2005

Mobility and Military Children

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

MOBILITY AND MILITARY CHILDREN

BY

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A Thesis submitted to the
Department of Educational Psychology and Learning Systems
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Science

Degree Awarded:
Spring Semester, 2005

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

One of the few certainties of life is that no graduate student completes a thesis without the assistance of others. I am indebted to Dr. James Sampson for his insistence that I research a topic that was relevant and interesting to me and my future, his willingness to let me conduct a qualitative study, and his support and instruction throughout the process.

I would like to thank my fellow graduate students Becca White and Marissa Brattole for their editing and their encouragement. I also appreciate the suggestions and advice given by committee members Dr. Don Kelly and Dr. Gary Peterson.

I also want acknowledge the assistance of Libbie Pippin in organizing the focus groups. And I would be remiss if I did not thank the parents and teachers who took time out of their busy schedules to take part in the focus groups.
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ABSTRACT

Frequent moves are an integral part of military life for soldiers and their families. This qualitative study used focus group methodology to examine the positive and negative aspects of moving for elementary school children. The study also examined factors that help and hinder children’s adjustment after a move. Finally, the implications are presented for practice and further research.
A continuing aspect of military life for soldiers and their families has been frequent moves from one duty station to another. Military children move an average of once every three years during their school years. Some students adjust quickly and successfully while other children have difficulties that can lead to serious consequences, depending on the nature and level of support provided to the child. The literature points to a variety of consequences for students who change schools. Moving is a stressful event for children that require them to adapt to new physical and cultural surroundings and breaks the patterns the child is accustomed to, particularly relationships with friends, neighbors, teachers, etc.

Although many different definitions of student mobility exist, often making it hard to accurately measure the phenomenon, Ligon and Paredes define student mobility as an inconsistency or interruption in the educational experiences of a student (1992). For this study, mobility will be defined as a change in a parent’s duty station that results in a student changing schools.

While moving rates have declined slightly in the general population from 17 percent in 1994 to 14 percent in 2003 (US Census Bureau, 2004), military families, which include 1.2 million children, still typically move every two to three years (Kelley, Finkel & Ashby, 2003). In fact, children connected to the military move an average of three times more than other students (U.S. Army Secondary Education Transition Study [SETS], 2001).

Leadership in the Army understands the importance of this issue of mobility and its effects on families. From 1999-2000, the Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) conducted intensive qualitative research on the educational impact of transition of children in grades 9-12 (U.S. Army SETS, 2001). However, this study did not include elementary school children.

The Impact of Moving on Children and Adolescents

There are both positive and negative aspects of moving for children and adolescents in military families.  

**Negative Aspects of Moving**

According to Ingersoll, Scamman and Eckerling “the most negative effects of geographic mobility were found at earlier grade levels” (1989, p. 143). Their study indicated that mobile students in grades first through sixth showed greater negative impact on achievement as measured by the Iowa Test of Basic Skills when compared to older children and children who did not move. Erikson’s theory of personality development recognizes that elementary school
children are at a stage where they are broadening their social environment to include school. Children who are able to function in this less nurturing environment will gain a sense of competence (Weiten, 2004). Consequently, children who are starting to feel secure in their expanded social environment, and that social environment changes radically, can be extremely vulnerable to the effects of moving (Working with military children, 2003).

Research also provides substantial evidence on the negative consequences of moves. One such consequence is behavior problems. Kantor found that children who have moved are significantly more likely to have behavior problems (1965). Wood, Halfon, Scarlata, Newacheck and Nessim found four or more behavioral problems (as indicated by their parents from a checklist adapted from the Achenbach Behavior Check List) in 18% of children who had moved frequently, compared to only 7% of children who had not been frequent movers (1993).

Several studies show that children who move frequently suffer academically. Children who move often find that curriculums vary substantially from school to school (U.S. General Accounting Office [GAO]). Benson, Haycraft, Steyaert, and Weigel state that the difference in curriculums between schools can make it difficult to correctly place a new student based on academic and social skills (1979). Elementary school children who change schools do not perform as well on achievement tests (Ingersoll et al., 1989 and Mantizicopoulos & Knutson, 2000). One study showed that 41% of third graders who moved frequently were below grade level in reading compared to 26% of third graders who had never changed schools (GAO, 1994). The same study reported that 33% of frequent movers were below grade level in math compared with 17% who had never changed schools (GAO, 1994). Another study found that students who moved two or more times prior to third grade scored lower on achievement tests in third grade and were less likely to be at grade level on an achievement test in sixth grade (Heinlein & Shinn, 2000). Wood et al. found that 35% of frequent movers were more likely to fail a grade than children who never or infrequently moved (1993). Finally, Hammans & Olsen found that elementary children who change schools show a greater probability of not graduating high school.

Mobility can also affect a child’s mental or physical health. Children become at least temporarily hindered in their ability to connect with others and to discuss their feelings, which can bring about feelings of isolation and helplessness (Stubblefield, 1955). Johnson states that for children and adolescents, changing schools rates similar to hospitalization of a parent or
having a parent in jail for 30 days or less on the Coddington Life Events Record (1986).

According to the Elkind’s Child Stress Scale, moving, changing schools, and adjusting to a new school are “major stressors” (Humke & Schaefer, 1995). Other research has shown that children in families that moved frequently were 50-100% more likely to suffer growth or development delays or have a learning disorder (Wood et al., 1993). Another study showed that when discussing a move, children worry about making friends more than anything else (Schaller, 1974).

**Positive Aspects of Moving**

The literature does provide a few examples of the positive aspects of moving for an elementary school child. Moving gives children a chance to reinvent themselves and to learn from different environments and people (U.S. Army SETS, 2001). Children get the opportunity to develop and practice adjustment coping skills (Stroh and Brett, 1990a). Mann showed diverse experiences as a child can lead adults to value independence as well as be more flexible, autonomous, and intellectually oriented (1972).

**Factors Influencing Moving**

A child’s ability to make these adjustments after a move depends on several interrelated factors that can be separated into four categories: the nature of the move, the community, the child’s parent(s), and the child.

**Nature of the Move**

Moving is a significant life event, a transition that requires a child to go through at least two levels of adaptation, behavioral and cognitive restructuring (Williams, 2004). The first factor included in the nature of the move that may play a role in the child’s adjustment is the number of previous moves. While some believe that as the number of moves increases, so do the negative effects of such moves; others have found exactly the opposite. Marchant and Medway concluded that having several prior moves may soften the shock of the current move (1987). Another study showed that as the number of moves increased, there was a greater chance that children would have problems in school (Tucker, Marx and Long, 1998). Two studies have shown that children who have experience moving expect fewer problems and are more positive prior to the move (Stroh & Brett, 1990a; Schaller, 1974).

How much information is available prior to the move is the second factor of the nature of the move. Cornille states that reducing the surprise about a move can ease the transition (1993).
Stubblefield recommends that the timing of the discussion about the move be carefully considered and that the child be given enough notice to react, express their emotions, and begin to think about the impact the move will have upon their life (1955). The Army Secondary Education Transition Study (SETS) states: “We found that the move was not as much a stress factor for students and parents, rather, the very real worries were caused by lack of information about the new school’s culture, environment, and expectations” (2001, p. 99).

The third factor to consider in the nature of the move is the distance of the move. The greater the distance of the move, the more likely the norms and values of the new location will differ from the current location (Vernberg & Field, 1990). The new climate may also affect the activities that the child is able to take part in, hindering their ability to “fit in” to the new social surroundings. Studies have shown that children moving a short distance express fewer worries and fewer adjustment problems than those moving a longer distance (Schaller, 1974).

**Community Factors**

Community and school factors are the second area that can play a role in adjustment after a move. According to Pollari and Bullock, “the role of the school and the degree to which the school personnel facilitate integration of the new child can be pivotal in the assimilation process” (1989). One study showed that if a child feels that the school environment is warm and supportive, they will have a higher level of participation; and greater participation relates to academic achievement (Voelkl, 1995). Schools can help a new student by having an established orientation program and sponsorship groups (SETS, 2001) and having a system in place to get the student’s records quickly to ensure the student is enrolled in the right programs and classes (GAO, 1994).

**Family Factors**

Family factors can also impact the experience of moving for an elementary school aged child. The first aspect of the family that plays a role in post move adjustment is the family members’ relationship. While parents may be “emotionally unavailable” to young children during the relocation process (Pollari & Bullock, 1989, pg 115), research has shown that the parents’ involvement and ability to be supportive are directly related to their children and adolescents’ ability to adjust (Gabower, 1960; Schaller, 1972; Vernberg & Field, 1990). Tucker et al. reported that children who move an above average number of times are not harmed if they
reside in families with both biological parents. However, with highly mobile children in other family structures, one move could have a negative impact on school life (1998).

Parental attitudes about the move have also been shown to play a role in the adjustment after the move (Cornille, 1990; Humke & Schaefer, 1995). Relocation challenges each family member individually which in turn affects the way the family members relate and interact with each other (Hausman and Reed, 1991). Research has shown that children mirror their parents’ attitude and adjustment following a move (Humke & Schaefer, 1995; Stroh & Brett, 1990 a & b; Pedersen & Sullivan, 1964). Family adjustment and positive relationships between children and parents are associated with the adjustment of military children (Kelley et al. 2003). Studies have also shown that children are more reliant on family members during a time of transition (Vernberg & Field, 1990) and children whose parents were more actively involved in helping the children adjust showed fewer behavior problems (Gabower, 1960). One study found that families, who identify with the larger military community, indicated by investment in the military “way of life and feeling satisfied with the choice of a military career, exhibit fewer signs of stress during relocation (Pederson & Sullivan, 1964).

Individual Factors

Individual factors can also impact the move of a child to a new school. It appears that children who are involved in the move and feel they have some control over the situation adjust more quickly after the move (Working with military children, 2003). Stroh found that children who had an opportunity to provide input or influence on decisions about moving were better adjusted and showed more self confidence after the move (1990). Gruman found that moving does not have an effect on a child’s social competence from year to year, but as the number of moves increases, social competence declines and the negative effects can be seen at the end of elementary school (2003). Individuals with low self esteem or low self confidence build their security on things and people in their environment and may be less capable of dealing with the emotions associated with relocation (Hausman and Reed, 1991).

Although there is an abundance of research on the effects of mobility, most studies focus on one aspect or consequence of moving. Very few studies and have focused on either military children or elementary school aged children. This study aimed to look at the breadth of issues that result from and effect a population that undergoes multiples moves from the viewpoint of parents and teachers. The research question for this study is as follows: What are the positive and
negative consequences of moving during elementary school and what factors influence children’s’ adjustment after a military-directed move?

Method

Qualitative research was used in order to study people’s experience in their own environment, from their perspective. There is not enough known about the perceptions of teachers, parents, and elementary students who have experienced multiple moves to test hypotheses about this topic. Purposeful sampling provided people who are “information rich and illuminative (Patton, 2003, p. 41) and who are likely to have personal insights about this very particular situation. A semi-structured interview format was used with three focus groups of parents and one focus group of teachers. The Nominal Group Technique was used to prioritize and take advantage of the “pooled judgements” (Dunham, 1998, p. 1) of the answers identified by four focus group questions, for each group.

Participants

The sample population was drawn from active duty members and spouses and teachers of elementary military children in Florida. The parents were volunteers who responded to a letter that their child brought home one week prior to the focus groups. Teachers were informed about the study by the principal and asked to volunteer. The five teachers were all female. Four were European American and one was African American. They ranged in age from 36 to 62, with a mean age of 49. They were currently teaching second grade through fifth grade. Years of teaching experience ranged from three to 28 with a mean of 16.4 years. Years of teaching experience in a school on a military installation ranged from one and a half to 22 years with a mean of 11.4 years.

A total of seven parents participated in the three parent focus groups. Four were spouses of active duty service members and three were active service members. Four were woman and three were men. They ranged in age from 25-50 with a mean age of 35. Four parent participants were European American, two were African American and one was Hispanic. Their children had made zero to three moves while attending elementary school. The parent participants had been at their current location between four and 104 months, with a mean of 33 months. In regards to their last move, two participants had moved 101-500 miles, two had moved 501-1000 miles, and three had moved more than 1000 miles. Before their last move they were given between two and 28 weeks notice, with a mean of 15 weeks. After the move, the active duty military member was
given between zero and 60 days to get their family settled before reporting to work, with a mean of 21 days.

Measure

Focus group questions were developed in order to gather information on what the parents and teachers believe were the consequences of elementary aged school children moves and what factors help children adjust after said moves. The same four questions were asked for each focus group, which included: (a) What do you think are the positive aspects of moving for an elementary school child? (b) What do you think are the negative aspects of moving for an elementary school child? (c) What factors do you think help a child adjust after a move? (d) What factors do you think hinders a child’s adjustment after a move?

Procedures

Procedures for each focus group session were consistent and are outlined in detail in Appendix F. The researcher provided a brief overview of the study. Each participant was given an informed consent form to read and sign. The form included a discussion of confidentiality and the purpose of taping the focus group sessions. In order to collect demographic information, each participant filled out a personal data sheet at the conclusion of the focus group.

The focus group began with a brief overview of the Nominal Group Technique. Each focus group member was then given a sheet of paper with the first question written on top. They were asked to silently generate ideas and record them on the piece of paper provided to them. Each member then read one of their responses while the researcher recorded them on a flipchart. Once everyone had given a response they were each asked for a second or third response until all responses were annotated on the flipchart. The group then clarified and discussed their ideas. Next, they eliminated answers that they felt were repetitive. Each group member then chose three responses that they feel are the most important and ranked them accordingly. The researcher then collected all the data and aggregated the rankings. This process was repeated for all four questions.

Results

The researcher took each participant’s ranking and aggregated the data to get a group ranking. These results appear in Table 1. After collecting and assimilating the data from each of the four groups, two areas were explored. First, how did the teachers’ answers compare to the
parents’ answers? Secondly, how did the focus group answers’ compare to what is available in the literature?

**Positive Aspects of Moving**

When exploring the first question, what are the positive aspects of moving for an elementary school child, there were some obvious similarities between the teachers and parent responses, all four groups mentioned exposure to different cultures. The teachers ranked this fourth overall while two parent groups ranked this first and one group ranked it second. One group of parents as well as the teachers listed and ranked experiences to different teaching approaches and opportunity to develop different learning styles (4th and 2nd respectively). The groups discussed a variety of skills the child may gain through multiple moves. The teachers listed the building of character (5th) and social/emotional maturation (6th) while the parents listed the ability to adapt (3rd) and social skills (2nd).

The teachers and parents also had some different ideas about the positive aspects of moving. In all three of the parent groups, the opportunity to make new friends made the final rankings (ranging from second to fourth) while the teachers did not mention this at all. Chance for new experiences was ranked by two parent groups (2nd and 1st), but was not discussed by teachers. Some original ideas offered by only one group were the increase in the child’s background knowledge (teachers ranked 1st), the chance to take part in family moves (parent group, ranked 5th), an opportunity for the child to reinvent themselves (teachers ranked 3rd), and the exposure to different weather or climate (parents ranked 3rd).

The most obvious difference between the literature and the groups is the number of responses. Very little research has focused on the positive aspects of moving, but when asked, teachers and parents were able to name numerous positive aspects. Most of the items the literature highlighted were also discussed by the groups (chance to reinvent self, chance to learn coping skills, and independence). A few of items that were not brought up were being more flexible, autonomous, and more intellectually oriented. This could be explained by the fact that Mann didn’t see these results due to moving until many years after the move (1972).

**Negative Aspects of Moving**

In regard to the question what are the negative aspects of moving for an elementary school child, parents and teachers agreed on many items. Every group mentioned school in some regards. The negative aspects of school seem to fall into two main categories. The first deals with
a difference in curriculums from school to school, state to state, etc. One parent highlighted this by describing how his first grade child was not required to be able to write while living in Oklahoma, but when they moved, not only was she required to write in first grade, but had to be able to do it well enough to pass the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test (FCAT). The teachers stated that it is just as difficult when a child arrives and is way ahead of his or her classmates.

The second area of school was the difference in expectations which focused more on how the classroom was run, what the teachers’ rules were, and how teachers’ personalities and expectations differ after a move. All the groups mentioned friends in some regard. This ranged from difficulty forming relationships and being accepted (teachers, ranked 4th) to leaving friends behind (parents, ranked 1st, 3rd, and 4th). Another area that saw much agreement between the groups was disruption, change, or lack of familiar routines. Finally, emotional issues were evident across all the groups’ responses. Teachers talked of lack of self esteem (6th), fear of rejection (8th), lack of a comfort zone (9th), stress (unranked), and loneliness and homesickness (unranked). Parents mentioned uncertainty of what is to come (3rd), overall stress (5th), feeling of starting over (3rd), and negative feeling and emotions in general (unranked). There were no areas where the teachers and parents differed, but some unique answers did emerge including: child doesn’t like where we are going to be (parents, 5th), new climate has negative effect on the activity the child is able to participate in (teachers, 5th), and negative impact on communication between parents and child about feelings (parents, 2nd).

The groups frequently talked about academics and school. The focus of the literature in this realm seems to be that children do not perform as well on standardized tests. For the most part, the discussion of the groups was not the performance on the tests, but rather the difference in the curriculums that lead to gap in the child’s preparedness for testing. Contrary to the literature available, none of the groups mentioned behavior as a negative aspect of moving. Making or keeping friends was mentioned by all the groups. This would seem to parallel the literature that children worry about making friends more than anything else (Schaller, 1974).

The groups also discussed a variety of emotional consequences of moves including loneliness and stress. The one thing that emerged that was vastly different from the literature was mentioned by all three parent groups was in the medical arena. One parent talked about how when she lived in Las Vegas one of her children was allergic to the surroundings and when she
moved Florida the other child is allergic. Two of the parent groups mentioned changing doctors/dentist as a negative aspect of moving. This ranked higher and appeared more often than finding a new home.

Factors Related to Adjustment

Because of the nature of the third question, what helps and elementary school child’s adjustment after moving and the fourth question, what hinders and elementary school child’s adjustment, these will be discussed simultaneously. The range of answers and discussion for this question showed more variance for each group than the two previous questions. Compared to the first three questions, the parents offered very few responses to the fourth question and in more than one instance wanted to know if they could say the opposite of everything in question three.

Of the four areas of adjustment (nature of the move, community, family, and child), the majority of the discussion centered on things that fell into the community area. For helping a child adjust, all four groups mentioned getting involved in some respect. Answers ranged from getting involved soon (teachers, 3rd), getting involved in the community through sports and clubs as soon as possible (parents, 2nd), church involvement (parents, 1st), after school programs (parents, 2nd), meeting new neighbors/kids (parents, 3rd), meet kids of own age (parents, unranked), make friends with similar hobbies (parent, unranked), and parents making friends (parents, unranked). The teachers discussed several school factors that also fell into the community area including helping the child to understand the new classroom expectations (1st), students available to welcome a new student (4th), being prepared for a new student (9th), teacher meeting with parents and student (11th), records arriving quickly (unranked), being in a class whose members are used to moving (unranked), and identifying items the child has in common with classmates (unranked). One group of parents felt it was important to choose a school that was attended by other military children, so that their children would be more easily understood and accepted upon arrival.

The replies for hindering adjustment were very similarly listed as failure to make friends (teachers, 4th), lack of understanding or knowledge of rules and/or expectations (teachers, 7th), maintaining friendships (parents, 3rd), being the “new kid” and making friends (parents, 1st), differences in schools both academically and extracurricular activities (parents, 2nd), and lack of group support.
Several groups talked about roles that the parents play in helping their child adjust. Teachers mentioned supportive parents (5th) and loving home environment (6th) as being important to a child’s adjustment. The parent groups listed the topics of family discussion (1st), doing stuff as a family (4th), positive parent attitude (3rd and 5th), and discussing feelings (unranked). Only the teachers mentioned parental factors that hinder adjustment. They included lack of parental involvement (2nd), parental stress which leads to lack of nurturing of the child (unranked), and family separation during a move.

In the area of individual factors of the child that influence the move, only a few items were mentioned as helping a child adjust. The teachers noted that the child should be given an opportunity to share their experiences with the class (2nd); one parent group stated that children should be allowed to help with some decision making (3rd), and another parent group felt that discussing the child’s feelings to lower stress and anxiety was important. Individual factors that were listed as hindering adjustment included fear of failing or not being accepted (teachers, 1st), moving stress (teachers, 3rd), and insecurity as the child faces new things (teachers, 6th). The parents did not list any individual factors that could hinder the child’s adjustment.

Other factors were discussed as helping adjustment. Three groups discussed a child’s sense of security based on familiar belongings or establishing the new surroundings. Teachers listed having some comforts of home during the move (unranked) while parents mentioned establishing a child’s room after the move (5th) and hand carrying some personal items for the child (2nd). Two groups of parents discussed going out and exploring the new area to become familiar with it (1st, unranked). Again, there were some unique factors discussed by individual groups. The teachers discussed a quick return to regular routines (7th), being prepared for the move (10th), and one parent discussed how his family’s home schooling of their child made the adjustment after the move much easier because the expectation didn’t change and there was no change in the curriculum due to the move.

The only discussion about factors that fell in the category of the nature of the move, were discussed as elements that hinder the move. The teachers did not discuss any items in this category; but each parent group touched on at least one. One group discussed the negative impact on adjustment if the child was trying to adjust to a move while also dealing with another adjustment such as a family death, divorce, or birth of a sibling (2nd). Another group discussed the factors of culture shock and or differences in ethnic diversity as situations that could hinder a
child's adjustment after a move. A third group discussed the fact of moving from installation housing to community housing or vice versa after a move as a factor that could hinder adjustment.

The most obvious deviation from the literature was in the discussion about the nature of the move. None of the groups discussed the distance of the move, amount of notice before the move, amount of information on the move, time provide to settle after a move, or number of prior moves. Another interesting response that differed from the literature was the discussion about home schooling and how it made adjustment easier for that child. In all the other areas, community, parents, and individual factors, one or more groups touched on the issues outlined in the literature.

Discussion

By using multiple groups, themes were uncovered which provide insight into the phenomenon of moving for elementary aged children of parents in the military. It is apparent that the perceptions of the parents and teachers were often congruent with current literature. Although at times they may have used different language, in many areas the parents and teachers were cognizant of the issues outlined in by previous research. The results show that parents and teachers have a high level of awareness of what the children are experiencing in moving. On the other hand, the groups also discussed a handful of issues that are not identified in the literature. One theme that emerged was the amount of positive aspects cited by both teachers and parents. While past research seems to have focused on negative outcomes, there appears to be at least a bit of silver lining to the multiple moves of young military children.

Much of the discussion about adjustment, centered on community issues. This could be explained by the fact that military members move into a community of shared experiences, a community that understands the moving phenomenon and has members who have most likely moved several times themselves. The military as a whole is very community oriented, this is a culture all of its own. The military also offers many programs to assist families while they settle into their new home, job, and community. It is possible that this environment and these programs make moving in the military a completely different experience than it would be for non-military families. One could speculate that it is the difference of military life that leads to so many positive aspects of moving for children compared to what is outlined in the literature.
Parents felt that one of the negatives was differences in academic programs from school to school, but when talking about adjustment, they never mentioned problems with records or the process of placing a child in a certain class. Again, this may be because they feel that this is an area that is out of their control.

The groups mentioned very few aspects under the nature of the move in regards to adjustment. This may because these are issues that they feel they have no control over. The participants may have been limited by the wording of the question since it stated “after moving” when responding to what helps and hinders adjustment.

**Implications for Practice**

This research has implications for parents, teachers, counselors, and administrators as well as military supervisors. The results of this descriptive study illustrate that there are several interrelated factors that impact a child when they move during elementary school. The better these dynamics are understood, the more likely it is that the child will receive the services and support they need to make a smooth transition with a minimum of long term negative impacts.

This study has shown that there is much concern by both teachers and parents regarding the differences in curriculums from school to school and how these differences impact children. For administrators and school counselors, this may mean reevaluating how a child arriving at their school is assessed and placed in a classroom. Educating parents on the process of classroom placement may help them be better advocates for their children. For schools with high mobility rates, this may indicate a need for after school tutoring programs to help children catch up with their peers.

For school counselors and mental health professionals, this research shows that the family unit is often under a lot of pressure during a move. It appears that parental attitudes, support, involvement and open lines of communication can help a child’s adjustment. It is important during a move to help a child maintain some level of control though decision making (Cornille, 1993). Some parents may not be aware of or able to do this because of the stress that they are under. Family counseling could potentially ease the stress of moving for both the child and the parent. Another suggestion would be providing information as a handout or website provided by the military or another organization that outlines what a parent can do to ease the adjustment for a child after a move.
Schools may want to consider group counseling for newly arriving students. This could be included as part of an orientation process. This would appear to address two issues. First it would provide an opportunity for newly arriving students to express their feelings and gain support in a safe environment. Secondly, it would give the children an opportunity to make friends.

Implications for Future Research

More research is needed to explore these issues in depth. Case studies or a series of in-depth interviews that outline information on the child, family, school and situation before, after and during a move it would be helpful in clarifying the dynamics of moving and how these factors interrelate. Additionally, a longitudinal study following military students for several years through multiple moves might provide answers addressing the long term effects that multiple moves have on children currently and later in life. A study that looks at this phenomenon from the child’s perspective could also assist in better understanding this phenomenon.

Another area of research may be the areas that came to light in this study that differ from the literature. Potential areas to explore may include the positive aspects of multiple moves for an elementary school aged child, the effects of changing doctors at a young age, how home schooled military children differ in relation to a move, and how the community in the military differs from a regular community with respect to a moving family. Another area that future research could explore is the difference of mobility on military vs. nonmilitary children. Finally, a comprehensive evaluation of variables that put children at risk and/or provide resiliency may be a topic to be explored by future researchers.

Limitations

The aim of this study was to look at the breadth of issues involved with moving for an elementary school child as a military dependent. The goal was to gain a general understanding of the consequences of moving and the multiple aspects that effect adjustment. The answers to these questions were therefore not looked at in depth. This study has limited applicability to other populations and settings. The sample was limited to parents and teachers in Florida. Because of the limited sample used, the results of this study may not be representative of military schools in other areas of the world, other school age students, older children, or non-military schools. Additionally, because of the small size of the individual parent focus groups, the amount of discussion and number of perspectives was limited.
One parent indicated that her children had never moved while in elementary school. However, this participant had moved multiple times as a child in a military family. This could have produced a slightly different point of view and this participant could have reported answers based on inaccurate memories from her childhood.

The researcher acted as the focus group leader. This could have led to researcher bias. In an attempt to control for this, the researcher used a nominal group technique to standardize the focus groups. The individuals in the study were all volunteers which could affect external validity of this study and limits the extent to which this study can be generalized.

“Rip up a seedling apple tree ground the ground, throw it on a moving van, and the tree dies. But dig up the apple tree, wrap its roots in wet burlap, keep it moist and cool until its destination, and the tree grows and thrives. Children like plants thrive after transplanting, if moved with care” (Pollari and Bullock, 1989, p. 113).
### Table 1: Teacher and Parent Answers

#### Question #1: What are the positive aspects of moving for an elementary school child?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Parents #1</th>
<th>Parents #2</th>
<th>Parent #3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Increases child's background knowledge</td>
<td>Opportunity to experience different cultures and people</td>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>New experiences sat new location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Develop different learning styles</td>
<td>Chance to have different experiences</td>
<td>Early start on being a people person</td>
<td>Wordly growth and exposure to various cultures at an early age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>Child has chance to reinvent self</td>
<td>Acquiring the ability to adapt</td>
<td>Weather</td>
<td>Meeting new friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>Acceptance of various cultures/people</td>
<td>Make new friends</td>
<td>New teachers &amp; approaches to teaching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>Develop more well-rounded character</td>
<td>Less prejudiced</td>
<td>Involvement in a family move</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>Social/emotional maturation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Other Answers Not Receiving Final Votes
- Meeting new people in new areas
- Ability (easier) to fit in
- Immediately family becomes closer
- Well rounded
- Provides opportunity to develop social skills
- Chance to shine by displaying knowledge already gained
- More independent/adventurous
- Develop interest/hobbies based on experiences

### Question #2: What are the negative aspects of moving for an elementary school child?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Parents #1</th>
<th>Parents #2</th>
<th>Parent #3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Behind or ahead academically</td>
<td>Bad if in middle of the school year</td>
<td>Scholastics-different levels</td>
<td>Leaving friends/teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Readjustment period for teacher's personality/expectations</td>
<td>Hard to adapt to different schools</td>
<td>Change of routine</td>
<td>Lack of communication w/parents about feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>Difficult to move from curriculum to curriculum</td>
<td>Feeling to starting over</td>
<td>Leaving friends and family</td>
<td>Uncertainty of what is coming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>Forming friendships difficult (acceptance)</td>
<td>Feel sad about friends left behind</td>
<td>Leaving familiar living arrangements and schedules</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>New climate and its effect on activities</td>
<td>May not like where we are going to be</td>
<td>Overall stress</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>Lack of self esteem</td>
<td></td>
<td>Find new doctors and dentists</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th</td>
<td>No longer has comfort zone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td>Fear of rejection</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Other Answers Not Receiving Final Votes
- Unable to participate in extracurricular activities
- Changing doctors
- Teacher rules
- Planning the move & having yard sale
- Cost=Family stress=child stress
- Change in surroundings
- Adjustment to new community and school
- Relationships that help child decide who they are are jeopardized
- Medical issues
- Packing up possessions for undetermined amount of time
- Disruption of normal schedule
- Unsettled home environment, lack of routine
- Finding new home
- Feelings and emotions
### Table 1 Teacher and Parent Answers

**Question #3: What helps an elementary school child’s adjustment after a move?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Parents #1</th>
<th>Parents #2</th>
<th>Parents #3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Understand expectations</td>
<td>Lots of family discussion</td>
<td>Church</td>
<td>Getting used to new area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Opportunity to share experiences w/class</td>
<td>Getting involved in the community ASAP (sports/clubs)</td>
<td>After school programs</td>
<td>Hand carry personal items for child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>Getting them involved soon</td>
<td>Allow children to help with some decision making</td>
<td>Parent’s attitude about the move</td>
<td>Meet new neighbors/kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>Students to welcome new student</td>
<td>Going out and doing fun stuff together</td>
<td>Added responsibility</td>
<td>Plan a trip to an amusement park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>Supportive parents</td>
<td>Positive parenting/positive children</td>
<td>Establish child’s room</td>
<td>Home school children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question #4: What hinders an elementary school child’s adjustment after moving?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Parents #1</th>
<th>Parents #2</th>
<th>Parents #3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Child’s fear of failing or not being accepted</td>
<td>Leaving the familiar (house, friends, school, etc)</td>
<td>Cultures-culture shock</td>
<td>Being “new kid” and making friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Lack of parental involvement</td>
<td>If dealing with another adjustment</td>
<td>Medical issues</td>
<td>Differences in schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(death, divorce, sibling)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(academically and extracurricular)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>Moving stress, lack of familiar</td>
<td>Maintaining relationships</td>
<td>Lack of things to do (video games,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>computer, DVD upon arrival</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>Failure to make new friends</td>
<td>Ethnic diversity</td>
<td>Lack of group support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>Child not held responsible for actions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>Insecurity as face new things</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th</td>
<td>Lack of understanding or knowledge of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of rules/expectations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Other Answers Not Receiving Final Votes**

- Records arrive quickly
- Meeting kids of same age at new location
- Making friends with same hobbies
- Discuss feelings to lower stress/anxiety
- Being in class members used to moving
- Choosing school attended by other military children
- Parents’ friendships with others
- Moving into permanent housing quickly
- Exploring area to become familiar with it
- Having some comforts of home
- Teacher identifying what child has in common
- Allow child to express feelings

- Child’s fear of failing or not being accepted
- Leaving the familiar (house, friends, school, etc)
- Cultures-culture shock
- Being “new kid” and making friends
- Lack of understanding or knowledge of rules/expectations
- Other Answers Not Receiving Final Votes
APPENDIX A

Florida State University Human Subjects Application
The Federal Government and University policy require that the use of human subjects in research be monitored by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The following information must be provided when humans are used in research studies, whether internally funded, extramurally funded or unfunded. Research in which humans are used may not be performed in the absence of IRB approval.

**PLEASE COMPLETE AND SUBMIT PAGES 1 AND 2 plus YOUR ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS (on page 3) IN TYPEWRITTEN FORM TO:**

HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE, Mail Code 2763, or
2035 E. Paul Dirac Drive, Box 15
100 Sliger Bldg., Innovation Park
Tallahassee, FL  32310

---

Researcher:  **Kimberly A. Semelroth**  
Date:  **October 24, 2004**

**Project Title:**  **Mobility of Military Children.**

---

**Project Period (starting/ending dates):**  **September 2004- March 2005**

---

**Position in University (faculty, etc.) If student, please indicate FSU Faculty Advisor:**

**James Sampson, PhD**

---

**Department:**  **EPLS**

---

**Telephone:**  **(850) 656-7378**  
**E-Mail Address:**  **ksemelroth@earthlink.net**  
(where you can be reached in case of a problem with your application)

---

**Mailing Address (where your approval will be mailed):**

1900 Centre Pointe Blvd, Apt 74, Tallahassee, FL 32308

---

**Project is (please check one):**

- dissertation  
- teaching  
- thesis  
- other

**Project is:**

- unfunded  
- funded  
(if funded, please complete the following):

  **Funding Agency (actual/potential):**
  1.  
  2.  

  **Contract/Grant No. (if applicable):**

---

**FOR EVALUATION OF YOUR PROJECT, PLEASE CHECK THE FOLLOWING WHICH APPLY:**

- Mentally or Physically Challenged Subjects
- Children or Minor Subjects (under 18 years old)
- Prisoners, Parolees or Incarcerated Subjects
- Filming, Video or Audio Recording of Subjects
- Questionnaires or Survey(s) to be administered
- Review of Data Banks, Archives or Medical Records
- Oral History
- Subjects' major language is not English
- Involves Deception (if yes, fully describe at Question No. 7)
- Exclusion of Women or Children Subjects (must explain why they are being excluded)

**Subjects studied at FSU**

- Subjects studied at non-FSU location(s)
- Students as Subjects
- Employees as Subjects
- Pregnant Subjects
- Fetal, placental or surgical pathology tissue(s)
- Involves Blood Samples (fingerpricks/venipuncture, etc.)
- Subjects to be paid

---

This document is available in alternative format upon request by calling (904) 644-8633
Survey Techniques: Check applicable category if the only involvement of human subjects will be in one or more of the following categories:

__________ Research on normal educational practices in commonly accepted educational settings

__________ Research involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement)

X ________ Research involving survey or interview procedures (if checked, please see below)

__________ Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, specimens

If research involves use of survey or interview procedures to be performed, indicate:

1. Responses will be recorded in such a manner that human subjects cannot be identified, by persons other than the researcher, either directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.  
   X yes ___ no

2. Would subject’s responses, if they became known outside the research, reasonably place the subject at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subject’s financial standing or employability. 
   ___yes X no

3. The research deals with sensitive aspects of the subject’s own behavior, such as illegal conduct, drug use, sexual behavior, or use of alcohol. 
   ___yes X no

Does Research Involve Greater Than Minimal Risk to Human Subjects? ________ Yes X ______ No
(If yes, explain in full at Question No. 2)

"Minimal Risk" means that the risks of harm anticipated in the proposed research are not greater, considering probability and magnitude, than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.

I HAVE READ THE FLORIDA STATE LETTER OF ASSURANCE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH AND AGREE TO ABIDE BY IT. I ALSO AGREE TO REPORT ANY SIGNIFICANT AND RELEVANT CHANGES IN PROCEDURES AND INSTRUMENTS AS THEY RELATE TO SUBJECTS TO THE CHAIR, HUMAN SUBJECTS COMMITTEE, OFFICE OF RESEARCH.

RESEARCHER (signature) (Date)

FSU FACULTY ADVISOR (signature) (Date)  
(Application will not be processed without Advisor’s signature)

Page 2 Human Subjects Application (rev. 11-99)
1. The sample population will be drawn from parents and teachers of elementary children who attend school on post at Fort Benning, Georgia. The parents will be notified of the focus group date, time and location by a letter which their student will bring home (attached). This letter which will encompass a brief description of the study will be sent home one month before the focus groups is scheduled. Parents and teachers will be asked to return the bottom half of the letter indicating whether they will or will not attend and on which day. Teachers will receive a similar letter inviting them to take part in a focus group (attached). The goal is to have one focus group for teachers with 6-10 teachers attending and two focus groups for parents with 6-10 parents in each group. If needed, a second letter requesting additional volunteers may be sent two weeks prior to the focus groups. If too many parents and teachers volunteer, additional focus groups will be established. At the beginning of the focus group, I will disseminate and explain the consent forms and explain that all of the responses given by the participants are completely confidential and no identifying information will be associated with their answers. The group will then be asked a series of questions (attached). Answers will be audio recorded for greatest accuracy. At the end of the focus group, each individual will be asked to fill out a personal data sheet (attached).

2. No physical risks exist in the study. The focus groups will be conducted in a room provided by the school or the Army post. All tapes and personal data sheets will be kept in a secure file cabinet in Dr. Sampson’s research office located in the University Center.

3. I will go to Fort Benning to conduct the focus groups.
   A) I will be obtaining the informed consent the day of data collection.
   B) The subjects will be asked to participate one month prior to the focus group. Subjects will sign the consent form at the beginning of the focus group.
   C) No children will be used in this study.

4. I have been in contact with Gail Wilson, Public Relations, and Fort Benning Schools and am pending approval from the Deputy Director of Department of Defense Schools Stateside to conduct my study.
5. Yes, confidentiality of all subjects will be maintained.
6. No, the research is not controversial and my project should not generate public concern.
7. Upon completion of the experiment, I will return to the school and will conduct a workshop session on the results of my research and ways that parents and teachers can help children adjust before and after moving.
Informed Consent Form

I voluntarily agree to participate in the research project entitled “Mobility and Military Children.”

Under the direct supervision of James Sampson, Ph.D., this research project is being conducted by Captain Kimberly Semelroth, who is a master’s level student in the Educational Psychology and Learning Systems Department at Florida State University. I understand the purpose of her research project is to better understand the factors that effect, and the consequences of, mobility of military children. I also understand that I will be asked to participate in a focus group, discussing my experiences and those of my children or my students, who have moved due to a change in their parent’s duty station. I understand that the information gathered will become part of the data analysis for the study and may contribute to published research reports and presentations.

This study will be explained to all participants and I will be asked to participate voluntarily on my own. My participation should require no more than two hours to complete. Any questions I have will be answered by the researcher. Upon completion of the study I will be able to attend a free workshop on how parents and teachers can help children before and after moving.

I understand that I will be tape recorded by the researcher in order for her to obtain the most accurate data from the focus group. I understand that only the researcher, her professor and her professional transcriber will have access to these tapes. I am also aware that I am to fill out a personal data sheet, which will be separated from my responses in insure confidentiality. The completed personal data sheets and tapes from the focus group will be kept in a locked file cabinet in Dr. James Sampson’s office in the Career Center at Florida State University. I understand all responses and personal information will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law and only group results will be reported. The tapes from this study will be destroyed by May 1, 2005.

I understand that this consent may be withdrawn at any time during the study without prejudice or penalty. I have been given the right to ask and have answered any inquiry concerning the study.

I understand that I may contact Dr. James Sampson, Florida State University, College of Education, (850) 644-2490 or Kimberly Semelroth, graduate student at Florida State University, (850) 656-7378, for answers to questions about this research or my rights as a participant.

If I have further questions about my rights as a participant in this research, or if I feel that I have been placed at risk, I can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Committee, Institutional Review Board, through the Office of the Vice President for Research, at (850) 644-8633.

I have read and understand this consent form and agree to participate in the research study.

__________________________________________________________________________
Participant’s Name

__________________________________________________________________________
Date

__________________________________________________________________________
Participant’s Signature
March 25, 2005

Dear Parents:

My name is Captain Kim Semelroth. I am an active duty Army Captain. I am currently attending Florida State University working on a Master's and Specialist degree in Counseling and Human Systems. When I finish my degree in May, I will be teaching psychology at West Point.

As a part of my degree, I am conducting research and writing a thesis on “Mobility and Military Children.” The purpose of the research is to better understand the factors that effect, and the consequences of, mobility of military children.

I am asking for parent volunteers to take part in a focus group discussions on Thursday, February 10th at the Tyndall Elementary Media Center from 11:30-1:30 or 1:45-3:45. The groups will last no more than two hours and refreshments will be provided.

If you have any questions about this research, you may contact me at (850) 656-7378 or semelrothk@earthlink.net.

Please indicate your intentions below and have your child return the slip to his/her classroom teacher no later than Thursday February 3rd. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Kimberly A. Semelroth
Captain, U.S. Army

Libbie Pippin
Principal, Tyndall Elementary School

________________________________________________________________________________________

Name__________________________________  Phone Number _______________________

_______ I will attend the focus group on Thursday, February 10th 11:30-1:30 at Tyndall Media Center.

_______ I will attend the focus group on Thursday, February 10th 1:45-3:45 at Tyndall Media Center.

_______ I am interested in participating, but can not make either focus group.

_______ I do not wish to participate in the focus group.

March 25, 2005
Dear Teachers:

My name is Captain Kim Semelroth. I am an active duty Army Captain. I am currently attending Florida State University working on a Master's and Specialist degree in Counseling and Human Systems. When I finish my degree in May, I will be teaching psychology at West Point.

As a part of my degree, I am conducting research and writing a thesis on “Mobility and Military Children.” The purpose of the research is to better understand the factors that effect, and the consequences of, mobility of military children.

I am asking for volunteers to take part in a focus group discussion on (day/date/time) at (location). The group will last no more than two hours and refreshments will be provided.

If you have any questions about this research, you may contact me at (850) 656-7378 or semelrothk@earthlink.net.

Please indicate your intentions below and return the slip to the secretary no later than (day/date). Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Kimberly A. Semelroth
Captain, U.S. Army

______________________________________________________________________________________________

Name__________________________________ Grade
Level__________________________

________ I will attend the focus group on (day/date/time) at (location).

________ I am interested in participating, but can not make the scheduled focus group.

________ I do not wish to participate in the focus group.
Personal Data Sheet (Parent)

What is your age?________

Are you   _____male   _____female?

What ethnic group do you identify with?____________________

How many times have you moved since you (or your spouse) have been an active
duty member?_____________

How many times did you move when you were not an active duty service member
as a child?____

How many times did you move when you were not an active duty service member
as an adult?____

How many months has it been since your last move?________

What was the distance from your last duty station to your current one?
_____ less than 50 miles
_____ 50-100 miles _____ 101-500 miles _____ 501-1000 miles _____ more
than 1000 miles

Was your most recent move
_____ from within the state  ____ from out of state within the U.S.
_____ from overseas

How many children are in your household?_______

What are their ages? _______

What is their gender?_____

How many moves have your children made while attending elementary school
while you (or your spouse) were on active duty in the military? _______

What is your (your spouse’s) rank?_____

How far is your closest relative?
_____ within the community/city  ____ within the state  ____ out
of state

How much notice did you have before your last move?_______________

After your last move, how much time did the military member have to get
settled before reporting to work?__________

What extracurricular activities does your child participate
in?________________________________

Are you a single parent?   Yes    No
Date ________
Subject # ______

**Personal Data Sheet (Teacher)**

What is your age?______
Are you ____male ____female?
What is ethnic group do you identify with?____________________
How many years have you been teaching?____________
How many years have you been teaching on post?____________
How many years have you been teaching on this post?___________
What grade level are you currently teaching?___________
What grade levels have you taught in the past?___________
On average, what percentage of student turn over do you have during the school year? _____
How much notice do you typically have before a child leaves?___________
How much notice do you typically have before a new child arrives?___________
How many meetings do you average with parents directly related to a move (not regular parent-teacher conferences)? _____________
**Focus Group Questions (Parents)**

What do you think are the positive aspects of moving for your elementary school child?

What do you think are the negative aspects of moving for your elementary school child?

What factors do you think helps your child adjust more after a move?

What factors do you think hinders your child’s adjustment after a move?
Focus Group Questions (Teachers)

What do you think are the positive aspects of moving an elementary school child?

What do you think are the negative aspects of moving an elementary school child?

What factors do you think helps a child adjust more after a move?

What factors do you think hinders a child’s adjustment after a move?
APPENDIX B

Amendment to Original Human Subjects Application
To: Office of the Vice President for Research  
       Human Subjects Committee  

From: Kimberly Semelroth  

Re: Approval for study “Mobility and Military Children”  

I recently received approval to commence my study entitled “Mobility and Military Children.” While the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) did not have a problem with my study, the Superintendent of the Georgia/Alabama School District declined to participate. Therefore, I need to amend my application in two ways. First, I would like to conduct my study at an Air Force Base in Florida. Secondly I would like to continue to use my consent form that was originally approved. A second consent was approved to meet DoDEA’s requirements, but is no longer applicable.  

I am hoping to get quick approval on this very minor change so I can start to gather my data.  

Thank you for your assistance,  

Kimberly Semelroth
APPENDIX C

Human Subjects Approval
APPROVAL MEMORANDUM

Date: 11/19/2004

To: Kimberly Semelroth
1900 Centre Pointe Blvd., Apt 74
Tallahassee, FL 32308

From: John Tomkowiak, Chair

Dept.: EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY AND LEARNING SYSTEMS

Re: Use of Human Subjects in Research
Mobility of Military Children

The forms that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the proposal referenced above have been reviewed by the Secretary, the Chair, and two members of the Human Subjects Committee. Your project is determined to be Exempt per 45 CFR § 46.101(b) 2 and has been approved by an accelerated review process.

The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals, which may be required.

If the project has not been completed by 11/18/2005 you must request renewed approval for continuation of the project.

You are advised that any change in protocol in this project must be approved by resubmission of the project to the Committee for approval. Also, the principal investigator must promptly report, in writing, any unexpected problems causing risks to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the chairman of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols of such investigations as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Protection from Research Risks. The Assurance Number is IRB00000446.

Cc: James Sampson
HSC No. 2004.796
APPROVAL MEMORANDUM (for change in research protocol)

Date: 1/24/2005

To:
Kimberly Semeiroth
1900 Centre Pointe Blvd., Apt 74
Tallahassee, FL 32308

Dept: EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY AND LEARNING SYSTEMS

From: John Tomkowiak, Chair

Re: Use of Human subjects in Research
Project entitled: Mobility of Military Children

The memorandum that you submitted to this office in regard to the requested change in your research protocol for the above-referenced project have been reviewed and approved. Thank you for informing the Committee of this change.

A reminder that if the project has not been completed by 11/18/2005, you must request renewed approval for continuation of the project.

By copy of this memorandum, the chairman of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols of such investigations as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Protection from Research Risks. The Assurance Number is IRB00000446.

cc: James Sampson
APPLICATION NO. 2004.796
APPENDIX D

Bay District School Application
Dear Ms. Tucker,

My name is Captain Kim Semelroth. I am an active duty Army Captain. I am currently attending Florida State University working on a Master’s and Specialist degree in Counseling and Human Systems. When I finish my degree in May, I will be teaching psychology at West Point.

As a part of my degree, I would like to conduct research and write a thesis on “Mobility and Military Children.” The purpose of the research is to better understand the factors that effect, and the consequences of, mobility of military children. This study has been approved by the Florida State Institutional Review Board.

If you have any questions about my proposal, I can be reached via email at semelrothk@earthlink.net or by phone (850)65-7378 (home), (850)322-7146 (cell). You may also contact Dr. Jim Sampson, my faculty supervisor, at JSampson@admin.fsu.edu or (850) 644-1286.

Thank you for your assistance,

Kimberly A. Semelroth
Captain, US Army
1900 Centre Pointe Blvd #74
Tallahassee, FL 32308
Bay School District

Description of materials to be distributed and how distribution will be conducted:

I would like to conduct three focus groups consisting of parents and teachers. The parents will be notified of the focus group date, time and location by a letter which their student will bring home (attached). This letter which will encompass a brief description of the study will be sent home a couple of weeks before the focus groups are scheduled. Parents and teachers will be asked to return the bottom half of the letter indicating whether they will or will not attend and on which day. Teachers will receive a similar letter inviting them to take part in a focus group (attached). The goal is to have one focus group for teachers with 6-10 teachers attending and two focus groups for parents with 6-10 parents in each group. If needed, a second letter requesting additional volunteers may be sent prior to the focus groups. If too many parents and teachers volunteer, additional focus groups will be established. At the beginning of the focus group, I will disseminate and explain the consent forms and explain that all of the responses given by the participants are completely confidential and no identifying information will be associated with their answers. The group will then be asked a series of questions (attached) which they will discuss. Answers will be audio recorded for greatest accuracy. At the end of the focus group, each individual will be asked to fill out a personal data sheet (attached).
Date Received

BAY DISTRICT SCHOOLS
Public Information Office
Phone: (850)872-4269 Fax: (850) 747-5367

Request to Distribute Literature

Approval of this request is based on compliance with Bay District School Board Policies 2.113, 2.116 and 2.121 and does not represent endorsement by the Superintendent or other officials of Bay District Schools.

Directions:

1. Complete this form and submit it to the Public Information Office in the Nelson Administrative Building with a copy of the materials to be distributed. You are required to receive approval from the District office prior to contacting schools. You must submit this form three school days prior to the requested distribution date.

2. Take Request to Distribute Literature to each school principal for approval. Please provide a copy of this form to accompany any materials that are delivered to the school.

3. The correct number of flyers, applications or brochures must be provided for distribution. The number needed to distribute to classroom teachers may be obtained by contacting the individual schools. Distribution of materials to students would be sorted into groups of 30 per classroom.

Name: Kim Semelroth
Organization:

Address: 1900 Centre Pointe Blvd, Apt 74, Tallahassee, FL 32308
Phone: 850-656-7378 Fax: 850-678-2117

Description of materials to be distributed (Samples must be attached to this request):

See attached.

School/sites requested: Tyndall Elementary

Dates of distribution: 2-1-05

How will distribution be conducted (i.e. personally deliver, through district courier)?

See attached

Names of persons who will distribute materials: Kim Semelroth

Will you have direct contact with students? No

Approved ☐ Not Approved: ____________ Date: ____________

(Superintendent or Designee)

Approved ☐ Not Approved: ____________ Date: ____________

(Principal)
APPENDIX E

Tyndall Elementary School Correspondence
Dear Ms. Pippin,

My name is Captain Kim Semelroth. I am an active duty Army Captain. I am currently attending Florida State University working on a Master’s and Specialist degree in Counseling and Human Systems. When I finish my degree in May, I will be teaching psychology at West Point.

As a part of my degree, I would like to conduct research and write a thesis on “Mobility and Military Children.” The purpose of the research is to better understand the factors that effect, and the consequences of, mobility of military children. This study has been approved by the Florida State Institutional Review Board and by the Bay District Schools Superintendent.

If you have any questions about my proposal, I can be reached via email at semelrothk@earthlink.net or by phone (850)65-7378 (home), (850)322-7146 (cell). You may also contact Dr. Jim Sampson, my faculty supervisor, at JSampson@admin.fsu.edu or (850) 644-1286.

Thank you for your assistance,

Kimberly A. Semelroth
Captain, US Army
1900 Centre Pointe Blvd #74
Tallahassee, FL 32308
Date Received

BAY DISTRICT SCHOOLS
Public Information Office
Phone: (850) 872-4269 Fax: (850) 747-5367

Request to Distribute Literature
Approval of this request is based on compliance with Bay District School Board Policies 2.113, 2.116 and 2.121 and does not represent endorsement by the Superintendent or other officials of Bay District Schools.

Directions:
1. Complete this form and submit it to the Public Information Office in the Nelson Administrative Building with a copy of the materials to be distributed. You are required to receive approval from the District office prior to contacting schools. You must submit this form three school days prior to the requested distribution date.
2. Take Request to Distribute Literature to each school principal for approval. Please provide a copy of this form to accompany any materials that are delivered to the school.
3. The correct number of flyers, applications or brochures must be provided for distribution. The number needed to distribute to classroom teachers may be obtained by contacting the individual schools. Distribution of materials to students would be sorted into groups of 30 per classroom.

Name: Kim Semelroth
Organization: 
Address: 1900 Centre Points Blvd, Apt 74, Tallahassee, FL 32308
Phone: 850-656-7318 Fax: 850-678-2117

Description of materials to be distributed (Samples must be attached to this request): See attached.

School sites requested: Tyndall Elementary

Dates of distribution: 2-1-05

How will distribution be conducted (i.e. personally deliver, through district courier)? See attached

Names of persons who will distribute materials: Kim Semelroth

Will you have direct contact with students? No

☐ Approved ☐ Not Approved

(Supervisor or Designee) Date: 01/19/05

☐ Approved ☐ Not Approved

(Principal) Date: 

Comments: OK

Signature: }

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APPENDIX F

Step-by-Step Outline of Procedures
Step-by-Step Outline of Procedures

1. Designed study.
2. Request approval from Human Subjects Committee.
3. Receive approval from Human Subjects Committee.
4. Contact Bay District Schools.
5. Submit Bay District Schools Request to Distribute Literature.
6. Receive approval from Bay District Schools.
7. Contact Tyndall Elementary School.
8. Receive approval from Tyndall Elementary School.
9. Tyndall Elementary School Principal asks for teacher volunteers for the teacher focus group at staff meeting. Five teachers volunteer, Principal notifies researcher.
10. Researcher and Principal schedule teacher focus group.
11. Teacher focus group held.
   a. Researcher arrives early to set up area in the school library.
   b. Teachers arrive, introductions/name tags, snacks provided, teachers are seated around one table with researcher and butcher paper at one end.
   c. Group proceeds as outlined in the script (Appendix G).
   d. Teachers are asked to fill out a personal data sheet.
   e. Final rankings for all four questions are provided.
   f. Teachers are thanked for their participation and focus group is concluded.
12. Principal and researcher decide on times/location for parent focus groups.
13. Principal sends letter home with each student asking if parents to volunteer to participate in focus group.
14. Letters are returned to school. Principal and researcher keep in contact about number of parents that have volunteered to participate.
15. Parent focus groups held
   a. Researcher arrives early to set up area in the parent resource center.
   b. Parents arrive, introductions/name tags, snacks provided, parents are seated at a table facing researcher and butcher paper.
   c. Group proceeds as outlined in the script (Appendix G).
   d. Parents are asked to fill out a personal data sheet.
   e. Final rankings for all four questions are provided.
   f. Parents are thanked for their participation and focus group is concluded.
APPENDIX G

Researcher’s Script Used at the Focus Groups
Good afternoon. To begin, I would like to thank you all for being here. I know that you’ve had a long day and you have busy schedules and I appreciate the fact that you volunteered to help me out.

I am Kim Semelroth. I am an active duty Army Captain. I am currently attending Florida State working on a degree focusing on Mental Health Counseling. When I finish my degree, I will be teaching psychology at West Point. The research I am conducting on Mobility and Military Children is to meet my thesis requirement and hopefully provide more information to parents, teachers, and administrators.

Before we begin, I need each of you to sign an informed consent form. I am giving each of you tow copies. One is for you to fill out and return to me and the second one is for you to keep. A few things I would like to highlight in the informed consent. First is that you have volunteered and you are free to leave at anytime. It states there the name of my faculty supervisor and a little bit about the study. Today’s group will be audio taped and the information gathered from this group may be used in published research report. You will also be asked to fill out a personal data sheet at the conclusion of the group. However, I want to highlight that the tapes and data sheets will be secured and only seen by my professor myself, and a professional transcriber and only group results will be reported. Listed on the form is the contact information for my professor, the Florida State Human Subjects Committee, and myself in case you have any questions after we leave today. Are there any questions at this time?

This afternoon, we will be using a focus group technique known as nominal group technique to look at four questions. This technique is a very structured group technique consisting of six steps. The first step is silent idea generation where I will ask each of you to individually answer the question and write down your answers. Then we will each report your ideas. Then we will clarify any ideas that are unclear, discuss the ideas, decide if any of the ideas could be combined, and finally each of you will vote on which three ideas you feel are the most important. I will provide more specifics on each step as we proceed.

If there are no questions, let’s get started. The first question we will be discussing is: what do you think are the positive aspects of moving for an elementary school child? Please think about this question and write your answers on the sheet of paper provided.

It looks as if everyone is done, so let’s move on. If you think of any other ideas, please feel free to write them down. I am now going to ask each of you to report one idea at a time. We will go around the room several times. If you do not have an idea to report, just state pass and we will move on the next person.

Ok, we are going to stop there. Now, is there anything written up her that someone would like more clarification on?

Is there any discussion about these ideas?

Are there any of these items that you think say the same thing that maybe could be combined?
Ok, Now I would like each of you to flip over your paper and list from top to bottom what you feel are the three most important ideas form the list. The first answer you write down should be the most important, followed by the second most important, and finally the third most important. Once everyone is done, please pass your papers in. At the very end of the group, I will provide you with some overall results based on your votes.

Now we will move on to the second question: What do you think are the negative aspects of moving for an elementary school child? Again, we will start with the silent idea generation.

Repeat for all six steps on all four questions.
REFERENCES


Many change school frequently, harming their education (GAO/HEHS-94-25). Washington, D.C.


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Captain Kimberly Semelroth was born February 15, 1973 in Iowa City, Iowa. She began her undergraduate studies in 1991 at Northeast Missouri State University (Truman State) in Kirksville, Missouri. In 1995, she graduated with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Biology and earned her commission as an Army Second Lieutenant through the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) Program.

Captain Semelroth has severed at Fort Gordon, Georgia; Kitzingen, Germany; Taszar, Hungary; Fort Leavenworth, Kansas; and Fort Sill, Oklahoma. While stationed in Germany and Georgia, she completed a Masters Degree in Education and is a certified general science and biology teacher.

Captain Semelroth is currently attending Florida State University in pursuit of a Master of Science and Educational Specialist degree in Counseling and Human Systems as part of the Army’s Advanced Civil School Program (ACS). When she completes her degree, she will work as a psychology instructor at the United States Military Academy at West Point.

Captain Semelroth has long been interested in working with children and adolescents. Her experiences include serving as an intern at DISC Village, Inc. counseling adolescent substance abusers, as a coordinator for the soldier/student mentor program at Fort Sill, as a camp counselor, volunteering and teaching at the Iowa school for the blind, as a brownie troop assistant, and coaching softball and baseball.

Although she only moved once as a child (at age three), was not a child of a military family, and has no children of her own, Captain Semelroth is very interested in this phenomenon as it relevant to many of the military families that she works with each day.