2020

Perception of Parents and Teachers about Social Media Communication Effecting Children's Attitudes Toward Schooling in Deployed Military Families

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Walden University
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Abstract

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by

Luther M. Robinson Jr.

MA, Virginia State University, 2008

BS, Wayland Baptist University, 2001

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Military families represent an under-researched and unique population in U.S. society. Little is known about the effects that extended separations have on military families and/or about the daily challenges such families face. This basic qualitative inquiry examined military spouses' perception of how social media and digital face-to-face communication with deployed parents influenced their children's behaviors and attitudes toward school. It also examined the perceptions of teachers who teach or taught military children whose parents were deployed. The study's conceptual framework consisted of Bandura's social cognitive theory of self-efficacy and Ainsworth and Bowlby's attachment theory. The research questions for this study were used to ask how spouses of deployed active-duty service members perceived the effect that social media and digital face-to-face communication had on their children's behaviors and attitudes in school, and how teachers perceived deployments influenced military children's behaviors and attitudes toward school. Data were collected through semistructured, in-depth individual interviews from 11 military spouses and five teachers. Each interview was transcribed from recording to text using an automated transcription service. Once each interview was transcribed, Microsoft Word was used for manual coding. Data were analyzed and coded to identify rich themes and patterns. The key results revealed that military spouses supported social media. Social media helped military families stay connected in real-time, and such connections contributed to military children's positive attitudes at school and at home. The implications for positive social change are a better understanding of the challenges and needs of children whose parents have been deployed to better meet those needs.

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Dedication

I am grateful to God for making this possible. I dedicate my work to my beloved mother (Patricia Viola Robinson), whom I admire and miss dearly. Mother, you were truly a remarkable woman, who left an eternal influence on my life, the lives of my beloved siblings, and our entire family. You were the best mother a son or daughter could wish for, and I love you. You were our precious gift who did a remarkable job raising your children alone!

I would like to also dedicate my work to my dear wife. Elita, my sweetie, you have been a constant supporter who believed in me and encouraged me to continue moving forward. I am grateful to have you as my wife, my best friend, and my number one supporter. I love you. Thank you, my Sweet Mama!

Finally, to our children, Edward, Nicole, Isabel, Dieonjonai, and Tahjae, I am very proud of each of you on your quest to secure your future and become positive assets to society. No one said it would be easy, and you would not have failures. However, I read somewhere that a person's success could be determined by how well they handle their failures (author unknown). Continue to make the main thing the main thing, and never quit and never give up. Always know that you are precious gifts from God.

Acknowledgments

I want to thank Dr. Carol Watson for believing in me. Your dedication, guidance, and constant support as my Committee Chair were essential to me completing this academic marathon. Dr. Watson, you were an inspiration, patient, and dedicated, and you showed genuine concern for my success from Day 1 as my Committee Chair. Thank you, Dr. Watson! Dr. Rasmussen, you also believed in me, and it was evident that you cared when you first agreed to serve on my committee. Thank you, Dr. Rasmussen. To the other members of the Walden University staff who contributed to my success, I say thank you!

Also, I would like to thank my dear friend, mentor, and advisor Mr. Ronald Sutton. Ron, you were there with me and for me from the very beginning. Always a solid rock whom I could lean on during all the ups and downs of this journey. Thank you for caring, being a good friend, and that solid rock.

Finally, I would like to thank my siblings for their unconditional love and support and my spiritual leaders, Pastor Sherman Spratley and Dr. Sharon Spratley, for their prayers, guidance, love, leadership, wise counsel, and support. I must also include my entire church family for their prayers, support, and kind words of encouragement. God bless each of you.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

"With the joining of one person, the entire family serves" is a common saying throughout the military, and the choice to serve in the military is a commitment for the family to serve (Alfano, Lau, Balderas, Bunnell, & Biedel, 2016; Wolf, Eliseo-Arras, Brenner, & Nochajski, 2017). Military occupations, divorce, and incarceration are a few dynamics that lead to parental absence and family separation (Moeller, Culler, Hamilton, Aronson, & Perkins, 2015). Military deployments are stressful periods for service members and their families, and communication is an essential factor for families trying to maintain a relationship (Baiochhi, 2013; Carter & Renshaw, 2016; Durham, 2015; Riggs & Riggs, 2011). McGuire and Steele (2016) noted that communication between parents and children could be impacted tremendously by separations. With the increase in technology, military families have several communication options that improve their ability to keep in touch (Carter & Renshaw, 2016; Landers-Potts, Walker O'Neal, & Mancini, 2017).

In this study, I explored the use of technologies to help military families stay in communication and how such communication influenced military children's behaviors and attitudes toward school. I examined social media and digital face-to-face communication between deployed parents and their children and its influence on the children's behaviors and attitudes toward school as perceived by spouses of deployed service members. I also examined the experiences of teachers who teach or taught military children with deployed parents.

The military family is part of a unique culture and an under-researched population (Cozza, 2014; Wolf et al., 2017). Cozza (2014) stated, “Military children are our nation’s children and military families are our nation’s families“ (p. 1). Ensuring military children and families are supported and their issues and concerns are addressed impacts the United States as a nation. It also has significance for military capabilities, service members, and their families (Masten, 2013; Wolf et al., 2017).

There are both hazards and benefits unique to life as a military member; however, there are commonalities shared between military families and their civilian counterparts (Masten, 2013; Wolf et al., 2017). Valuable lessons can be learned from the achievements and struggles experienced by military families and the system in place to help support them (Kudler & Porter, 2013; Landers-Potts et al., 2017; MacDermid Wadsworth et al., 2013; Masten, 2013; Wolf et al., 2017).

The popularity of social networking sites (SNSs) has grown tremendously, particularly among America’s youth ages 13–17 years of age (Landers-Potts et al., 2017; McGuire & Steele, 2016). Cookingham and Ryan (2015) referred to SNSs as a relatively new phenomenon among teens. Lenhart (2015) of the Pew Research Center conducted a survey in which 92% of teens reported going online each day to visit SNSs such as Facebook, Instagram, and Snap Chat, with 91% accessing the internet from their smartphones. McGuire and Steele (2016) and Landers-Potts et al. (2017) pointed out that SNS use results in both positive and negative physical and mental health outcomes for youth, and researchers need to work diligently to identify other ways in which SNSs are impacting today’s youth.

When a military parent is absent for an extended period, family interactions and how families cope with such absences play an essential role in influencing how children perform academically, emotionally, and behaviorally (Crow & Seybold, 2013; Mustillo, MacDermid Wadsworth, & Lester, 2015). According to McGuire and Steele (2016) and Wolf et al. (2017), the average length of deployment is 7.7–8.3 months for members of all branches of the military. Although research and intervention have increased regarding the impact that separations or deployments have on military families, there remains a gap related to the effects of extended periods of separation on military children (McGuire & Steele, 2016). Nicosia et al. (2017) conducted a qualitative study to examine the connection between military parents' deployments and (a) teens social-behavioral unpredictability and academics and (b) the psychological well-being of parents.

Using online parent surveys, Nicosia et al. (2017) collected data on teen's social-behavioral unpredictability, academics, deployments, and parental psychological well-being from 1021 military families of enlisted service members with school-aged children between 12 or 13. The findings revealed that long-term deployments (i.e., absences of 180 days or more in a 3-year period) were connected with teens' social-behavioral unpredictability and academic performance as well as the decline of parent's well-being (Nicosia et al., 2017). However, Nicosia et al. (2017) noted that the findings also revealed inconsistencies in who was most affected between teen boys or girls. Such inconsistencies presented a gap that requires additional studies to be conducted (Nicosia et al., 2017).

Rea, Behnke, Huff, and Allen (2015) also noted a gap regarding understanding the negative or positive impact social media has on the communications between military couples during deployments. Landers-Potts et al. (2017) and McGuire and Steele (2016) highlighted the gap in empirical research conducted on military children's use of SNSs. The results of the present study add knowledge to the field of learning, instruction, and innovation by offering an insight into the connection between technology's use as a tool to communicate and keep military families connected through SNSs, and to understand how such communication influenced children's behaviors and attitudes toward school. Adding knowledge to the field is not solely for the benefit of military families; it also benefits civilian families, educators, and decision-makers at all levels (i.e., school administrators, school boards, politicians, and military leaders).

The present study may be the first to examine how social media and digital face-to-face communication between deployed parents and their children influenced children's behaviors and attitudes toward school as perceived by military spouses of deployed service members. The present study may also be the first to examine the perceptions of teachers who teach or taught military children with deployed parents. In the study's problem statement and purpose sections, I introduce social media and digital face-to-face communication use by military families and the challenges these families face using such technology to stay communicating and connected during separations. In the sections regarding the study's purpose and nature, I outline how data were collected and the process for interviewing participants. I used Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory of self-efficacy and Ainsworth and Bowlby's (1991) attachment theory as the conceptual

framework for this study. I used this framework to guide my construction of the definition of terms, assumptions, scope, limitations, and delimitations.

Background

Parental absence is a way of life for military children and has become more common in the past 15+ years due to a shrinking military force and repeated deployments (Durham, 2015; O'Grady, Burton, Chawla, Topp, & MacDermid Wadsworth, 2016). Parental deployments can significantly impact the communication between parents and children and negatively affect military children, including how they internalize and externalize behavioral problems and school issues (McGuire & Steele, 2016). Most military parents have constantly and consistently worked hard to ensure the attachment is strong between their children and themselves (Landers-Potts et al., 2017; Yeary, Zoll, & Reschke, 2012). With Internet availability, deployed parents can stay in communication with their children through SNSs (Landers-Potts et al., 2017; McGuire & Steele, 2016). Staying connected and in contact with deployed parents is a common suggestion for military children dealing with parental deployment. Landers-Potts et al. (2017) and McGuire and Steele (2016) noted SNSs could help military children cope with the stress associated with parental deployments and improve the relationship between a deployed parent and child.

In recent years, society has seen youth at the forefront of SNSs' popularity, surge, and expansion (Landers-Potts et al., 2017; McGuire & Steele, 2016). Nearly everyone has access to the internet (Wolf et al., 2017). Jovic, Corac, Ignjatovic Ristic, and Knezevic (2015) found that people under 18 were the most frequent users, with more than 60%

spending 1–3 hours each day on the internet. SNSs have played a significant role in helping military families stay in communication, which also helps to improve families' relationships and ease the negativity associated with deployments (Landers-Potts et al., 2017; Matthews-Juarez, Juarez, & Faulkner, 2013; Rea et al., 2015; Wolf et al., 2017).

Durham (2015) pointed out that 21st-century technologies have presented some new issues and have added to the stresses for service members, their families, and military leaders. McGuire and Steele (2016) pointed out some of these stresses and noted that SNSs allow military children to follow the news on events occurring in the conflict region in which their parent is deployed. SNSs include different forms of media (i.e., videos and news articles) that military children can access, and, as children follow this news, their stress levels may increase as they begin to worry about the safety and possible death of their deployed parent (McGuire & Steele, 2016). Although SNSs allow for frequent communication between the deployed parent and their family, evidence suggests such frequent contact may interfere with the deployed parent's ability to do their job, as issues at home may become distracting (McGuire & Steele, 2016).

Additionally, social media may pose dangers to service members and is a major concern to military leaders (Ferdinando, 2018). Ferdinando (2018) noted several risks associated with allowing military members and their families to use social media to stay connected. These risks included posting an innocent photo from a deployment, talking about a mission, or visiting a website via a smartphone and having those events intercepted by enemy intelligence. Risks like these could place service members in danger of serious injury or death (Ferdinando, 2018). At one point, the military banned

social media use and digital face-to-face communication by its members (Matthews-Juarez et al., 2013; Military Community and Family Policy, 2016). However, military leaders also recognize the importance of parents staying up to date and involved in their children's lives during prolonged separations (Matthews-Juarez et al., 2013; Military Community and Family Policy, 2016).

The Pentagon has seen a change from banning and/or restricting social media use to openly embracing, promoting, and allowing its use by military members (Matthews-Juarez et al., 2013; Military Community and Family Policy, 2016). However, because of the dangers posed by social media, senior leaders created limitations, standards, guidance, and obligations that service members and their families must accept and follow. Examples include not discussing information about job responsibilities, safety, specific combat experiences, and missions, and the need for awareness and professional conduct when using social media (Durham, 2015; Military Community and Family Policy, 2016; U.S. Department of the Army, 2011).

Problem Statement

The research problem that I addressed in this study was that little is known about how deployments affect the children of military parents. Westerman, Daniel, and Bowman (2016) conducted an exploratory study to examine students' attitudes regarding social media and face-to-face communications and the potential experiential and environmental causes of such attitudes. Overall, the results revealed that students had a positive attitude and experience using social media and a greater positive experience with face-to-face communication. Students reported the source of negative information about

social media and face-to-face communication came from teachers/school, family/parents, and mass media. Meanwhile, the informative sources that expressed the benefits and effectiveness of social media came from personal experiences and friends (Westerman et al., 2016). Thus, while students often hear about negative experiences with social media, their social media experiences are more likely to be positive.

SNSs such as Facebook, Skype, Instant Messaging, FaceTime, Twitter, Google+, WhatsApp, and Myspace may be able to help close the distance gap and allow absent military parents to play a more active role in their children's learning and development. Although there is a gap in data involving military children and their families, new research on this population is rapidly advancing as policymakers and researchers continue to learn more about how parental absences affect children in multiple areas, including learning and development (Chandra & London, 2013). In a previously written clinical research paper, Bittner (2014) looked at military families' social media use to communicate during deployment. Bittner examined communications between service members' use of electronic forms of media to stay connected to their spouses, adult children, and significant others during post-9/11 deployments. The findings revealed that deployed service members and their families had a high level of satisfaction with the frequency of social media use and accessibility (Bittner, 2014).

In another study, Carter and Renshaw (2016) focused on military spouses' use of social media and digital face-to-face communication tools to stay connected in real-time with their deployed spouse. Carter and Renshaw (2016) noted that the research examining the communication between deployed service members and their children is

limited to a few studies. Many questions remain regarding social media with no definite results or findings on the unintended or intended consequences of its use, especially with military families who often experience long separations (Matthews-Juarez et al., 2013; McGuire & Steele, 2016).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative study design was twofold. First, the research was designed to examine how military spouses perceived social media and digital face-to-face communication between deployed parents and their children influenced the children's behaviors and attitudes toward school. Second, the research was designed to explore the perceptions of teachers who teach or taught military children with deployed parents. I interviewed two types of people: (a) military spouses of deployed service members and (b) teachers who teach or taught military children with deployed parents. Central to this study was the perceptions of military spouses regarding the value of social media and digital face-to-face communication and the teachers' perceptions of social media and digital face-to-face communication.

Research Questions

I developed the research questions for this study based on the current literature related to military families' unique situations. My goal was to answer the following questions: How did spouses of deployed active-duty service members perceive the value of social media and digital face-to-face communication between deployed parents and children? What were the experiences of teachers who teach or taught military children

whose parents are currently deployed or experienced a deployment? I developed three research questions to answer the overarching questions.

Research Question 1: How do spouses of deployed active-duty service members perceive social media and digital face-to-face communication between deployed parents and children influence their children's behaviors in school?

Research Question 2: How do spouses of deployed active-duty service members perceive social media and digital face-to-face communication between deployed parents and children influence their children's attitudes toward school?

Research Question 3: How do teachers perceive deployments influence military children's behaviors in school and attitudes toward school?

To address these research questions, I asked military spouses 15 probing questions and teachers who have experience teaching military children 13 probing questions. These questions were essential to answering the research questions and focused on family communication, deployed parent and child communication, teachers' perceptions, and deployed parent involvement in their children's school (see Tables 1 and 2).

Conceptual Framework for the Study

The study's conceptual framework was grounded in Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory of self-efficacy and Ainsworth and Bowlby's (1991) attachment theory. Social cognitive theory focuses on constructing knowledge and meaning from experiences, while attachment theory focuses on parental involvement (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Bandura, 1997). Attachment theory suggests parents should develop an

early, secure, and nurturing relationship with their children that matures over time and can result in a child's ability to achieve academic success, effectively manage stress, and develop positive social relationships with their peers (Lester & Flake, 2013). An added benefit of Bowlby's attachment theory is addressing proximity maintenance, which consists of daily interaction between partners (i.e., sharing, everyday talk, daily companionship) and is apparent in long-distance relationships (Rea et al., 2015). The conceptual framework for this study was composed of common factors affecting parents' involvement in their children's academics, the use of social media and digital face-to-face communications as a means to stay connected, and the influence such technology had on students' learning and behaviors.

Nature of the Study

This study was qualitative, and as Patton (2002) noted, followed the traditions of a basic qualitative inquiry. In basic qualitative inquiry, the identifying characteristics of qualitative research remain present. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), identifying characteristics of qualitative research include inductive logic, data collection through interviews, a detailed description, meaning and understanding, observations and document analysis, and the identification of patterns and themes. The central concept that I investigated was how the study's results might help fill a gap in the literature concerning military families' use of social media and digital face-to-face communications to keep families connected and deployed parents updated and actively involved in their child's academic and social life.

I collected data for this study from semistructured interviews and follow-up interviews with two different categories of participants. Category 1 included spouses of active-duty service members with school-aged children who were deployed or had been deployed. Category 2 included teachers with experience teaching military children whose parents are currently deployed or were previously deployed. The data that I collected and insights that I gained from this qualitative study may help to expand the scope of knowledge as it relates to SNSs as a means to communicate and keep deployed military parents updated and involved in their children's schooling and to support positive learning experiences while a parent is deployed.

Data originated from semistructured, face-to-face, telephone, or email interviews with spouses of deployed or previously deployed active-duty service members with school-age children and teachers who teach or taught military children with deployed parents. Maxwell (2005) cautioned that qualitative researchers must remember that people are not the sole focus of sampling because events, processes, and settings are also being sampled. Selected participants should possess different characteristics. Factors such as the ages of their children, the location of the school their children attend, the location of the deployed parent, the time or period of the deployment, the method the family used to stay in communication with the deployed parent, the location of teacher's schools, the grade taught by teachers, and the time or period teachers taught should differ within the sample.

Definitions

Deployed: Active-duty service members who are separated from their families, often in a combat zone. Deployments are not limited to overseas locations that involve combat with a foreign nation. Military members experience two types of deployments (a) Combat/combat support deployments, where service members deploy to combat zones. (b) Normative/routine deployments, where service members participate in extended training exercises, temporary duty assignments, humanitarian aid missions, and disaster relief. The average length of deployments for U.S. Military service members is between 7 to 9 months (McGuire & Steele, 2016; Nicosia et al., 2017)

Military children: Children of active-duty service members (McGuire & Steele, 2016; Nicosia et al., 2017)

Military spouse: Someone married to an active-duty service member (McGuire & Steele, 2016; Nicosia et al., 2017)

Permanent change of station: When military families relocate from one military installation to another (McGuire & Steele, 2016; Nicosia et al., 2017).

Social networking site (SNS): Web-based platforms used to build social networks or social relations with others (McGuire & Steele, 2016; Military Community and Family Policy, 2016). Examples include Facebook, Skype, Instant Messaging, FaceTime, Twitter, Google+, WhatsApp, and Myspace.

Temporary duty: consist of short-term training duties for military members and requires families to be separated (Mancini, Bowen, Walker O'Neal, & Arnold, 2015).

United Service Organizations: A nonprofit organization that supports America's military service members and their families in many different ways. Some examples of how the United Service Organizations support service members and their families included (a) connecting deployed or separated service members with their family back home, (b) providing a clean and safe environment for military families as they wait inside major airports worldwide for connecting flights or transportation, and (c) offering many different programs for service members and their families, including live entertainment (United Service Organizations, n.d.).

Assumptions

For this study, I assumed that all those who participated were volunteers and that the responses to interview questions were in participants' own words and represented the truth as they perceived it. Access to participants came from U.S. Army military communities and local school districts. I assumed there was no coercion to participate, participants volunteered for the study based on their own free will, and selected participants met the interviewee criteria.

Scope and Delimitations

My goal for this qualitative study was to document the perceptions of spouses of deployed active-duty service members on the influence social media and digital face-to-face communication between deployed parents and their children have on their children's behaviors and attitudes toward school. A secondary goal was to examine and report the perception of teachers who have taught and/or teach military children whose parents are currently deployed or have been deployed. Participants were required to sign a consent

form. Families must have experienced a minimum of one separation period of 12 months or longer and have used some forms of SNSs or other media to stay in contact during separation. Teachers must have had experience with teaching military children. Participants were assured their identity would be protected, there would be no repercussions for declining to answer a question or dropping out of the study, and data collected would be secured and destroyed within 5 years of the study being completed.

The study's findings helped guide policy on military families' use of social media and digital face-to-face communications while physically separated. The study expanded the understanding of technology used to keep deployed service members connected and up to date with their families and connected with their children's teachers through open and real-time dialog. Such connections can help build relationships in the classroom and positive learning experiences for children while their deployed parents are physically located hundreds or thousands of miles away.

Limitations

The study's primary limitation was selecting participants from one small pool associated with one military installation, one military branch of service, and teachers from one small school district. However, the selected participants accurately illustrated the larger population of military families and teachers who teach military children. Another limitation was the inability to ensure that participants provided true and accurate responses that were not exaggerated or underexpressed. Because service members were not interviewed, validating their spouses and their children's teachers' responses were not

possible regarding how communication between them and their children has influenced the children's behaviors and attitudes toward school.

Significance

When military families are separated, communication is essential in helping service members and their families feel connected and capable of dealing with the separation (Durham, 2015). Allowing service members to use social media and digital face-to-face communications to stay connected and up to date with their families' everyday lives can boost morale and ease the burden of separations and/or deployments. The present study is unique and significant for three reasons. First, few qualitative studies are focused on military spouses' perspectives on how social media and digital face-to-face communication between deployed parents and their children influence children's behaviors and attitudes toward school. Second, this study enhanced understanding while providing knowledge on the importance of using technology to keep families connected while one parent is deployed. Third, this study highlighted the opportunities social media and digital face-to-face communication present to deployed parents, helping them stay connected with their children's teachers and build relationships in their children's classrooms through open and real-time dialog while located hundreds or thousands of miles away.

SNSs have truly revolutionized how deployed parents and their children communicate, and these sites allow deployed parents to stay actively involved in their children's schooling through continuous communication with their children's teachers. Cozza (2014) explained that although research exists on the strengths and weaknesses of

military children and families and support for communication programs is growing, existing studies on communication and technology use are limited. Such limitations provide an incomplete picture of military children's experiences. Cozza advised that researchers examine strengths and weaknesses in the systems that support military children compared to systems supporting civilian children. Research gaps remain in the body of knowledge that allow researchers to vigorously pursue wide-ranging opportunities (Chandra & London, 2013). Extending research on military children benefits military youth and adds to the knowledge of communication practices among America's youth (Cozza, 2014).

Summary

This chapter presented SNSs as a viable platform for military families to stay connected and constantly communicate during separations. Carter and Renshaw (2016) noted that because separations are stressful periods for military families, it is essential that families communicate to maintain relationships, and advancements in communication technologies offer military families more options to communicate. Social media and digital face-to-face communications constitute a viable platform to keep military families connected and deployed parents actively involved in their children's academics.

This qualitative study had two purposes. First, the research was designed to examine how military spouses perceived social media and digital face-to-face communication between deployed parents and their children influenced the children's

behaviors and attitudes toward school. Second, the research was designed to explore the perceptions of teachers who teach or taught military children with deployed parents.

The construction of knowledge and derision of meaning from reported experiences and parental involvement was guided by a conceptual framework based on Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory of self-efficacy and Ainsworth and Bowlby's (1991) attachment theory. Olmstead (2013) noted that the importance of the relationship between parental involvement in children's schooling and academic achievement has been studied extensively. The benefits of extending research on the use of SNSs to keep deployed parents informed and up to date with their children's learning and education may not solely benefit military families. Such research has the potential of contributing to civilian families as well. Chapter 2 includes a synopsis of the current and available literature related to the relevance of the study's problem statement presented in Chapter 1.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this basic qualitative study design was twofold. First, the research was designed to examine how military spouses perceived social media and digital face-to-face communication between deployed parents and their children influenced the children's behaviors and attitudes toward school. Second, the research was designed to explore the perceptions of teachers who teach or taught military children with deployed parents.

Separations are stressful periods for service members and their families, and communication is essential for military families to maintain relationships during these periods of separations (Carter & Renshaw, 2016). The U.S. military's engagement in conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraqi, Syria, and other Middle East countries has resulted in military families enduring multiple moves, deployments, and changes to the family structure (Alfano et al., 2016). This segment of the American population understands the sacrifices that accompany being a military family, including extended separations and separation-related stressors. The stress of military life does not always result in adverse outcomes for all military families; however, further research and special attention are required because the military family remains an at-risk population (McGuire & Steele, 2016). Military youth are especially vulnerable because they experience unique stressors that place them at risk of multiple behavioral and psychological problems.

Being able to communicate and stay connected during periods of separations has always been important for military families, and for years, military parents have worked

hard to ensure they maintain strong connections with their children (Yeary et al., 2012). Understanding how families cope and interact during extended separations is essential in influencing how a child performs academically, emotionally, and behaviorally (Crow & Seybold, 2013). Military leaders have begun to understand the importance of military families staying connected, and the military now promotes and allows social media use by its members (Matthews-Juarez et al., 2013).

Carter and Renshaw (2016) noted that service members' access to and frequency of communication media use has evolved over the years. Today service members have more access to communication media than any time in history, and such unprecedented access has led to higher access expectations (Carter & Renshaw, 2016). Questions remain regarding social media and digital face-to-face communication, as scholars have found no definitive results or findings on the unintended or intended consequences of its use (Matthews-Juarez et al., 2013). With research on the military's use of social media rapidly advancing, policymakers and researchers continue to learn more about how parental absences affect military children in multiple areas, including learning and behavior (Chandra & London, 2013).

Chapter 2 is organized into two sections: the conceptual framework and a review of current research. The review of current research is arranged into two themes. The first theme includes several topics, beginning with an overview of the military family and how the limited extant research is being used to study service members, families, and (in some cases) public opinions and attitudes about military life. This first theme includes a discussion of the inimitability of the military family and how military families continue

to be unwavering in their efforts to keep their families connected despite many daily challenges considered common throughout military communities worldwide.

I examined the use of 21st-century technology to bridge the distance gap for military families and keep them connected and discuss the outcome with respect to keeping families connected through such technology. The unique threats social media and digital face-to-face communications pose to the military, its members, families, and children also lay within the peripheries of the first theme. In the second theme, I examined the perspectives of military spouses and teachers who taught at schools with military children and could share how communication between deployed parents and their children influenced the children's academics, behavior, and attitudes. The conceptual framework was founded on Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory of self-efficacy and Ainsworth and Bowlby's (1991) attachment theory.

Literature Search Strategy

This chapter is an organized review of both current and seminal literature, with the current literature being the preferred source. The literature consisted of peer-reviewed journals, websites, professional magazines, books, military policies, the U.S. Department of Defense social media policy, and U.S. Army social media handbooks. ProQuest Central, Walden Library, The Military Families Research Institute at Purdue University, The U.S. Army Logistics University Library, the U.S. Department of Defense, and the U.S. Army War College Library constituted examples of the digital databases accessed in this research effort. I used GoogleScholar, SAGE Premier, ERIC, and Thoreau Multi-Database to search for resources within the Walden Library. An online search of

keywords and terms included *soldiers, digital face-to-face communications, social media, Department of the Army, Department of Defense, military family, deployments, separation, technology, military leaders, academic, adolescent children, military children, educational experiences, military family connections, teaching military children, military communities, learning and development, benefits of social media, innovations, consequences, social networking sites, knowledge gap, temporary duty,* and *perception.*

The primary source for initial searches came from the Walden Library, the Department of Defense, the Department of the Army, and the Military Research Institute at Purdue University. I also used reference pages from material related to this research or material and authors that met the study's criteria. As noted by Bowen, Martin, and Mancini (2013); Carter and Renshaw (2016); Cozza (2014); and Lucier-Geer et al. (2016), the military population is a unique culture that remains understudied. After an extensive search of the literature, I agreed with Cozza (2014) and Carter and Renshaw (2016) that research on military children and spouses' use of SNSs to stay connected and communicate with their deployed parent or deployed spouse is limited to a few studies.

A barrier to this research that required my consideration was my ability to locate material on the topics of military families' use of SNSs to stay connected while separated or deployed, military children's use of SNSs, and military spouse's views of SNSs use to stay connected with their deployed service member. Enough current literature was available on the topic of the military family and deployments. Some current articles existed on military members' use of technology and social media. Additional literature

addressed soldiers', military spouses', and military children's use of social media. However, little to no research addressed the perceptions of spouses and teachers concerning the influence social media and digital face-to-face communication had on military children's behavior in school, motivation to learn, and attitude toward school.

Conceptual Framework

The study's conceptual framework consisted of common factors affecting parents' involvement in their children's academics, the use of social media and digital face-to-face communications as a means to stay connected, and the influence such technology has on students' learning and behaviors. The epistemological approach of social constructivism supports the concept that meaningful and active involvement of deployed parents in their children's schooling help children understand and realize the importance of education. The present study's conceptual framework consisted of Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory of self-efficacy and Ainsworth and Bowlby's (1991) attachment theory.

Social cognitive theory focuses on constructing knowledge and meaning from experiences (Pajares, 2002). Human agency serves as a foundation for social cognitive theory, which implies that individuals can affect change by taking actions and serving as agents actively involved in their development (Pajares, 2002). The concept of self-efficacy is the belief that when people realize their purpose in life, they then try to understand the events occurring in their lives and gain control over how those events affect their lives (Bandura, 1997). The attachment theory focuses on parental involvement and suggests that an early secure attachment relationship between parent and child that lasts throughout childhood results in a child's ability to achieve academic

success, effectively manage stress, and develop positive social relationships with their peers (Jeynes, 2011; Lester & Flake, 2013).

Social cognitive theory encompasses how people maintain behavioral patterns (Bandura, 1997). From a theoretical perspective, the primary focus of the social cognitive theory is learning by observation (Bandura, 1997). According to Pajares (2002), during the 1970s, Bandura realized key components were missing from both social learning theory and the widely recognized learning theories of that era. Bandura identified self-beliefs as the important missing component in the theories.

The view of human functioning was advanced when, in 1986, Bandura published *Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory*, rendering a fundamental role to self-regulatory, self-reflective, cognitive, and vicarious processes. People were no longer viewed as reactive organisms driven by hidden inner impulses or steered and influenced to react by environmental forces, but were viewed as proactive, self-regulating, self-reflective, and self-organizing (Pajares, 2002). Bandura (2006a) noted the view of social cognitive theory is that of an agentic perspective, as it relates to human adaptation, change, and self-development.

An agent looks at the functioning and events affecting one's life and influences the quality as such (Bandura, Caprara, Barbaranelli, Regalia, & Scabini, 2011). The role cognition plays is critical regarding people's capability to self-regulate, perform behaviors, encode information, and construct reality (Pajares, 2002). Strategies to increase others' well-being include increasing behavioral competencies; improving motivational, emotional, and cognitive processes; or looking at the social conditions in

which people work and live and altering such conditions (Pajares, 2002). For example, military parents have the challenge of keeping their families connected during separations and deployments. These parents often reflect on their situation while exploring their beliefs and thoughts. They seek to understand and evaluate what they are experiencing (make sense of the situation at hand). As their reality becomes clear, these families alter their behavior and thoughts and develop different strategies to increase their children and their families' well-being. Bandura (1997) advocated a multifaceted approach to promoting cognitive development.

Bandura (1997) defined self-efficacy as a person's belief in their ability to achieve and succeed in specific situations or accomplish certain tasks. Self-efficacy plays a major role in how individuals approach challenges and goals (Bandura, 1997). Providing the foundation for personal accomplishment, human motivation, and well-being, self-efficacy beliefs are at the core of social cognitive theory (Pajares, 2002). People with high self-efficacy seek more challenging tasks, commit to completing those tasks, have self-confidence, are likely to have high aspirations, think soundly, view things extensively, think they are better prepared to cope with difficult or challenging situations, and are self-motivated (Bandura, 1997). Conversely, people with low self-efficacy shy away from challenging tasks, have low self-confidence, lose faith in themselves, and become depressed. Autonomy is not how families live but rather working as a team to achieve family goals. The family does not operate as a collection of independently operating members, but rather the family is a multilevel social system with relationships that are interdependent of each other (Bandura et al., 2011).

Bandura (2000) pointed out that the social cognitive theory extends the understanding of agency in both the personal and collective sense because of people's belief in their collective efficacy. Perceived efficacy is given a prominent role by social cognitive theory in which families manage their quality of life and the different relationships commonly found in families (Bandura, 1997, 2006a). Collective efficacy demands each member to form alliances in support of each other and work as a team combining resources, skills, and knowledge to achieve what cannot be done individually (Bandura et al., 2011).

Cigoli and Scabini (2006) noted that rooted in spousal dyad and parent-child dyad interdependencies system is the family's collective functioning. Strong parental efficacy is essential to children's success and development. In addition to shaping children's developmental path, a strong sense of parental efficacy also yields dividends in the quality of caretaking and emotional well-being (Bandura et al., 2011). If parents believe they can alter their child's developmental course while nurturing their child's potential, they will proceed without reservation (Ardelt & Eccles, 2001). Bandura (1997) pointed out that high efficacy parents serve as representatives for their children, advocating for them during the formative periods of their life, as they interact with social institutions regarding their children's behavior.

The attachment theory encompasses the joint work of Ainsworth and Bowlby (1991). According to Bowlby (1969, 1973), attachment is a bond of continuing affection that is substantially intense. Bowlby devised attachment theory's basic tenets using the concepts drawn from information processing, psychoanalysis, psychology, developmental

psychology, ethology, and cybernetics (Bretherton, 1992). Bowlby's work transformed how people thought about the ties a child had with their mother and how deprivation, bereavement, and separation disrupted such ties (Bretherton, 1992). Ainsworth used an innovative methodology that contributed to the attachment theory and provided a new direction, which encouraged empirical testing of Bowlby's ideas and expanded the theory (Bretherton, 1992). According to attachment theory, children must have a sense of security that allows them to be free to explore early in life, and parents often offer such security (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991).

Schneider, Atkinson, and Tardif (2001) noted that the attachment theory's central premise is focused on security early in a child's life and the bond between a child and parent, as reflected across the life span of the child's interpersonal relationship. The attachment theory addresses the strong physical and emotional attachment a child has with one or both parents and their role in the child's development. Bowlby (1969, 1973) noted the primary function of attachment behavior is to protect the person and facilitate learning. Children develop differently and at different rates, and parents play such an essential role in the development process.

People of all ages appreciate and respond positively when they have access to someone they can trust who responds to them encouragingly. Burke and Weir (1978) conducted a study of young people ages 13 to 20 years old and found that when parents and peers were involved in helping adolescents, there was a high level of satisfaction and psychological well-being expressed by those adolescents. According to Marcia (1980), higher stages of ego-identity can relate to autonomous and warm relationships between

adolescents and parents. Intimate communication between a parent and child reduces delinquent behavior (Hirschi, 1969).

The attachment an infant has with their parents differs from the attachment a child has with their parents as an adolescent (Marcia, 1980). Adolescents with secure attachment strategies can balance autonomy and attachment needs (Marcia, 1980). As a result, these adolescents appear to be comfortable with the attachment security they have with their parents, making it easier to explore and seek autonomy. For example, adolescents who have secure attachment are more likely to engage in intimate communication with their parents as they seek to resolve issues or problems. Conversely, insecure adolescents may find engaging in intimate communication with parents difficult.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and Concepts

Military families' work environments are unique and require adaptation, flexibility, and tolerance (Arnold, Lucier-Greer, Mancini, Ford, & Wickrama, 2017). Because of a military parent's commitment to service, the whole family must participate in national service (Alfano et al., 2016; Bowen et al., 2013; Cozza, 2014). Life in a military family is demanding, and military youth experience unique stressors (Bowen et al., 2013; McGuire & Steele, 2016). These stressors place military children at risk for multiple behavior and psychological problems if they are compelled to deal with such stressors in their own way (Bowen et al., 2013; McGuire & Steele, 2016). For example, according to the U.S. Department of Defense (2015), children in military families, on average, change schools between six and nine times in grades K–12, which is about three times more than children in nonmilitary families.

In an antiquated era, before the all-volunteer force (AVF), there were fewer military families with spouses and children, and these families primarily belonged to senior enlisted leaders and officers (Cozza, 2014). In that period, the military's attitude regarding children and spouses aligned with an old military adage: if the military wanted its members to have families, they would have issued spouses and children to service members (Cozza, 2014). Clever and Segal (2013) observed that since the 1970s, the demographics have changed from a military predominantly comprised of single service members to one where family life is commonplace.

The AVF of today finds itself strong, well-trained, well-led, well-educated, dedicated, intelligent, family-oriented, and proud to be known as professional warriors that serve a beloved nation (Bowen et al., 2013). Today's military sees family members outnumbering service members at a ratio of 1.4 to 1, including both enlisted and officer personal (Clever & Segal, 2013; Moeller et al., 2015; U.S. Department of Defense, 2015). In 2014, the sons and daughters of the active AVF (including reserve and National Guard) numbered approximately 2 million (Nicosia et al., 2017). Fifty-seven percent of active-duty service members are married, and 44% of married service members have children (Cozza, 2014; Moeller et al., 2015).

The Military Family

Military families are routinely faced with multiple challenges that make them unique, and according to Mancini et al. (2015) and McGuire and Steele (2016), military members and their families experience change and transition regularly. This change and transition can come in the form of steps known as a permanent change of station, in

which military families can find themselves moving about every 3 years. Also included in this change and transition are deployments, which can be combat and noncombat-related, and temporary duty (Mancini et al., 2015). McGuire and Steele (2016) noted that because of the cycle of deploying and returning home from deployments, the environment of U.S. soldiers and their families is unique and stressful, especially for those families that have younger children.

Lester and Flake (2013) and Mancini et al. (2015) asserted that the dynamic cycle of multiple and frequent moves is made more complex for military children when the family is separated because a parent is deployed. Forty-seven percent of families with a deployed service member moved at least three times over 5 years (Lester & Flake, 2013). Combat operations and potential threats to the United States and its allies has resulted in frequent and prolonged deployments. The effects of such deployments and prolonged separations on military children's academics and social and emotional wellbeing are yet to be fully discovered. However, there are consequences for such an increase in deployments and length of deployments. Nicosia et al. (2017) explained that the increasing length and frequency of military members deployments are reasons for concern, not just for service members but also for military spouses and children.

Although military children's social well-being has received increasing attention, a gap remains in the data (Chandra & London, 2013; McGuire & Steele, 2016). Much remains unknown about military children and their families, and insufficient sources of robust data exacerbate the lack of knowledge. However, what is known is that a connection exists between longer deployments and negative outcomes for military

parents and adolescents (Nicosia et al., 2017). Understanding military children and their families requires the collection of practical data to study the sources of resilience and these families' experiences, while also distinguishing among subgroups within this unique and diverse community of military children and their families (Chandra & London, 2013; McGuire & Steele, 2016).

Policymakers, senior military leaders, and researchers deliberately seek to remove the barriers that impede the collection of empirical data while closing the gap of knowledge and understanding, to learn more about the academic, emotional, behavioral, and social consequences that military children and families face (Chandra & London, 2013; McGuire & Steele, 2016). Moeller et al. (2015) argued that there remains limited research on the impact deployments have on military children's academics, attitudes, and behavior. Opportunities remain for the vigorous pursuit of future research that can prove useful in expanding our knowledge of the influences of military life and parental occupation regarding military children and their families (Lucier-Geer et al., 2016). To be more specific, data shows the importance of parents staying actively involved in their children's lives (Lucier-Geer et al., 2016). Therefore the collection of robust data is imperative to understand how 21st-century technology keeps military families connected. Researchers should examine how such connectivity influences military children's performance academically, emotionally, and behaviorally (Lucier-Geer et al., 2016).

Chassiakos, Radesky, Christakis, Moreno, and Cross (2016) noted that today's adolescents and children are submerged and encircled by new and traditional digital media forms. Jennings (2017) noted that although research on the individual effects of

digital devices on children is well documented, scholars have not yet determined the implications such devices have on families and parenting. According to multiple scholars (e.g., Chassiakos et al., 2016; Janick-Bowles, Narayan, & Seng, 2018; Jennings, 2017; McGuire & Steele, 2016), the use of social media by the millennial generation's has grown over the past decade. However, empirical data on the effects of such use on this population is still immature. Janick-Bowles et al. (2018) characterized social media as the mass media of the digital age. Furthermore, because of the ubiquity of social media, policymakers and families no longer seek methods for tuning off media but instead are constantly seeking strategies to navigate and cope with today's new digital and social media as it has become a permanent part of our lives (Jennings, 2017).

Although families throughout the United States have adopted information and communications technology (ICT), the scholarly knowledge remains limited in knowing which ICTs parents chose to use and the frequency of use needed to keep families connected and communicating (Rudi, Dworkin, Walker, & Doty, 2015). To be more specific, when it comes to parenting, limited research exists on which technologies parents use to stay connected and in communication with extended family members, their children, their in-laws, and separated parents (Rudi et al., 2015). Rudi et al. (2015) also noted that most current researchers examining parental ICT use have not focused on how parents chose to communicate with family members. Instead, the research focus is primarily on the emotional support and information offered by other parents regarding parenting. For example, parents seek to exchange information, discuss specific areas of interest, and pursue social support from other parents. Taking a different position, Zhang

and Ha (2018) argued that the preference of non-ICT or ICT use does not matter; what is important is the amount of time people spend on various media platforms.

Rudi et al. (2015) conducted a study that contributed to the field of knowledge and understanding of families' use of ICTs as a way to stay connected in today's digital age. The study focused on how parents (N = 1322) from across the United States used ICTs (i.e., SNSs, email, Skype, and text messages) to stay connected and communicate with family (Rudi et al., 2015). The results revealed parents progressively used various ICTs to communicate and stay connected with their children, and the frequency of that communication increased as the child got older. The findings also revealed text message communication increased among coparents and nonresident family members with school-aged children (Rudi et al., 2015). Conversely, parents of adolescent children were unlikely to use text messages and email communication among themselves and nonresident family members (Rudi et al., 2015).

When it comes to military members and their families, technology to communicate and stay connected has not always been available. Now that technology has allowed communication to be regularly available through SNSs, telephones (Skype), and videos (WhatsApp's and Instagram), Wilson et al. (2017) pointed out that frequent communication between deployed service members and their nondeployed spouses and children is the key to relationship success. Unal (2018) added that parents' and children's interaction and communication are considered fundamental elements of a child's social life. Solomon and Vangelisti (2014) and Unal (2018) noted that communication is an essential factor in establishing and maintaining a close relationship.

Family and relationship successes rely on communication quality, especially during separation periods (Houston, Pfefferbaum, Sherman, Melson, & Brand, 2013). Wilson et al. (2017) explained that communication quality refers to the frequency of communication and the type of engagement. This premise simply means that when family members communicate, it must be out of love and concern for each other. Quality of communication, as noted by Wilson et al. (2017), signifies that families must show genuine concern and support for each other when it is needed most, including sharing information and making decisions together even while apart.

Staying Connected

Before the era of social media and digital face-to-face communication, military families' primary method of stayed connected during deployments included calling cards and stamped letters (Military Community and Family Policy, 2016). Families would send letters in the mail and wait weeks or months for return letters to arrive. The calling card and stamped letter delivery systems did allow military families to stay connected. However, these methods resulted in lengthy communication delays, and according to the Military Community and Family Policy (2016), delayed communication did not close the distance gap.

Fortunately for today's military members and their families, contemporary communication methods have superseded the calling card and stamped letter delivery systems. Web 2.0 changed communication forever, and people can connect anywhere and anytime (Tezci & Icen, 2017). The only requirement for such communication is a computer or mobile device that allows Internet connections (Military Community and

Family Policy, 2016). Staying connected during deployments and separations is especially important for military members and their families.

When living under the same roof, parents and children frequently communicate about feelings and daily experiences, but when families are separated by distance for long periods, communication becomes harder, and family relationships can suffer (Friedman, Sigelman, Rohrbeck, & del Rio-Gonzalez, 2017). Social media and digital face-to-face communication have helped families stay connected by narrowing the physical distance gap between military families and deployed service members (Military Community and Family Policy, 2016). There are many SNSs available to help military families stay connected during long separations. Examples include Facebook, MySpace, Instagram, Twitter, Google+, Meetup, WhatsApp, Duo, and HOMEFRONTConnections. These sites offer two-way communication where deployed parents and their families can interact with each other.

In today's society, smartphones are popular. Half the population owns a smartphone, and phones account for over half of all Internet connectivity (Unal, 2018). Smartphones are also popular throughout military communities. Most military installations outside the United States have WiFi, allowing military members to stay connected with their families 24 hours a day (Military Community and Family Policy, 2016). Military members can bring their smartphones with them during deployments ensuring current and up to date connections are just a phone call away. Social networking applications such as HOMEFRONTConnections are designed specifically for military members and their families.

Social media and digital face-to-face communications have changed deployments forever by allowing military members to stay connected in real-time with their family's daily activities, including their children's academic performance and development (McGuire & Steele, 2016; Military Community and Family Policy, 2016). Deployed military members can see and speak with their families; share pictures and videos; review their children's homework, quizzes, and test scores; connect with their children's teachers; and review their children's academic report cards. Service members understand that life for their families continues back in the United States. Social media and digital face-to-face communications have helped military families close the gap during deployments by allowing deployed service members to participate in many day-to-day family activities. Despite acknowledging that military families have become more connected because of smartphones, Internet connectivity, and SNSs, more research is required to understand how military children use SNSs (McGuire & Steele, 2016).

Social Media and Digital Face-to-face Communication

The field of social media, digital devices, and social networking is extensive, and SNS use has increased substantially in recent years, especially among youth (Chassiakos et al., 2016; Jennings, 2017; Lambie & Sherrell, 2018; McGuire & Steele, 2016; Tezci & Icen, 2017). Traditional media, such as radio, periodicals, and television, are no longer the primary sources for communicating. Traditional sources have yielded to new digital technologies that allow teenagers, children, and adults instant and around-the-clock access to a digital world that promotes interactive social engagement (Chassiakos et al., 2016).

Desktop or laptop computers are no longer the sole method or preferred choice for users to access social media via the Internet (Adler, 2014; Chassiakos et al., 2016). Smartphones and tablets are rapidly becoming the preferred choice for accessing the Internet, with smartphones and tablets accounting for more than half of users' time spent on social media (Adler, 2014; Chassiakos et al., 2016). The ability to access social networking platforms and profiles and download user-generated content on mobile phones through applications has bolstered the popularity of smartphones and tablets tremendously (Khalaf, 2014).

Studies show that the increase in social media rates and patterns can be attributed to the recent influx of mobile phone use among teenagers and children (Chassiakos et al., 2016). This increase is not surprising with increasing technology and Internet availability (McGuire & Steele, 2016). Because of the smartphone's popularity and constant growth, mobile app use doubled from 2012 to 2013, and messaging apps usage increased by 203% (Khalaf, 2014). Tezci and Icen (2017) noted that an important product of the Internet and computer technologies is social media, and social media's day-by-day usage has increased.

Brenner and Smith (2013) noted that in 2005, the number of Americans using social media was 8%. By 2012, that number had increased to 60%, and by 2013 the number was up to 72%, making social media the top Internet activity amongst adults in the U.S. (Brenner & Smith, 2013). Lambie and Sherrell (2018) observed that Americans spend an average of 37 minutes spent per day using social media, with Facebook being second to Google in regards to popularity. Facebook is one of the most accessed

websites, with a billion active users consuming a total of 114 billion minutes per month (Lambie & Sherrell, 2018). By comparison, Instagram users consuming 8 billion minutes per month (Lambie & Sherrell, 2018). Students' preferred means for accessing social media is through a smartphone, with 1–3 hours representing the number of daily hours students spend on social media (Tezci & Icen, 2017).

Today's adolescents prefer to have a social media portfolio (Chassiakos et al., 2016). Twitter (33%), Instagram (52%), Google+ (33%), Snapchat (41%), and other social media (11%) all attracted younger users (Chassiakos et al., 2016). Social media portfolio growth among adolescents and adults is expected to steadily increase as more screen-to-screen interactions and advancements in technology and social media platforms continue to evolve (Chassiakos et al., 2016). Although technological advances have produced many positive effects on society as a whole, Memmedova (2017) advised that SNSs could have negative effects when used extensively and without control. Negative effects include depression, attention problems, social problems, behavioral and physical disorders, and addiction (Memmedova, 2017). Chassiakos et al. (2016) observed that 50% of teenagers who own a smartphone feel addicted to their phones, and 24% report being continuously connected to the Internet.

The use of social media by military members and their families pose unique threats to the military and its members (Military Community and Family Policy, 2016; U.S. Department of the Army, 2011). Social media and digital face-to-face communication offer risks and advantages (Rose, Hesse, & Garcia, 2014). The military views safeguarding sensitive information as one of the primary threats posed for allowing

its members and their families to use social media and digital face-to-face communications to stay connected during separations (U.S. Department of the Army, 2011). As a result, each military branch of the U.S. military (i.e., Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and Coast Guard) has developed their own policy that aligns with the Department of Defense's policy, providing guidance, direction, and a blueprint on the proper use of social media for professional and personal use.

According to the U.S. Department of the Army's (2011) *U.S. Army Social Media Handbook*, soldiers and their families are encouraged to use social media to stay connected and tell the Army story while sharing their life as members of the Army family. The U.S. Department of the Army's (2011) *U.S. Army Social Media Handbook* provides a list of Do's and Don'ts soldiers and their families must follow. The following lists summarize those recommendations.

DO

- Review photos and videos very closely before posting to ensure that personal or sensitive information is not released.
- Ensure security settings are maximized on social platforms.
- Discuss Operation Security with each family member so they understand what can and cannot be posted.
- Turn off location-based social networking and geotagging on digital cameras and phones.

DON'T

- Post images of gear and equipment.

- Release information about the injury or death of a Service member.
- Reveal times and locations of your unit deployment.
- Post personnel or unit morale problems
- Post sensitive information about your unit (i.e., security procedures and unit's mission).
- Use media that is copyrighted.

An important factor for military members and their families is the military's ability to balance restrictions on communication (e.g., digital and social media) and determine when communication becomes a distraction that impedes service members' ability to complete their mission (Carter & Renshaw, 2016). Department of Defense policymakers find it difficult to keep up social media's ever-evolving pace, sometimes resulting in outdated policies (Rose et al., 2014). However, the requirement to ensure measures exist to safeguard against the potential privacy and security threats posed by social media platforms remains a priority (Rose et al., 2014).

Summary and Conclusions

In Chapter 2, the literature review was composed of sections that included several topics beginning with the purpose of the study. The purpose of this basic qualitative study design was twofold. First, the research was designed to examine how military spouses perceived social media and digital face-to-face communication between deployed parents and their children influenced the children's behaviors and attitudes toward school. Second, the research was designed to explore the perceptions of teachers who teach or taught military children with deployed parents. There is 21st-century technology being

used to bridge the distance gap for military families. However, justifiable challenges remain regarding the threats that social media and digital face-to-face communications pose to the military. Threats include mission and soldier security, spying from adversaries, and inadvertently revealing classified information (U.S. Department of the Army, 2011). Memmedova (2017) and Chassiakos et al. (2016) noted that uncontrolled and extensively used SNSs result in negative outcomes for all who use such systems, including military families.

Although social media and digital face-to-face communication have helped narrow the physical distance gap (Tezci & Icen, 2017), a gap in literature remains regarding how social media and digital face-to-face communication keep military families connected (Chandra & London, 2013; McGuire & Steele, 2016). Opportunities remain to expand the data infrastructure, and these opportunities allow future research to expand knowledge on the influences of military life and SNS use regarding children and their families (Chandra & London, 2013; Moeller et al., 2015). Military leaders are beginning to understand that in addition to morale improvement throughout the military, it is beneficial to keep deployed, active-duty service members who are parents in communication with their families and involved in their children's schooling (U.S. Department of the Army, 2011). As Chandra and London (2013) and McGuire and Steele (2016) mentioned, so much remains unknown about military children and their families.

Chapter 2 provided an exhaustive review of the current literature that included an in-depth discussion on Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory and of self-efficacy; Ainsworth and Bowlby (1991) attachment theory; the military family as a whole;

influence and popularity of SNSs; and how SNSs are being leveraged to help military families close the physical gap by stay connected during separations and deployments. Chapter 3 provided an in-depth layout of the research method that supported this study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this basic qualitative study design was twofold. First, the research was designed to examine how military spouses perceived social media and digital face-to-face communication between deployed parents and their children influenced the children's behaviors and attitudes toward school. Second, the research was designed to explore the perceptions of teachers who teach or taught military children with deployed parents. The major sections addressed in Chapter 3 included the research design and rationale, role of the researcher, methodology, and issues of trustworthiness.

Regardless of the many programs and efforts in schools and military communities intended to relieve stress experienced by military children, separation periods remain stressful for these children. The stressors related to military family life impact many areas of military children's lives, including their academics. The results of this research study helped fill a gap in the literature concerning the use of social media and digital face-to-face communications to keep families connected and the deployed parent updated and actively involved in their child's academic and social life.

Research Design and Rationale

I developed the study's research questions based on the following factors.

- The current literature related to the unique situations military families face daily.

- My personal acquaintance with the military and having been separated from my family on numerous occasions while serving in multiple junior and senior leadership positions in both combat and noncombat zones.
- My experience being separated from my school-aged children during separations and deployments.
- Understanding the importance of using technology to keep military families connected and deployed parents involved and up to date in their children's daily lives.
- The influence parents and teachers have on military children's education and ability to learn. I developed a total of 28 probing questions that focused on family communication, deployed parent and child communication, and deployed parents' involvement in their children's schools. I developed probing questions to obtain a clear picture of the stories spoken in each participant's own words. Janesick (2011) noted that types of interview questions include basic, descriptive, big-picture, follow-up, clarification, comparison, contrast, or structural questions.

Research Question 1: How do spouses of deployed active-duty service members perceive social media and digital face-to-face communication between deployed parents and children influence their children's behaviors in school?

Research Question 2: How do spouses of deployed active-duty service members perceive social media and digital face-to-face communication between deployed parents and children influence their children's attitudes toward school?

Research Question 3: How do teachers perceive deployments influence military children's behaviors in school and attitudes toward school?

I selected a basic qualitative research design approach because it aligned with the research questions and the purpose of the study. The chosen design allowed me to capture each participant's perceptions and experiences and apply meaning to those perceptions and experiences using the participants' own words. Through the study's central concept, I addressed how the study's results might help fill a gap in the literature concerning military families' use of social media and digital face-to-face communications to keep families connected and deployed parents updated and actively involved in their children's academic and social lives.

I conducted individual interviews that provided meaningful data on an understudied research population and topic. Patton (2002) referred to the approach as the qualitative traditions of inquiry. The identifying characteristics of qualitative research remain present in the basic qualitative inquiry without the special focus found in each of the five traditions. A rich description, meaning and understanding, inductive logic, data collection through interviews, observations and document analysis, and identifying patterns and themes are characteristics of qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

In addition to these basic approaches, each of the five approaches to qualitative inquiry are characterized by a particular focus. Phenomenology aims to distill the essence of lived experience, narrative analyzes text in the form of the stories people tell, grounded theory aims at developing a theory to explain a phenomenon or process, case studies analyze bounded systems, and ethnography focuses on group culture (Merriam & Tisdell,

2015). The basic qualitative inquiry is rooted in philosophy, history, constructionism, and phenomenology. My use of basic qualitative inquiry focused on questions that began with *how* and *what* and use *describe*, *explore*, *experience*, and *meaning* in the research questions.

The primary locations for participant selection included a U.S. Army military community and a local school district attended by military children. I selected two secondary locations for potential participants if the targeted number of participants (10–15 individuals) was not available at the primary location. The secondary locations included a separate U.S. Army community and a school district attended by military children.

Role of the Researcher

According to Sutton and Austin (2015), qualitative researchers should try to access participants' thoughts and feelings. My role as a researcher required me to collect data via semistructured interviews. Each interview was audiotaped and transcribed from voice to text to accurately capture participants' responses using their own words. Patton (2015) noted that an interviewer's skills determine the quality of information obtained from interviews. I selected interviewing because of my interest in the stories of nondeployed parents and teachers of military children. I believed I could understand the meaning of their stories regarding the influence of social media and digital face-to-face communication on military children's behaviors and attitudes toward school. According to Seidman (2006), when a researcher seeks to capture others' experiences and make meaning from others' separation experiences, interviews may serve as the best avenue of

inquiry. Interviewing consistently offers people the opportunity to make meaning through language (Seidman, 2006).

I did not have any personal or professional relationship with the participants. Before commencing any recruitment activities, I obtained permission to conduct the study from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). My IRB approval number was 11-22-19-0303224. I did not need to solicit a letter of cooperation or permission to recruit from military installations or solicit school districts. Instead, I successfully used flyers and social media to solicit military spouses and teachers.

Participants included spouses of deployed service members who were the primary caretakers of their school-aged children. After identifying participants, I made arrangements to meet with each participant and explain the study's purpose and the participation requirements. Those who agreed to participate in the study received a letter of cooperation/participation and a consent form. Once I obtained consent, participants selected their preferred method for being interviewed, and I scheduled interviews. I preferred conducting interviews face-to-face. However, I also considered other methods, such as telephone, Facetime, WhatsApp, Skype, and emails. Participants chose their preferred method of being interviewed. These interviews captured what Seidman (2006) described as understanding others' lived experiences and meaning-making processes.

Each interview (except for those done by telephone) was conducted in the conference room of a local library or a teacher's classroom. My goal was to conduct interviews after 5 p.m. because this time represents the end of the workday for most people, increasing many of the participants' ability to participate. Conducting interviews

after 5 p.m. allowed for an uninterrupted atmosphere that was quiet, private, peaceful, and comfortable. The idea was to establish an atmosphere where participants were at ease and relaxed to participate in the interview process. The relaxed environment allowed participants to engage in easy conversation while answering interview questions. However, every effort was made to adjust to participants' schedules.

I have personal experience with the military. I retired from active-duty after 20+ years and experienced family separation from my spouse and school-aged children on numerous occasions, including a combat deployment to Iraq and a normative deployment to the Republic of Korea. My values, beliefs, social background, and opinions shaped my analytical and methodological decisions. Having experienced family separations influenced by combat supported and normative deployments, I had a clear understanding of the challenges military families face regarding staying connected and engaging as a family. As a result, bias was a credible concern in this research.

My military experiences speak to my positionality. Bourke (2014) suggested that researchers possess multiple overlapping identities based on their personal experiences. According to Bourke (2014), in qualitative research, the researcher is the data collection instrument, and as such, the researcher's experiences may influence how they interact with participants. Because of my military background, there are important variables such as beliefs, support for and sensitivity to military families, and dedication to the military that could have affected how I interacted with participants and observed and interpreted data. These important variables could have influenced the participants and their responses. Bourke (2014) cautioned that experiences framed in social-cultural contexts

are not solely reserved for participants but also extend to researchers. Therefore, as a researcher, my positionality and the positionality of the participants intersected. A researcher's identity shapes their research and encourages the researcher's likeliness of being shaped by both the participants and the research process itself (Bourke, 2014).

D'Silva et al. (2016) noted that reflexive research requires a researcher to critically examine themselves and determine how their experiences, background, and personal values may affect how they observe and analyze. Reflecting throughout the data collection process allowed me to be constantly aware of biases and helped me prevent my personal background, values, and beliefs from shaping how data were observed and interpreted during this qualitative study. I interpreted the collected data during the final analysis and explanation of the findings. I stored all the collected data on a zip drive and secured the drive in a personal safe. The data will remain there for 5 years, after which the stored data will be erased from the zip drive, and the zip drive will be destroyed.

Methodology

According to Sutton and Austin (2015), researchers use semistructured individual interviews in basic qualitative inquiry. The primary sources of data collection were from semistructured, face-to-face, telephone, or email interviews with spouses of deployed or previously deployed active-duty service members with school-age children and teachers who have taught and/or teach military children. I asked open-ended questions to initiate the interview and allow participants to provide their stories and/or share their perceptions and/or experiences in their own words. I had the autonomy to slightly modify questions that were clarified for participants. I also asked probing and follow-up questions for

clarity. As noted by Yin (2009), the researcher must be skilled in asking probing questions, possess excellent listening skills, and be objective.

Participant Selection Logic

I used snowball sampling to recruit military spouses and teachers for the sample. According to Mawhinney and Rinke (2019), snowball sampling is one of the most frequently used strategies for identifying participants from hard-to-reach populations. The snowball sampling process is explained by Mawhinney and Rinke (2019), in which they noted once a convenience sample of people from the hard-to-reach population is acquired, recruitment or requesting participation from others in the same hard-to-reach population continues until the required number of participates are reached. I used purposeful sampling to collect data from semistructured interviews with individual participants. Yin (2011) defined purposeful sampling as a process of deliberately selecting samples. Purposeful sampling is centered on participants meeting specific criteria. Participants for this study must have been spouses of deployed service members or teachers who teach or have taught military children.

In this study, the primary participants came from a U.S. Army military community familiar with the challenges of deployments and/or separations military families face. After identifying the participants, I contacted each participant and asked if they were willing to participate in a study. I explained that participation was strictly voluntary. Participants who agreed to participate received a letter of introduction, and I scheduled an appointment time to meet with them. At the meeting, I provided participants with a consent form that had to be signed prior to the interviews. I told the participants

that the data collection method would involve individual interviews. Each participant met the following interview criteria:

- Married to an active-duty service member
- Has at least one school-aged child between the ages of 7 and 17
- Family has experienced at least one separation period 12 months or longer
- Family has used some form of technology to stay in contact with the deployed family member
- Participants may use or have used some form of social media and/or digital face-to-face communication as the primary method to stay connected with their deployed active-duty service member
- teachers must have taught and/or teach military children with a parent currently deployed or have been deployed.

I collected data through semistructured, in-depth individual interviews with each of the participants. I conducted follow-up interviews and/or asked questions where clarity, accuracy, and understanding were required. I conducted individual interviews with 11 spouses and five teachers, which represented a manageable sample size. The sample size allowed me to explore the perceptions of military spouses of deployed or previously deployed active-duty service members and teachers who provided their perception on how social media and digital face-to-face communication between a deployed parent and child influenced the child's behavior, motivation, and attitude relating to school. Patton (2015) pointed out that small samples are typically the focus of qualitative studies aimed at developing an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon.

When new information stopped emerging during interviews, saturation occurred, and the analysis could begin.

Instrumentation

Two digital recording devices were used to capture participants' stories using their own words. I tested and retested each recording device individually prior to the interviews. There were two categories of participants for individual interviews. Category 1 participants consisted of 11 military spouses, and Category 2 participants were comprised of five teachers. I scheduled a semistructured individual interview with each individual. The interviews were scheduled to last for 1 hour; however, the time was flexible and could increase or decrease to suit the participants' needs. I employed follow-up interviews and/or questions as needed to achieve clarity, accuracy, and understanding. Key questions were formulated before the interviews to serve as an agenda for participants to consider and use as a guide. Before each interview, an introduction to the study and interview procedures were provided to each participant. There were three research questions that influenced probing questions.

Research Question 1: How do spouses of deployed active-duty service members perceive social media and digital face-to-face communication between deployed parents and children influence their children's behaviors in school?

Research Question 2: How do spouses of deployed active-duty service members perceive social media and digital face-to-face communication between deployed parents and children influence their children's attitudes toward school?

Research Question 3: How do teachers perceive deployments influence military children's behaviors in school and attitudes toward school?

As part of the interview guide, Table 1 and Table 2 present adequate representations of the probing questions I asked to help guide the interview while seeking answers to the three research questions. Table 1 presents the 15 probing questions that aligned with the three research questions. Table 2 had 13 probing questions that aligned with the three research questions that were asked to the teachers. Janesick (2011) pointed out the importance of learning how and when to use the types of questions suited to the study. I sought to develop probing questions that probed deeper to obtain a clear picture of each participant's story. Types of interview questions included basic, descriptive, big-picture, follow-up, clarification, comparison, contrast, or structural questions (Janesick, 2011).

Testing to see if probing questions were reliable and rendered responses suitable for answering the three research questions required me to forward the questions for review. The probing questions were sent to two military spouses and two teachers with experience teaching military children. None of these individuals participated in the study. Instead, I used their responses to determine if the probing questions were reliable. I made adjustments to the probing questions as required.

Table 1. *Alignment of Category 1 Probing Interview Questions with Research Questions*

Probing Interview Questions	Research Questions
1. What is your purpose for using social media?	1 and 2
2. In what ways has social media impacted you?	1 and 2
3. How did social media help keep your family connected?	1 and 2
4. What were the challenges to keep your family connected?	Not Applicable
5. What method of communication did you prefer and why?	Not Applicable
6. What method of communication did your children prefer and why?	1 and 2
7. What challenges did you face communicating with your spouse?	Not Applicable
8. What made communicating with your spouse enjoyable for your children?	1 and 2
9. How did communicating with your spouse influence your children's behavior?	1
10. How did communicating with your spouse influence your children's attitude?	2
11. How did your children respond after talking with their deployed parent?	1 and 2
12. How often did your family communicate with your deployed spouse?	1 and 2
13. How did communication help your spouse stay up to date?	1 and 2
14. How can family professionals assist military families during separations?	1 and 2
15. How can military leaders assist military families with staying connected?	1 and 2

Table 2. *Alignment of Category 2 Probing Interview Questions with Research Questions*

Probing Interview Questions	Research Questions
1. How long have you taught students in military families?	3
2. How has social media or online communication impacted you as a teacher?	3
3. How has social media assist with keeping you connected with parents?	3
4. What are the challenges teaching children with a deployed parent?	3
5. What method do you prefer to communicate with students' parents and why?	3
6. What are the challenges teaching students in military families?	3
7. What were the challenges communicating with military parents?	3
8. What influence did deployments have on military children's behavior?	3
9. What influence did deployments have on military children's attitude?	3
10. What influence did deployments have on military children's motivation to learn?	3
11. How often do you communicate with the military student's deployed parent?	3
12. How can schools assist deployed parents to be actively involved?	3
13. How effective is social media as a tool to communicate with deployed parents?	3

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

I conducted semistructured individual interviews to collect data from two different categories of participants. Category 1 consisted of 11 military spouses of

deployed or previously deployed active-duty service members with school-aged children. Category 2 consisted of five teachers who had experience teaching military children with deployed parents. I conducted each interview at a scheduled date, time, and location. I instructed participants that participation was voluntary, and they were free to leave at any time before or during the interview. I scheduled all interviews for 1 hour. After the interviews concluded, I explained how participants' information would be processed and stored. For example, I told participants that their recorded information would be transcribed from recording to text to accurately captured their words. Participants had the chance to compare their transcripts with their voice recordings.

I informed participants that I would store the data collected during this study on a password-protected home computer until the dissertation was completed. After completing and publishing of the dissertation, I would transfer all drafts and other information to a secured flash drive. I would then store the flash drive along with the consent forms in a safe for 5 years. After 5 years, I would shred the paper documents and erase the flash drive to ensure the flash drive contents could not be retrieved. I then asked participants if they had questions or needed further clarification about the study and the information they provided.

I did not anticipate any challenges with recruiting the number of military spouses and teachers needed to conduct individual interviews. However, I devised a follow-up plan if I could not find the minimum number of participants. I intended to recruit participants from another military community if I could not find the minimum number of participants. The follow-up plan would have required me to travel to those locations and

make arrangements for interviews. I also considered other methods for collecting data from interviews (i.e., emails, telephonic, Skypes, Facetime, WhatsApp). I remained flexible, sensitive, and considerate to participants' preferences. I did not need to use the follow-up plan because enough participants volunteered to participate in the study.

Data Analysis Plan

I recorded interviews using two digital recording devices for easy downloading to a computer to be translated to a Microsoft Word document using a translation program called Trint. I also took written notes during the interviews. After completing the interviews, I transcribed each semistructured interview from recording to text using Trint. I compared the transcripts to the voice recordings to ensure participants' words were captured accurately. Participants also engaged in member checking to compare the transcripts to the recordings.

I limited each interview to 1 hour and closely monitored the time to ensure I did not exceed the time limit. The transcription process is arduous but necessary to facilitate analysis (Sutton & Austin, 2015). After transcribing the voice recordings to words, I selected Microsoft Word as the qualitative tool for manual coding. Microsoft Word was an ideal option because the color-coded examples supported my understanding during the coding process. The color-coding also helped me present a thorough analysis of the patterns and themes for each military spouse, teacher, and research question. According to Charmaz (as cited in Saldana, 2016), coding refers to the critical link between collecting data and explaining its meaning.

Key elements of data analysis consistent with base qualitative inquiry include searching for patterns, interpreting the patterns, identifying what the patterns mean, and linking the findings (Bernard, Wutich, & Ryan, 2017). Researchers then analyze data inductively before moving to deductive analysis and data interpretation (Yates & Leggett, 2016). Saldana (2016) listed descriptive coding as the first cycle of coding under the elemental methods. Descriptive coding allows researchers to summarize the primary topic of the excerpt. I did not uncover significant discrepant points during the data collection and analysis processes. I did not need to ask participants to clarify their responses further, and follow-up interviews were not required. The aim of follow-up interviews would have been to clarify and resolve differences between participants' responses.

Issues of Trustworthiness

According to Graneheim and Lundman (2004) and Yin (2009), trustworthiness in qualitative research must address and consider the concepts of credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. These concepts are to be applied throughout the research (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). The following subheadings address the independent components of trustworthiness.

Credibility

Graneheim and Lundman (2004) noted that participants should be of different ages and genders to support credibility. Additionally, researchers must consider the amount of data needed and the selection methods when establishing credibility (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). Participants for this study had varying genders and ages, but I used the same interview questions for each participant, allowing them to provide

their perspective to each question. Although the depth and breadth of the participants' information differed, I addressed credibility by collecting the same information from each participant. No issues were posed regarding credibility because each participant was unique and provided a unique perspective (Patton, 2015).

The participants identified the phenomenon in detail, and I provided transparency by detailing participant recruitment and data collection. I reviewed the participants' responses carefully to ensure accuracy. I collected data from two sources (i.e., military spouses and teachers) to achieve triangulation, yet I used the same questions for the interviews. I also sent the transcripts to participants to complete triangulation via member checking. Yin (2011) noted that member checking is achieved by giving participants their interview transcripts to review for accuracy and verify the verbatim transcripts.

Transferability

Participants came from a U.S. Army military community familiar with the challenges of deployments and separations military families face. I used snowball sampling to ensure that participants met the criteria to participate in the study. I recruited military spouses and teachers. Spouses of current or previously deployed active-duty service members had at least one school-aged child between the ages of 7 and 17 years old, and teachers had experience teaching military children with deployed parents. Participants had different genders and ages, and the spouses of deployed active-duty service members were associated with different ranks and grades in the Army (i.e., enlisted, warrant officer, or commissioned officer). Finally, the families had been separated at different times. All these considerations improved the study's transferability.

Dependability

Yin (2011) noted that researchers use member checking, triangulation, and pattern procedures to assure the duplication of a study by other researchers. Transcribing voice to text occurred shortly after each interview, and I offered participants verbatim transcripts, so that the review process could begin. Upon completing each interview, I documented the date, time, location, and other prudent information. I stored the data on a password-protected personal computer to ensure I managed the information properly.

Confirmability

I maintained objectivity to ensure the results reflected participants' experiences and ideas rather than my characteristics and preferences. These efforts ensured the study's confirmability. I thoroughly described my interactions with the participants in a journal to reveal my potential biases and feelings about my interactions with the participants. Yin (2011) noted that reflexivity could transpire throughout qualitative research because of bias. I identified and placed in brackets all biases and feelings revealed during the interview process.

Ethical Procedures

Participants for this study came from a U.S. Army military community. As such, I used snowball sampling, public flyers, and social media to recruit both military spouses and teachers. I provided information on the study's background, purpose, criteria for participation, and the possible implications to military communities to all spouses and teachers interested in participation. I did not know any of the participants, having long retired from active duty and having no affiliation with any deployable units, local school

districts, or their personnel. After identifying potential participants, I contacted each individual and provided them with information. Each participant who met the criteria indicated they were willing to participate in the study voluntarily. The two categories needed for the study included military spouses of deployed service members (Category 1) and teachers of military children with deployed parents (Category 2). When I reached the target number of participants for both groups (i.e., 11 military spouses and five teachers), recruitment ended.

Before collecting any data, I obtained permission through Walden University's IRB. I provided individuals who agreed to participate with a consent form that I thoroughly explained. I also thoroughly explained that participation was voluntary, and participants had the right to stop participating at any time before, during, or after the interview. After I obtained signatures, I sent a copy of the consent form to each participant with a letter of introduction, briefly explaining the study's purpose. The consent form also included my contact information, my dissertation committee chair's contact information, and the contact information for Walden University's Research Participate Advocate. I used pseudonyms to protect participants' identities.

I stored all data collected during this study on a password-protected home computer until I completed the dissertation. After completing and publishing the dissertation, I collected all drafts and other information and transferred the data to a secured flash drive that I then stored in my home safe. The flash drive and consent forms will remain in the safe for 5 years, after which time I will shred the paper documents and erase the flash drive contents. I took the required courses from Walden University on

working with human subjects (e.g., Protecting Human Research Participants), which helped me understand the procedures, rules, and conduct needed to work with human subjects.

Summary

The purpose of this basic qualitative study design was twofold. First, the research was designed to examine how military spouses perceived social media and digital face-to-face communication between deployed parents and their children influenced the children's behaviors and attitudes toward school. Second, the research was designed to explore the perceptions of teachers who teach or taught military children with deployed parents. This chapter detailed the research method for this study to present data in areas where gaps existed and provide military leaders, stakeholders, and policymakers with useful data to help make key decisions and set policies that ease the burden of keeping military families connected and in routine communication while separated.

In Chapter 3, I identified the research method for collecting data to allow senior military decisionmakers, community members, school administrators, and lawmakers to verify the credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability of my study. By doing so, these stakeholders can determine if new policies and guidelines are needed for supporting and encouraging deployed parents to be actively present in their children's schooling. Such decisions and efforts profoundly impact military families and result in positive social change throughout military and civilian communities around the country. The study's data can be used to foster dialogue about the effects of military deployments on children, and the findings may inspire additional studies. The results of this research

filled a gap in the literature concerning this underresearched population. Additionally, by examining this innovative topic, I presented a new perspective on the significance of deployed parents' involvement in military children's schooling and daily lives. Chapter 4 presents a summary of the data collection of data and the findings that resulted from the data analysis.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this basic qualitative study design was twofold. First, the research was designed to examine how military spouses perceived social media and digital face-to-face communication between deployed parents and their children influenced the children's behaviors and attitudes toward school. Second, the research was designed to explore the perceptions of teachers who teach or taught military children with deployed parents. To understand the perceptions and/or experiences of each participant and apply meaning to those perceptions and/or experiences, I examined each participant's response using the conceptual framework based on Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory of self-efficacy and Ainsworth and Bowlby's (1991) attachment theory. The following section contains the research questions that guided the study.

Research Questions

Research Question 1: How do spouses of deployed active-duty service members perceive social media and digital face-to-face communication between deployed parents and children influence their children's behaviors in school?

Research Question 2: How do spouses of deployed active-duty service members perceive social media and digital face-to-face communication between deployed parents and children influence their children's attitudes toward school?

Research Question 3: How do teachers perceive deployments influence military children's behaviors in school and attitudes toward school?

The major sections addressed in Chapter 4 include setting, demographics, data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, results interpreted by research questions, and summary of the data.

Setting

Participants for this study came from a U.S. Army military community located in the Southeast region of the United States where deployments are common among military families. This population was familiar with the challenges of deployments that military families faced. This region contained 129,480 active-duty service members (Defense Manpower Data Center, 2019), 684,480 veterans, and 417,532 were Gulf War Veterans (U.S. Census, 2018).

At the start of the interview process, time and availability were the two key challenges presented during scheduling and conducting interviews. Each participant was interested and willing to participate in the study; however, scheduling a date and time for face-to-face interviews presented a challenge because participants were engaged in other commitments and activities. As a result, the study required a combination of face-to-face and telephone interviews. I used the same protocol for both face-to-face interviews and telephone interviews.

A worldwide pandemic forced face-to-face interviews to be immediately stopped. This pandemic was unexpected and compelled me to reschedule the remaining seven face-to-face interviews and replace them with telephone interviews. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2020), a worldwide pandemic of a highly contagious and deadly respiratory virus that easily spread from person to person

rapidly swept throughout 216 countries. The virus, called *Coronavirus disease 2019* or *COVID-19*, compelled world governments and health organizations, including the CDC (2020) and the World Health Organization (2020), to recommend aggressive measures and unprecedented initiatives, such as closing schools and colleges campus, postponing or canceling major events, and finally closing cities and countries to slow the spread of the pandemic. I abided by the protective measures and guidelines set forth by Walden University with regard to the pandemic, and immediately eliminated face-to-face contact for the remaining interviews to control the possibility of exposure and keep both participants and myself safe from the risk of exposure. The remaining interviews were scheduled and conducted solely by phone.

I conducted telephone interviews at the office in my residence, which supported an environment conducive for interviewing, free of disturbances, and eliminating the possibility of the interviews being overheard by others. Each interview lasted approximately 1 hour, and to ensure I captured each participants' story accurately using their own words, I used two digital recording devices. I tested the recording devices prior to the start of each interview. A printed copy of the interview questions was on hand, as well as paper for note-taking. After each interview, I checked to ensure I had captured the recording.

Demographics

All 16 participants were members of a U.S. Army military community located in the Southeast region of the United States. Eleven participants were military spouses, and five were teachers who taught military children. Of the 11 military spouse interviews, 10

were women, and one was a man. Table 3 presents the demographic information for military spouses.

Table 3. *Demographic Information for Military Spouses*

	Name	Information
1	Mindy	20 years of experience as a military spouse. Her family has experienced four deployments and separations. She has two children ages 17 and 19.
2	Maria	15 years of experience as a military spouse. Her family has experienced two deployments (Iraq and Afghanistan) and one separation (South Korea). She has four children ages, 4, 8, 13, and 17.
3	Mary	20 years of experience as a military spouse. Her family has experienced four deployments (two Iraq and two Afghanistan) and one separation (South Korea). She has two children ages 15 and 17.
4	Michelle	19 years of experience as a military spouse. Her family has experienced two deployments (Iraq and Afghanistan) and two separations (England and South Korea). She has three children ages 8, 12, and 14.
5	Melissa	25 years of experience as a military spouse. Her family has experienced one deployment (Afghanistan). She has two children ages 15 and 20.
6	Martina	20 years of experience as a military spouse. Her family has experienced four deployments (two Iraq and two Afghanistan) and two separations (South Korea). She has six children ages 4, 7, 12, 17, 19, and 21.
7	Maine	20 years of experience as a military spouse. Her family has experienced two deployments (Iraq) and two separations (South Korea). She has two children, ages 17 and 21.
8	Mike	18 years of experience as a military spouse. His family has experienced one deployment. He has seven children ages 7, 9, 12, 15, 19, 21, and 23.
9	Marlyne	20 years of experience as a military spouse. Her family has experienced four deployments (two Iraq and two Afghanistan) one separation (South Korea). She has four children ages 11, 15, 19, and 22.
10	Merissa	17 years of experience as a military spouse. Her family has experienced one deployment (Afghanistan) and four separations (Saudi Arabia and South Korea). She has three children ages 13, 15, and 22.
11	Mariella	15 years of experience as a military spouse. Her family has experienced three deployments. She has three children ages 10, 13, and 14.

Ten interviews were telephonic, and one interview was face-to-face. The sole face-to-face interviewee's ethnicity was African American, but I did not ask the remaining participants to identify their ethnicity. Of the five teachers interviewed, I interviewed three via telephone and two face-to-face. One teacher taught at the high school, two taught at the middle school, and two taught at the elementary school. Table 4 presents the demographic information for teachers.

Table 4. *Demographic Information for Military Children's Teachers*

	Name	Information
1	Tamyra	29 years of experience as a teacher, with 20 years of experience teaching military children of active-duty service members. She teaches 10th 11th, and 12th grade mathematics at the high school level.
2	Tammy	15 years of experience as a teacher and 2 years of experience teaching military children of active-duty service members. She teaches eighth and ninth grade English at the middle school level.
3	Terri	20 years of experience teaching military children of both active-duty and reserve service members. She has taught K–6 grades at the elementary school level.
4	Tina	26 years of experience as a teacher and 21 years of experience teaching military children of active-duty service members. She teaches eighth and ninth grade English at the middle school level
5	Teresa	26 years of experience as a teacher and 21 years of experience teaching military children of active-duty service members. She teaches eighth and ninth grade English at the middle school level

The two face-to-face interviewees were African American, but I did not ask the telephone interviewees' ethnicity. I assigned pseudonyms to protect the privacy of each

participant. These names also identified the two participant categories for the study. The military spouse pseudonyms began with the letter M, and the teacher pseudonyms began with the letter T. I provided a verbal sketch of each military spouse and teacher to give context to the data analysis.

Data Collection

Eleven military spouses and five teachers participated in the study. I collected data using two small digital recorders, which allowed me to download saved audio files to my personal computer. This process provided for redundancy, served as a safety net against the probability of technology failure, and reduced the threat of losing any content from interviews. Although I allocated 1 hour for interviews, interviews lasted an average of 45 minutes. I conducted interviews over 7 weeks in February and March 2020. I planned to complete interviews within 4 weeks; however, scheduling conflicts and the COVID-19 pandemic extended the interview period. During and after each interview, I took notes to capture my impressions of participants' nonverbal and verbal communication. For example, as participants reflected on certain topics, I detected minor sadness, distress, and discomfort in participants' voices during interviews. Other topics brought happiness and joy. I recorded notes documenting these emotional responses.

I used a secured automated transcription service called Trint to reduce the time to transcribe interviews from voice to text. Trint made converting audio files into text more effective and helped ease what Sutton and Austin (2015) called an arduous process of transcribing spoken words to written data required to facilitate analysis. Each interview went very smoothly from start to finish without any interruptions. Participants reviewed

their transcripts to ensure their words were accurately captured and provided final approval of the transcripts. The transcript review process is what Yin (2011) referred to as member checking.

Data Analysis

There was a total of 16 digitally recorded interviews. The audio was clear, allowing the transcriptions to be accurate, and no follow-up interviews were required. I used the semistructured interview process to ask the initial interview questions and additional probing or follow-up questions until new information stopped emerging. The lack of new information represented the point of saturation. According to Fusch and Ness (2015), data saturation occurs when a researcher collects enough information to replicate the study, additional new information does not emerge, and it is no longer feasible to generate more codes.

After transcribing the voice recordings to text, I began the coding process. According to Charmaz (as cited in Saldana, 2016), coding refers to the critical link between collecting data and explaining its meaning. Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) described coding as a system of classification. I used manual coding for each interview. According to Adu (2019), Microsoft Word can be used for manual coding. I considered both Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel for manual coding and chose Microsoft Word because it allowed me to color-code text within the document. The color-coded examples were ideal for understanding and implementing the coding process and presenting a thorough analysis of the patterns and themes for each military spouse, teacher, and research question.

I reviewed each transcript separately to identify code categories. I circled each code category with a different colored highlighter. Patton (2002) referred to this process as the "challenge of convergence" (p. 465). After completing each transcript's color-coding and identifying code categories, I reexamined each category and color-code. I revisited the interview notes and reviewed the groups. While the colors did change a few times, I gained confidence that I had grouped each category correctly. Bloomberg and Volpe (2019) noted that the first cycle of coding is rarely perfect. Revising codes and adding new codes as they emerge is an ongoing process.

Once I had identified and categorized the codes, themes began to emerge. To be more descriptive, I assessed each code's characteristics and grouped them based on their commonalities, areas of repetition, and characteristics. Adu (2019) referred to this process as sorting or clustering by placing codes into groups based on commonalities. As a result, emergent themes became clearer. After I identified the theme for each color-coded category for both military spouses and teachers, I captured the results in Word tables labeled using interview codes and themes (see Appendix A for military spouses and Appendix C for teachers).

Evidence of Trustworthiness

According to Graneheim and Lundman (2004) and Yin (2009), trustworthiness in qualitative research must address and consider the concepts of credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. Researchers must apply these concepts throughout the research (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). I explain how I addressed each concept in this basic qualitative inquiry in the following subsections.

Credibility

When addressing credibility, Graneheim and Lundman (2004) noted that participants should be of different genders and ages. Additionally, researchers must ensure that the amount of data and the selection methods are appropriate for data collection when establishing credibility. Those who volunteered to participate in this study were diverse in age and gender and had varied experiences as military spouses and teachers who taught military children.

I collected data from two different categories of participants. Category 1 included spouses of active-duty service members with school-aged children who were currently deployed or had been previously deployed. Category 2 included teachers with experience teaching military children whose parents are currently deployed or were previously deployed. All 16 participants were members of a U.S. Army military community located in the Southeast region of the United States. Of the 11 military spouses interviewed, 10 were women, and one was a man. Ten of the interviews with spouses occurred over the telephone, and one interview occurred face-to-face. Three of the teacher interviews occurred over the telephone, and two occurred face-to-face. One teacher taught at the high school level, two teachers taught at the middle school level, and two teachers taught at the elementary school level. Participants provided their perspectives on each of the interview questions.

I asked all the participants the same interview questions, and they provided unique responses based on their perspectives. Although the depth and breadth of the participants' information differed, credibility was addressed by collecting the same

information from each participant. No problems arose regarding the study's credibility because each participant was unique and provided a unique perspective (Patton, 2015). I reviewed each participant's responses carefully to ensure the responses accurately reflected the participants' statements. I achieved triangulation by conducting one-on-one individual interviews with military spouses, conducting one-on-one individual interviews with teachers, and engaging in member checking. Yin (2011) characterized member checking as providing participants with their interview transcripts to review for clarification and verification to confirm what they said was captured accurately using their own words.

Transferability

Participants came from a U.S. Army military community familiar with the challenges of deployments and separations military families face. I used snowball sampling to recruit military spouses and teachers, ensuring that participants met the criteria to participate in the study. I selected 11 spouses of current or previously deployed active-duty service members with at least one school-aged child between 7 and 17 years old. I also selected five teachers who teach or taught military children with a deployed or separated parent. The active-duty service members held different positions and ranks/grades in the Army (i.e., enlisted, warrant officer, or commissioned officer), and families experienced separations at different times. Teachers taught at different schools and grade levels, and they had varying amounts of teaching experience. I included full descriptions of the themes in Appendices E and G to ensure transferability and afford other researchers the opportunity to expand on this research topic.

Dependability

Yin (2011) noted that using member checking, triangulation, and pattern procedures ensured that other researchers could duplicate a study. I transcribed the interview recordings to text shortly after each interview, and I provided participants with verbatim transcripts to review for accuracy and provide final approval. Upon completing each interview, I assigned pseudonyms to protect participants' identities and label their written transcriptions. I also documented the date, time, type of interview (face-to-face or telephonic), and location on the written transcribed files. I stored the data properly on my password-protected, personal computer.

Confirmability

I maintained objectivity to ensure confirmability and demonstrate that the results were the participants' experiences and ideas rather than a reflection of my characteristics and preferences. I kept a journal that captured and described my interactions with the participants to uncover my biases and subjective feelings. Yin (2011) noted that reflexivity could transpire throughout qualitative research because of a bias entering the research. I identified biases and feelings revealed in the interview transcripts by placing notes in brackets (see Appendix E).

Results

In this basic qualitative study, I examined how social media and digital face-to-face communication between deployed parents and their children influenced children's behaviors and attitudes toward school from the perspective of two different populations. I examined the perspectives of military spouses of deployed service members and teachers

of military children with deployed parents. Central to this study were military spouses' and teachers' perceptions of the value of social media and digital face-to-face communication.

I organized the study's results by research question. Research Questions 1 and 2 are similar and addressed military students' attitudes and behaviors concerning school and communicating with the deployed parent. Research Questions 1 and 2 addressed military spouses' perceptions, while Research Question 3 addressed teachers' perceptions. I examined data from each of the 16 interviews and the journaling narrative to identify relationships and themes among participants' responses.

Table 5. *Number of Times a Theme Was Mentioned by Military Spouses*

Theme	# Times Mentioned
Social media offered peace of mind	23
Communication influenced children's behavior in school	11
Technological advancements increased communication between deployed parents and their children	29
Deployments and separations are hard on military families	15
Real-time communications helped deployed service members and extended family members	18
Military organizations can offer more assistance	11
Military leaders can do more	11

Research Question 1

Research Question 1: How do spouses of deployed active-duty service members perceive social media and digital face-to-face communication between deployed parents and children influence their children's behaviors in school? Participants were consistent as they voiced their opinion that being a military family is not for everyone. Military service is a difficult and challenging way of life that requires commitment and sacrifice. Each response to the interview questions offered a unique perspective from each participant, and, as a result, clearly defined patterns and themes emerged from the data. The safety and well-being of the deployed parent was the most important concern for all the participants and played a key role in their children's overall behavior and attitude at school and at home. Common themes that emerged from Research Question 1 included:

- Social media offered peace of mind.
- Communication influenced children's behavior in school.
- Advancements in technology increased communication between deployed parents and their children.
- Deployments and separations are hard on military families.

To confirm the themes, strengthen the credibility of my interpretations, and support the integrity of this analysis, the following sections share the perceptions and experiences of each participant using their own words.

Social media offered peace of mind. As mentioned in Chapter 3, understanding the importance of technology in keeping military families connected and deployed parents involved in their children's daily lives served as the motivation for this study. All

11 military spouses who participated in the study indicated that knowing their deployed family member was safe and well generated a sense of peace for them and their children. The safety and well-being of the deployed family member constituted the top priority for military spouses and their children. The safety and well-being of the deployed service members were mentioned 23 times by interviewees (see Table 5), and social media was key in contributing to the sense of peace by allowing the family to stay connected. Social media contact enabled accurate and real-time information sharing. Although letters might indicate that a service member was safe and well at the time it was written, the immediacy and frequency of seeing and hearing a deployed family member's voice were vital to lessening the stress that these military families lived with daily. This peace of mind positively affected the military family's behavior, including military children's behavior at school and home.

Each military spouse answered the same 15 probing questions (see Table 1 in Chapter 3), and 10 of the 11 military spouses either shared the same probing question or chose a different probing question to describe the connection between social media use and peace of mind. In doing so, participant responses provided a deeper and clearer picture of their story in their own words. Military spouses provided their perceptions of how social media offered a sense of peace to the participants, the deployed service members, and their children.

The first participant, Mary, noted that scheduling and the extra communication enabled through social media helped put her deployed husband at ease. Mary stated, "Keeping our social calendars together and letting him [her deployed husband] see who

my kids' friends are and what school activities they're doing and how all that keeps him in contact just by checking in at places on Facebook." Mary indicated that the key to the sense of peace was the knowledge that family members were safe. Mary concluded by stating, "He can keep track of us, and it helps his peace of mind."

Marlyne was another spouse that felt the ability to talk in real-time was helpful. Speaking of her conversations, Marlyne shared the following observation.

> They kept his mind at ease because he would hear a lot of horror stories while he was deployed about other spouses acting up and stuff, so he would get on the computer and call me, "Hey, what you doing?" (Marlyne)

Marlyne stated that real-time contact reassured her deployed spouse. Marlyne continued, "He knew if he was on the computer with me. He knew I wasn't running the streets, I guess." There were times that the deployment location made real-time contact difficult. Marlyne described how she dealt with time differences "I told him 'Hey, Bo, it's night, night time. I'm about to go to bed.' But he knew that his house was still standing, and his bills were paid, and that gave him comfort to know."

Several participants noted the importance of video conferencing technology. Maine stated that her family "preferred the video conferencing." Maine's family felt that letters were important, but the participant stated, "A quick phone call with face-to-face video chat, I think, was very important too. Being able to set eyes on this person and see them for the greater assurance that everything is okay." Mariella agreed that video calls provided a deeper level of assurance. "I think it was more the video call now it's just because it was the way for them to see him. Especially with what they see on the news.

It's like that confirmation for them that he is okay" (Mariella). Melissa noted that the ability to see her spouse gave her the ability to endure the deployment period. "That was awesome. That made me feel that he's alive. You know that communication, I just need a sign that he's alive, that he's going to come home" (Melissa).

Several other participants also appreciated the ability to use technology to see their spouses when a deployment separated them. Merissa stated, "The purpose for me is just to actually lay eyes on my spouse and be able to know that he's okay." Mindy and Martina both cited Skype as their preferred method of communication. Mindy said she "preferred Skype because the connection [allowed her] to see him and see that he was okay." Martina compared her use of the phone to her use of Skype.

> I like Skype, and the reason I like Skype is because I can see my husband's face. On the phone, yes, it's ok, but it's different when you can see somebody's face and their body language. I could see when something's wrong with you by the way your body language is, I can see your face, and I can see the frustration. (Martina)

Some participants commented on how video communication influenced the way negative emotions were shared. Maria noted that sometimes video calls resulted in sadness. Speaking about her children, Maria said, "They seem a little sad sometimes, but for the most part, they're very happy to see their dad and be able to speak with him." However, Maria noted that the calls seemed to provide her children with "a little reassurance, too, that Dad's okay. You know, he may not be here where we can see him,

but he's okay." One participant, Mary, indicated that she preferred not to see her deployed partner's face.

> Well, I prefer phone calls personally because it's a lot easier to say things when you don't have to see their face. You know what I mean? Like he doesn't have to see that I'm stressing out about something, and he doesn't have to see that the kids are crying. (Mary)

Based on the military spouses' responses, social media use helped lessen the participants' safety and welfare concerns by offering a real-time and personal connection with military spouses deployed overseas. Social media connection was vital and permitted military spouses and their families to stay informed of their deployed service members' safety and welfare, and the deployed service members could verify their families' safety and welfare. Social media was an important tool that helped maintain a sense of connection and relationship for the entire military family.

Communication influenced children's behavior in school. As it related to communicating with family, each military spouse shared the same perspective that social media, as a communication tool, played an essential role in keeping their family connected and their deployed service member actively involved and up to date with the family's daily activities and the children's academics. When asked the probing question, how did communicating with your deployed spouse influence your children's behavior in school, five military spouses indicated behavior was not linked to communication with the deployed parent. The responses from these five participants aligned with elements of attachment theory, as defined by Lester and Flake (2013).

In attachment theory, parents develop an early, secure, and nurturing relationship with their children that matures over time and can result in a child's ability to achieve academic success, effectively manage stress, and develop positive social relationships with their peers. Some military spouses indicated that behavior in school was linked to communication with the deployed parent. Below are a sample of some of the quotes captured from military spouses' as they discussed how communication with a deployed parent influenced their children's behavior in school.

Mary was one of the participants that doubted the link between behavior and communication. Mary stated, "We've been doing this their entire life. They're used to the routine that he's here. He's gone. Daddy's here. He's gone. So, him being deployed doesn't really change the way they act at school." Mary clarified that she and her deployed spouse worked hard to instill a sense of responsibility in their children.

> We've gone out of our way to make them understand that they are responsible for their school, no matter what is going on the outside of life…they know they need to handle school. They are consciously aware of the fact that is their responsibility. (Mary)

Many of the participants indicated that they had not experienced behavioral problems with their children resulting from the deployment. Maria stated, "Just in my experience, my children adapted pretty well. I didn't really have any behavioral issues at school." Martina echoed similar sentiments. "I didn't have any problems with my children in school. They've never acted out in school. With him deployed and with him

not deployed“ (Martina). Michelle stated that she had “never really had any negative behaviors with them at school.“ Merissa concurred but offered a longer explanation.

> Well, my kids, I have to say, I’m not bragging about my kids. Sometimes they’re home and you think they’re the worst behaved kids. But my kids are very well-mannered. Education for my husband and myself is very important…So they didn’t want to make Daddy disappointed. So, you know, I think it had a good influence on them. As far as school, they want to do well for him. (Merissa)

The remaining participants indicated that communication was influential in their children’s school-related behavior. Marlyne described her spouse as “very involved“ in their children’s schooling. Marlyne explained that communication allowed her to coordinate a parenting approach with her deployed spouse. She stated, “They knew we were on the same team. Cause if those grades weren’t right. Yes, he would know because he knew when the reports cards were coming out.“

Maine also attributed behavioral benefits to increased communication.

> I think it helped them behave a little better [in school] because parent discipline for me is one thing, I’m here. But to disappoint their father, who’s always sacrificing his time and to know that they were misbehaving that was a great disappointment on their behalf. (Maine)

Finally, Mindy noted that when her children talked with their deployed parent, the reaction sometimes varied. “Sometimes, it would have a positive impact. Sometimes it would have a negative impact. So, it just varies. It just depends.“ Mindy elaborated,

“Sometimes they would really miss him, and it would affect, you know, their behavior at school or their interactions with me.“

From the quotes captured from military spouses, it was clear that perceptions varied on how communication with the deployed parent influenced their children’s behavior in school. Some of the military spouses perceived that real-time communication with the deployed parent did not influence their child’s behavior in school, while other military spouses perceived real-time communication with the deployed parent did influence their children’s behavior in school. Finally, a few military spouses perceived that real-time communication with the deployed parent influenced not only their children’s behavior in school, but also their children’s behavior at home.

Technological advancements increased communication between deployed parents and their children. All 11 of the military spouses interviewed agreed that deployments and separations were a way of life for military families. Military spouses clearly expressed that technological advancements allowed them and their deployed service members to stay connected in real-time. Technology also permitted the deployed service members to continue to be more actively involved in their families’ daily activities, including their children’s academics. Eight out of the 11 military spouses indicated that technological advancements allowed for better and more frequent communication with their deployed service member. Frequent communication showed children that although their deployed or separated parent was not home, they were only a video chat, text message, or phone call away.

Mary, one of the military spouses, noted how technological changes had improved communication availability between spouses, families, and deployed service members for the better. Mary put this change into perspective by noting how things had changed since the introduction of the Internet.

> So, but I've been, I mean, my husband has been on one, two, three, four deployments to wars. And we've gone everything from before there was even Internet communication was even available. Like you couldn't even email each other from all the way to today, where you can do everything online. So social media is the rule. And so, it's a lot easier to communicate with him and let him know what's going on and keep him involved in [our] life. (Mary)

Martina, another military spouse, concurred, noting that in the past, the Internet was not as reliable as it present "the Internet is not working. It's hard at war." She noted that previously, she could "go weeks and days without hearing from them, and that's the scary part." However, Martina noted that this is no longer the reality. "After years went by, new technologies started to catch up. So, if you don't get to talk to them, you at least get a text message or something." Maine, a third military spouse, also recalled the difficulty with communications prior to the Internet or reliable social media stating. "Before we had social media when he was deployed to Iraq for the first time. All we had was letters, you know calls were very few and far between. There was no really, social media was just starting I believe during that time" (Maine). Maine also noted the significant improvements in communications on deployments in recent years, noting that now, "you can video chat, you see conference chat, you know, you can call."

Mindy, a fourth military spouse, also recalled when social media technologies were starting to become available to deployed military and the frustrations that came with the early iterations of social media. Mindy stated, “if social media wasn’t an option, that was challenging.” She noted that “at times we couldn’t Skype or Facebook that posed some challenges as well.” Mindy further stated that when services such as Skype were first available that they were “a luxury during deployment, it was, you know, not always available or the connection was bad.”

Marlyne, a fifth military spouse, cited issues with social media use after it first became available to military families. Marlyne concurred with Mindy that in the early years, social media had problems with availability and reliability.

> We didn’t post a lot of stuff on social media, but that was a communication tool that’s free that we can use to contact each other, especially on Facebook. I think beforehand, it was the first one was Skype. Skype, it worked, and then sometimes it didn’t work, but it was a communication tool where he could see us and the kids. But Facebook worked much better, and we constantly email and text message each other. (Marlyne)

Mike, a sixth military spouse, noted that he eschewed early social media technologies but started to use them to communicate with his deployed spouse when effective video calling became available. Describing Facebook, Mike stated that he “saw the negative about it.” As a result, he ended up choosing not to use Facebook. However, when Facetime became available for his iPhone, he stated that this is what he started to use to communicate with his deployed wife, noting it “was a great way with the iPhone

for us to do Facetime calls. The iPhone, it was a whole lot easier to Facetime because you could basically see and hear. You didn't have any limitations."

Participants noted many benefits to the use of social media for communications. In an example of these benefits, Marielle, another military spouse, provided a personal, substantive, and concrete account of the benefits of social media communications to families with deployed spouses.

> Well, my last deployment, my youngest, actually, she was only a few months old when he left, and she had surgery before she turned one while he was still on deployment. And it was a way for us even in the hospital, he was able to connect and see her, and I guess to show the difference between the two. My oldest had surgery while he was on his first deployment. He wasn't able to be there, all I could do is take videos, and I sent him a DVD. But the youngest was able to see his face. He was able to be a part of that experience. (Marielle)

Several military spouses were quite emphatic when providing their perceptions of the many challenges they faced in the past with trying to communicate with the deployed family members. However, participants noted that rapid advancements in internet and computer-based technologies caused the challenges military families faced in communicating with deployed family members to decrease over time and as the technologies involved matured. Some military spouses noted that the rapid advancements in such technologies had allowed social media to evolve into the ideal platform for real-time family connection and communication. Furthermore, such contacts were vital to keeping deployed service members involved with their families and their children's

schooling. Several of the military spouses noted that the availability of social media-based real-time communication played a positive role in influencing their children's overall behavior in school and at home.

Deployments and separations are hard on military families. All the military spouses interviewed were residing in the same military community, and all of their families were familiar with the challenges that accompany deployments and other professional separations. However, the families resided at diverse military communities during previous deployments, and these military communities differed in terms of the services and support offered to military families during those previous deployments. Military families are from a stoic and resilient subculture characterized by an unwillingness to complain about their living conditions or admit how hard life as a military family can be, particularly in times of separation. Four of the eleven military spouses interviewed appeared to remain reserved during the interview process and were only willing to share their experiences in broad brush strokes without the provision of personal specifics. However, the seven remaining military spouses were more forthcoming in their interviews and elucidated many personal details of how hard deployments and life as a military family were for them and their families.

Given the situations that military families face, Bandura's social cognitive theory of self-efficacy is a very good fit as a theoretical framework of analysis. According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy occurs when a person realizes their purpose, they try to understand the events that are occurring and affect their life and gain control over how those events affect their lives. The social cognitive theory relates to human adaptation,

change, and self-development (Bandura, 2006b). This theory has a particularly good fit when applied to military families as they must adapt to lifestyles characterized by constant change and must, as a result, develop some measure of control over how the military way of life affects them.

Many of the military spouses and their families had experienced multiple deployments and separations. These spouses noted that those deployments and separations constituted the most difficult periods in their lives. As such, these periods in their lives influenced the conditions under which they lived and had a significant influence on all aspects of their children's lives. Their lived experiences of these difficult periods in their lives and their families' lives and the perspectives they developed on these experiences were captured in the present study's research.

Merissa's experiences as a military spouse are typical for modern US Army families. She stated, "we have three children. Our deployments were, let's see, he went to Korea, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, and then we lived separate for about three years." She noted that this was four to five deployments or separations" and constituted a great deal of time as a family that was not together. She also noted that, "It's difficult, I can say [the many years of separation], you know, it's difficult." Merissa also noted the difference regular contact via the internet and social media could make to families with deployed members. She suggested that it was important that, "you [the military] can have some kind of technology or whatever that is supplied to deployed soldiers, so they are able to reach out to their family and stay connected that way." She noted that if this was universally deployed, it would be ideal.

Merissa indicated that it was important to families with deployed military members for those family members to have "the opportunity to be able to talk with their family a little bit more often." She further noted that such regular communication "would relieve the stress for me." She concluded by drawing attention to the fact that the separations were challenging. She stated, "I mean, it was, it was hard. So, something I don't ever want to go back through again [being separated for so long and so often]. But it seemed like we lived separate for most of our marriage." Reinforcing the theme of how hard it had been, she concluded by noting that, "We've been married 16 years, and I want to say out of those 16 years, we may have spent five anniversaries together."

Because of my own past experiences with deployments, I was able to empathize with Merissa as she expressed the pain she had experienced due to multiple deployments. The pain she experienced was specifically noted and bracketed in the interview transcript (see Appendix E). Merissa's candid responses resulted in me asking her additional questions about how family professionals might better assist military families during separations.

Merissa noted that such questions were important. She prefaced her answers by noting that such professionals "need to realize like the effect it has on first the spouse who is here all the time and just get out of the attitude that the mission first and family second." She noted that the mission first attitude could be taken too far by the military and that there were times that it appeared that the military did not "care [about the service member having a family]."

There was a broad consensus among the military spouses as to the types of hardships that they faced. However, this consensus was reflected within the context of several participant perspectives that expanded on Merissa's experiences with the hardships endured by military spouses and families due to deployments. Maria, another military spouse, had experienced separations caused by three tours totaling 30 months. Her family had four children, "the oldest is 17, and we have a 13-year-old, 8-year-old, and 4-year-old." She noted that her children "were a little emotional in the beginning" of the first tour. However, she also noted that over time that "they adjusted, and they adapted, and we explained to them you know, that about Daddy's job and what it has them doing and that he will be back." Overall, she stated that "they adjusted, and they get better," and that their life strategy as a family during deployments was to "make the best of each day."

Melissa's experience as a long-term military spouse was atypical in that her husband had only one deployment, and that was after 25 years of marriage. She noted, that "It was, it was very hard, not only for the kids, but for us [her and her husband] because, all the military life and after 25 years, and that was the first deployment. She further noted that it not only affected the children who were still at home, the youngest being in high school but that "it also affected my oldest because he was already deployed, and he knew how that [deployment] already affects his life." Marlyne noted the effect on the security her children felt on seeing their father for any purpose; she noted that her son "to this day when he [his daddy] goes out the door, he'll go stand at the door with him and be like, 'Hey Daddy, where are you going?'" Her son worries that his father may not

be seen for months whenever he goes out of the door because it may be another deployment.

Mindy, a military spouse, and mother noted that in terms of children's attitudes to deployments, "It could go either left or it can go right. It just depends on their mindset at the time." She noted that the consequences of conversations with their father when they were down or missing him very much represented problems "that would just make them want him home more and present more challenges on the home front for me, and I guess for teachers as well." Sensing that this was an area of sensitivity for Mindy, I added a note in the transcript, and chose not to probe further into this specific topic (see Appendix E). Martina, another military spouse, highlighted an additional problem for families, and that was the difficulty with coping with being separated from the extended family. She noted that "you're separated from other families. It's hard being a military family anyway because you're separated from your other parts of your family, not just your husband, but you had family scattered in different places."

Mary noted that for numerous military families, many separations came in addition to deployments and that deployments, themselves, were often extended. She noted that her "husband has been on four deployments, and two were actual war." She continued by noting that the deployments resulted in a "3-year separation period because of deployments getting pushed back." However, her family's separations did not end with traditional deployments. She noted that her husband was involved in "several different field exercises where he's been gone anywhere between 1 and 6 months." Overall, she

stated that they had been apart “way too many times to count” and that the actual number was “ at least 13 [deployment or separations].”

Mary highlighted the difficulties of being a military spouse in the psychological dimension, noting that being a military spouse “is not for everybody.” She specifically noted that a military spouse needed to be able to maintain consistency in their family relationships and that “not everyone’s parent is strong enough to hold up both sides of the scale.” She was clear that, in order to be a successful military spouse, “you got to be incredibly independent and yet be comfortable knowing that you have no control over anything, and that’s a hard balance.” Mary opined that for active military personnel, it was hard to find “a spouse who can walk that line” where the line was “what keeps the house stable while the soldier’s in the chaos all the time.”

Mary noted that the role was extremely challenging to fulfill and that as a consequence, “there’s a lot of kids that they don’t have that I can’t tell you how many times I’ve had to help spouses who can’t handle life while their spouse is gone. While their soldier’s gone.” She concluded by noting that many military spouses need more emotional support than is available either formally or from absent spouses, stating, “You know how many times I’ve had to lean on them and pick em up…Even after 20 years, it’s because everybody needs somebody. But trying to keep that stabilization is so important in our world [the world of the military family].”

It was important to these military spouses to acknowledge that being a military family is a challenging life in which the sacrifices can often outweigh the rewards. Being a part of this unique population is not for everyone, and those who chose to be a part of it

understand that it is not an easy life, especially for children. Deployments and separations had a profound and lasting impact on military families. The military spouses felt this was especially true for military children, who were affected in every aspect of their life. The experience of deployment/separation can reflect positively or negatively on their behavior, including how they perform in school.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2: How do spouses of deployed active-duty service members perceive social media and digital face-to-face communication between deployed parents and children influence their children's attitudes toward school? As with Research Question 1, each military spouse interviewed maintained the same consistency regarding the fact that being a military family is not for everyone, and it is a difficult life that comes with many challenges, commitments, and sacrifices. Another consensus shared among this group of military spouses was their deployed service member's safety and well-being. Each response to the interview questions offered a unique perception from each participant. Thus, clearly defined patterns and themes began to emerge from the data. Three common themes emerged from Research Question 2.

- Real-time communication helped deployed service members and extended family members.
- Military organizations can offer more assistance.
- Military leaders can do more.

McGuire and Steele (2016) noted that parental deployments could significantly impact communication between children and parents and lead to negative consequences

for military children, including how they suppress and express issues and attitudes toward school. These military spouses provided their perceptions of the importance of their children communicating with family members who were deployed and their extended families. They noted explicitly that social media provided the ideal platform to facilitate such communication. In this section, each participant's perceptions and experiences are shared to confirm analytical themes and support the researcher's interpretations of the participants' answers.

Real-time communication helped deployed service members and extended family members. After interviewing all 11 military spouses, it was clear that each valued the opportunity to stay in contact with their deployed family members and their extended families. The ability to remain in real-time contact with deployed family members and extended family was important for all interviewees (see Table 5). Each participant's perceptions of how and why remaining in real-time contact with deployed family members was important were reflected in their interview responses.

Mike and Marlyne emphasized the positive holistic effects on both close and extended families of regular social media use. Mike reflected the consensus of the group of military spouses when he offered the following response.

> Just so everybody could stay in contact. [My] wife could pretty much stay in contact with me and the kids as well and the rest of the family. Just being able to daily and visually see and talk, the kids being able to talk to mom and them being able to talk to the wife [meaning deployed service member]. Just knowing what was going on [to include what's going on in school] rather than having to wait a

> couple days for a letter. This was the biggest help. She actually had real-life live time information. (Mike)

Marlyne echoed Mike's sentiments but also elucidated the extended family dimension. She noted, "I'm the only one out of seven kids that's not home where I'm from. So, I actually get to see what everybody's doing because they'll post pictures of kids, remind me of birthdays and when they have gatherings." A key point for her that she was not missing out on family. Marlyne emphasized this by noting, "So basically, I'm not missing out." Marlyne noted both the speed and ease of using modern communication technologies, stating, "They'll just pick up the phone and they'll get on Facebook and send you a message. So, it's quick, and it gets to you quicker as well."

Melissa and Maine focused specifically on the importance of the deployed spouse's real-time social media availability in terms of their children's schooling. Melissa noted the positive effects of her son being able to communicate achievements at school to his deployed father. Describing her son, Melissa stated, "He had to say something about what was happening in school." Melissa continued, "He was on the football team, so he tried to say something about what he accomplished." Melissa noted that her son was also able to communicate other achievements. "He was doing something with painting, drawing, and the computer class he was taking. So, he was excited. He was taking kickboxing classes, trying to lose weight."

Melissa emphasized the overall importance of real-time communication to her son "He wanted to tell his daddy his accomplishments, so when his daddy come back, he would be proud of him" (Melissa). She believed that real-time communication made a

real difference to her son's level of achievement and ability to adjust to his father's deployment. Maine, another military spouse, also emphasized the dimension of school performance. "They performed a lot better, knowing that in an instant he can be connected and tuned in to the parent-teacher conference" (Maine). She went on to note that not only could her spouse be connected, but he could also provide his real-time input as a parent. "He could be there too with scheduling that he could hear what the teacher had to say, and he would have something to say about it" (Maine).

Mindy and Merissa noted that not even real-time communications and social media sessions were a complete substitute for the absent parents' presence at home in their children's lives. Mindy stated, "At times, it can be positive and or negative that can go either way." The issue was the physical absence of the other parent. Mindy continued, "Well, you know, sometimes they would miss their dad and they would lash out [their attitudes would change] because I'm not Dad, or they would withdraw from school because they're missing Dad." Mindy also noted the positive effects of real-time communication stating, "Another time they'd be upbeat and happy, sharing that they had spoken with Dad."

Like other participants, Mindy noted the positive influence social media had on remaining engaged with extended family. She stated, "Being that all of my married life and all of my children's lives, we've moved away from family. So social media has been a great way to stay connected and to share what's going on with our family." She noted that social media allowed not only rapid communication but extensive communication. "For us to remain connected with extended family. It allows us to instantly share a family

updated, accomplishment, let the children Facetime family, and let family members Facetime them" (Mindy).

Merissa concurred with Mindy but noted that social media communications between her children and their deployed father could result in sadness. Merissa stated, "It varies like some days they would be like if we went somewhere, they would be like when we went to the zoo, they would be like we wish Daddy was here so he can go." She stated that "they always want to be there with him. So, it was kinda sad at times when we did stuff, and he wasn't there because we always do stuff as a family. They missed him a lot." Merissa noted that her "children always did well in school [maintained a positive attitude]."

The interview results illustrated how important it was to maintain connections with immediate and extended families. These spouses felt sharing photos, events, activities, and academic success with their deployed family members and extended family members was important and influenced their children's attitudes. These spouses noted that it required a deliberate effort on every family member to maintain connections during separation periods. These military spouses clarified that being a family is a team effort and requires each family member to partake. The family is a multilevel social system with relationships that are interdependent of each other. As a result, and as noted by Bandura et al. (2011), the most effective way for families to achieve their goals is via teamwork.

Military organizations can offer more assistance. Military organizations and schools have consistently offered services and helped military families maintain routines

while service members are deployed. However, deployment periods are characterized by some military spouses as times of chaos. As a result, it is essential for military children to maintain a routine in school and at home during these periods. Military organizations can offer resources to help military children maintain routines. One of the most crucial and effective resources that can be provided is the consistent availability of real-time communications with the deployed family member. Maintaining the regular routines of children in the families of the deployed can positively influence these children's attitudes.

Military spouses who remained at home during a deployment emphasized the importance of routines and how contact with deployed spouses at irregular or nonscheduled times could be disruptive. For example, Mary noted difficulties with irregular calling times. "Some nights, it was hard because he would sometimes call or video, text, or whatever too close to their bedtime, and then it would take me a long time to get them to sleep after because they were upset" (Mary). Mary continued discussing the importance of routine.

> Any disruption in a routine, once you have a routine, any disruption in it is just chaos anyway. Most kids need a routine to thrive, you know, and so when there is a break in routine, there needs to be some other consistency. (Mary)

Marlyne discussed how a routine was developed once a deployed spouse could schedule calls regularly. She stated, "The longer he's gone, we develop a routine, and we also get the time down to a science to where 'hey Daddy's about to call.'" Marlyne could then develop a routine for her husband's calls to their children. She would tell them, "'Come on, let's get ready' And they'll line up and get at the computer, and they'll wait

for him to come on." Marlyne noted that waiting for their father to call had a positive influence on the children's attitudes, which she felt could easily carry over to their attitudes in school.

Resources relating to maintaining contacts and routines were largely limited to efforts by the military to provide communications links and support volunteer groups. Multiple military spouses mentioned one specific volunteer group, the Solder and Family Readiness Group (S&FRG). Mike, a military spouse, noted the group's efforts on his behalf. First, Mike noted the importance of routines stating, "Just keeping everyone doing what they were supposed to do, by just maintaining a routine like Mom had never left." Mike then stated, "When my wife was deployed, the S&FRG checked on me maybe once every couple weeks." Mike found these volunteer support contacts useful and noted that he would have liked even more contact from the group. Mike stated, "Maybe they can be in communication maybe once per week, something like that" as opposed to once every two weeks or longer. Mike indicated that he found contact by the group's volunteers helpful because they understood his situation.

Mary also mentioned the S&FRG. However, she highlighted that a major issue was that "it's completely volunteer-based. So, if you don't have volunteers doing it, nothing happens." Because the S&FRG had limited volunteers and resources, the group did not always help as much as military spouses would like. Mary remarked that many spouses "feel like they're out on their own, you know." She noted that S&FRG was positive if volunteers were available. "Having that open line of communication to the families is what the S&FRG does. Assuming the people are doing it" (Mary). Mary

continued, noting that the S&FRG's "purpose, it's a bridge between the two [deployed service member and their family]."

Mary identified a problem with S&FRG's long-term efforts as their focus on young children. Mary stated she had 20 years of experience volunteering with the S&FRG, but "one of the things I noticed is they only focus on little kids. You know, if anyone who is five or younger. Honestly, when they're that little, they don't really need it." Mary concluded by noting that middle schoolers and high schoolers were the ones who needed the most support. She stated, "they are the ones whose lives turned upside down by constant deployments and constant whatever. They're the ones who are deeply affected by it. They're the ones that remember it. It truly affects their lives."

Maria also mentioned the S&FRG, but her perspective was different. Maria stated, "they have the S&FRG. I didn't particularly involve myself with that, but I have heard that it's a good source to use. So, I know that's there. So, I know that's provided." All 11 military spouses agreed that military communities are important to military families, especially during deployments, and these groups can play a major role in supporting their children. Some military spouses volunteered for the S&FRG, some used its services, and others were simply aware it existed. While the S&FRG had both strengths and weaknesses, most participants acknowledged the group's positive aspects because it offered military families help during deployments.

As a group, the military spouses noted that services offered by military communities and schools played a key role in military children's routines. The military spouses believed that maintaining a routine for their children was essential in providing

adequate structure to support their day-to-day activities, particularly when parents were away on deployment. There was a consensus among all the spouses that more needs to be done by military organizations, both when service members are stationed in and outside the United States.

All the participants viewed stable, secure, and continuously available communications technology provided by the military to be a practical necessity in maintaining healthy family routines and normal. Additional assistance beyond facilitating good communications would be welcome due to the isolation and chaos military families often experience during deployment/separations. All participants identified better communications as positively influencing students' behavior and attitudes toward school. However, participants identified definite gaps in terms of the practical support they received while their family members were deployed.

Military leaders can do more. Military leaders have started to understand just how important it is for military families to stay connected (Matthews-Juarez et al., 2013). There was a period when military leadership banned social media out of concern for security issues. However, military leaders have come to appreciate social media's effectiveness as a tool to keep deployed service members up to date and involved in their children's learning and behavior (Matthews-Juarez et al., 2013; Military Community and Family Policy, 2016). Participants acknowledged that military leaders had done a lot for service members and their families, but the participants felt leaders could do more to relieve the hardships military families face during deployments.

Michelle noted military leaders' efforts as well as deficits in resources provided. She stated, "I know they [military leaders] do different things to help, and I know they have influence at the schools." However, she continued, "I would like to see them provide different kinds of media access or a computer at home, so the deployed spouse could routinely video chat with their deployed service member." Mariella also perceived issues with help provided by military leaders, stating, "At the very least, leaders could give the deployed service member scheduled downtime or free time and encourage them to talk to family there throughout the deployment."

Martina was concerned with better access to services. She noted, "just allowing service members to use social media to keep the family connected and communicate in real-time while deployed would be helpful to us as a family." Mindy perceived communications issues from a broader perspective, stating, "Military leaders could continue encouraging the service member to reach out, to find ways to communicate." Mindy suggested that they lead "by example and providing the deployed service member with the tools and time to contact their families would help ease the stress for the family." Maine had a different perspective.

> In addition to being leaders, military leaders are service members too, and they understand the hardships deployments have on the family. With this experience and knowledge, leaders know and understand what resources are needed that could help families stay connected during deployments and ease they levels of stress deployments cause. (Maine)

These military spouses were adamant in expressing the importance of keeping their families connected with frequent, real-time communications that were readily available during family members' deployments. As a result, these spouses' perceptions focused on better communications, which were their primary focus of concern. The participants wanted military leaders to do more to support military families during deployments and separations. They were very aware that military leaders are service members who often have families and who understand the hardship deployments/separations have on families. Such leaders have done a great deal to support military families experiencing separations caused by deployments or other military necessities.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3: How do teachers perceive deployments influence military children's behaviors and attitudes toward school? Military children and military families are our nation's children and our nation's families (Cozza, 2014). Each teacher embraced the fact that military children are an extension of the military family and each teacher agreed that the military family is a unique population. The United States has a significant responsibility to ensure that military children and families are supported (Masten, 2013; Wolf et al., 2017). Each teacher who participated in the present study teaches military children every day at school. All were adamant that their roles as educators are to teach, support, and ensure that military children's educational concerns and issues are adequately and consistently addressed. Responses to the interview questions provided

unique perspectives from each teacher. However, clearly defined patterns and themes emerged from the data. Two common themes emerged from Research Question 3.

- Communication with deployed or separated parents.
- Attitudes in school.

The following section elucidates the teachers' perspectives that are foundational to the identified themes. The perspectives strengthen the credibility of the present study's interpretations and support the integrity of the analysis. The following sections contain the narratives related to each theme.

Communication with deployed or separated parent. When asked the probing question, how often do you communicate with deployed parents, two teachers explained they had no contact with parents while they were deployed or separated, two teachers expressed having minimum contract with deployed or separated parents, and one teacher had frequent contact with separated or deployed parents. Teachers felt it was important for the deployed parent to stay in contact with them during deployments and separations when at all possible. According to Friedman et al. (2017), parents and children often communicate about daily experiences and feelings when they live together. However, such communications can become infrequent or fail to occur when families face long-term separations due to deployment. The reduced communication has negative consequences for a family's emotional bonds and communications. The teachers who taught military children noted a similar pattern. When the military parents were at home with their families, communication with their children's teachers was more frequent, but the communication often ceases once the parent is deployed.

The teachers, as previously noted, fell into three categories. Some teachers had no contact with deployed parents, some teachers had minimal contact, and some teachers had frequent contact with deployed parents. Tina and Tammy were two teachers that had no contact with deployed parents. Tina stated, “I can tell you; I’ve never communicated with a deployed parent until they’ve gotten back.” Tina continued, “the parent that’s always there, that’s a constant communication.” She acknowledged that she had “never spoken to a deployed parent while they’ve been deployed. Not in my experience. I had no one like Skype from Afghanistan for a parent conference.” Tammy, another teacher, had a similar experience. “I can’t remember [communicating with a deployed parent]. I don’t think so. Communications between teachers and deployed parents are infrequent” (Tammy).

Two teachers, Teresa and Tamyra, experienced infrequent contact with deployed spouses. Teresa described her experiences. “Not too often. Only as needed. It’s usually the spouse or the guardian who’s here, who’s local, and then they relay the messages or their progress reports to the deployed parent” (Teresa). However, Teresa noted that she had once had ongoing communications with a deployed parent when a child experienced behavior problems. “He had a lot of challenges going on. Unfortunately, his parents didn’t communicate well, and one parent would coddle him and give in to his demands, and the other parent was very firm with him” (Teresa). Teresa noted that the child experienced no consistent parenting when the firm parent was deployed. Teresa noted that the deployed parent “wanted us to email or call, and we did that every once in a while, or when it was possible.” Despite the ability to communicate directly with the

parent, the child's behavioral problems continued. Teresa concluded, "We still didn't make any headway with the child. He still continued with the behaviors, and it was just very challenging. So that can result."

Tamyra also reported infrequent contacts with deployed parents. Tamyra stated, "If I'm making contact with a deployed parent, that parent has contacted me. I normally make, well, we have emails that we use, and so, I usually contact the parent with a local email." She noted that she would find out if the parent in question was deployed either from the student or, in some cases, "another caretaker will let you know if the parent is deployed." Tamyra continued, "sometimes deployed parents will email and say, 'Ms. Tamyra, I'm so-and-so, I'm deployed. But I would like to know if you would also send me my child's grade report or interim report.'" Overall, Tamyra noted that such contacts when they happened took place via email. She stated, "We contact through email. So that's how that would work."

One participant had frequent communication with parents, including deployed parents, and the reason for this appeared to be access to an online communications platform instead of traditional email. Terri, the participant teacher in question, offered the following statement.

> I communicate in dojo [a communication platform used by the school district]. I communicate quite often if there is anything going on in our room, and once again, I'm posting it on dojo. Therefore, this week we had some outside sessions. I take pictures of the kids watching the author. Tell them a little bit about other author's work and show them if their kids ask a question, I might videotape them

> or take their picture. The communication is instant, it's not delayed. It happened in the moment. So, they [deployed or separated parent] do not feel they're missing out. I make a point to ask the students would you like to send that together, you know, they can post on dojo. (Terri)

Terri's experience highlights another benefit of modern Internet-based technology and social media-style communications. Terri cited teachers' ability to communicate in real-time or near real-time and across multiple communications modalities with parents both in school and outside of school. Terri's experience suggests a direction for the military to explore further in its efforts to better support military families and improve learning outcomes for military children.

The teachers believed that it was as important for military parents to stay in contact while deployed as it was when they were at home between deployments. Terri's anecdote demonstrated that such contacts are becoming increasingly feasible from both the economic and technology perspectives. All teacher participants welcomed the possibility of greater future opportunities to stay connected to deployed or separated parents allowing them to stay involved and up to date on their children's behavior, achievements, and academics.

Attitudes in school. Each teacher participant provided feedback on the influence deployments had on their military students' attitudes and performance. Four of the five teachers specifically noted that all students are individuals, and circumstances vary. Thus, participants believed that deployment effects varied from student-to-student. One teacher stated that they believe deployments did not influence students' attitudes. However, it

was noteworthy that all the teachers' perspectives on teaching military students aligned with the attachment theory. Attachment theory highlights the importance of parents developing early, secure, and nurturing relationships with their children to create the foundations for the child to develop the mental tools to achieve academic success, effectively manage stress, and develop positive social relationships with their peers (Lester & Flake, 2013). The teachers' perspectives on the influence deployments had on their military students' attitudes in school were reflected in the responses they provided in their interviews.

Tammy was the sole teacher to not believe that the deployments of military students' parents influenced their behavior and performance. She stated, "I really have not seen a big effect on their attitude toward academics." Tammy believed that many military students reflected the attitudes of their parents. "Some of the better students that I have had, and it seems like they're more willing to work. I guess because they've kind of somewhat adapted the attitudes of their parents." Tammy noted that the attitudes of these students were positive.

The other four teachers shared a consensus that deployments did affect military students' behaviors and academic achievement. Tina summarized the overall experiences of this group in the following statement.

> It depends on their attitude before the parent left. If there is a broken relationship with that deployed parent, their attitude nine times out of ten is negative. If there's a positive influence or a positive connection with that parent before they leave and that kid and their parent had an understanding, then their attitude is more

> neutral because they're still dealing [the child still has to deal] with the fact that their parent is deployed and separated from them. (Tina)

Terri concurred but put what Tina stated into the context of academic performance. Terri stated, "some of them don't care, or some of them pour themselves into their work." Terri believed that students' academic responses reflected how they were emotionally and mentally dealing with the separation caused by their parent's deployment. Terri believed that deployments also influenced behavior. "So, yes, it's very similar to their behavior. Some of them come through, and it's hard for them to focus. They're often thinking about their [deployed] loved one, and then some it seems not to bother at all" (Terri). Teresa also noted the variability in military students' emotional responses, stating, "Well, when it's negative, some of them will act out. Some of them will get a little sad. I'm not going to say depressed, but it affects their mood." Teresa went on to note that separation could also make some students seem "a little bit apprehensive or unsure about it, it kind of affects their own confidence and mood."

Tamyra concurred that deployments impacted each military student differently. She noted that she approached things "case-by-case." She also made the distinction between war and peacetime, stating, "it depends on whether or not we're in wartime or scary time." Tamyra concluded by emphasizing that "some students handled it better than others. Some students are mature. The students feed off the parents that are left here or the caretakers that are left here. I see it as case-by-case."

Each teacher interviewed was dedicated to their job, and it was important to each teacher to know they were making a difference in their students' lives, whether military

or civilian. The four teachers who stated that parents' deployment status influenced military children's emotional and mental states shared a strong consensus that military students face additional challenges that affect academic outcomes. The teachers were emphatic about how much they cared for their students. Four out of five of the teachers asserted that they thoroughly understood the reasons why some military students' attitudes toward school changed day-to-day or even hour-to-hour, which could lead some students to act out while others worked hard to succeed.

Summary

I conducted the present study to examine social media communication between deployed military parents and children. I examined this influence from the perspective of military parents and teachers of military children. Participants agreed that there was a strong value proposition for supplying social media and digital face-to-face communication as a means for keeping military families connected and deployed parents actively involved in their children's daily lives. I organized the results by research question. Research Questions 1 and 2 focused on how military spouses of deployed active-duty service members perceive social media and digital face-to-face communication between deployed parents and children and how social media use influences their children's behaviors and attitudes toward school. Research Question 3 focused on the perceptions of teachers who have experience teaching children of deployed parents. In addition to the research questions, I asked participants supplemental questions that allowed for a deeper understanding of participants' responses. The responses, when analyzed, exhibited defined patterns and themes within the data.

All the military spouses participating in the study emphasized multiple times that their families' top concerns included the deployed family members' safety and well-being. These concerns played a significant role in military children's overall behavior and attitudes at school and at home. A consensus existed among the military spouses that being a military family is not for everyone. It is a difficult and challenging way of life that requires commitment and sacrifice. Each participant brought a unique perspective to the research questions. Teachers noted that military children require teachers to be aware of and sensitive to the daily challenges military families face. Teachers also explained how important it was for deployed parents to stay connected and up to date with their children's schooling and welcomed the opportunity to communicate with deployed parents. Teachers who communicated with deployed parents believed that communication significantly influenced military children's behavior and attitudes.

Chapter 5 contains a discussion of the study's purpose, the analysis, and interpret the findings in the context of Bandura's social cognitive theory of self-efficacy and Ainsworth and Bowlby's attachment theory. Chapter 5 also includes a comparison of how the findings confirm, disconfirm, or extend knowledge in the discipline. The chapter contains information on the study's limitations, it contains suggestions for further research, it details how data from this study can contribute to positive social change for military families and communities, and it concludes by offering the key basis of the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this basic qualitative study design was twofold. First, the research was designed to examine how military spouses perceived social media and digital face-to-face communication between deployed parents and their children influenced the children's behaviors and attitudes toward school. Second, the research was designed to explore the perceptions of teachers who teach or taught military children with deployed parents. In the major sections of Chapter 5, I address the interpretation of the findings and the study's limitations, recommendations, and implications.

In this qualitative study, I focused on three research questions. Research Questions 1 and 2 were directed toward military spouses, and question three was directed toward teachers. To ensure participants addressed the research questions, I asked the military spouses to answer 15 probing questions, and I asked the teachers to answer 13 probing questions. The responses to the probing questions were essential to getting answers to the three research questions.

By capturing and documenting the participants' perceptions about the benefits of social media and digital face-to-face communication, the results may help fill a gap in the literature concerning military families' use of these media to keep families connected and the deployed parent updated and actively involved in their child's academic and social life. The results may also add knowledge to the field of learning, instruction, and innovation by offering insight into the connection between technology's use as a tool to communicate and keep military families connected through SNSs and understand how

such communication influenced children's behaviors and attitudes toward school. Adding knowledge to the field is not solely for the benefit of military families but also to benefit civilian families, educators, and decision-makers at all levels (i.e., school administrators, school boards, politicians, and senior military leaders).

The interviews conducted with military spouses indicated that the deployed service member's safety and well-being were top priorities and played a key role in children's overall behavior and attitudes at school and home. Military spouses' perceptions were that social media was essential in contributing to their peace of mind by keeping their family connected and their deployed service members actively involved in family affairs, which impacted their children's behaviors and attitudes. Military spouses perceived that maintaining a routine also helped influence children's attitudes and behaviors both at school and at home. These military spouses suggested that military organizations help their children maintain a routine by offering resources that allow military children to communicate consistently with their deployed parent.

When military parents are deployed, communication with their children's teachers often stops. The interviews conducted with teachers with experience teaching military children indicated it was just as important for military parents to stay in contact while deployed as it was while not deployed. These teachers welcomed the opportunity to stay connected and keep the deployed or separated parent involved and up to date in their children's academics.

Interpretation of the Findings

This study's conceptual framework consisted of two theories: Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory of self-efficacy and Ainsworth and Bowlby's (1991) attachment theory. The conceptual framework provided a structure for interviews regarding military spouses' and teachers' perceptions of how social media and digital face-to-face communication between deployed parents and children influenced their children's behaviors and attitudes toward school. Participants' personal stories indicated social media's influence as a tool to stay connected during separations had on the military family, particularly military children's behavior and attitude at school and home. I used Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory of self-efficacy and Ainsworth and Bowlby's (1991) attachment theory when interpreting the findings for all three research questions. All the participants shared their perceptions of the factors affecting deployed parents' involvement in their children's academics and school performance.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1: How do spouses of deployed active-duty service members perceive social media and digital face-to-face communication between deployed parents and children influence their children's behaviors in school? The spouses who participated in this study had 15 to 25 years of experience as military spouses. Family size ranged from two to seven children, and the ages of the children ranged from 4 to 25 years old, with most being teenagers. The families experienced between one and four deployments that lasted 12 months or longer.

Six of the 11 military spouses expressed that social media through real-time face-to-face communication with their deployed service member was directly linked to their children's behavior in school and at home. While the other five expressed that their children's behavior in school was not linked to communication with their deployed parent. These five military spouses expressed that their children understood doing well in school was their responsibility, and by doing well in school, their deployed parents would be happy and not worry about them. This behavior aligns with the social cognitive theory of self-efficacy, which focuses on constructing knowledge and meaning from experiences with human agency as a rooted view that suggests individuals can make things happen by their actions and serve as agents actively involved in their own development (Pajares, 2002). While self-efficacy reveals that when people understand their purpose in life, they then try to understand the events occurring in their lives and gain control over how those events affect their lives (Bandura, 1997).

All 11 of the military spouses interviewed were very adamant in expressing multiple times that their families' top concern was their deployed service members' safety and well-being of their deployed service members, and social media helped by offering them and their children peace of mind. These spouses expressed with all the news reported from those hostile and dangerous regions where their service member was deployed, it was important for them and their children see their deployed service member and verify visually that they were fine. Social media is essential in contributing to military families' sense of peace by allowing them to stay in real-time face-to-face

communication with their deployed service members. These parents felt that such peace of mind positively influenced the entire family's attitude and behavior.

Eight out of the 11 military spouses expressed that technological advancements allowed for better and more frequent communication with their deployed service member. Social media helped their children understand that although their deployed or separated parent was not physically there, they were only a video chat, text message, or face-to-face phone call away. Their deployed parent was very much involved in their schooling and up to date with daily activities.

All the military spouses were honest, open, and consistent in saying that being a military family is not for everyone. It is a difficult and challenging way of life that required commitment and sacrifice. Seven out of the 11 military spouses interviewed expressed how hard deployments were on their families, and social media helped ease those hardships by allowing their family to have constant access to real-time communication with their deployed service members. One spouse mentioned that she and her husband would share movies as they sit on the phone, talked, and looked at each other's faces in real-time. She described such moments as precious, decreased distance, and eased the difficulties associated with separation.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2: How do spouses of deployed active-duty service members perceive social media and digital face-to-face communication between deployed parents and children influence their children's attitudes toward school? McGuire and Steele (2016) noted that parental deployments could have a meaningful influence on

communication between children and parents and lead to unfavorable consequences on military children, including overcoming and articulating issues and their attitudes related to school. All 11 of the military spouses interviewed expressed their excitement with social media and how it offered real-time communication with their deployed service members and their extended family members.

These spouses shared that they valued the opportunity to stay in contact with their extended family. This opportunity was essential for them and their children, and many stated that they welcomed the ability to see their family members' faces in real-time through social media. The spouses revealed how they enjoyed exchanging pictures of their children participating in extracurricular activities (e.g., band, playing sports, celebrating birthdays) and sharing their children's success in school. This type of connection was influential in contributing to their children's positive attitudes at school and home.

The 11 military spouses interviewed all expressed that maintaining some form of routine during deployments was essential in helping with the structure needed for their children to continue with their day-to-day activities. The findings revealed that although military organizations and schools consistently offered services that helped their families maintain a routine, many military spouses felt more could be done. These spouses expressed that military organizations' and schools' services should be centered around keeping their military family connected. These spouses felt that such services were critical and could positively influence their children's overall behavior and attitude at schools and home.

Ten of the 11 military spouses felt that military leadership could do more to assist their families during deployment/separations. Five of the spouses expressed that leaders often forget that the deployed service member has a family. These spouses felt that a key way military leaders could help would be to encourage service members to stay in contact with their families while deployed, provide service members and their families the means to stay in contact and provide service members time to routinely contact their families. Carter and Renshaw (2016) noted that communication is a necessary and essential component for families trying to maintain a relationship.

Research Question 3

Research Qestion 3: How do teachers perceive deployments influence military children's behaviors in school and attitudes toward school? The five teachers who participated in this study had 15 years to 29 years of experience teaching, and their experience teaching military children ranged from 2 years (one) to 20 years (four). With 82 years of experience teaching military children, these teachers clearly understood the challenges military students faced and the influence deployments and separations have on military students' behaviors in school and attitudes toward school.

One teacher expressed that she felt deployments or separations had no influence on students' attitudes toward school. Four of the teachers expressed that they felt that deployments or separations influenced students' attitudes toward school, and the influence varied from student-to-student. These four teachers expounded on how the influence varied from student-to-student. The following points represent an interpretation of these teachers' perceptions.

- It depended on the student's attitude before the parent left. The relationship with their parent dictated the student's attitude.
- Some students were concerned about their deployed parent, and it showed. For other students, deployments appeared not to bother them.
- Some students would act out; some would be sad. The deployment would affect their attitude, and they would need additional attention or affection.
- Some military students were unsure about how they felt, and it showed in their confidence and mood.

These military students' attitudes aligned with the attachment theory. Attachment is a bond of continuing affection that exhibits substantial intensity (Bowlby, 1969, 1973).

Four of the five teachers expressed that military parents communicate with them regularly and were more involved in their children's schooling when they were home. However, once deployed, communication often stopped. I asked how often teachers communicated with deployed parents. One teacher expressed having frequent communication with deployed parents, two teachers had minimum communication with deployed parents, and two teachers stated they had no communication with deployed parents. The three teachers who had frequent or minimum communication with deployed parents shared that they used social media as a tool to communicate. They explained that, with social media, the communication was in real-time and happened in the moment. These teachers conveyed that social media made the deployed or separated parents feel that they were not missing out on their children's school activities. Teachers also felt that social media positively influenced the military student's behavior and attitude in school.

One teacher asked military students if they would like the teacher to send an instant message to their deployed parent along with the student, and this often made the student feel good. All five teachers felt it was important and they welcomed and encouraged deployed parents to stay in contact with them and continue being an active participant in their children's academics while they were separated from their family. These teachers expressed a clear understanding of what their military students were experiencing and why these students' behaviors and attitudes toward school often changed. These teachers knew that when a military student's parent was getting ready to deploy or were deployed, the students' behavior and attitude would often change.

The findings confirmed that social media and digital face-to-face communication influences military children's behavior and attitudes toward school. Carter and Renshaw (2016) noted that military deployments are stressful periods for service members and their families, and communication is essential for families trying to maintain a relationship. The military population underresearched, and Chandra and London (2013) and McGuire and Steele (2016) confirmed that the collection of practical data is required to understand military children and their families better. As the present study's participants expressed, everyone cannot be a military family. Arnold et al. (2017) echoed these spouses' and teachers' sentiments by confirming that the uniqueness of military families' work environments requires tolerance, adaptation, and flexibility.

Limitations of the Study

The primary limitation of this study was that both the military spouses and the teachers who participated came from a single military community. I selected the military

spouses because their families had experienced multiple deployments, and they were familiar with the daily challenges unique to military family life. I selected the teachers because they had multiple years of experience teaching military children and understood the challenges military students faced.

The study's other limitations included the truthfulness and accuracy of the military spouses' and teachers' responses. Participants could have exaggerated or underexpressed their experiences when providing their responses to the research questions and the probing questions. Additionally, because of the exclusion of service members, I could not independently validate military spouses' and teachers' responses. Interviewing service members would have provided a more accurate representation regarding how communication influences their children's behaviors and attitudes toward school. I did not attempt to interview recently returned active-duty service members because of the restrictions that required multiple levels of approval from senior military leadership. Furthermore, in this study, I wanted to focus solely on capturing the perceptions of spouses of currently deployed military personnel and teachers with experience teaching military children.

Recommendations

Research on military families has slowly begun to expand. Researching the impact that multiple deployments and separations have on military families, especially military children, is an on-going challenge. The military family is a protected population, and little empirical research focused on this unique segment of our society exists. This study was the first of its kind to examine how social media and digital face-to-face

communication between deployed parents and their children influenced children's behaviors and attitudes toward school, as perceived by military spouses of deployed service members. The present study may also be the first to include teachers' perceptions of how social media communication between deployed parents and their children influenced behaviors and attitudes toward school.

Additional research is needed in multiple areas regarding the military family. At no time in our nation's history have we seen military families experience back-to-back deployments. Researchers have not yet determined the impact of these multiple deployments on the military family's mental and physical health. However, as a retired service member who has experienced deployment separation from my family, I can attest that such separations do place a mental and physical burden on each family member, from the youngest to the eldest.

All the military spouses interviewed were very emphatic that the personal safety and welfare of their deployed service member was their family's number one priority and concern. Deployments can entail varying levels of risk, and they can also occur frequently depending on the military's needs. Service members often receive official orders to deploy for 18 months. After that deployment is completed, the service member reunites with their family. However, after a couple of months back home, the service member may receive official orders to prepare for another deployment or to change duty stations to a new location. Moving to a new military community is another source of stress for military children. Then, after 2 or 3 months at the new location, the service member's new unit may receive official orders to deploy again. Such a scenario would

result in 36 months (3 years) during which a military family member is separated from their family, with only about 5 or 6 months spent together between deployments.

Not only does the family experience the stresses of moving to a new location (e.g., new schools, new job, new home, new community), but the family experiences the stresses of being separated again. It would be fair to repeat that the long-term effects of multiple deployments on each family member's mental and physical health have yet to be known. McGuire and Steele (2016) noted that currently, no research addresses the positive or negative effects SNSs have on military children. Many questions about social media use among military families remain (Matthews-Juarez et al., 2013; McGuire & Steele, 2016).

Recommendations for further research include conducting further qualitative research that solicits perceptions from deployed service members in different military branches (i.e., Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps) or extended family members. Many single parents serve in the U.S. military. Therefore, further research should involve the solicitation of military children's caregivers' perceptions, especially in the context of single-parent households. Caregivers become responsible for military children when a single parent is deployed or separated. Often caregivers are relatives such as grandparents. Soliciting perceptions from additional populations that understand and have experienced the challenges of military life would provide further scientific evidence and further the dialogue regarding the consequences of military deployments on children.

Implications

Positive Social Change

This study contributed to positive social change throughout military communities in the United States and worldwide. My research integrates social change by exploring the connection between deployed parents' use of social media technology to stay actively involved in their children's academics and daily lives. I also examined how real-time communication influences military children's educational experiences. Social media has proven to be an effective communication tool capable of easing the burden faced by military families during deployments. When military families can stay in constant and real-time communication with their deployed service members, the quality of life increases, and deployments become more bearable for the entire family.

My study provides military leaders, policymakers, and stakeholders with useful data in one area where gaps existed to help make key decisions that could ease the burdens placed on military families during difficult periods. Easing these burdens would have a positive impact on their lives, contributing to positive social change. Senior military decision-makers can use the findings from this study to enhance current policies and guidelines regarding social media use by deployed service members, which would, in turn, allow these parents to be active participants in their children's educational experiences during deployments.

Conclusion

The findings confirmed that the military lifestyle is a unique culture, and there is not enough available research that addresses certain aspects of military culture. Parental

absence and family separation are experiences shared by many military children. The experience of being a military family includes sacrifices that each family must make and endure. Every military parent would like their children to be successful whether it is in primary and secondary school, college, trade school, the workforce, or life in general. The desire for success can be especially important during children's formative years. When a military parent is separated from their family due to deployments, family members experience stress, and maintaining communication is essential for families to feel like they are still connected. Communication between parents and children could be very negatively impacted due to separations (McGuire & Steele, 2016). However, technology has advanced over the years and continues to do so rapidly, and these advances have allowed military families to stay connected during stressful and challenging periods.

As previously mentioned, the military family is an underresearched population. As noted by Landers-Potts et al. (2017) and McGuire and Steele (2016), there remains a gap in empirical research conducted on military children's use of SNSs. This qualitative study may very well be the first of its kind to examine military spouses' and teacher's perceptions of how social media and digital face-to-face communication between deployed parents and their children influenced children's behaviors and attitudes toward school.

The study's results revealed that military spouses' concerns centered around the deployed service members' safety and well-being. Social media offered a sense of peace for military spouses and their children by allowing them to be in real-time, often face-to-

face communication with their deployed service members. To see and hear the deployed service members in real-time provided comfort and reassurance during the very stressful deployment separation. Social media also helped keep deployed parents connected, involved, and active participants in their children's and spouses' daily activities.

Keeping military service members actively involved and connected helped military families maintain a routine by establishing steady communication. The families knew when their deployed service members would be contacting them. Sometimes it would be multiple times in a day, daily, or certain days of the week. Whenever the time, military children realized that while their deployed parents might not be physically present, social media allowed them to be virtually present. These children knew that social media and digital face-to-face communication enabled their deployed parents to remain up to date with their daily actions. The children also knew that their deployed parents remained concerned about their behavior and attitudes at home and at school.

The five teachers who participated in this study had 82 years of experience teaching military children. These teachers clearly understood the challenges military students faced and the influence deployments and separations have on military students' behaviors and attitudes toward school. These teachers welcomed the opportunity to communicate frequently with deployed parents and keep them actively involved and up to date in their children's academic lives. Based on the military spouses' and teachers' responses, social media is ideal for improving real-time communication between deployed service members and their school-aged children.

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Appendix A: Interview Codes and Themes for Military Spouses

1	2	Themes
Red	1.00	Social media offered a peace-of-mind
Blue	2.00	Communication influenced children's' behavior in school
Yellow	3.00	Technological advancements increased communication between deployed parents and their children
Green	4.00	Deployments/separations are hard on military families
Violet	5.00	Real-time communication helped deployed service members and extended family members
Dark Yellow	6.00	Military organizations can offer more assistance
Teal	7.00	Military leaders can do more

Appendix B: Data Table Interviews for Military Spouses

	1.00	**Social media offered a peace-of-mind**
1		He can keep track of us and it helps his peace of mind.
2		Being able to set eyes on this person and see them for the greater assurance that everything is ok.
3		I think it was more the video call now it's just because it was the way for them to see him. Especially with what they see on the news. It's like that confirmation for them that he is okay.
4		On the phone yes, it's ok, but it's different when you can see somebody's face and their body language. I could see when something's wrong with you by the way your body language is, I can see your face, I can see the frustration.
5		I preferred Skype, because the connection to see him and see that he was Okay.
6		I prefer phone calls personally because it's a lot easier to say things when you don't have to see their face. You know what I mean? Like he doesn't have to see that I'm stressing out about something and he doesn't have to see that the kids are crying.
7		The purpose for me is just to actually lay eyes on my spouse and be able to know that he's ok.
8		That made me feel that he's alive. You know, that communication, I just need a sign that he's alive, that he's going to come home.
9		And I think it gave them a little reassurance, too, that dad's okay. You know, he may not be here where we can see him, but he's okay.
10		They kept his mind at ease because he would hear a lot of horror stories while he was deployed about other spouses acting up and stuff
	2.00	***Communication influenced children's behavior in school***
1		We've been doing this their entire life. They're used to the routine that he's here. He's gone. Daddy's here. He's gone. So, him being deployed doesn't really change the way they act at school. It's more at home.
2		Just in my experience, my children adapted pretty well. I didn't really have any behavioral issues.

3		The only thing, I didn't have any problems with my children in school. They've never acted out in school. With him deployed and with him not deployed.
4		Never really had any negative behaviors with them. It wasn't just me, myself, encouraging or enforcing any kind of rules…
5		Well, my kids, I have to say, I'm not bragging about my kids. Sometimes they're home and you think they're the worst behaved kids. But my kids are very well-mannered. Education for my husband and myself is very important…So they didn't want to make daddy disappointed. So, you know, I think it had a good influence on them. As far as school, they want to do well for him.
6		I think it helped them behave a little better because parent discipline for me is one thing, I'm here. But to disappoint their father, who's always sacrificing his time and to know that they were misbehaving that was a great disappointment on their behalf.
7		It will vary sometimes it would have a positive impact. Sometimes it would have a negative impact. So, it just varies. It just depends. Sometimes they would really miss him and it would affect, you know, their behavior at school or their interactions with me.
	3.00	**Technological advancements increased communication between deployed parents and their children**
1		So, but I've been I mean, my husband has been on one, two, three, four, deployments to wars. And we've gone everything from before there was even Internet communication was even available. Like you couldn't even email each other from all the way to today, where you can do everything online. So social media is the rule. And so, it's a lot easier to communicate with him and let him know what's going on and keep him involved in life.
2		If you're in those third world countries and something's going on over there, you can go weeks and days without hearing from them and that's the scary part. After years went by, new technologies started to catch up.
3		I remember before we had social media when he was deployed to Iraq for the first time. All we had was letters, you know calls were very few and far between. There was no really, social media was just starting I believe during that time. We really weren't into as much technology

		wasn't enhanced as it is now with messenger where you can video chat, you see conference chat, you know.
4		Well, some of the challenges of facing things like deployment if social media wasn't an option that was challenging or if at times we couldn't Skype or Facebook, that posed some challenges as well. But Skype was a luxury during deployment, it was, you know, not always available or the connection was bad.
5		I think beforehand it was the first one was Skype. Skype it worked and then sometimes it didn't work, but it was a communication tool where he could see us and the kids. But Facebook worked much better and we constantly email and text message each other.
6		And then that's when everyone else pretty much started going haywire with Snapchat, Twitter, and everything else, but when my wife deployed. You know, that was a great way with the iPhone for us to do Facetime calls. The iPhone it was a whole lot easier to Facetime because you could basically see and hear. You didn't have any limitations.
	4.00	**Deployments/separations are hard on military families**
1		So, I would say probably about four to five deployments or separations. So, it's a lot. It's difficult I can say, you know, it's difficult.
2		I mean, I know it's going to be war and they are going to be deployed or whatever, but just affording them the opportunity to be able to talk with their family a little bit more often. I think they would relieve the stress for me. I mean, it was, it was hard.
3		I think they need to realize like the affect it has on first the spouse who is here all the time and just get out of the attitude that the mission first and family second. That's what I feel like it is and something. I think that's a little better. I know they have a job to do, but you still have a family, and I don't think they care really sometimes.
4		It was, it was very hard, not only for the kids, but for us [her and her husband] because, all the military life and after twenty-five years and that was the first deployment.
5		But if they're in the valley, where there been some nights where they cry for him or they miss him. Then that would represent a problem that

		would just make them want him home more and present more challenges on the home front for me and I guess for teachers as well.
6		It's hard being a military family anyway, because you're separated from your other part of your family, not just your husband, but you had family scattered in different places.
7		Being a military spouse is not for everybody. There needs to be some consistency and not everyone's parent is strong enough to hold up both sides of the scale.
	5.00	**Real-time communication helped deployed service members and extended family members**
1		Just knowing what was going on rather than having to wait a couple days for a letter. This was the biggest help. She actually had real life live time information.
2		Social media has been a great way to stay connected and to share what's going on with our family. For us to remain connected with extended family. It allows us to instantly share a family updated, accomplishment, and let the children facetime family, let family members facetime them.
3		So, I actually get to see what everybody's doing because they'll post pictures of kids, remind me of birthdays and when they have gatherings. So basically, I'm not missing out. They'll just pick up the phone and they'll get on Facebook and send you a message. So, it's quick and it gets to you quicker as well.
4		They performed a lot better, knowing that in an instant he can be connected and tuned in to the parent teacher conference, he could be there too with scheduling that he could hear what the teacher had to say and he would have something to say about it.
	6.00	**Military organizations can offer more assistance**
1		Just keeping everyone doing what they were supposed to do, by just maintaining a routine like mom had never left. When my wife was deployed, the S&FRG checked on me maybe once every couple weeks. But maybe they can be in communication maybe once per week, something like that.

2		The Family Readiness Group, Solider and Family Readiness Group now, they changed the name about four months ago. The problem is its completely volunteer based. So, if you don't have volunteers doing it nothing happens. So, people feel like they're out on their own, you know.
	7.00	**Military leaders can do more**
1		I know they do different things and I know they have influence at the schools. I mean, seems like they're doing things in the areas that they need some assistance. I suppose if there was someone who didn't have any kind of media access or the computer at home, maybe they can provide some sort of service that way they can set up a time to speak with their deployed spouse, so they can get that video experience, video chat experience.
2		But being able to have his laptop and being able to Skype when he was over there or just being able have his phone and due international calling. Not calling moreso being able to text me through the different apps and stuff like that was helpful to us as a family.
3		Military leaders could continue encouraging the service member to reach out, to find ways to communicate. Leading by example and providing them with the tools to teach them how to reach out, even though it's a very stressful situation for both parties especially for deployed service members as it is for me being the stay home mom with three kids to raise while daddy is away.
4		I think just them knowing and many of them have families themselves. Just knowing what it is to be deployed and away from their family. Staying involved and aware of what's going on with this service member. During their deployments, that's how they can make sure that they know the resources that are available to them.

Appendix C: Interview Codes and Themes for Teachers

1	2	Themes
Red	1.00	Communication with deployed or separated parents
Blue	2.00	Attitudes in school

Appendix D: Data Table Interviews for Teachers

Participant	Theme	Participant Responses
	1.00	**Communication with deployed or separated parents**
1		I can tell you, I've never communicated with a deployed parent until they've gotten back and then the parent that's always there, that's a constant communication. But I've never spoken to a deployed parent while they've been deployed. Not in my experience. I had no one like Skype from Afghanistan for a parent conference.
2		Not too often. Only as needed. It's usually the spouse or the guardian who's here, who's local, and then they relay the messages or their progress reports to the deployed parent.
3		If I'm making contact with a deployed parent that parent has contacted me. I normally make, well we have emails that we use and so, I usually contact the parent with a local email and the student or another caretaker will let you [meaning the teacher] know if the parent is deployed,
4		I communicate quite often if there is anything going on in our room. The communication is instant, it's not delayed, it happened in the moment. So, they do not feel they're missing out. I make a point to ask the students would you like to send that together.
	2.00	***Attitudes in school***
1		It depends on their attitude before the parent left. If there is a broken relationship with that deployed parent, their attitude nine times out often is negative. If there's a positive influence or a positive connection with that parent before they leave and that kid and their parent had an understanding then their attitude is more neutral because they're still dealing with the fact that their parent is deployed and separated from them].
2		I really have not seen a big effect on their attitude toward academics. Like I said, there's some of the better students that I have had and it seems like they're more willing to work. I guess, because they've kind of somewhat adapted the attitudes of their parents
3		Well, when it's negative, some of them will act out…Some of them will get a little sad. I'm not going to say depressed, but it affects their mood. Some of them seems a little bit apprehensive or unsure about it, it kind of affects their own confidence and mood. It's case by case and it depends on whether or not we're in wartime or scary time. You know, again it's case by case, some students handled it better than others some students are mature the students feed off the parents that are left here or the caretakers that are left here.

Appendix E: Examples of Biases and Feelings

Transcribed Interview	Bias and Feelings
Encouragement maybe you can have some kind of technology or whatever that is supplied to deployed soldiers, so they are able to reach out to their family and stay connected that way. I don't know if everybody had that, I think that would be ideal. I don't know. Get out the war zone. I mean, I know it's going to be war and they are going to be deployed or whatever, but just affording them the opportunity to be able to talk with their family a little bit more often. I think they would relieve the stress for me. I mean, it was, it was hard. So, something I don't ever want to go back through again. But it seemed like we lived separate for most of our marriage. We've been married 16 years and I want to say out of those 16 years, we may have spent five anniversaries together.	(Because of my past experiences with deployments/separations, I instantly felt empathy for Merissa and sadness as I remembered how it felt being separated from my loved ones).
It could go either left or it can go right. It just depends on their mindset at the time. They talked to their dad, it just depends on the upswing where they're not missing him or longing for him, the conversation, I mean, the results of the conversation would be positive. But if they're in the valley, where there been some nights where they cry for him or they miss him. Then that would represent a problem that would just make them want him home more and present more challenges on the home front for me and I guess for teachers as well.	(I noticed a shift in the tone of Mindy's voice. Her voice became softer and see seemed a bit uncomfortable. I knew a sensitive area that made Mindy uncomfortable. I felt it was best not to prob further.)