arise. Contact the Committee Chairperson at irb@lesley.edu

Sincerely,

Michal Setti Parnes

617-218-7407
Appendix J: Individual Interview Protocol

Time of interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Beginning of the interview: (Will be read to the interviewee) Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this study. I would like to verify that you know that your participation is voluntary. You do not have to participate in this study, you may decline to answer any of my questions, and can quit from it during its process without being penalized in any way. In this interview, we will discuss friendships between military and nonmilitary students who attend the same high school.

This interview is going to be audio recorded. Your name, age, and any other information will not be mentioned in the study and will be confidential. Do you have any questions?

During this meeting, please think only of your experience about friendships and other interactions with nonmilitary (or military) students. Are you ready to begin?

Interview questions for current and recent high school students from nonmilitary families
• Please describe your experience of being a student in a public high school that
  includes students from both nonmilitary and military families.

• Please recall your experiences of getting to know a student from a military family
  and becoming friend with her or him.

• Please describe times or situations when you found it was hard getting to know
  students from military families.

  I am also interested in hearing what you may have told others about your
  experiences of being a student in a public high school that includes students from
  both military and nonmilitary families.

• With whom have you spoken about these experiences?

• Have you ever written anything about it? A poem? Essay?

• Have you expressed these thoughts, impressions, or feelings in another form, such
  as a piece of art work?

• So how do you think and feel about that experience?

• What have you heard other people your age say about this experience?

• Please tell me about any opportunities, experiences or benefits that are possible in
  your school mostly because you have a mix of students from military and
  nonmilitary families.

• When you are a student in a school that has students from both military and
  nonmilitary families, are there any ways that become difficult for students?
Interview questions for current and recent high school students from military families

- Please describe your experience of changing schools so frequently.

- Please describe your experience of being a student in a public high school that includes students from both nonmilitary and military families.

- Please recall your experiences of getting to know a student from a nonmilitary family and becoming a friend with her or him.

- Please describe times or situations when you found it was hard getting to know students from nonmilitary families.

I am also interested in hearing what you may have told others about your experiences of being a student in a public high school that includes students from both military and nonmilitary families.

- With whom have you spoken about these experiences?

- Have you ever written anything about it? A poem? Essay?

- Have you expressed these thoughts, impressions or feelings in another form, such as a piece of art work?

- So how do you think and feel about that experience?

- What have you heard other people your age say about this experience?

- Please tell me about any opportunities, experiences or benefits that are possible in your school mostly because you have a mix of students from military and nonmilitary families.
When you are a student in a school that has students from both military and nonmilitary families, are there any ways that becomes difficult for students?
Appendix K: Agreement for Participation in Focus Group

Hello,

As mentioned in the consent forms and assent form, the focus group is a part of this research study. Focus group interview usually consists of a small number of people (usually between 6 and 12) and a facilitator of the group (in this study, the organizer will be the researcher). The aim of this group discussion is to address and focus on a specific topic.

You are invited to participate in a focus group interview about the social interaction between high school students from military and nonmilitary families. You are invited to take part in this face-to-face group discussion since you attend or have attended a public high school that serves both military and nonmilitary populations. This meeting will be scheduled at the participants’ convenience and will last 60 minutes. This meeting will be audio recorded, transcribed, and will be made available for verification of completion and accuracy.

In addition, there are ground rules related to participation in this focus group interview:

- You are free to choose not to participate in the focus group and discontinue your participation in the research at any time without facing negative consequences. You will still receive a payment of $25 in the form of a gift card even if you quit the focus group.

- Identifying details will be kept confidential by the researcher. Data collected will be coded with a pseudonym; the participant’s identity will never be revealed by the researcher, and only the researcher will have access to data collected.

- Any and all of your questions will be answered at any time and you are free to consult with anyone (i.e., friend, family) about your decision to participate in the research or discontinue your participation.
• Participation in this research poses minimal to no risk.

• All participant responses in this focus group are valid—there are no right or wrong answers. Please respect the statements or views of others.

• Speak as openly as you feel comfortable. Please remember that you do not have to discuss topics that you do not want to share with the group’s members.

• Help protect others’ privacy by not discussing details (including participant’s names, locations, views, or any other information) outside the group.

• Please keep in mind that the researcher will not share any of your statements or personal experiences you mentioned in your individual interview with her.

• You will be asked at the end of the focus group interview if there is anything you said which you do not want included as a quote, and the researcher will ensure that they are not used.

• If any problem in connection to the research arises, you can contact the researcher:
  Michal Setti Parnes at 617-218-7407 and by e-mail at msettipa@lesley.edu or the Lesley University sponsoring faculty Dr. Paul Naso at 617-349-8284, pnaso@lesley.edu

• There is a Standing Committee for Human Subjects in Research at Lesley University to which complaints or problems concerning any research project may, and should, be reported if they arise. Contact the Committee Chairperson at irb@lesley.edu

• Participants’ Rights
I understand that my responses will be kept in the strictest of confidence and will be available only to the researcher. No one will be able to identify me when the results are reported, and my name will not appear anywhere in the written report.

I understand that I am participating in a study of my own free will and agree with all the statements mentioned above.

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records.

Participant Name: ________________________________

Signature: ______________________________________

Date: __________________________________________
Appendix L: Focus Group Interview Protocol

Time of interview:

Date:

Place:

It is anticipated that the questions in the focus group interview will be general and not an inquiry into the personal experiences of the study’s participants.

- You were/are all at a high school that had/has students from both military families and nonmilitary families. What are some of the positive outcomes that were/are possible because you had/have that mix?

- Were/are there aspects of high school that were/are more difficult because you had/have that mix?

- Were/are there ways that having that mix in your school benefitted/benefit students socially? Academically?

- May you please mention examples of activities and efforts made by nonmilitary community leaders and school leaders that appeared to make increased this social interaction possible?

- May you please mention examples of activities and efforts made by military base community leaders that appeared to make this social interaction possible?

- What advice do you have for public high school leaders (school principal, school counselor, assistant principal, and teachers) to optimally support the social interaction between high school students from military and nonmilitary families?
• What suggestions do you have for community leaders (religious leaders, art, music, sports and dance instructors, boys or girls’ scouts leaders, for example) to benefit the social interaction between high school students from military and nonmilitary families?

• What ideas do you have for parents from military and nonmilitary families to benefit the social interaction between high school students from military and nonmilitary families?

• What advice do you have for future high school students from military and nonmilitary families to benefit the social interaction between high school students from military and nonmilitary families?
### Appendix M: Connection between Guiding Questions and Survey/Interview Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guiding Questions</th>
<th>Corresponding Survey /Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do current and recent high school students from both military and nonmilitary families describe their shared social interactions when they attend or attended public high school that serves both military and nonmilitary students?</td>
<td><strong>Survey questions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In what places, beside school, did you interact with adolescents from military families?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You have attended a public school that serves both students from military and nonmilitary families. Please comment on how these two groups interacted with each other.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Based on your child’s experiences in school, how would you describe the social interaction between military and nonmilitary high school students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Interview questions for current and recent high school students from nonmilitary families</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Please describe your experience of being a student in a public high school that includes students from both nonmilitary and military families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Please recall your experiences of getting to know a student from a military family and becoming a friend with her or him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Please describe times or situations when you found it was hard getting to know students from military families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am also interested in hearing what you may have told others about your experiences of being a student in a public high school that includes students from both military and nonmilitary families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>With whom have you spoken about these experiences?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Have you ever written anything about it? A poem? Essay?</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Have you expressed these thoughts, impressions or feelings in another form, such as a piece of art work?

How do you think and feel about that experience?

What have you heard other people your age say about this experience?

Please tell me about any opportunities, experiences or benefits that are possible in your school mostly because you have a mix of students from military and nonmilitary families.

When you are a student in a school that has students from both military and nonmilitary families, are there any ways that becomes difficult for students?

Interview questions for current and recent high school students from military families

Please describe your experience of changing schools so frequently.

Please describe your experience of being a student in a public high school that includes students from both nonmilitary and military families.

Please recall your experiences of getting to know a student from nonmilitary family and becoming a friend with her or him.

Please describe times or situations when you found it was hard getting to know students from nonmilitary families.

I am also interested in hearing what you may have told others about your experiences of being a student in a public high school that includes students from both military and nonmilitary families.

With whom have you spoken about these experiences?
Have you ever written anything about it? A poem? Essay?

Have you expressed these thoughts, impressions or feelings in another form, such as a piece of art work?

How do you think and feel about that experience?

What have you heard other people your age say about this experience?

Please tell me about any opportunities, experiences or benefits that are possible in your school mostly because you have a mix of students from military and nonmilitary families.

When you are a student in a school that has students from both military and nonmilitary families, are there any ways that becomes difficult for students

Focus group interview questions
You were/are all at a high school that had/has students from both military families and nonmilitary families. What are some of the positive outcomes that were/are possible because you had/have that mix?

Were/are there aspects of high school that were/are more difficult because you had/have that mix?

Were/are there ways that having that mix in your school benefitted/ benefit students socially? Academically?
What activities and steps, on behalf of their school, community, and families do current and recent high school students from both military and nonmilitary families report as effective in introducing and fostering social interaction between the two populations?

May you please mention examples of activities and efforts made by nonmilitary community leaders and school leaders that appeared to make increased this social interaction possible?

May you please mention examples of activities and efforts made by military base community leaders that appeared to make this social interaction possible?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What recommendations do current and recent high school students from military and nonmilitary families believe will enhance the social interaction?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What advice do you have for public high school leaders (school principal, school counselor, assistant principal, and teachers) to optimally support the social interaction between high school students from military and nonmilitary families?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What suggestion(s) do you have for nonmilitary community leaders (religious leaders, art, music, sports and dance instructors, boys or girls’ scouts leaders, for example) to benefit the social interaction between high school students from military and nonmilitary families?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What suggestion(s) do you have for base community leaders to benefit the social interaction between high school students from military and nonmilitary families?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What ideas do you have for parents from military and nonmilitary families to benefit the social interaction between high school students from military and nonmilitary families?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What advice do you have for future high school students from military and nonmilitary families to benefit the social interaction between high school students from military and nonmilitary families?</td>
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</tbody>
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