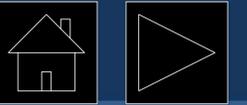


# Comparing the Post-Secondary Plans and Aspiration of Military- and Nonmilitary Connected Children Attending Military-Connected Public Schools

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## BACKGROUND

- Military service impacts more than two million youth, a figure that includes the children of active duty military personnel, reservists, and members of the National Guard. When the children of post-9/11 military veterans are included, estimates increase to four to five million children.
- Nationwide, more than 600 public school districts serve children with a parent or parents currently serving on active duty. Potentially thousands of school districts, however, are thought to enroll children from military families when the children of military veterans are taken into consideration.
- Efforts to support military children and families have been amplified in recent years and reflect a series of overarching goals, including but not limited to: preparing students for success inside and outside of the classroom; minimizing the effects of war, deployment and mobility; preparing students for the future; and keeping military families strong.
- Despite these overarching goals, public school educators know very little empirically about how children from military families attending define success and/or their aspirations for the future. The current study addresses the latter. More specifically, the current study examines the relationship between military-connectedness (i.e., who serves), number of times a family member has been deployed (within the past ten years), number of school moves (within the past five years), and the post-secondary plans and aspirations of children from military and nonmilitary families.

## METHODS

- Data for this study were collected during the 2010-2011 school year as part of the California Healthy Kids Survey.
- Subsample of 2,811 secondary school students, mostly 7<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> graders from the San Diego region, selected for inclusion based on their completion of the core module, the military-connected school module, and the resilience and youth development module.
- Dependent Variables: Plans to attend college or obtain some other form of post-secondary education after high school (College Plans); desire to join the military (Join Military), and dual plans/aspirations (Dual Plans/Aspirations).
- Independent Variables: Military-connectedness (1=none, 2=parent currently serving, and 3=sibling currently serving), number of times a family member has been deployed in the past ten years (1=none, 2=one, and 3=two or more), and number of school moves experienced in the past five years (1=did not change schools, 2=one, and 3=two or more).
- Analyses: Frequency distributions and cross-classification tables ( $\chi^2$  analyses) used to compare post-secondary plans and aspirations of military- and nonmilitary connected students by military-connectedness, number of family deployments, and number of school moves. Analyses were completed using IBM SPSS Version 20.

## RESULTS

- Plans to attend college are statistically similar for military- and nonmilitary connected children ( $p=0.702$ ).
- When asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statement, “I plan to go to college or some other school after high school,” approximately 89 percent ( $n=253$ ) of respondents with a parent currently serving in the military and 86 percent ( $n=99$ ) of respondents with a sibling currently serving responded that the statement was “pretty much true/very much true.” Approximately 88 percent ( $n=1,689$ ) of respondents with neither a parent nor a sibling currently serving in the military indicated the same level of agreement.
- No statistical differences were found by number of deployments ( $p=XXX$ ) or school moves ( $p=XXX$ ).
- While findings related to respondents’ college plans were statistically similar overall, the data do reveal subtle differences. Respondents with a parent currently serving in the military report slighter higher college aspirations when compared to those with a sibling currently serving in the military. When asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statement “I plan to go to college or some other school after high school, respondents who have experienced a single family deployment were slightly less likely to endorse “pretty much true/very much true,” in comparison to respondents who have not experienced a family deployment or those who have experienced two or more family deployments. Respondents who have changed schools at least once were also slightly less likely to endorse “pretty much true/very much true,” in comparison to those who have not changed schools.
- Unlike plans to attend college, desire to join the military does vary significantly by military-connectedness ( $p=0.00$ ) and number of family deployments ( $p=0.00$ ), and number of school moves ( $p = 0.00$ ).

Military-Connectedness (Current)	Join Military		$\chi^2$	df
	Not At All True/ A Little True	Pretty Much True/Very Much True		
No Parent/Sibling	1595 (85.3)	<b>275 (14.7)</b>	38.37*	2
Parent	215 (75.2)	71 (24.8)	*	
Sibling	78 (67.8)	<b>37 (32.3)</b>		

Note: \*\*  $p \leq .01$  Percentage values (within military-connectedness) appear in parentheses.

Number of Deployments (Past 10 Years)	Join Military		$\chi^2$	df
	Not At All True/ A Little True	Pretty Much True/Very Much True		
None	1152 (86.5)	<b>180 (13.5)</b>	35.57*	2
One	148 (78.3)	41 (21.7)	*	
Two or More	271 (74.0)	<b>95 (26.0)</b>		

Note: \*\*  $p \leq .01$  Percentage values (within number of deployments) appear in parentheses.

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## RESULTS (CONTINUED)

- Desire to join the military also varies significantly number of school moves ( $p = 0.00$ ).

Number of School Moves (Past 5 Years)	Join Military		$\chi^2$	df
	Not At All True/A Little True	Pretty Much True/Very Much True		
Did Not Change Schools	1122 (86.9)	<b>169 (13.1)</b>	39.79*	2
One	315 (80.6)	76 (19.4)	*	
Two or More	347 (74.5)	<b>119 (25.5)</b>		

Note: \*\*  $p \leq .01$  Percentage values (within number of school moves) appear in parentheses.

- Similar to respondents' desire to join the military, findings suggest that respondents' likelihood of reporting dual plans and aspirations does vary significantly by military-connectedness ( $p=XXX$ ), number of family deployments ( $p=XXX$ ), and number of school moves ( $p=XXX$ ).

Military-Connectedness (Current)	Dual Aspirations		$\chi^2$	df
	No	Yes		
No Parent/Sibling	1498 (87.7)	<b>210 (12.3)</b>	24.65*	2
Parent	206 (80.2)	51 (19.8)	*	
Sibling	79 (72.8)	<b>28 (26.2)</b>		

Note: \*\*  $p \leq .01$  Percentage values (within military-connectedness) appear in parentheses.

Number of School Moves (Past 5 Years)	Dual Aspirations		$\chi^2$	df
	No	Yes		
Did Not Change Schools	1498 (87.7)	<b>210 (12.3)</b>	24.65*	2
One	206 (80.2)	51 (19.8)	*	
Sibling	79 (72.8)	<b>28 (26.2)</b>		

Note: \*\*  $p \leq .01$  Percentage values (within military-connectedness) appear in parentheses.

## DISCUSSION

- Plans to attend college are relatively similar regardless of the number of family deployments or school moves experienced, a positive finding that suggests students from military families, at least those in this sample, may be receiving the deployment and transition support they need to maintain high aspirations, highlighting the potentially critical role of deployment and transition support, supports that districts and schools will need to continue to provide given the enduring and pervasive nature of deployments and residential mobility.
- Findings from this study show that students who have experienced a deployment or school move are more likely to want to join the military, a finding that may be surprising for some. One might hypothesize that students who have moved around a lot and/or experienced a family deployment would be less likely to want to join the military. Nevertheless, it is possible that military children have embraced the warrior culture associated with military service and view deployments as an honorable and courageous sacrifice. Multiple school moves, like deployments, may also be constructed in a positive light.
- Practitioners who work with students from military families, must keep an open mind in regard to their post-secondary plans and aspirations. A student with a parent or sibling currently serving in the military may not necessarily be planning to follow in his or her family member's footsteps. Moreover, a student who expresses a strong desire to join the military may also have a strong desire to attend college. As such, practitioners must continue to ask questions and provide comprehensive advising to students. Practitioners must also be mindful of students who are experiencing or have experienced a deployment or school move. Even though college plans were not statistically different based on the number of deployments or school moves a student experiences, there were still subtle differences. As such, providing adequate supports to students who have experienced a family deployment or recent school move is critical.
- Future studies must look to replicate these findings using a larger and more diverse sample. Future studies might also examine whether the relationships between post-secondary plans and aspirations, military-connectedness, number of deployments, and number of school moves differ based on the percentage of military-connected students enrolled in a school. Regional differences might also be explored as well as the academic, social, and emotional supports students from military and nonmilitary families receive.

## REFERENCES

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