

EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF HIGH-ABILITY MALE DEPENDENTS IN  
NAVY FAMILIES

by

ELIZABETH ENGLUND CONNELL PEE

(Under the Direction of Bonnie Cramond)

ABSTRACT

Through a qualitative interview study, the researcher investigated the experiences of high ability male dependents from Navy families and how these experiences were perceived to have influenced the male dependent's social, emotional and cognitive development. Findings indicated that high ability male dependents did not perceive that the Navy lifestyle had negatively influenced their development. Participation in sports was credited as a very positive influence in helping male dependents make smooth transitions into new schools after relocations, as was a positive attitude toward change and challenge on the part of the Navy family. Themes include high expectations and goals for achievement, adapting to change, participation in sports, and pride in the Navy lifestyle. Recommendations for parents, teachers and counselors working with high ability males from military families are provided, and implications for future research involving military dependents are highlighted.

INDEX WORDS: Gifted, males, military lifestyle, military dependents, sports, relocating, absent father, achievement

EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF HIGH-ABILITY MALE DEPENDENTS  
IN NAVY FAMILIES

by

ELIZABETH ENGLUND CONNELL PEE

B.A., Mary Baldwin College, 1992

M.Ed., The University of Georgia, 2000

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA  
2002

© 2002

Elizabeth Englund Connell Pee

All Rights Reserved

EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF HIGH-ABILITY MALE DEPENDENTS  
IN NAVY FAMILIES

by

ELIZABETH ENGLUND CONNELL PEE

Major Professor: Bonnie Cramond

Committee: Kathleen deMarrais  
Mary Frasier  
Thomas Hébert

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso  
Dean of the Graduate School  
The University of Georgia  
December 2002

## DEDICATION

To the Pacific Fleet's Premier Attack Pilot and his incredible wife,  
who provided me with such an exciting lifestyle, and to my brother, Aaron, who inspired  
this dissertation.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank Drs. Kathleen deMarrais, Mary Frasier, and Thomas Hébert for agreeing to serve on my committee. Each of them contributed invaluable advice at various stages of my research process. I thank the Chair of my committee, Dr. Bonnie Cramond, for her wonderful support and friendship to me and to my family throughout my graduate school experience. I extend my gratitude to Kristie Speirs Neumeister, who offered me constant encouragement and outstanding editorial support during my dissertation process. I also wish to express my appreciation to my teacher and friend, Dr. Sally Dobyms, who has nurtured me for so many years, who led me to pursuing this degree in Gifted Education, and who helped guide me in the completion of this Type III.

I am grateful to my participants for sharing their experiences with me. Each has led me to a better appreciation of my own experience as Navy dependent, and has helped me to better understand the experiences of my father, mother and brother.

Finally, I wish to thank my wonderful family. Without the constant faith and support of my husband, Tom, throughout this challenging process, I'm sure I could never have finished! I also thank my three young children, Emily, Robert and Alexander for their patience as their mother worked so hard and was away from them so often. I know one day you will understand.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	v
1 INTRODUCTION .....	1
Purpose of the Study .....	1
The Navy Lifestyle .....	1
A Navy Daughter’s Role.....	14
2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE .....	20
Relocation .....	20
Deployment and Separation .....	25
Father’s Role.....	28
Parenting Styles, Power Patterns and Family Cohesion .....	31
The Role of Peers.....	34
School Factors.....	35
High Ability Students .....	38
3 METHODS .....	42
Theoretical Framework.....	42
Methodology .....	43
4 PARTICIPANT PORTRAITS.....	56
Curt Taggart: Moving On .....	56

	John Mason: Staying Just Underneath the Radar .....	65
	Thomas Hanford: Sliding By .....	73
	Barton Landers: Taking Advantage of Opportunities.....	81
5	FINDINGS.....	90
	Expectations and Goals.....	91
	Adapting to Change .....	99
	Participation in Sports.....	112
	Pride .....	116
	Summary.....	117
6	CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS.....	119
	Expectations and Goals for Doing Well and Fitting In.....	119
	Adapting to Relocations.....	126
	Adapting to Father’s Absence.....	127
	Other Influences on Behavior and Achievement .....	129
	Sports .....	133
	REFERENCES .....	136
	APPENDICES	
	A INTERVIEW GUIDE.....	143
	B QUERY FOR PARTICIPANTS .....	144
	C INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS .....	145
	D SAMPLE INDIVIDUAL DATA CHART .....	146
	E COMBINED DATA CHART .....	147
	F DATA IN CATEGORIES.....	149



G EMERGENT THEMES AND PARTICIPANT QUOTES .....154

H SAMPLE PORTRAIT OUTLINE: BARTON .....155

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Purpose of the Study

Through a qualitative interview study, I investigated the experiences of high ability male dependents from Navy families and how these experiences were perceived to have influenced the male dependent's social, emotional and cognitive development. A description of the training and expectations of naval officers and of the challenges Navy families face is helpful in painting a picture of the culture of the Navy lifestyle and the ways it may influence Navy dependents.

#### The Navy Lifestyle

##### *A Career in the Navy: Anchors Away!*

The mission of the Navy is to maintain, train and equip combat-ready naval forces capable of winning wars, deterring aggression and maintaining freedom of the seas (Department of the Navy, 2002). To fulfill this mission, service members are trained in the latest technology, and experience a variety of different cultures and perspectives in places all over the world. The Navy lifestyle is a dynamic one, full of both challenge and reward.

Naval service includes both enlisted and commissioned officer careers. A commissioned officer who becomes a line officer is eligible for command during his or her career in the Navy. Line officers may specialize in surface warfare, submarine warfare, or aviation, and ultimately, they command ships, submarines, or squadrons of

airplanes. Regardless of their area of specialty, line officers are faced with heavy responsibility and sometimes danger. Theirs is a very stressful job, and one that frequently takes them away from their families. It is typical for line officers to spend as much as two-thirds of their naval career at sea (personal communication with Captain Doug Connell, May, 2002). A participant in this study, former Navy wife, Betsy Taggart, reflected on her experience: “Even when it was considered shore duty, he was gone. Whenever there were really bad snowstorms, he would always seem to be in Hawaii or something...I noticed that!”

*The Navy Spouse: “Entrusted to raise the kids properly”*

For the married line officer with children, both the direction and duration of the Navy career rely in large part on the level of support from his or her spouse. During times of deployment, the spouse’s attitude toward the separation plays a significant role in determining the family’s adjustment and success. The spouse has the primary responsibility for raising the children and taking care of the family home whenever the naval officer is away. This often includes unpacking and organizing a new home, establishing bank accounts, new physicians, dentists, vehicle registration, etc., as well as settling children into new schools and extracurricular activities.

In addition, when the officer is in command of a squadron or a ship, the spouse is looked upon as an experienced leader, and is expected to serve as an example to less experienced Navy spouses. In times of deployment, the spouse may be called on to speak to the press about critical events, may serve as grief and marriage counselor to other

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all information pertaining to the career paths of naval officers comes from a personal communication with Navy Captain Doug Connell, May, 2002. All other names are pseudonyms.

spouses, and frequently must coordinate activities for spouses and children of deployed officers.

The attitude of the commanding officer's spouse is critical in setting the tone for his or her own children, as well as for many other families during deployments. Betsy Taggart described her experience as follows:

It was really difficult when they were deployed and he was skipper because they had all these problems...you know, with airplanes and ejections...so I felt as though I was on the phone with my executive officer's wife constantly... I was really concerned then, and I thought, the worst is going to happen here...somebody is going to lose their life...things were definitely going bad then...and I always felt like we needed to focus on very positive things, and not listen to these rumors. You know, wives would come back from visiting ports, and they'd throw out little tidbits, let's just say, and you know, it would just ignite! It was very difficult to manage all those wives. Some had never been away from home, they'd never been away from their husbands, they'd just been married...this was all foreign to them, and very, very stressful... and I worried about his career, too. I mean, he was thinking, oh, my gosh...one more thing and I'm out of here!

### *Naval Training, Expectations and Duties*

The career path for all line officers begins with basic training. As part of this training, ideals such as respect, honor, and discipline are instilled in naval officers.

Officers are instructed in leadership techniques and in ways to overcome challenges using

teamwork. While survival strategies in a variety of situations are taught, the idea of subordination of self is stressed. All sailors can expect to be in many situations where they must put mission accomplishment and the safety of others above their own safety. This subordination of self is perhaps the most critical lesson to be learned. Attention to detail is also a focus in training. Officers become accustomed to routine inspections of uniform, personal grooming, equipment and living space. Their language, too, must be precise. Every officer must be able to communicate clearly and precisely and must be able to understand and act quickly on communications from others. Naval officers are instructed in the use of formalities. This includes the proper procedures for addressing and saluting fellow officers. The benefits of physical fitness are also a focus of officer training. Officers are expected to be in excellent physical condition, and must pass regular tests of physical fitness.

When basic training has been completed, the officer chooses a training pipeline to pursue. During advanced training, the officer learns skills specific to his or her aircraft or ship. From here, the officer is assigned to a term of sea duty. This first assignment is typically for a period of three years, during which the officer makes two deployments at sea (approximately six months each). Following sea duty, the officer is assigned to shore duty, which is typically a two year assignment. Although called “shore duty”, the officer’s time is not always spent on shore, or even at home. He or she is still likely to travel frequently, depending on the nature of his or her position. After shore duty, comes another three year sea duty assignment with the typical two deployments. Alternating sea and shore duties are fairly predictable for the first part of an officer’s career. Retired

Navy Captain and participant, Andy Hanford, described the first part of his career as follows:

At that point in my career, it was pretty much a move every two to three years from coast to coast...so we were in central California another three years, then back to Washington, D.C. for two years, then to southern California for two years, and then back to Washington, D.C. ...standard number of deployments in there...about two per assignment.

Most sea duty is assigned to line officers when they are between 22 and 30 years of age. After this point, the success the officer has experienced, his or her strengths and interests, as well as personal connections determine the course of his or her career. Often the officer is assigned to at least one tour of shore duty at the Pentagon. If he or she screens for command of a squadron or ship, additional sea duty can be expected later in the career. If the officer screens for a second command, another sea duty will be assigned, and if he or she has the skills to serve on a battle group or a fleet staff, that is yet another sea tour. For the many naval line officers who start families early in their careers, they are gone to sea a great deal while their children are very small, and then again while their children are adolescents. Line officers who are well suited for the Navy and who make a career of it, may aspire to reach the highest rank one can achieve, which is that of flag officer. Being promoted to this position takes years of dedication on the part of the officer, and a great deal of cooperation, sacrifice and support from the officer's family.

*Naval Aviators: An At-Risk Population*

“F-14 Crashes, details at 5:00.”

Naval aviators are typically assigned even more sea duty than are surface or submarine officers. This is because there are fewer pilots than there are other types of officers. Pilots fly from both land bases and ships around the globe, often under hazardous conditions. This dangerous job takes its toll. The Navy loses experienced pilots each year to combat losses and other plane crashes, as well as to higher paying and safer positions with commercial airlines. Those pilots who choose to stay in the Navy are in high demand. In times of world conflict, many pilots are assigned back-to-back sea duties or have very brief stints of shore duty in between sea duties. They are frequently away from their families, who may worry a great deal for their safety. Betsy Taggart described the fear that many Navy wives experience while their husbands are flying:

Tim had an accident when his plane went off the carrier. I remember he was flying at night, and at about 1:00 or 2:00 in the morning, the phone rang, and I knew something had happened. The officer that called told me what had happened. After we hung up, I remember getting up and looking outside...I remember thinking, I was almost a widow...I was almost a widow tonight...and that was really, really scary.

#### *Communication with Families*

Communication was much tougher than it is now...I think families now just don't even get it...what it's like to send a letter and have it take three weeks each way.

After a while, it's like, why bother? (Tammy Hanford, Navy wife)

Communication between service members at sea and their families has improved tremendously in the last thirty years. In the 1970's and early 1980's, communication was very limited. There were no satellite connections, and therefore, no telephone or internet

services provided on ships. There were only letters sent through the mail, and letters usually took weeks to be received. The mail was sent from the U.S. to the nearest port to the ship. It then went out to the nearest aircraft carrier, and from there, was flown by helicopter to its final destination. Mail being sent from ships to the U.S. was equally slow. Captain Tim Taggart described communication with his family in the first part of his career, when it was most difficult:

It was the snail mail kind of thing...you know, five or six weeks. Every time your letter got there, it was three or four weeks out of date, etcetera...and very rarely did I call home. I called Betsy one time to raise hell because she bought a \$500 dog ((laughter))...that's the only time I called from on cruise... you know, it was like \$21.00 a minute...so, yeah...literally, that's the only phone call I made on cruise.

Only in the event of an emergency could a naval message be sent to the ship from the American Red Cross. A spouse at home had to contact the commanding officer's spouse who would arrange for the message to be sent from the nearest American Red Cross office. It might take several hours or even days for a message to be received by the ship. When received, the emergency message would go to the commanding officer of the ship. He would get the message to the crew member to whom it had been sent, and then would send back a reply, confirming that the crew member had received the message and indicating how the crew member intended to respond to the situation. Depending on the location of the ship and on world events, the ship might not be able to transmit messages, for there were times when ships had to be electronically silent.



In the mid 1980's, satellite communications systems became available on ships. In the event of an emergency at home, a message could be sent from a naval facility to the ship. The crewmember receiving the message could be authorized to go to the communications department of the ship and use the satellite communications phone. In the late 1980's, Ham radio operators were authorized to be on board ships. Crew members could stand in line or make an appointment to call home for 15 minutes, if the circuits were up. Commanding officers can now make phone calls home from their state rooms on ships. They must limit such calls, however, to official business. They may, for example, call home to notify a spouse of an accident on board, or of a schedule change related to the ship's return. It is still not possible for families to call in to the ship from home. A spouse needing to reach an officer on board a ship must have the Chief of Staff on the nearest Navy base call the ship and instruct the officer to call home.

In the mid 1990's, internet connections became available on Navy ships. This technology has greatly improved communication between service members at sea and their families. Although there is not always open access, depending on the position of the ship and its objectives, in most cases, crew members are able to email their families every day, and can even send photos back and forth. Now, crew members can send a message home that asks, how was your day? This type of communication was unthinkable even fifteen years ago.

*Separations: "A fact of life"*

Most children of naval officers experience frequent separations from one parent, and must learn to make transitions from a two-parent household to a one-parent household and vice versa. Each going and coming of the father has a rollercoaster effect

on the family. Initially the family goes through a crisis stage, then reorganizes, then recovers, and settles into a new lifestyle pattern (Hill, 1997). The effect of the change on the family depends to a large extent upon the family's coping system (Rohall, Segal & Segal, 1999) and upon their overall attitude toward change and challenge. Families who approach new situations in a positive manner may have an easier time making adjustments. The following words from Captain Taggert illustrate the optimism with which he approached change:

Let's drain the swamp, get out the alligator, and get it over with! That's kind of the attitude we took...we didn't dwell on things and we looked for the good... you know, life is like a big pile of horse manure, and you can stand there looking at the manure with disgust, or you can start digging, in the belief that with all this manure, there's got to be a pony somewhere!

Former Navy wife, Tammy Hanford, explained her similar approach to facing difficult situations: "My philosophy was...if you get sad, you get mad, and then you get busy. It was important to keep busy and to keep the routine going."

*Reunions: "Being accepted back into the fold"*

For many families, the reunion phase can be more stressful than the actual separation. Naval service members expect their families to be just as they were before they deployed, but may come home to financial, employment and even family changes and find adjustment difficult. Because the Navy fosters a strong sense of discipline and respect for authority, many officers become accustomed to this way of life and may have a hard time switching gears when they return home to their families. The following quote from Captain Tim Taggert illustrates what this adjustment period may be like:

So, you bust through the door...and, oh, by the way, they've been doing just *fine* without you for six months...you know, they're still here and healthy, they're still making good grades, the house hasn't burned down, and they're still getting haircuts. And so you say, my God, whose idea was it to paint this room yellow? ...and, what do you *mean* you don't have to clean your room except on Wednesdays? ...That's an easy way to alienate your kids, and I learned that early on.

Captain Jack Mason also commented on this difficult adjustment period: "I had to watch real carefully and make sure I wasn't upsetting the apple cart...and probably a lot of vice versa." Fathers may feel disappointed when returning home after a long separation from their families. Young children may not remember their fathers and may be anxious about their father's presence after so long without him. Captain Taggart gave an example of this. He said, "You wanted them [the children] to come up and throw their arms around you, but they wanted to know who in the hell I was!"

Spouses and children, too, may find this adjustment period difficult at first. In Navy families where one parent is frequently coming and going, consistency in parenting style and expectations is difficult to establish. One parent is typically more nurturing and permissive than the other. The following quote from Captain Taggart further describes the period of adjustment that accompanies a homecoming:

I was pretty regimented...pretty strict. She [my wife] was a lot more forgiving and understanding than I would be. I'm used to saying, 'jump', and, by God...people want to know, how high? That's not what you have with your family – not anything close!

Captain Andy Hanford described this situation similarly. He said, “They [the children] always liked to have Dad home, but it came with a price in their minds... they had to tow the line.” Former Navy wife, Laura Mason, shared her perceptions of what this adjustment period was like for her family:

It was always awkward when Dad came home. You had to rethink...okay, what are Dad’s rules? ...because they’re different than Mom’s rules...and you had to get that all sorted out. ... We thought about Jack as being sort of the gravy...you know, he wasn’t the meat or the potatoes...so when he was gone, it was just like that gravy piece was gone, and we just sort of rolled on with life...and when he’d come home, it would be a nice addition... The biggest difference was, he’s a perfectionist, and so he has a place for everything and everything has a place, and so when you line things up, you do it in a particular way...and we just enjoyed having the time of not doing it that way. A couple of weeks before he came home, we went and found everything and we put it all back where it was supposed to be...we lined everything up, and we laughed about it, and said, okay, now Dad’s coming home and we have to put things in alphabetical order again.

External resources to help families meet the demands of separation and relocation include other family members, friends and the community. Most military communities have groups that sponsor regular activities for spouses and dependents, and support groups are available. An increasing number of web sites for military family members are available, as well. Many Navy families live on a Navy base or in a community with many other military families. Navy families depend on others who share similar circumstances.

We lived in a neighborhood of 90 houses, where at least half of the people were military...so, almost everybody's dad was gone sometimes, and we were really fortunate to have excellent neighbors...and we did so much together...that neighborhood was so supportive of everybody (Laura Mason).

*Relocating: "Kids, we're going on a vacation...across country!"*

For the Navy family, moving is a way of life. The average Navy family moves every 2.9 years (Department of Defense, 2001), but many families move every year for many years in a row, and the parent serving in the Navy (most often the father) is sometimes deployed to another part of the world during these moves. The family is left behind to constantly adapt to new situations, often without the benefit of both parents in the home at the same time. Moving provides a means for Navy families to see many different parts of the country and even the world, but while each move presents exciting new opportunities, transitions between schools bring with them new changes and challenges that may be difficult for the developing child.

There are times when Navy dependents move to a new school setting and experience a very different curriculum from that of their former school. This can make a move even more difficult when the student finds himself or herself behind academically in a new environment. Laura Mason explained how dependents can miss important information after a move to a new school:

There were probably holes in his learning. Sometimes we arrived after something had been taught in this place, and he hadn't had it in the last place, so he didn't ever get it.

Moving frequently may be especially difficult for high ability military dependents and those with special needs. These students may be ineligible for certain school honors in new schools if there are minimum residency/attendance policies in place; obtaining student records so that students can be included in special programs in the new school is often difficult; varying identification criteria in different schools is often a problem; and repeating curriculum in a new school is common (Tittle, 1985). Students who are not challenged are often bored, and this boredom may lead to underachieving behaviors (Rimm, 1995). Former Navy wife, Kat Landers, discussed the frustration that she and her son felt after moving to a new location:

Barton had a teacher in sixth grade who made him repeat a math book that he had already finished in his last school...and, he wasn't doing well, and I said, it's because he's bored...he's done this book already, but she *insisted* he go through this math book again.

Another Navy wife, Laura Mason, expressed a similar situation with her son:

John was never a bad kid in school...but he got bored, and when kids get bored, the games get played.

Varying identification criteria in different schools for gifted programming may prevent these students from receiving enrichment and acceleration. In some areas, in fact, gifted services may not be offered in schools at all. The following quote from Laura Mason illustrates this point:

When we moved here, I think fifth grade year was pretty cinchy for John. The school on base was much easier than the school he'd come from, and so, I think

he got lazy. There wasn't a gifted and talented program...they never had anything like that here.

Another mother, Tammy Hanford, described the inconsistent level of challenge that her son experienced when changing schools:

Thomas qualified for the gifted program in Virginia, but then when we moved to California, they didn't have one. I really worried about him when we moved back to Virginia...I worried he would be behind his peers who had stayed in the gifted program.

The Navy lifestyle provides opportunities for travel and adventure for service members and their families. It also provides an element of danger, uncertainty and stress. It is a lifestyle requiring the support and cooperation of the whole family. Some families fare better than others in making the necessary adjustments that the Navy lifestyle demands. Also, within each family, there are members who seem to adjust more easily than others.

#### A Navy Daughter's Role

My interest in high ability military dependents stems from my own background and personal experiences as the daughter of a career naval aviator. Growing up, the Navy moved my family eleven times, and four of these were cross-country moves. As a pilot, my father was frequently deployed for 3 to 11 months at a time. He was gone, in fact, for roughly 13 of my 18 years living at home.

My parents had very different parenting styles, with my mother being the more permissive parent. Whenever my father was gone, my brother and I experienced a relaxation in rules and routine. We went back and forth as we grew up, adjusting to

Mom's rules and expectations, and then to Dad's, and then to Mom's again. Although we experienced more freedom while our father was gone, we missed him very much. We relished the few calls and letters we received. I would sometimes cuddle my father's old flight jacket while he was away. The scent of airplane fuel on his clothes reminded me of him in times when his presence was very distant. Each time my father returned from a cruise, it was a new chance to win his approval and to try to form a closer relationship with him.

The day of his arrival was always a very big deal. The house had to be perfect, and we had to be perfect...in appearance and behavior. My mother reminded us of our father's interests and expectations. She coached us on things we might bring up in conversation with him – our recent science fair or spelling bee award, participation in clubs, sports or church activities, books we had read, etc. We rehearsed our roles for days in advance, and drove to the base with nervous excitement. I remember the thrill of waiting together with other families out on the runway. There was always a flyby first, which increased the level of excitement. I can remember so vividly being overwhelmed with pride at these times. There was usually patriotic music being played in the background, and I was so terribly proud of my father and felt such intense love for him! The planes landed and came to a stop. The canopies were raised, and the pilots emerged. Although the children were supposed to hang back and let the wives get the first hugs and kisses, we could never wait. We ran to our fathers, flinging ourselves into their arms. In those moments, our life and our relationship with our father seemed ideal. He spent the whole day remarking at how much we had grown and asking us questions about our schoolwork and extracurricular activities. He was completely interested in hearing what



we had to say. Our mother was patient...allowing us this bonding time with our father and waiting her turn.

Everything was wonderful when Dad returned. Soon, though, he seemed to feel a need to take control...to organize us, enforce his rules and routines once again. A part of me always resented this intrusion. Looking back, I realize how incredibly frustrating this must have been for him. He had just spent months away, giving orders, and rarely having his authority or decisions questioned. Although he seemed grateful to my mother for keeping the family and the house so well in his absence, I believe he sometimes envied her close relationship and rapport with us. Perhaps he felt like a stranger in his own home and not really needed.

Growing up, I always wanted to please my father. I worked hard in school, hoping to make him proud of me. I was careful, conscientious, and always a people pleaser. He and I didn't share many interests, and I think he was disappointed that I didn't enjoy the books he had enjoyed or the sports he had played as a child. He admired my hard work in school and always praised my people skills. He had very high academic expectations of me. When I received my report card, I couldn't wait to share it with him. It was his approval I needed most. He would always tell me at those times just how proud he was of me. I think he dreamed that I would follow more closely in his footsteps...that I might go to the Naval Academy one day, and become a pilot myself. He wanted someone with whom he could share his greatest passion. After some struggle, my father recognized that I had a different sort of gift, and that I would be happiest teaching children. Although this wasn't what he had envisioned for me, he had always respected teachers, and he never discouraged me from becoming one.

My brother had a much harder time. My father probably had the same hopes and dreams and expectations for my brother, but from the start, there was more conflict. Aaron is three years younger, and he had a much more difficult time adjusting to my father's absences and returns. While Aaron was bright, highly creative and artistic, he had trouble in school. It seemed that Aaron could have done better, but that he was just lazy. It was later discovered that he had several learning disabilities for which he had always managed to compensate. His gifts masked his disabilities and his disabilities hid many of his gifts. Aaron's needs were neither met in the classroom nor well understood at home. This situation was further aggravated by the fact that Aaron did not excel at sports. My father encouraged him to try different sports, and although Aaron was desperate for my father's approval, he did not seem to have the interest or ability in many sports that might have facilitated a closer connection with his dad.

Moving, too, was more difficult for my brother. I always looked forward to moving to new places. I felt secure in my ability to make new friends and to fit in quickly. I was confident that I would adjust to the academic challenges that new schools provided, and I was pretty well-rounded - an advantage for any child, but particularly for a military dependent. Although Aaron was very social and made new friends easily, changes in school curricula and routine were more challenging for him. He knew he could expect to struggle academically and in athletic games on the playground.

My brother and I had such different experiences growing up. In talking to other Navy dependents, I became intrigued by the factors that would lead to such a positive experience for some dependents and such a difficult one for others. I wondered about how the academic strengths and interests, and the social and athletic ability of children

from military families might influence their ability to make smooth transitions during relocations and separations from their military parent. I also wondered how different parenting styles and the family's approach to the military lifestyle in general would affect transitions for military dependents. Because it was a male dependent in my family who had such a struggle, I decided to focus on males for my dissertation study. I felt a need to figure out why my brother had so much trouble, and hoped that by exploring the experiences of other male dependents, I might somehow help others like him.

I wondered if male dependents with fathers serving in the Navy experienced particular difficulty with separations from their male role model. Did these males identify more closely with mother because she was the one that is most often at home? If they did identify closely with their mothers, how did these males perceive their fathers?

I wondered if the adjustments they made in relocating and related to deployments were especially difficult for high ability male dependents who may have had special intellectual and emotional needs. Were these males identified as gifted and given opportunities to participate in gifted and honors programs as they moved from school to school? What were their perceptions about the impact of frequent relocation on their social, emotional and cognitive development? Did they receive special support from counselors, teachers or mentors as they made difficult transitions? Did they have trouble making friends and adjusting in schools? Were they able to participate in sports and extracurricular activities? I was also curious about their perceptions of the effects their father's deployments had on their development. Did they experience more social and/or academic difficulty while he was away, or when he returned? To address these issues, my primary research question was as follows:

How does the Navy lifestyle influence the high ability male dependent's social, emotional and cognitive development?

Secondary research questions include:

1. In what ways does frequent relocation affect the social, emotional and cognitive development of high ability male dependents?
2. In what ways does the absence of the father affect the social, emotional and cognitive development of high ability male dependents?
3. In what ways do parenting styles and power struggles affect the social, emotional and cognitive development of high ability male dependents?

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The Department of Defense Office of Personnel Support reports that more than 670,000 active duty service members have children, which collectively total 1.3 million children in the United States. Given our war on terrorism and efforts to increase the size and strength of our military forces, this number is sure to increase. Although a limited number of studies have focused on military children, findings from other research related to parenting styles, peer and school influence, family morale and expectations, father absence, and frequent relocation suggest that there may be a particular risk for social and emotional difficulties and underachieving behaviors among children in military families. This risk likely increases for military dependents requiring special programs to meet their cognitive and affective needs.

#### Relocation

“They pack, move, unpack, burrow in, and nervously await their next orders.”  
(Conroy, 1976, p. 27)

The military life is one of constant change and considerable stress. For these families, moving is a way of life. The average military family moves every 2.9 years (Department of Defense, 2001), but many families move every year for many years in a row, and the parent serving in the military (most often the father) is frequently deployed to another part of the world for months at a time. The family is left behind to constantly adapt to new situations, often without the benefit of both parents in the home at the same time.

Few studies have investigated the effects of relocation on children, and an even smaller number have focused on military dependents. These limited studies report that

multiple moves have little or no negative academic or psychological impact on children in military families (e.g., Marchant & Medway, 1987; Whalen & Fried, 1973). In Marchant & Medway's study, which primarily involved enlisted military families, frequent relocation was not found to be detrimental to the service member, the spouse, or the children. The researchers theorized that the military and other military families provide support for families not available in the civilian population, and that this support reduced the stress caused by relocation. The study, however, focused only on military families living on base, with children attending base schools. Marchant & Medway reported that the curriculum of military base schools is fairly standard from one base to another, allowing for smoother transitions for students from one school to another. Because more than 50 percent of military families live off base, and an even greater number send their children to schools off base (Department of Defense, 2001), such smooth transitions for military children may be the exception rather than the rule.

Pittman and Bowen (1994) explored adjustment to relocation with a population of adolescents from highly mobile Air Force families. They found that some adolescent dependents did have trouble adjusting to relocations, and those who did viewed military life as too restrictive or as non-conducive to child rearing, or they were just generally unhappy with military life. More than half of the participants reported that they were less than satisfied with their rate of moving. Other findings included the following: making new friends was found to be more difficult than leaving old friends behind; adolescents who felt less rebellious and more communicative with parents reported better adjustment; the recency of a move was not found to be related to depression among these adolescents,

neither did it matter whether the move took the adolescent overseas, or whether the new residence was located on an Air Force base as compared to the surrounding community.

Pittman & Bowen (1994) suggested that in the male dominated environment of the military, boys may have an adjustment advantage. They also theorized that adolescents who are more well-adjusted tend to perform better academically and socially. Because the majority of the adolescents surveyed for this study were the children of enlisted men (72%), and because a greater number of enlisted families live on military bases where there is greater social support and resources for families, it seems likely that very different results might be obtained were the study repeated with more officer families.

Research on the effects of relocation on civilian children and adolescents point to behavioral problems due to low self-esteem, feelings of loss, fears of the unknown, and lessened parental attention (e.g., Jalongo, 1985; Smardo, 1981; Wood & Halfon, 1993). Parents who are preoccupied or exhausted with the physical and social demands of moving may be less attuned to their child's fears or needs. Military dependents experience similar effects. When transferred, the military parent typically begins work immediately, leaving his or her spouse to take care of everything else: unpacking and organizing a new home, establishing bank accounts, new physicians, dentists, vehicle registration, etc., as well as settling children into new schools and extracurricular activities. This is stressful for both parents, and the children's emotional needs may be neglected. In a study of civilian children, Simpson & Fowler (1993) found that only those who moved three or more times were at increased risk for emotional/behavioral and school problems. Most military children move three or more times while growing up.

When gender differences are explored, there is disagreement as to whether one sex has more trouble adjusting to school transfers than the other. Some studies of civilian children and adolescents have supported the idea that girls may have the easier time transferring because they appear to be more readily assimilated into peer groups than boys (Orosan, Weine, Jason & Johnson, 1992). Other studies have suggested that boys are more negatively affected by family discord and disruption than girls, and therefore have a more difficult time (e.g., Wolkind & Rutter, 1973). Pillen, Jason & Olson (1988) reported that transfer girls' academic ability appeared to be linked to social status, while boys' peer popularity and academic achievement were not significantly related. The varied results of these studies may be explained by methodological differences, and more research is needed to clarify these inconsistencies.

Relocating may be especially difficult for high ability children in military families. Moving frequently can make students ineligible for certain school honors if there are minimum residency/attendance policies in place; obtaining student records so that students can be included in gifted programs in the new school is often difficult; varying identification criteria in different schools is often a problem; and repeating curriculum in a new school is common (Tittle, 1985). Students who are not challenged are often bored. This boredom frequently leads to underachieving behaviors (Rimm, 1995). These situations and others may make meeting the needs of high ability military students particularly challenging.

Plucker and Yecke (1999) found organizational inconsistencies and varying criteria for admittance to gifted programs to be commonly reported frustrations among the parents of high ability military dependents. Academic performance did not seem to be



hindered by moving, although some of the children did experience short-term social difficulties related to moving. Research is very limited on the effects of moving on high ability children, but Plucker & Yecke have theorized that the intellectual skills and talents of these students may mediate the academic impact of multiple relocations. High levels of self-esteem and self-confidence also appear to have a powerful influence on successful adaptation. Although Plucker & Yecke's study explored the effects of relocations on both elementary and high school girls, adolescent males were not included in the research. Future studies are needed involving both female and male military dependents.

Plucker & Yecke (1999) have supported the idea that the family environment has much to do with how well children and adolescents deal with relocations. Several other studies have pointed to the importance of family cohesion and the degree to which the father and mother identify with the military (e.g., Marchant & Medway, 1987; McKain, 1973; Pittman & Bowen, 1994). In families where both parents have positive attitudes about the military lifestyle, the children are better adjusted and perform better academically.

The children of military officers may adjust better to relocations and the absence of their father than children of enlisted personnel because of greater financial stability and resources (Pittman & Bowen, 1994). A study investigating the effects of school transfer on the academic performance of low-income and minority civilian children found that high rates of school transfer were significantly related to lower academic achievement for low-income African American and Hispanic students (Felner, Primavera & Cauce, 1981). Research is needed to investigate the relationship between socio-

economic status and level of adjustment and achievement of children in military families, as are studies exploring the specific effects of relocation on minority dependents.

While research on the effects of frequent relocation on the adjustment and achievement of military dependents is limited and inconsistent, greater consistency is found in the literature related to the effects of parent-child separation on children's adjustment and level of achievement. The comings and goings of the military parent can have an enormous impact on family dynamics and discipline, affecting the social, emotional and cognitive development of the children in these families.

#### Deployment and Separation

There may be positive outcomes to family separations. These include opportunities to learn new skills and a greater sense of independence while the military member is away (Segal & Segal, 1993). Most often, however, studies point out the negative effects of deployment and separation on military families, noting especially those for the non-military spouse (e.g., Hunter, 1982; Kelley, 1994; Wood, Scarville & Gravino, 1994). Spouses of deployed military men may experience loneliness, depression, anxiety, anger, and physical illnesses as a result of the separation (Kelley, 1994). Studies have demonstrated that separation can be accompanied by a cyclic pattern of depressive behavior in military wives (e.g., Amen, Jellen, Merves & Lee, 1988; Beckman, Marsalla & Finney, 1979), and that some women may withdraw emotionally from their children during the deployment period (Beckmen, Marsalla & Finney, 1979).

Maternal adjustment to the military lifestyle has been found to be critical for the adjustment of military children (e.g., Kelley, 1994; Marchant & Medway, 1987; Pittman & Bowen, 1994; Plucker & Yecke, 1999). Kelley found that maternal adjustment and

child behavior differed as a function of the type of deployment, and that mothers of younger children reported lower self-esteem than did mothers of older children.

Research examining the adjustment of military children shows that fighting, defiance, anger, anxiety, sadness, and school difficulties are common among military children with absent fathers (e.g., Hillenbrand, 1976; Hunter, 1982). Although father-family interactions may mediate the effects of father absence, the responsibility of childrearing and child socialization falls mainly on the mother (Hunter, 1982). Three factors seemed to account for children's adjustment: mothers' attitude toward the separation, marital satisfaction prior to separation, and mothers' ability to cope with the separation (Hunter, 1982).

Different types of separation have been shown to have varying effects on families. Sudden and longer deployments tend to cause more problems, as do wartime compared to peacetime deployments (Blount, Curry & Lubin, 1992; Hunter, 1982). The length and frequency of deployments can effect how families interpret the separation event. Families are usually able to adapt to frequent separations, if they are expected and predictable, but studies show that the first few deployments are particularly disruptive to families (Decker, 1978). Clarke's (1991) review of the literature from 1949 to 1991 on psychological effects of husband/father separations and reunifications upon military families suggested that during peacetime separations, wives usually experienced greater personal problems during the separation than they did prior to their husbands' absence, and that the children often experienced substantial emotional and behavioral difficulties. This research also suggested that exposure to combat increased the likelihood of marital and family problems. The length and quality of the marriage prior to separation and the

wife's emotional state were closely related to how well the family adjusted to reunification. Families with a history of poor adaptability and those with poor communication skills are likely to have a harder time during separation, and those with good coping skills and self-concept have an easier time (Rohall, Segal & Segal, 1999).

Jensen, Martin & Watanabe (1996) looked into the effects of Operation Desert Storm on military children and their parents. They compared children and families with and without a deployed parent prior to and during Operation Desert Storm. Results indicated that children of deployed personnel experienced greater symptoms of depression, as did their parents. The researchers reported that boys and younger children appeared to be especially vulnerable to deployment effects. These boys experienced high levels of stress and anxiety, and as a result, they were less successful in academic and social situations.

In a study of middle-school boys from civilian families, Beaty (1995) found that boys with absent fathers evidenced a poorer sense of masculinity as well as poorer interpersonal relationships than boys with fathers present, and that the effects were worse for younger boys than older. Other studies also have suggested (e.g., Biller & Bahm, 1971; Hetherington, 1966) that children who are separated from their fathers before the age of five suffer more debilitating psychological and interpersonal difficulties than do children who are separated from their fathers after the age of five. This was found to be especially true for male children (Hetherington, 1966).

This research suggests the importance of investigating the father's relationship with his children, especially his sons. If the father's role is crucial to the healthy adjustment and achievement of his children, then in military families where the father is

often gone on long deployments while his children are young, we would expect to find a greater incidence of social and academic difficulties among young children, especially males. Due to a paucity of research specifically investigating relationships between military fathers and their children, we must look to studies conducted among civilian populations.

### Father's Role

Greater participation in fathering is consistently related to better child development with regard to academic achievement, personal identity, and social adjustment (Lamb, 1981). Although mother's nurturance and involvement is strongly related to children's school performance and adjustment (Nord, Brimhall & West, 1997), studies indicate that father involvement may be equally or more important for some children. A recent study of children in grades K-12 reports that fifty percent of students whose fathers were highly involved in their schools earned mostly A's and enjoyed school. Students were half as likely to have repeated a grade if their fathers were highly involved as opposed to minimally involved in their schools, and were significantly less likely to have been suspended or expelled (Nord, Brimhall & West, 1997). When factors such as mother involvement, father's and mother's education, household income, and children's race and ethnicity were controlled, children were still more likely to do well in school when their fathers were involved in some way than when they were not involved at all (Nord, Brimhall & West, 1997).

Other studies have reported positive findings related to identification with father and achievement. In his counseling experience with young men, Pollack (1998) found that the more shared experiences a boy had with his father, the more education he

completed. Boys with caring, active fathers had increased levels of self-esteem and lower incidence of social delinquency and depression in adolescence. When fathers were actively involved in their sons' lives, the boys were usually less aggressive and better able to express their feelings. They were less likely to act out or show aggression in order to win their father's love and attention. Pollack (1998) found that fathers had more impact on the social and academic functioning of their sons than did mothers, and boys were more likely to be underachievers if the father was absent from the home. Johnson & Hayes (1997) also reported a male's identification with his father to be related to his self-perceptions, achievement and behavior. These findings have important implications for families where the father is frequently absent, as in many military families, and suggest that male military dependents may be at great risk for underachieving behaviors and social and emotional difficulties when they lack close relationships with their fathers.

Father absence is an increasingly frequent phenomenon in American families, and has been linked to other problems in children and adolescents. Findings by the National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI) have indicated that children who live away from their fathers are 4.3 times more likely to smoke cigarettes as teenagers and more likely to use alcohol or marijuana than their peers who live with their fathers. Boys from mother-only households exhibit greater aggression than their peers from mother-father households, and teens living in single-parent homes are more likely to commit suicide than their peers (APA Monitor, August 1996, p. 6). Research points out that a fathering deficit is also increasingly evident in two-parent homes, as many fathers worry that their jobs interfere with child-rearing (APA Monitor, August 1996, p. 6)

Father absence has been observed to have detrimental, long-lasting effects on children, especially males. Among findings are that such absence is related to increased dependency, lower achievement, a poorer sense of masculinity and peer adjustment (Beatty, 1995), a “feminine” cognitive patterning of higher verbal than mathematical ability, more feminine sex-role preferences (Hetherington, 1966), and a lack of male gender identity resulting in developmental or psychological vulnerability in the form of negative self-perceptions (Hamilton, 1977; Johnson & Hayes, 1997). It has been theorized that such findings represent the cognitive and emotional effects of delay or disruption of the normal identification of the boy with his father (e.g., Hamilton, 1977; Hillenbrand, 1976).

Hillenbrand (1976) suggested that father absence may be experienced quite differently for boys and girls, and that boys with older siblings, especially older sisters, have the most trouble adjusting to the absence. These boys may have trouble dealing with stress, may be overly aggressive and have greater difficulty achieving in school. These boys may also experience depression-- feeling angry at a situation over which they have no control. Further research is needed to explore the relationship between the age of children when they are separated from their fathers and difficulties related to behavior and academic achievement. Also, studies are needed to investigate the impact that older siblings, especially sisters, may have on boys with absent fathers. An increasing number of children will be separated from parents serving in the military, and attention should be focused on the effects of these separations. Studies are certainly needed to investigate the impact of mothers serving in the military, but because there are currently many more men than women deployed by the military, it is the father’s absence that will be most critical

for a great number of families. The father's absence affects consistency of routine, discipline and expectations, and interrupts a sense of family cohesion.

#### Parenting Styles, Power Patterns and Family Cohesion

It was a universal law in military families that mothers could not maintain the strict discipline enforced by fathers to whom discipline was a religion and a way of life.

When the military man left for a year, the whole family relaxed in a collective, yet unvoiced sigh. For a year there was a looseness, a freedom from tension, a time when martial law was suspended (Conroy, 1976, p 16).

The preceding passage from Pat Conroy's novel, *The Great Santini* sheds light on the conflicting parenting styles often found in military families. In many military families, the father maintains an authoritarian parenting style. He likes to be in charge, and enforces strict discipline. The mother tends to be more permissive and democratic. Consequently, she is more easily approached. Because the mother is with her children while the father is deployed, she is more involved in their school and extracurricular activities and understands her children's strengths, weaknesses and interests better than the father, who must often be away from his family.

Children tend to identify with the parent who is most nurturing, powerful, and/or who has common interests (Rimm, 1995). When children's relationships with adults are nurturant and supportive, children are more likely to model behavior and to adopt and internalize the expectations and goals that are valued by those adults than if these relationships are harsh and critical (Grolnick & Kurowski, 1999; Wentzel, 1999). Supportive, aware parenting is frequently associated with children's positive academic, social and psychological adjustment, while parental inattentiveness and harsh control are



associated with poorer adjustment and academic performance (e.g., Bronstein & Duncan, 1996; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Rimm, 1995).

In military families where the military father is frequently coming and going, consistency in parenting style and expectations is difficult to establish. One parent is typically more nurturing and permissive than the other. Power struggles between parents with different parenting styles and expectations for their children may have a critical effect on parent-child identification and on the social and emotional development and achievement of these children (Rimm, 1995).

Sylvia Rimm (1995) identified four complicated power patterns that can lead to underachievement in children: “Father is an Ogre”, “Daddy is a Dummy”, “Mother is an Ogre”, and “Mother is the Mouse of the House”. Rimm explained that these power patterns arise when parents compete with each other in their approaches to child rearing, each wanting to be seen as the “good” parent. The “Father is an Ogre” pattern may be especially pertinent to military families where the father is frequently separated and then reunited with his family. In this pattern that Rimm described, the father is viewed as the successful and powerful parent. To exert his power over his children, the father often restricts or prohibits the desired activities of the children. The mother, who is viewed as the more kind and nurturing parent, tries to help her children, by convincing the father to change his mind. If the father cannot be persuaded, the mother often goes behind his back to permit the children to get their way. This pattern worsens as the children get older and the father recognizes his lack of power over his family. He becomes more and more authoritarian as he tries to cope with his powerlessness. In response to his increasing authoritarianism, mother feels an increasing need to protect and defend her

children. She sabotages her husband's power, believing she is doing the best thing for her children (Rimm, 1995). Because the military fosters a strong sense of discipline and respect for authority, many men become accustomed to this way of life, and may have a hard time switching gears when they return home to their families.

Rimm found that girls in such a family are likely to be high achievers because they see their mother as powerful and positive. Boys, on the other hand, will tend to underachieve because they do not see an effective role-model in their father. They fear and resent him, but do not wish to be like him. They identify more closely with their mother (Rimm, 1995). Such cross-gender identification of sons with their mothers was also linked to underachievement in males in a landmark study conducted by Terman and Oden (1947). The gifted underachieving men in this study possessed the following characteristics: lack of self-confidence, inability to persevere, a lack of integration toward goals, and the presence of inferiority feelings.

Many military children are of above-average intelligence and seem to have very high potential, yet suffer from low self-esteem and underachievement (e.g., Johnson & Hayes, 1997; Marchant & Medway, 1987; Plucker & Yecke, 1999). Underachievement has been defined as a discrepancy between a student's academic performance and his or her actual ability, as measured by a test of intelligence, achievement or creativity (e.g., Mandel & Marcus, 1995; Rimm, 1995). Recent studies have reported underachievement to be more common among males than females (Colangelo, Kerr, Christensen & Maxey, 1993).

Studies of high-ability underachievers point to characteristics that are typical of these children. The characteristic found most frequently among underachieving children

is low self-esteem (Colangelo & Dettman, 1983), which leads to avoidance behaviors such as procrastination, low expectations, perfectionism, and rebellion against authority. These behaviors serve to protect the child from admitting a lack of self-confidence or feared lack of ability (Rimm, 1995). As previously mentioned, there may be a connection between frequent relocations and the absence of the father in the child's early years and low self-esteem. In addition to the importance of a close relationship between the child and both parents, peers may play a crucial role in developing greater self-esteem, motivation and achievement.

#### The Role of Peers

I'm lucky to be absolutely friendless through an entire school year until the month of May. Then I make lots of new friends. Then I'm lucky enough to have Daddy come home with a new set of orders. Then I'm lucky enough to move in the summer and lucky enough to be absolutely friendless when school starts back in the fall. (Conroy, 1976, p. 44)

Studies have yielded consistent findings relating popular status and acceptance with successful academic performance, and rejected status and low levels of acceptance with academic difficulties (e.g., Orosan, Weine, Jason & Johnson, 1992; Wentzel, 1999). Research on the effects of school transitions suggests that the loss of a familiar peer group can have negative effects on self-esteem and general interest in school (Wolfe, 1991). This lack of interest often leads to underachieving behaviors (Rimm, 1995).

The development of close friendships, which can be similar to parent-child relationships in that they reflect warmth, nurturance, and effective interpersonal communication styles, may contribute to the adolescent's behavior and academic

performance in school (Berndt, 1999). Children and adolescents need to feel they belong. When needs for belonging are met, individuals experience a positive sense of emotional well-being and beliefs that the social environment is a supportive place (Connell & Wellborn, 1991). As a consequence, individuals are likely to adopt the goals and values of those who help them meet those needs. When friendships are not formed, however, and these needs for belonging are not met, individuals may experience anger and depression, resulting in behavioral and academic difficulties (Berndt, 1999).

Because of their transient lifestyle, many military dependents find it difficult to make close friends or to ever fit in with their peers. The masculine role model provided by the peer group may be particularly influential for paternally deprived boys (Lamb, 1981), and the absence of such a role model may lead to a number of difficulties. Research has also suggested that adequate peer adjustment is related to appropriate same-sex identification (Hetherington, 1966). Boys in military families, who are frequently transferred to new schools, often lack a close group of male peers. Because these boys are often separated from their fathers, as well, they have few males with whom to identify. A sense of belonging to a peer group seems critical to positive self-esteem, adjustment and academic achievement, especially for boys separated from their fathers. The influence of peers on social and emotional development as well as academic achievement among military dependents clearly warrants investigation.

#### School Factors

“I’m so lucky that I get to go to four high schools instead of one.” (Conroy, 1976, p. 44)

Transitions between schools bring with them new changes and challenges for the developing child. The child is expected to take on new academic and social responsibilities in an unfamiliar environment. A child in such a situation is at increased

risk of experiencing disruptions in his or her self-esteem and academic performance.

Taking advantage of new learning opportunities requires that the student take intellectual risks. A student is less likely to take such risks in an environment unless it has been proven safe and trustworthy (Spencer, 1999). In highly mobile military families, the children are not in a school environment long enough to trust it, therefore, they may not perform to their academic potential. Low achievement and environmental factors such as peer social support may predict the quality of children's adjustment to new schools.

Children who are not given adequate time to develop trusting relationships with teachers and peers in a new school, and who consequently do not perform well academically, are even less likely to do well in the next new situation. Each disappointing experience leads to deterioration of self-efficacy and motivation. This combined with the assurance that no school situation is permanent, may lead the child to resist ever expending much effort forming new relationships or working toward academic goals.

The ideas that children develop about their abilities and styles as learners can have important and long-lasting effects on their ways of approaching learning materials (Eccles, Wigfield & Schiefele, 1998). Goodenow (1992) found that perceived teacher support was associated with both perceived competence and intrinsic interest in early adolescent students. Harter (1989) reported a strong relationship between perceived teacher support and student self-worth. Midgley, Feldlauer & Eccles (1989) found that students who moved from classrooms where they experienced high teacher support to those where perceived teacher support was lower, showed lower levels of interest and positive attitudes toward learning. Ryan & Stiller (1994) found that students who reported emulating parents and teachers showed more positive school adjustment and

motivation. These findings point to the importance of relationships with teachers in shaping school motivation, adjustment and self-esteem. Their findings also suggest that students who feel secure with and supported by parents may be more likely to experience better relationships with their teachers. Students in military families may be denied the opportunities to develop strong positive relationships with teachers. It is important for these children that no time be wasted. Teachers need to be aware of the military lifestyle and the toll it takes on dependents. They need to make immediate efforts to form strong personal connections with military children, recognize and nurture their talents, and encourage the development of goals and motivation.

There is strong evidence that children whose school behavior is more intrinsically motivated (Harter, 1989) and self-regulated (Connell & Wellborn, 1991) perform better in school than those whose behavior is more extrinsic, externally regulated, or performance oriented. Self-regulated learning involves the use of strategies, such as self-management and organization of time and materials to achieve academic goals. The basis for these strategies is a child's sense of self-efficacy (Connell & Wellborn, 1991). In addition to a child's autonomous self-regulation, perceived control and perceived competence are also key motivational resources. Children must understand the connections between their actions and success and failure outcomes—they must have a sense of control. For many military children, who are frequently being pulled out of one school and placed in a new one, this sense of control is lacking. A child who is uncertain of his time remaining in a school is less likely to set goals and see them through. He or she lacks control over the learning situation, and therefore may be less motivated to work toward goals.

## High Ability Students

Dependents requiring special programs to meet their needs, such as high ability students, are at particular risk for developing underachieving behaviors. These children are even less likely to be challenged in school than civilian gifted students because they are so often transferred. It is not uncommon for military dependents to move to a new location and to be presented with the very same curriculum that they completed in their last school (Tittle, 1985). Varying identification criteria in different schools for gifted programming may prevent these students from receiving enrichment and acceleration (Plucker & Yecke, 1999). Instead, they may find themselves biding their time tutoring other children or grading papers for teachers.

Alvino (1991) has theorized that high ability boys may be particularly susceptible to perfectionist tendencies and underachievement because they are not permitted to develop the same capacity for emotion (to give or receive) as are girls. They feel they can only secure affection and approval through academic or athletic success. Alvino also theorized that boys raised in families where “macho” values, such as toughness, competitiveness, independence, aggressiveness and lack of sensitivity are reinforced may be especially at risk. Boys who feel they must conform to the macho stereotype against their natures are subject to internal struggles that can cause them to reject their giftedness. This may be the case in many military families, where there is often an emphasis on such “macho” values. This self-alienation, according to Alvino, leads to guilt, feelings of inadequacy and poor self-esteem. Boys are taught to suppress their feelings. For high ability boys in particular, this can limit the development of their creativity and intuition

(Alvino, 1991). When gifts are not valued and developed, motivation, self-esteem and academic achievement suffer.

Students with nontraditional talents and learning styles may also be at greater risk for underachievement than their peers. If their gifts and talents are not valued in the school setting, many children will not only hide them, but may also deny them (Olenchak, 1999). It may be that children in military families, who are seldom in one school setting for long, may be at an increased risk for having their strengths and learning styles go unnoticed by teachers or that these strengths will be misinterpreted as learning problems rather than as talents to be tapped.

Adolescence is for many an especially difficult time. During this stage, individuals are searching for an acceptable identity and also for acceptable standards. It is a period of uncertain status, a time of need for social acceptance, and with adolescence often comes an anti-scholarship climate (Willings, 1980). What is acceptable to teachers and parents may be unacceptable to the peer groups on whom the adolescent depends for a meaning to life. It is often at this stage that the high ability adolescent will deliberately underachieve in order to gain group acceptance (Clinkenbeard, 1996; Willings, 1980). They begin to underachieve, and as they do, their peer relationships take on a higher priority. These students are often positively reinforced for underachieving behaviors by their peer group (Frasier, 1991; Rimm, 1995). Underachievement to identify with peers is theorized by some (e.g., Dowdall & Collangelo, 1981; Kerr, 1994; Reis, 1998) to be more problematic for adolescent girls, who are expected to be more social and have different achievement pressure than boys. However, studies by Loeb & Jay (1987) and Wolfle



(1991) have reported that there are different but equal pressures for boys to underachieve in order to be socially accepted by peers.

Because boys feel pressure to be tough, masculine and able to keep their emotions under control, they may not open up to peers or adults, and early underachieving behaviors may go unnoticed (Woffle, 1991). Because of their frequent relocations, children and adolescents in military families are especially susceptible to the influences of peers. They want desperately to make smooth transitions in each new school and to fit in with the other students as quickly as possible. The brighter the child, the more quickly he or she learns to do whatever it takes to fit in with others, even if this means denying gifts and talents.

The children of military families are not tucked neatly away on military bases to be handled by carefully trained teachers and counselors, sensitive to their particular needs. Instead, these children are constantly being transferred in and out of public and private schools in communities all over the United States and the world. Although some social support is provided for families on military bases, parents, teachers and counselors are not adequately trained to meet the needs of these learners in our schools. Indeed, we may not even recognize them, for these children and adolescents want very much to fit in and blend in with each new environment.

Because of recent world events, this population of military dependents is now growing, and the number of these children with fathers and mothers on dangerous deployments is increasing as well. During times of conflict, children and spouses suffer greater emotional problems (Blount, Curry & Lubin, 1992; Hunter, 1982), therefore we might expect an increase in underachieving behaviors and social problems among

military children. If we do not keep up with these children, they may get lost in the shuffle. Only a handful of qualitative research studies have been conducted with this population, and many more are needed to explore the experiences of gifted military dependents. With a better understanding of their experiences and perceptions, teachers and counselors may be better able to meet the needs of this special population.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODS

#### Theoretical Framework

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the perceptions of high ability males and their parents related to their experiences growing up/raising a high ability son in a Navy family. The culture of the Navy family is of great interest to me. I am intrigued by the perspective found in cultural anthropology which sees culture as a set of cognitive structures learned by children as they grow up in a particular community and used by them to make decisions about their own behavior and to interpret the behaviors of people around them (Singer, 1970). Although I have not conducted an ethnographic study, I have considered the culture of the Navy family. It is unique, and very little research exists related to high ability dependents in military families. I am especially interested in the perceived influence the Navy culture and lifestyle may have on the cognitive, social and emotional development of high ability males.

I approached this study from a constructionist epistemology. Social constructionism holds that meaning is constructed by individuals as they interact with the world they are interpreting (Berger & Luckman, 1966). Based on the notion that people continually construct and modify meanings in their lives through social interactions with others, the aim is to understand and explain human and social reality. This approach looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the world (Crotty, 1998). Because people engage with others to construct meaning, there are many different ways of making sense of reality, and no one true or valid interpretation exists (Kramp,

forthcoming). Since reality is historically and culturally based, interpretations of the same phenomenon may vary during different times in different places. The perceptions of my participants vary depending on their situation and the situations of important people in their lives. These perceptions will be different from those of other high ability Navy dependents in other situations.

My theoretical perspective, symbolic interactionism, comes from the constructionist epistemology. This perspective seeks to understand an experience or phenomenon by looking at individuals and how these individuals interpret their world through and in social interaction (Crotty, 1998). The researcher attempts to 1) explain the set of understandings and symbols that give meaning to peoples' interactions, and 2) to take on the role of participant in order to better understand his or her perspective (Blumer, 1980). I have experienced the role of the Navy dependent myself, and my observations of my brother's experiences as a dependent inform my perspective as well. I am interested in understanding the meaning of experiences related to the Navy lifestyle for other male military dependents. I am also interested in the perceptions of these males and their parents regarding the influencing of the Navy lifestyle on their social, emotional and cognitive development.

### Methodology

Because lived experience is the object of my research, narrative inquiry is an appropriate research method. Narrative inquiry refers to a subset of qualitative research in which stories are used to describe human action (Polkinghorne, 1988). Narrative studies are different from other types of qualitative research in that they focus on the individual and his or her experiences (Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995). Two main purposes of narrative

inquiry are: 1) to better understand how participants create order from their experiences and how they structure and interpret their stories, and 2) to enhance personal and social growth among others (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 1993). The object of narrative inquiry is understanding, not explanation. Because the participant may not be able to see the ways in which events or experiences are connected, the researcher helps organize the story told by linking events, perceptions, and experience - filling the space between “what happened” and “what it means” (Kramp, forthcoming). Narrative inquiry assumes personal involvement as the very condition that makes it possible for the researcher to gather and interpret narratives of participants in the study. The researcher strives to use the storyteller’s own words in the narrative, which can best communicate the unique particularities of what the experience is really like for each participant (Kramp, forthcoming).

### *Selection of Participants*

Initially I chose three families for this study from communities in northern Virginia and Maryland where there is a heavy concentration of Navy families. I selected participants based on purposive and theoretical sampling. This sampling method is defined as selecting groups or categories to study on the basis of their relevance to one’s research questions, one’s theoretical position, and the explanation or account which one is developing (Silverman, 2000).

Due to the wide variation in lifestyle among the different branches of the military, I chose to include only families from one branch of the military, the Navy. In an additional effort to reduce variation, I chose families where the father had served as an active duty line officer, and where the mother and father were currently married and

sharing the family home. Children of officers may adjust differently to relocations and family separations than the children of enlisted men because of greater financial stability and resources (Pittman & Bowen, 1994).

I first made contact with six former Navy families with the help of my father, a retired Navy captain. He sent out an email (see Appendix B) with a brief explanation of my study to 12 former Navy colleagues who had at least one adult son, and who lived in the Washington, D.C. area. Six of these families expressed an interest in my study. I then sent detailed information about the study to each family (see Appendix C), and after hearing back from them, I chose the three families that best fit my criteria, which were as follows: 1) father had served as an active duty line officer in the Navy; 2) father and mother are currently married and sharing the family home; 3) the son in each family is of high ability, as evidenced by a standardized achievement test score at the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile or above; 4) the son is at least 18 years of age and is capable of reflecting on and discussing his experiences.

After interviewing these three families in May of 2002, I made the decision to add a fourth family. The reason for this was to obtain the perspectives of sons who were in different positions within their families. In my first three families, I had one son who was the youngest of three siblings, one son who was the younger of two siblings, and one son who was the middle of three siblings. By adding a fourth family, I would be able to gain the perspective of a son who was the oldest of his siblings. This fourth family was located again through my father. I contacted the family by telephone to describe my study and solicit their participation. This family met my criteria, and the son who would participate was the oldest of three children. After the family agreed to participate, we set up

interviews in June. Although the son was living in the Washington, D.C. area at that time, both parents were living in California. For this reason, both parents were interviewed over the telephone. Demographic information for the participants in this study is provided in Table 1.

Table 1

## Demographic Information for Participants

	Curt Taggert	John Mason	Thom. Hanford	Barton Landers
Age	25	25	18	21
Position among siblings	oldest of three	youngest of two	youngest of three	middle child
Father's position in Navy	attack pilot	test pilot	attack pilot	surface warfare officer
Mother's occupation	teacher	teacher/ principal	teacher	teacher
Current occupation	law student	Selling mutual funds	high school student	college student
Ethnicity	Caucasian	Caucasian	Caucasian	Caucasian

It is possible that I would have obtained greater variety in demographics had I not secured my participants through my father. He was asked to help me locate families of career naval officers with adult sons of high ability. Ethnicity was not a consideration.

The families I initially contacted were simply twelve that my father perceived would fit the above criteria and were those that were living in the Washington, D.C. area.

### *Methods and Data Collection*

The phenomenological interview, which is informal and open-ended, both complements and enhances narrative inquiry (Kramp, forthcoming), and therefore was my primary method of gathering data. In-depth interviews involve asking open-ended questions that encourage the participant to reconstruct experiences and explore the meaning of these experiences (Seidman, 1998). My interview guide was open and flexible, permitting participants to guide the direction of each interview. This design helped reduce the risk of imposing my own organization and subjectivities into the interview. A copy of my interview guide is provided in Appendix A.

I began by conducting one 60-90 minute interview with each of my twelve participants. I interviewed each male dependent, each mother, and each father. With the exception of the fourth family, the Taggerts, all interviews were face-to-face interviews. As previously mentioned, Captain and Mrs. Taggert were interviewed by phone because they were living on the west coast at the time, and I was not able to fly across country. A second follow-up phone interview was conducted with each of the four male dependents, and then email correspondence took place as necessary with all 12 participants to thoroughly complete data collection. When considering face-to-face interviews and telephone interviews, I did not notice a difference in the quality or quantity of information gathered from my participants. Participants seemed equally comfortable sharing information in person as they did over the telephone. The telephone interviews conducted with the Taggerts were as lengthy, as detailed and as full of emotion as the



face-to-face interviews conducted with the other parents. All interviews were audio taped and transcribed verbatim. An audit trail of data and data analysis consisting of tape recorded interviews, interview transcripts, email correspondence, and researcher notes has been preserved. Although interviews with both parents were conducted and incorporated, the narratives I present focus primarily on the perceptions of the male dependent in each of the four families.

### *Subjectivity*

As previously mentioned, I have a very personal interest in the experiences of high-ability Navy dependents, and share a common group identity with my participants. I consider my subjectivities to be advantageous to this study. Mischler (1986) stated that the researcher should ideally know something of the respondent's life situation. Peshkin (1988) also pointed out that subjectivity is "the basis of researchers' making a distinctive contribution, one that results from the unique configuration of their personal qualities joined to the data they have collected" (p. 18). My own subjectivities as the daughter of a career naval aviator, the sister of a high ability male, and as a teacher and researcher in the field of gifted and creative education served as assets to my study, for another researcher might not understand this population so well.

Although I recognize the potential for researcher bias that this may present, this shared identity also enables me a deep understanding of the Navy lifestyle. To ensure that I would understand the data from the participants' perceptions and not my own, I participated in a bracketing interview with a colleague before collecting my data. Bracketing, as defined by Husserl, the "father of phenomenology" (cited in van Maanen, 1990), describes the act of suspending ones' various beliefs in order to study the essential

structures of the world. In this bracketing interview I was asked to describe my study, to explain my reasons for conducting the research, and to predict what I might find at the conclusion of the study.

After the interview, I analyzed my responses. This process allowed me to examine and identify my subjectivities up front, before data collection began. I reflected on my subjectivities at many points during the research process, noting instances when I identified with what my participants were sharing, and made every attempt to keep those subjectivities in check. I also looked for instances in the interview transcripts where I did not identify with the participants responses, and consequently might not have sufficiently probed for further information. In such cases, I made sure to ask the participant for greater detail in a subsequent interview or question via electronic mail.

To ensure the quality of this study, I completed member checks with each of my participants. Member checks are opportunities for participants to review data, analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions to verify that the researcher has constructed an adequate representation and interpretation of the participants' experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In my study, this process involved sending drafts of the male dependents' narratives to all four male participants via electronic mail. With these drafts, I also sent a note, explaining the purpose of member checks, and encouraged them to notify me if they felt my interpretation was inaccurate in any way. Because parents were quoted in my introduction and my findings sections, I sent drafts of chapters one and four to all parent participants with the same note attached, asking for their approval. In all cases, my participants responded via electronic mail that my interpretations were accurate representations of their experiences. By completing these member checks, I feel I have

taken appropriate steps to minimize the effect of potential researcher bias on the analysis and interpretations of the data.

### *Planning for the Presentation of Data*

I planned to report my data in a case study format, with each case focusing on the male dependent. I chose to incorporate interviews with both parents as well as each son in order that these different sources would corroborate each other and serve as a form of methodological triangulation (Silverman, 2000). By describing the experiences and perceptions of several individuals, readers would be better able to understand the Navy lifestyle and the ways it may influence high ability dependents. I planned narratives that would be synchronic reports, as described by Weiss (1994), using consequential or thematic sequencing, and envisioned a collective story narrative – one that represents a category of people, but invokes an individual response such as, “That’s my story - I’m not alone” (Richardson, 1994, p. 213). Because I have experienced the Navy lifestyle first-hand, and, therefore, am a member of the military category, I know I am well suited to organize the collective story of particular members of this category.

To create a clear picture of each participant, I relied on Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis’ book entitled, *The Art and Science of Portraiture* (1997). Portraiture, which involves creating a written portrait of a participant, appealed to me as a method and was a natural fit for several reasons. First, in portraiture, the researcher seeks to record and interpret the perspectives and experiences of the people they are studying, documenting their authority, knowledge and wisdom. Secondly, in portraiture the focus is on what is good and healthy in an experience, rather than on the sources of failure. The portraitist works to document how the participants define goodness, even in bad experiences (Lawrence-

Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Culture and context are also very important in portraiture. The portraitist sees the social and cultural context as a resource for understanding.

Portraiture is a form of narrative inquiry, “combining systematic, empirical description with aesthetic expression, blending art and science, human sensibilities and scientific rigor” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 3). One goal of portraiture is to ensure that the participants feel appreciated and identified. Another purpose of portraiture is to lead toward new understandings and insights for participants and any others who might read the portraits, as well as to instigate change. The close observation that portrait writing requires unites the researcher to the subject. The distance that portrait writing requires affords a view of the whole with which insiders may be less familiar (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). The researcher is therefore able to recognize and represent order where the participants may have perceived disarray.

Portraiture involves the tracing and interpretation of emergent themes, and the piecing together of these themes into an aesthetic whole. There is never a single story to emerge – many could be told.

The portraitist is active in selecting the themes that will be used to tell the story, strategic in deciding on the points of focus and emphasis, and creative in defining the sequence and rhythm of the narrative... The identity, character, and history of the researcher are critical to the manner of listening, selecting, interpreting and composing the story... The shaping hand of the investigator is counterbalanced by the skepticism and scrutiny that is the signature of good research (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p.12-13).

This process is not unlike the process involved in constructing other types of narratives. Kramp (forthcoming) asserted that one of the most important roles of the researcher in constructing a narrative is the structuring of events in such a way that they demonstrate coherence and a sense of movement through time. The narrator constructs the story by structuring and framing relationships, thereby imposing a meaning on the actions and events that comprise the story. “The principal attraction of narrative as method is its capacity to render life experiences, both personal and social, in relevant and meaningful ways.” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990).

### *Methods of Data Analysis*

In portraiture, the researcher first identifies relevant dimensions. These dimensions are brought to the site, and are areas of mattering that the researcher chooses (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). I entered data collection with the following relevant dimensions that I chose based on my own experience as a Navy dependent: 1) moving to new locations; 2) deployments; 3) reunions. These relevant dimensions are evidenced in my interview guide (see Appendix A). These relevant dimensions provided a structure for reflecting on themes. As I interviewed participants, I kept a journal of my reflections. In this, I considered these three dimensions, noted similarities and differences in participants’ stories, and generated questions which were addressed in follow-up interviews and emails. My notes helped develop a plan of action for consecutive interviews.

After each interview, I transcribed the data and read through the interview transcript carefully, writing words and phrases in the margins that represented topics and emerging themes. This process is consistent with the methods involved in portraiture, as

Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis described (1997). In portraiture, coding is not something one does to get the data ready for analysis, but something that drives ongoing data collection. It is a form of early and continuing analysis. This ongoing coding helped me to uncover real or potential sources of bias and guided continued data collection and analysis.

After consecutive phone interviews had been conducted (with the four dependent participants) and this same coding process repeated, I corresponded via electronic mail with all twelve participants to clarify certain issues and/or probe for additional information. Next I sifted through all data, and developed a chart to help organize the data for each family (see Appendix D). From these four data charts, I organized a combined chart to display the data for all four male dependents side by side (see Appendix E). This display allowed me to identify similarities and differences among participants. From this chart, I constructed a list of topics that were common to two or more dependents. I then combed through the data for quotes from the dependents that would fit these categories and displayed them together (see Appendix F). I looked for repetitive refrains (a collective expression of views) and also for examples of the deviant voice in the data.

My next step was to narrow down my list of topics to a list of the four main emergent themes that were common among the dependents. I constructed a preliminary outline into which the data were sorted according to these themes. I selected names for these themes in each of the four male dependents' stories. Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis suggested that "If the portraitist cannot find a name for a theme within the language of the actors on the site, it is more likely that the theme is being imposed from the outside in than emerging

from the inside out” (p. 220). Kramp (forthcoming) also stressed the importance of using the participants’ own words to best communicate what the experience is really like for each participant (see Appendix G).

While the identification of emergent themes did not reduce the complexity of the whole, it made the complexity more comprehensible. The themes that I selected to tell my participants’ stories are as follows: 1) expectations and goals; 2) adapting to change; 3) participation in sports; 4) pride. These four themes were also identified in the data collected from both mothers and fathers. Furthermore, I found that these four themes cut across the three relevant dimensions (moving to new locations, deployments, and reunions) in the data collected from sons, fathers and mothers. Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis explained (1997) that, “While some emergent themes will have more resonance within one dimension than another, resonance across dimensions suggests authenticity – the likelihood that the theme is indicative of the whole of the institution and not just a part” (p. 220).

Finally, I outlined the four individual portraits for my dependent participants. I took the advice of Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) as I sought to construct each portrait, attending to the following four dimensions: 1) the *conception*, or overarching story (which usually grows out of an emergent theme, and is the most powerful idea that often reveals itself through different voices, in different settings); 2) the *structure* or sequencing and layering of emerging themes that give the portrait a stability and an organization; 3) the *form*, or movement of the narrative (often expressed through metaphors or punch lines of stories which capture the emotion and energy of the participant); 4) the *cohesion*, or unity and integrity of the piece. I made certain that the

conception of each portrait was evident in the structure, and that the form supported and illuminated the structural elements and conception. In so doing, the pieces fell into place, creating a sense of unity or cohesion. An example of a portrait outline is provided in Appendix H.

Because the focus of my study is on the experiences and perceptions of the male dependents in these Navy families, I did not construct portraits for the parent participants. Instead, I chose to incorporate parent perceptions in the introduction and findings sections of the dissertation, to demonstrate how their responses support and/or contradict the perceptions of their sons. My study contributes to the literature by painting a picture of the experience of growing up in a Navy family from the shared perspectives of mother, father and son.



CHAPTER 4  
PARTICIPANT PORTRAITS

Curt Taggert: Moving On

At age twenty-five, Curt Taggert is still on the move. After graduating from a small university on the west coast, he moved to England where he earned his Master's Degree in business at a large university. From there, he went to work in New York for a year before moving again to a state in the southwest where he is currently a second year law student. He hopes to find a position upon graduation that will allow him continued opportunities for travel. He explained, "I never really stayed in one place very long, so I am accustomed to moving. It feels stagnant if I stay beyond a year in a certain place. The constant traveling thing – it really hasn't stopped."

Curt's well-groomed appearance and conservative clothing seem appropriate considering both his military background and his future aspirations in business or law. His short, blond hair is parted on the side, and the glasses he wears give him a serious and intelligent look. Despite the warmth of the June day, he wears long pants and a long sleeved, button-down shirt. Tall and very thin, Curt sits with one leg crossed over the other, shaking his foot with nervous energy during the interview.

Curt is the oldest of three children. His brother, Matt, is four years younger, and Kendra, his sister, is seven years younger than Curt. His father retired from the Navy in 1997, after 29 years as a naval attack pilot. Captain Taggert's career in the Navy was a successful one that moved the family six times. Curt attended eight different schools

while growing up, and would have made three additional moves (and attended three additional schools), had his parents not chosen to have the family remain behind several times while Captain Taggert worked in other locations. Curt's father made seven deployments ranging from four to nine months in length while Curt lived at home. Curt's mother is now a teacher, but she stayed home while Curt was growing up. She was an active member of the Navy Officers' Wives Club, and in her children's school and extracurricular activities.

### *Expectations and Goals*

*"There was a general expectation that I would do well."*

The Taggerts always had high expectations for Curt in school. He was bright and personable and made new friends easily. Although, in general, he was academically self-motivated, Curt recalled a time when his father organized an "incentive program" for better grades. Curt explained, "It wasn't that these incentives really drove me, but it sort of set the bar and...you know, I just tried to reach that bar and keep it up." Curt also expressed the perception that once his parents had enrolled him in Catholic school, they expected more from him academically. "Things changed in sixth grade because now my parents were *paying* for school. You know, they sort of expected a return."

*"My mom really counted on me."*

When Curt's father was gone, Curt was expected to step up and assume greater responsibility at home. He recalls several changes in expectations and in family routine, at times when his father was away:

I was the oldest child and I was a guy, so, I would get to sit in my dad's chair in the dining room, and I would help out with dinner and these sorts of things. My

mom would really count on me to do certain things because she was so busy and there was no one else...in terms of, like, taking care of my brother and sister...and those sorts of things.

*“It wasn’t your brother and sister and mom, it was just you two.”*

Each time Captain Taggert returned home, he wanted to make up for the time that had been lost while he was away. When Curt was young, his father instituted a schedule for taking each of the three children on a special trip alone with Dad. Each child was expected to take one such trip with Dad each year. Curt was taken on “manly” trips with his father, that included fishing, camping, horseback riding and hunting. While Curt was sometimes pushed on these trips to do things he was afraid of, he looks back on them fondly: “They were good things, those trips.”

#### *Adapting to Change*

*“I found myself changing to fit in.”*

Fitting in with new school peers was especially important for Curt after each move. He admits that in each new environment, he consciously tried to alter his own behavior and appearance – whatever he deemed necessary to fit in quickly. If he perceived that hiding his own natural ability would enable him to fit in, then he began to underachieve. If, on the other hand, he was with a group of high academic achievers, he worked hard to rise to the academic standards of the group. Curt also rose or sunk to the level of expectation in each new school. After several years of very mediocre performance in public schools, Curt’s parents enrolled him in a Catholic school for sixth grade. In this new environment, more was expected from him and he had more academically oriented

peers. Although this transition was initially difficult, Curt reflected that it was a very positive change.

I spent 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade in public schools, and I didn't do very well at all there. I can remember just always sort of getting in trouble with my friends...not really caring...not even bothering to learn...you know, get C's and D's... And then in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, my parents didn't know what to do. They were like, what's up? And...so they took me out of public school and put me into a Catholic school for 6<sup>th</sup> grade. And from that point on, I really started focusing more on school, and things went up from that point, but it wasn't until then that I really took academics seriously...or even just schoolwork seriously. In sixth grade, I was in an entirely new school in an entirely new city, and...I mean, there were nuns...they were very strict disciplinarians...and that was all new, and I didn't know how to act in that sort of environment. I guess I was just like, okay, this is how you're supposed to do it here...like, I'm supposed to do my work and I won't get in trouble. And...so it really just kind of started out like that, and then...that was the first time that I consistently did work and actually started doing well in school, but I think it really had to do with me moving to a new city...new kids...entirely new type of school...you know, I was wearing a uniform...I felt totally out of my element...I had no idea how I was supposed to act, and I had really strict teachers, so, I just fell into it that way. I think Catholic School was really good for me, just because I can see such a marked change...even in my life. Had I not gone to Catholic schools...I don't know what would have happened...I probably would have just continued down that road, and I

have no idea where I'd be now...what I'd be doing...that sort of thing...so, it was totally instrumental, and I'm happy that it did happen.

For the most part, moving was not difficult for Curt. He explains, "Moving came to be easy...normal... it was so regular and so frequent that, even if you didn't want to leave a group of friends you had made, you had done it before, and so, there was some confidence you could draw from that...you know, I've been able to do this once – I can do it again." He experienced his most difficult transition at the beginning of eighth grade, when he was moved across country.

Moving from Virginia to California was pretty dramatic. My eighth grade school was primarily Philippino...in fact, I was one of only two white people in my class, and so...that was a big change, and just being in California and not knowing anyone, and then being confronted with an entirely new social environment that I had never seen before...never experienced before...and, so...that was definitely difficult. It was really hard to find someone that I really connected with...so, I found myself changing to fit in to that sort of context. My clothing changed...my friends changed...the type of friend totally changed, as well...just because there weren't many people that I knew...I mean, all I knew were these Philippino kids at school, and then...people who lived on the base, who didn't attend my school.

Despite some difficulty adjusting to a new environment in middle school, Curt believes that moving around the country was good for him. He always enjoyed meeting new people and learning about new places.

You moved around so often and you were introduced to so many different people, so many different perspectives, and this sort of thing...that really enabled you, when you

got older to...deal with new types of situations and interact with different types of people, because you know, you know how to speak to a Southerner...you know how to speak to a Northerner...you know how to speak to a Californian...because you've lived in each one of those places...and you know the people there...so...I think it was good.

*“Oh, look... it's the Mommy camel, the baby camel, and the babysitter camel!”*

Captain Taggert was often deployed when Curt was young. In these times, Mrs. Taggert relied heavily on friends and babysitters for support. Curt talked about how he and his siblings were quite accustomed to the presence of babysitters when their father was away. Curt recalled that at the age of six, his mother took him to the zoo. The crowd around the camel pen was amused, when young Curt assumed that a group of three camels must be “Mommy, baby and babysitter.” It didn't occur to Curt at that point, that there would be a Daddy camel present, because his own father was so seldom home.

*“You get used to one system, and then it's gone, so you devise your own.”*

Whenever Captain Taggert left on a deployment, the family made changes in their regular routine. They developed their own “systems” for doing things. These systems changed somewhat each time Captain Taggert returned home. The following quote illustrates a few of the ways his father's homecomings affected Curt:

When my dad came back...it was kind of weird because we'd gotten so accustomed to these roles that when he came back, it was like...okay, now I've got to shift down one...the biggest slice of the chicken went to him again...all these little things that are just indicative of the larger changes...the rules and stuff. He would come back and...what he said went! And it would overrule anything

that you and your mom or your brother...like, you had definitely set up systems and everyone was familiar with those systems, but when he came back, he's like...no, we're not doing it that way...we're doing it this way, and I don't care if you argue or not...we're doing it this way. And so...we'd kind of look at each other and say, okay, yeah sure, Dad, and just wait for him to leave and go okay, good...finally! It was like that.

Curt described his father as “regimented, efficient and very business-like...stern at times...when he needs to be or when he thinks he needs to be, but...really a great father...a great guy.” Curt’s mother was described as “nurturing, soft, and...a pushover with anything emotional.” Although Curt’s father had the more controlling personality, Curt perceived that his mother was really the parent in control.

Mom probably was more powerful behind the scenes than my dad. My dad would kind of stand up in front of you and say, we're doing it this way...and whatever...and then Mom would take him into another room or something and they'd have their discussion and then they'd reemerge and he'd have changed his mind. So, I mean, you wouldn't be able to watch it, but you kind of understood what was happening.

### *Participation in Sports*

Curt was encouraged to participate in sports from a young age, and he tried many. He played baseball, soccer, football, and was on a neighborhood swim team while he was young. In middle school, Curt got serious about tennis, the sport his father loved best and played well. This was the one sport Curt tried that he did not participate in for social reasons. “Not many of my classmates did play tennis...so...that wasn't something that

helped out socially.” Curt persisted with tennis throughout high school and college and expressed that tennis is now a fun activity for father and son to do together. “We used to play really hard, until I gave my dad a hernia...now my dad and I just like to hang out and just enjoy hitting the tennis ball.”

Curt seemed to rely on his outgoing personality and his academic strengths to help him fit in with peers in new settings, rather than on his athletic ability in school sports. Neither Curt’s level of participation in sports nor his enjoyment of sports was affected by his father’s deployments.

*Pride*

*“He did a lot of great things, and I lived with this person!”*

Curt expressed a great deal of pride in his father and in his father’s achievements in the Navy. The following description of a change of command ceremony that took place toward the end of Captain Taggart’s career illustrates this pride:

At a change of command...it was really strange to sit down and have this entire ceremony in honor of him...and people talking about their experiences that they’d had with him...mostly professional, but some social and that sort of thing...and...when you’ve got the booklet sort of thing that they’re passing out, and you read his biography...you’re like, oh wow! He did a lot of great things! So it was...eye-opening, really, because it was seeing that your dad really did have all this responsibility and power and...you know, you lived with this person...it just seemed like a different thing all together.

Curt reflected about changes he has noticed since his father’s retirement from the Navy.



He believes his father has relaxed a great deal, and is more accepting of other perspectives. Curt perceives that the shift to retirement was not an easy transition for his father, and he is proud of the way his father has handled this adjustment. Because of the changes in his father's general attitude and because his father is now home all of the time, Curt feels they have grown much closer.

When he retired I was kind of curious to see what would happen to him...just because he was accustomed to...taking charge with his family or going to work...you know, what he said went...he was commanding officer on the aircraft carrier...you couldn't question him...you had to accept what he said. There wasn't any insubordination or anything like that. I'm not saying that that's how it was at home, but certainly it was at work. And when you don't really have that sort of authority any more...I thought that he might be upset that no one would listen to him...you know, no one *had* to listen to him anymore. And...I think that's been good for him, because he has become a lot more mellow and more...tolerant of different perspectives...things like that...because he can no longer dictate how the conversation goes...he has to realize that he's just like everyone else and his own perspective on things isn't necessarily right and it won't prevail all the time, and that sort of thing. So... that's definitely one thing that I've noticed about his transition from working in the military to...a civilian type job. Now that I'm getting older, and he's home all of the time, I think our relationship has gotten stronger and closer...I mean, I feel like I can really talk to him now.

### John Mason: Staying Just Underneath the Radar

Twenty-five year old John Mason is a highly social person. He insisted, “I work to live...I don’t live to work.” John would much rather be out with friends than working at a desk, and that is how he has always been. After graduating from college with a degree in economics and marketing, John found a job selling mutual funds with a large company on the east coast. It is at John’s office that we meet for our interview. He is easily distracted while we talk, waving and smiling at people as they pass by his office. Although he appears quite professional in his business suit and tie, there is a mischievous charm and restlessness about him suggesting that he would be more comfortable elsewhere.

John’s father retired from the Navy in 1996 after 27 years as a test pilot. The Masons moved six times while John was growing up, but the family always managed to remain on the east coast. Captain Mason had made five deployments, ranging from four to eleven months in length, by the time John was eight years old. John’s mother, who has now made a successful career for herself as an elementary school principal, was home with John until he entered third grade. John is one of two children in his family. His sister, Helen, is older by four years. Although very bright, John has always been somewhat of an underachiever in school.

#### *Expectations and Goals*

*“I was always expected to do well in school and in sports.  
Basically, it was... do well in whatever you try to do.”*

John’s family recognized his potential early on, and expected him to do well in school. He attended public school in the same school district through fourth grade and did well academically. At that point, the family moved to another state, and John was

enrolled at a middle school on the Navy base where they lived. John began to underachieve in his new school, and because his parents were concerned about the quality of the education he was receiving, they moved him to a public middle school off base for the following year. The second school did not seem much better, however, and so John was moved once again to a Catholic school for seventh and eighth grade. There he did better, but not his best. John explained,

I started getting into trouble in middle school. I got suspended once...I was doing really badly in school because I was goofing off. School never came that hard for me, though, if that makes any sense. It seemed I could always get by on a minimal amount of effort... And I'm still that way. I put things off to the last minute, and then I'll grind out something that'll get me by... I was just always very social, and wanting to hang out, and that became a factor in my grades at some point. Also, I just lack the ability to focus, and that's true to this day, in anything I do. I never tried to get the 'A'. I was just always...get the 'B' and they'll be happy because you're above average. You don't want to get the 'C', because that looks bad when you're just average. Get the 'B' and you're off the radar, basically, and no one is going to pay any attention to you and you can go about your life. I think I use that in everything – if you can stay underneath the radar, then you don't have to worry about it, and you can live your life. That's kind of the mindset I still keep.

Although John wasn't motivated to work hard in school, he was very competitive on the playing field. His father pushed participation in sports from the time John was in preschool. Both John and his sister got involved in soccer, enjoyed it, and stuck with the sport through high school and college. John's father learned to play soccer also, was an

active supporter of both children's teams, and even coached several of John's teams. John was a talented soccer player and enjoyed the social aspects of the sport, as well.

Although John was quite young when his father made the majority of his deployments, John remembered that when his father was gone, the routine and expectations at home were a little different.

I remember goofing off more because he wasn't around. I just think it was more relaxed...lackadaisical, I guess. There wasn't someone around, pushing you to do all the chores and stuff. I probably took advantage of that situation...probably even more than I should have.

When his father returned, John explained that there were different expectations for routine and behavior.

My dad was pretty regimented, and when he came back, things had to be done a certain way. There were contracts that we had to sign for certain levels of achievement...things like that. My mom pushed academics, too, and obviously, as an educator, she wanted us to do well, but it came more from a 'how can I help?' approach, whereas Dad was more of a 'just do it...whatever you have to do, get it done' kind of thing.

Captain Mason was always in charge of family vacations when he was home. John fondly recalled several vacations, but added that his father always expected to pack a lot in. "You know, like, we were going to see 80 cities in Europe in two days!" John also recalled that there was often pressure to try new things on vacations.

Things that were supposed to be fun weren't necessarily fun. I remember learning to boogie board, and I didn't enjoy it because I was *having* to do it. Water skiing

was the same way. I spent something like eight hours in the water to learn how to do it, because I wasn't allowed to get out of the water until I learned to do it. There definitely was that pushing thing. There were a lot of vacations like that.

### *Adapting to Change*

*“Move on... don't dwell on things...look forward to new things.”*

John insisted that the most important thing he learned while growing up in a Navy family was the ability to adapt to new situations. He was taught that change was inevitable and that it didn't help to dwell on it. He also learned that there were always things to look forward to in new situations.

Moving around was a fact of life. That's just the way I knew it...I'd always known it, so I don't think I saw it as odd. I went to two elementary schools, two middle schools, and two high schools. It was always a little difficult at first, but it was always interesting to go somewhere new, and I think my parents did a good job of probably trying to convince me that I was going to like where we were going, so it was no big deal.

John learned how to get along with all sorts of people, and was confident when moving to new settings. A very social person, he made friends easily and never had trouble fitting in with new peers. John's most difficult move came in ninth grade when he had to move to a new town just before entering high school.

In high school, image is so important. I can remember clothes being a concern... I had been going to a private middle school, where I was wearing a uniform, and so, I was thinking, what do I wear? What will kids be wearing in this new place? That was a hard move because I didn't know anyone going into that situation for

the first time. That was when I probably tried harder than ever to fit in. I was constantly trying to fit in to the social structure.

John credits his parents with facilitating smooth adjustments during relocations for their children, and claims that moving around was a very positive experience overall.

My parents did a good job of moving during the summers. I never had to move mid year. That was excellent. I always finished the school year out wherever I started, and I could definitely start a new sport in the new place before the new school year started and I'm sure that was planned. I don't think moving ever hurt me. I think I missed out on some experiences, but I also got to see a lot of new places... I have enjoyable memories of all the places I lived, and I'll probably move around as an adult. I like the thought of changing and seeing a lot of things.

*“What Dad doesn't know won't hurt him.”*

John perceives that his mother actively helped the family adapt to changes related to Captain Mason's departures and homecomings. As previously mentioned, there was a relaxation in rules and routines whenever father was away. The family had little trouble making this transition. When father returned, John's mother helped prepare for the changes that would come. Her children knew that while their father would appear to be the parent defining rules and consequences in the household, Mom was still really in charge. John explained:

Dad barked out orders for us all, but it was really in one ear and out the other with Mom. She still did what she wanted, and that's a form of deception, I guess, but Dad still got the same result...you just let him *believe* you were doing it his way. As long as in the end game, he saw what he wanted to see...that's what's most

important. . . . My sister and I probably went to Mom first with almost anything. If I got a report card that was bad, I would take it to Mom first, and then we would negotiate the plan of how to land it on Dad. She handled a lot of stuff and it never really got back to him.

### *Participation in Sports*

*“It helped me work my way in.”*

Participation in team sports helped John to make smooth transitions into new settings. He made new friends through sports, and did better in school when he was involved. He had only positive things to say about his participation in sports while he was growing up.

Moving early in the summer and getting involved with sports right away helped a lot, because then I already knew some kids when school started. When you play a sport like soccer, you know guys that are older than you, and that helps you get involved in the new school. That makes the change easier. . . . Sports were good for me. I was always healthy, and I always did better in school when I was involved in sports. . . . There are so many things you learn playing sports, especially in team sports. You learn how to deal with people, and how to deal with leadership roles. . . . I think sports are real important to someone who’s doing what I was doing – changing around. It made the changes a lot easier. Playing soccer enabled me to stand out in the crowd a bit. It helped me to adjust and get respect from some of my new peers. Once you are able to establish this respect, you are able to work your way in.

Although soccer was his favorite, John was talented at several different sports. When he moved to a Catholic school in seventh grade, he used basketball to help him ease in to a new peer group. He said, “I was playing soccer at that time, but none of the kids at St. Thomas played soccer, so I played basketball with them, because, that was the sport to help me fit in there.”

John did not recall a difference in the level of his participation in sports at times when his father was away versus the times when he was at home, nor did he comment on a difference in his level of enjoyment of sports. As John moved in to middle school and high school, Captain Mason attended many of John’s soccer matches, but was not directly involved.

#### *Pride*

*“I’m a Navy kid...I grew up all over.”*

John expressed both pride and gratitude for the Navy lifestyle. He enjoyed moving around and meeting new people. He liked the excitement, too, and said he didn’t appreciate how fortunate he was growing up until he talked with college peers about their experiences.

I didn’t grow up in one place, so I can’t remember my childhood friends, or even name them, but I really got to do a lot. These guys never experienced the thrill of sneaking to the end of the runway and standing behind a C-5 and getting blown [backwards and knocked down from the powerful blast of the jet’s engine]... I used to think that that’s what every other kid was doing when he was little, but it wasn’t.



John also shared feelings of pride for both of his parents. He marveled at his mother's ability to start her own career, while still supporting her husband's career and raising two children. He said his mother was always active in the wives' club, keeping the younger wives involved and happy. She also went back to school and became first a teacher, and then a school principal while John was growing up. John perceives that his mother learned a lot from her husband and his role as an officer. He explained that it seems his mother "has now taken on the Captain role...she commands respect, she's tough, and she has to beat up on some slackers now and again."

John perceives that his father has relaxed a great deal since his retirement, and that he is no longer as domineering as he once was. Although John said that his father was difficult to get along with at times, he now understands his father's domineering and controlling tendencies and considers them to be natural characteristics for any one in his father's position. He said,

Any of the Dads that were in the Navy that had the jobs they did...how can they not be domineering and control freaks? I mean, that's who they were. You'd get the same thing, I think, if your dad was the CEO of a large company or ran a business...they're used to control...they controlled men and lives in their jobs, and so they got used to it, and it carried over into their family life.

John is proud of his father for always encouraging and respecting his mother's achievements. He says, "Dad always encouraged everything Mom wanted to do. He has really been an active supporter... He was always the one who was so highly respected for what he did, and I think now it's her turn."

### Thomas Hanford: Sliding By

At age eighteen, Thomas Hanford is just weeks away from the end of his senior year in high school. His clean-cut appearance, friendly smile, and engaging personality seem to match those of the other members of his family. There is a sparkle in his brown eyes – one that hints of his potential. Thomas lives with his parents in a suburb of Washington, D.C. He is the youngest child in the family and the only boy. His sisters, who are two years older and four years older than he, attend universities away from home. Thomas is extremely bright, and his family is curious about the types of opportunities that he may have as an adult.

Thomas comes from a family of high achievers. His mother, an experienced teacher, holds a master's degree in instructional technology and is currently working in adult technological education with the county schools in her area. Thomas' father also holds a master's degree. He retired two years ago, after a successful career as a naval attack pilot for 27 years, and is now working as a weapons specialist for a large company. Thomas' sisters, Amanda and Mary, are both on swimming scholarships at their universities and are high academic achievers, as well.

The Hanford family made five moves while Thomas was growing up, all of which were cross-country moves. Captain Hanford was gone on seven deployments during this time. These separations from the family ranged from three to seven months in length. Thomas's mother worked at home until Thomas was in first grade. Thomas did not have trouble with any of the moves, and he made friends easily in each new setting. He seemed to accept the Navy lifestyle, and did not have much difficulty being separated from time to time from his father.

While his family works hard and looks to the future, Thomas said, “I don’t think about the future much. I take things one day at a time. I am content to just do the minimum...I just kind of slide by.”

### *Expectations and Goals*

*“I’m sure my parents thought I could do more.”*

Thomas was tested for the Gifted and Talented program at the end of his third grade year in Virginia. He had very high test scores and qualified for the program, but before he could begin being served, the Hanfords moved to California, where there were no gifted services available at the time. Thomas enjoyed school, but was not challenged there. The family knew that it was likely that they would return to Virginia in two years, and his mother worried about whether Thomas would be able to keep up with his peers in Virginia who were receiving a more advanced curriculum. As soon as Captain Hanford’s next orders were received, Mrs. Hansford was on the phone with Thomas’ former school district. Because of Mrs. Hanford’s persistence, Thomas was enrolled in a special Magnet school for the gifted and talented when the family moved back to Virginia for his sixth grade year.

Thomas did well in this school, and went on the following year to another gifted magnet school for seventh and eighth grade. In the fourth quarter of his eighth grade year, Thomas began the admissions process for a highly competitive magnet high school focusing on math, science, and technology. This school, which draws students from many counties in both Northern Virginia and Maryland, accepts only 400 students in the freshman class. Acceptance is based on standardized test scores, grade point average, extracurricular activities, and teacher recommendations. Of the 2600 students who

applied for the school that year, Thomas scored equal to or better than 99% on the math component of the entrance exam. He was admitted for the following fall.

This school seemed a good fit for Thomas. He had always possessed a strong interest in both math and computers, and he had a great deal of natural ability in these areas. Although Thomas seemed challenged in his English, Spanish and history courses, he had little difficulty with math, science and technology. Thomas explained,

I never had to work that hard in math or science...I pretty much got 'A's without doing very much. My calculus teacher and I even had an agreement that as long as my grades stayed up, I could sleep in her class. And that went well. I got an 'A' for the year and a 5 on the AP exam...I didn't really need to pay attention, and she knew it.

Thomas sought to challenge himself in these areas outside of school. He worked summers with the information technology department in a large school district, and even built his own computer as a high school student.

In his junior year, Thomas' grades began to slip. He was badly hurt in a snowboarding accident and missed three weeks of school. When he returned he had difficulty making up the work he had missed, and lost his motivation in many of his courses. Thomas acknowledged that his attitude towards school changed at that point.

I probably spent three weeks in the Lazy-Boy. I don't know if so much time on the pain killers had some sort of effect on my attitude, or if I just saw how little I could get away with and still pass, but I just didn't want to try anymore.

Thomas did just enough to pass in his junior year, and continued this trend through his senior year. He admitted that he established the following pattern of underachieving behaviors that have led him to his current predicament:

Basically, I'll slack off in the beginnings of the quarters, and then teachers will tell me what I'm missing, and then I'll figure out how much I'm willing to do and that I can do, and then I'll get that done before the end of the quarter... It's not like the classes are hard, it's just that I never want to do the work. The assignments are incredibly boring. I did a lot of sleeping in class. If I thought I didn't need to know something, or that I could learn it later, I'd put my head down on my desk and go to sleep... This year I've been skipping classes and getting caught for it. I don't want to be in school. I mean, it's my senior year, and I want to slack off. I've dug myself into a hole that I'm trying to climb out of now. But, unless I get another 'F', I'm not going to fail for the year, so...it's no big deal.

Thomas explained that his parents never put pressure on him to achieve at a particular level in school. He perceives that his parents may have actually had lower expectations for his grades in school than they had for his older sisters because his sisters did not attend magnet schools. He said,

They never put stress on me or made any petty threats about if my grades weren't this and this and this, I wouldn't be able to do something... I don't think that would have been very productive. The mood between me and my parents has always been pretty light. When a bad report card comes home, sometimes I'm nervous before I give it to them, but I pretty much know what to expect. I mean,

they won't blow up at me...they'll just be disappointed and kind of discuss it with me.

*“My sisters were good swimmers, so that's what I tried, too.”*

It was expected that Thomas would follow his sisters and participate in team sports. Because Thomas had to tag along to his sisters' swim practices, he got involved in competitive swimming as well. Although he continued swimming into high school, he said, “I was pretty much burned out by the time I was 12 or 13... I didn't like the discipline or the pressure.”

Thomas explained that he didn't ever notice differences in his parents' expectations for him. He said, “Both of my parents pretty much let me choose what I was going to do as far as sports and where I wanted to go to school and things like that. They never really *made* me make any of those choices.”

#### *Adapting to Change*

*“Changing houses every few years takes its toll,  
but with each move, you become more adept to change.”*

Thomas never felt that he had much difficulty moving around. He said he always made friends quickly, and doesn't remember having trouble fitting in anywhere. He said that his sisters seemed to have a harder time adjusting, and that he suspected that perhaps he had less trouble because he was a boy and was less emotional. Thomas never had trouble adjusting to new school curricula, either. School always came easy for him, wherever he was. If he ever repeated content, he didn't mind.

*“We just set one less spot.”*

He doesn't recall difficult adjustments at times when his father left on cruise or returned home. Thomas explained that although his father was a little more assertive

when it came to discipline, his parents had pretty similar parenting styles, and that his mother kept the routine and expectations consistent in Captain Hanford's absence.

My dad is usually the assertive one, which is expected, I guess, because of his military experience. My mom is a little more lenient. I guess when I was little, I always tried to ask my mom for things... When Dad was home, we'd all sit down to dinner...talk...eat...the normal thing. And then when he was away, it was the same thing, minus one person... we just set one less spot... As far as any differences in routine...not really. I guess he never really went on a long cruise when I was old enough to where I really noticed the difference. I hate to say it because it makes me sound bad, but...it was just something I was used to...it just kind of became the normal thing. When we were on the west coast, he'd have to go off sometimes.

### *Participation in Sports*

*“When I stopped playing soccer, my grades went down.”*

Thomas was good at several sports, and liked participating on teams when he was little, when it was just for fun. In addition to swimming, he played basketball, baseball and soccer. He enjoyed playing soccer on both club and school teams until his junior year of high school. In the winter of his junior year he broke his arm snowboarding, and he said that he just lost his motivation for everything, including soccer. “I never really took the initiative to get back in the kind of condition I needed to be in to play varsity soccer after my accident.”

He did not perceive that sports had ever helped him socially, and said that he never relied on sports as a way to meet friends in new schools. He recognized the health

benefits of being athletic, and admitted that his performance in school was better when he was participating in sports. He noticed a big change after his snowboarding accident. He said, “I can’t explain it. I mean, they say athletes do better, and they can’t really determine the cause or effect...which one comes first? But, I do know that when I stopped playing soccer, I didn’t have as much energy.”

Thomas said he never enjoyed sports as much as he could have because he hated the competition. He admitted that he began to dislike school for the same reason. He was in a highly competitive high school, where his peers were obsessed with getting the best grades all of the time. Thomas said, “The competition in both sports and the classroom is so frustrating, so I choose not to compete. If I’m not competing, I can’t lose.”

Neither of Thomas’ parents pushed him to play sports when he didn’t want to. His mother was busy playing softball herself and with shuttling both of Thomas’ sisters to their swimming events. Thomas was free to make his own decisions regarding his level of participation. Both parents were active supporters of Thomas’ teams whenever he was playing. Thomas has recently begun playing soccer again at the club level. He said he likes playing soccer now because, “everybody gets to play...there’s no pressure, it doesn’t matter, and so it’s just fun.”

### *Pride*

Thomas admitted that he has not achieved to his potential so far, in school, but he expressed that he is proud of who he is and has no regrets.

I’ve always been the kid who could sleep through class and still get by. I actually don’t feel any regrets for it, because I didn’t stress myself out like all these other kids are doing. I mean, I basically slid by, yeah, but, I mean, it just didn’t bother



me that much. I was a lot more relaxed and enjoyed myself a lot more, so I never regretted not trying harder in school.

He enjoyed the Navy lifestyle for the most part, and doesn't perceive that it has had a negative effect on his development. He explained that the moves and separations just came to be normal for him, and he is proud of the social skills he learned while growing up.

I can see the advantages of living in the same place all of your life, but in the Navy, you learn to be more sociable, because you have to restart every so many years. It's nice getting to know new people all of the time. I didn't mind not having my dad around all of the time. I didn't really notice it. I just accepted it because it had been happening since I was so young, so it didn't really influence me that much.

Although a career in the Navy will probably not be for him, Thomas admires his father, and the career he made for himself. He also respects the fact that Captain Hanford never pushed Thomas to follow in his footsteps.

My favorite part about growing up in the Navy was... my dad's a pilot. Of course, I wanted to be a pilot, too... I wanted to be just like my dad! That changed, though, when I realized how much work it was. My dad is a work-a-holic! And, I could follow in his footsteps and go into the Navy, but I'm not exactly one who enjoys a lot of discipline and hard work. My dad was in the Navy, and that's the way he wanted to go. He respects that that isn't the way I want to go.

### Barton Landers: Taking Advantage of Opportunities

Twenty-year old Barton Landers is taking full advantage of the opportunities before him. Barton has just completed his freshman year at an Ivy League University, where he is a good student and a member of the varsity football team. He looks every bit the all-American college student with his faded college sweatshirt, blue jeans and well-worn ball cap. His tan and freckled complexion and muscular build suggest his enjoyment of outdoor sports.

Barton attended a large public high school where he participated in the rigorous International Baccalaureate program. He was a high achiever with excellent grades and test scores and a very competitive athlete as well. Barton was heavily recruited by several colleges and universities to play football. Although he could have attended a school with one of the most nationally recognized and publicized football programs, Barton chose to attend a smaller university where he was sure to be challenged academically as well as have the opportunity to play the sport he loved. Barton credited his experiences growing up in a Navy family for the opportunities and success he enjoys today.

If my dad hadn't been in the Navy, I wouldn't have been able to attend the schools that I attended, and I wouldn't have had the opportunities that I did have to be so competitive both in the classroom and on the field. The ideals that the Navy taught my dad, and that he passed on to me really helped me take advantage of these opportunities.

Barton's father retired in 2001, after a twenty-six year career in the Navy as a surface warfare officer. The Navy moved Captain Landers seven times while Barton was growing up, but Barton and the rest of his family made only three moves. Captain and

Mrs. Landers made personal sacrifices in order to keep their children from moving several times when they feared adjusting to new settings might have been too difficult for their children. Barton spent most of his childhood in southern California, where his father was stationed on and off for ten years. The Landers family moved across country to Virginia when Barton was entering sixth grade, and they remained there until after Barton graduated from high school. Captain Landers was away from his family a great deal while Barton was growing up. He made six cruises, ranging from four to twelve months in length, and also made several moves without his family. Barton's father lived in New England for six months when Barton was in fourth grade in California, and then he lived in another part of Virginia for Barton's junior year of high school, commuting home on weekends to be with his family whenever he could.

Barton is the middle child in his family. His brother, Vincent, is three years older, and his sister, Anna, is two years younger than Barton. Mrs. Landers is a teacher, and has been teaching full time since Barton was in elementary school. Barton described his family as very sports oriented. Captain Landers was a star athlete in high school, and played college football at a military academy. Barton's brother, Vincent, excelled at baseball and football, the same two sports that Barton chose to play. Barton's sister Anna is also a competitive athlete, playing varsity rugby and lacrosse at her high school.

#### *Expectations and Goals*

*"My parents had high expectations for me, and I have high expectations for myself."*

Barton's parents had high academic expectations for their second son. Barton had always been a good student, and he was identified as "gifted" in the sixth grade, when his family moved to northern Virginia. There were no gifted services available in the

California community where Barton had attended school prior to this, and he was, therefore, not identified earlier. He was always a self-motivated and highly competitive student. He elected to participate in the International Baccalaureate program in high school, and enjoyed the challenges it provided him. He said, “I have high expectations for myself. I am very competitive, and am willing to do the work necessary to compete at high levels in all facets. The I.B. Program challenged me, and helped me to maximize my potential in high school.”

Barton’s parents had similar expectations for his behavior. Barton explained, “Mom expected the same things that Dad did. She’d say things like, ‘If your father was around, you wouldn’t be doing that’...so she expected a lot of the same things.” Barton claimed that his mother put more emphasis on academics than his father did, especially when Captain Landers was away. She was the stricter parent, and knew how best to motivate Barton to continue trying his best.

Mom stressed academics more than Dad. You know, if I did poorly on a test or was acting up at home, Dad would never have pulled me off a team, but Mom threatened a million-and-a-half times, ‘I have no trouble yanking you off that team!’

There were high expectations for Barton in sports, as well. Barton’s father had been an all-state football player in high school, and had played college football, as well. He actively encouraged all three of his children to participate in team sports from a young age. Barton said he grew up playing all sorts of sports, but focused on baseball and football. He started playing baseball at age five, because his older brother had chosen to play the sport. Barton said, “Vincent was a really, really good baseball player, and I was

always trying to catch up with him.” Barton began playing football in sixth grade when his family moved from California to Virginia. He said, “When I began playing football, I did it to meet other kids. My dad never pushed me into it, I just loved the game.”

### *Adapting to Change*

*“I didn’t have any friends for a while, so school is basically what I did.”*

Barton had some trouble adjusting after his family’s move from California to Virginia just before his sixth grade year. This was the first move that he remembered making, and it came at a tough time. Barton said that he experienced “culture shock” that year. He didn’t know how to fit in with his new peers, and remembered going out to recess and “just sitting around.” He was not as social as his brother, and so he dove into his schoolwork in an effort to prove himself academically. He recalled that the schools in Virginia were tougher, but that he enjoyed those new challenges. For the first time, he was able to participate in the gifted program. He reflected,

In the gifted program, we did little things to exercise our minds, and we created new inventions and stuff like that. It was interesting, and it made me realize how smart some of those kids were. I liked it because it gave me the chance to break away from the repetitive instruction that I was getting in the regular classroom...you know, just read out of the book. We were encouraged to think off the wall. It was kind of like my first year of college because everyone was so different, and the intellectual level of the kids was a step above the regular level in the classroom.

Barton experienced gaps in his education after that move. He recalled feeling very anxious when he discovered that the other students knew something that he had missed.

I arrived in Virginia, and I hadn't learned the parts of speech. All the kids knew about nouns and verbs, and I never learned any of that until I got to high school Spanish. I remember, it was like standing in the middle of the freeway...I just had no idea what they were talking about!

Barton also mused, "I never learned about Egypt like the rest of the kids, but I got to learn about Colonial America two years in a row." He admitted that he really didn't mind sitting through the same content twice in that instance. He said, "That didn't affect my attitude toward school. In fact, it was probably a good thing, because it made the year a little easier for me when I was having such a difficult time adjusting."

Barton explained that it took most of his sixth grade year to feel like he fit in with his peers. Most of the students there had gone all the way through elementary school together, and there were many established cliques. In seventh grade, Barton and his classmates moved on to a number of different secondary schools. A few of Barton's friends went on to his same school, and Barton did not have as much trouble adjusting to this change because he said, "everyone was new in the seventh grade."

*"Dad wasn't going to be around to play catch with my brother and me."*

Barton said it was difficult at times when his father was deployed. He remembered that his mother would become "upset and irritable," and Barton guessed that she must have had trouble juggling three children and their activities all on her own. Although Barton was the child in the family who had the "stereotypical outbursts," he perceived that his brother may have had the hardest time adjusting to their father's absences because he was the oldest and had to assume greater responsibility in those times for helping to care for his younger siblings and with chores around the house.

Barton recalled that “although neighbors and friends would always step in to help in whatever ways that they could, it just wasn’t the same without Dad.”

Barton and his father shared a love of sports. Barton said that his father was always so patient in teaching him things and that he’d never tire of throwing the football with him. When his dad was gone, Barton missed playing catch with his him and discussing sports with him. Barton knew that his father felt the same way. He recalled seeing his father cry for the first time before leaving on a six month deployment, when Barton was in fourth grade:

To this day, I can picture Dad sitting on our couch, about to make the trip across country, with tears in his eyes. I think at this point it really hit me how much he cared about us, and how big a deal this was for him. Looking back, I understand that my father was so upset because he wasn’t going to be able to do the little things with his family, like go to our baseball games, sit and watch TV, eat dinner with us, and watch my sister’s dance recitals.

Barton explained that for him, the hardest part about his father being away was when his Dad missed one of his sports events. He remembered a particularly difficult time in his junior year of high school:

My Dad missed my very first varsity football game. That really meant a lot to me. Starting was definitely one of the main goals I had for myself, and playing quarterback for my high school was a very big deal in general, because we have a high profile football program. I had always shared a passion for football with my dad, which blossomed in high school, as I was starting to get serious about

playing for the varsity team and playing in college. I hated that he wasn't there for that first game. I know he hated it, too.

It was also difficult to adjust when Barton's father returned from deployments. Barton reflected that his father was a more strict and sought to be in control each time he returned home. This took a while for everyone to get used to.

Dad would come home, and he wouldn't be used to how things were. Like, if I said, Mom, I'm going to so and so's house...my dad would be like, 'Whoa, whoa, whoa...who's this person, and what do we really know about him? I think I'd better call this person's house'...things like that. And we'd be like, Dad, we've been doing this for six months while you've been gone!

### *Participation in Sports*

*"You can tell a lot about a person by how he plays football."*

For Barton, sports were very important growing up. His athletic ability helped give him confidence with peers, but mainly helped him in his relationships with his father and brother. He looked up to his athletic older brother, and wanted desperately to keep up with him. This motivated Barton to practice until he was the very best that he could be. He also knew how important sports were to his father. His best childhood memories of time spent with his father involved playing or watching team sports. Although Barton insisted that his father never pushed him into football, a close bond was formed between father and son when Barton chose to pursue his father's favorite sport.

Barton said that he learned many valuable life lessons from his participation in team sports. He learned to strive for success and how to deal with failure. He learned the



importance of persistence and working with others toward a goal. He insisted that he learned to be a better student and a better person from his experience playing football.

I learned that you just can't quit. Once you start something, you finish it, even if you don't feel like it. I also learned that you have to practice to get better... I think football has had a major impact on my life, and I believe that more than any other sport, football teaches kids life lessons. You can tell a lot about a person by the way that he plays or prepares for football. Football taught me that it takes a lot of preparation and hard work to achieve the desired results. Football also teaches a person to be tough – to handle adversity. It's tough to play when you're sick or hurt, but I've learned to do this, and this will have a great impact on how I approach tough situations in the future... Plus, playing sports is just a lot of fun, and it's a great way to escape from reality and just let out all types of emotions you have inside. You have opportunities to bond with teammates, and to achieve something great.

### *Pride*

*“My dad gave up his dream for his family...it really made me proud of him.”*

Barton is proud of his father for many reasons. He respects his father for never pushing him to follow in his footsteps in sports. He recognized that this must have been difficult, given his father's experience and enthusiasm for football. Barton reflected:

My dad never really pushed me in any direction. He just kind of let me go my own direction, which is something I really respect about him. He really could have been pushing me in football from day one, because that was his big sport, but he didn't. He just basically said, okay, if you're going to play football, make

sure you do it. He was big on that one – once you decide to do something, stick to it...make yourself your own man and be accountable to yourself.

Barton also expressed great pride and respect for both his father's character and his father's accomplishments in the Navy. He recognized the personal sacrifices that his father and mother both made to keep their children happy while growing up.

We almost had to move while I was in high school. I had already established myself in my school, and I was slated to be the next quarterback in a really good football program, and so taking me out of that...that wasn't at all what I wanted to do! So my dad was able to make a sacrifice for that. We stayed here, while he moved, and he commuted back and forth to see us on weekends. My dad made lots of sacrifices like that for us. He was very successful in what he did, and I am so proud of him. My dad could have been an admiral, which is like the pinnacle of Navy life, but he said no. He decided not to do it because he was tired of moving his family around. He gave up his dream for his family, and that made me proud of him!

Barton views the Navy lifestyle as a very positive influence on his life so far. He said, "The military lifestyle was absolutely great for me...no question about it! I learned respect and manners, and got to see places across our country that other kids only read about."

## CHAPTER 5

### FINDINGS

The four families that participated in this study had many things in common. All four fathers were career naval line officers who had spent twenty-six years or more in the Navy, and all four officers retired as Captains. Three of the fathers were pilots, while one was a surface warfare officer, but all had experienced one or more tours commanding squadrons or ships. Although there was variation in the number of moves made, the male dependents in this study all made at least one move in middle school and two males experienced moves in both middle school and high school. All male dependents experienced between five and seven separations from their father while growing up, although the frequency and duration of these separations differed considerably.

Academic achievement was highly valued in these families and all four sons were of high cognitive ability. Each male had consistently scored at or above the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile on standardized tests of achievement during his school career, and each set of parents had reason to expect high academic achievement from their son. All four mothers modeled high achievement by pursuing higher degrees and careers in education while raising their children. The children in these families were also expected to adjust well to the Navy lifestyle. A very positive attitude toward both change and challenge was modeled by all parents, and all four sons seemed to adopt this attitude. The parents in all four families were aware of the possible negative effects of frequent relocations and

family separations, and all made personal sacrifices with the cognitive, social and emotional needs of their children in mind.

All four fathers had been athletes, and had emphasized participation in team sports with their children. All four dependent participants were involved in sports into high school, had inherited considerable athletic ability, and admitted that sports had been helpful in facilitating transitions into new environments. Many other advantages to playing team sports were given by both parent and dependent participants. The dependents came from social families, and with one exception, all dependents were highly social individuals who made new friends easily. All four dependents expressed great pride in their fathers' naval careers and in the Navy lifestyle in general.

#### Expectations and Goals

*"He needed a challenge"*

Although only two participants had been formally identified as "gifted", all four males participated in accelerated and honors courses at different times. Thomas, Barton and John all experienced inconsistency in the availability of gifted services as they moved around from state to state. Neither Thomas nor Barton was served in a gifted program until sixth grade for this reason. They both entered challenging programs in Northern Virginia at that level that met their needs, and both boys continued with challenging programs through the end of high school.

John's parents did not have him tested when he was referred for the gifted program in one state, because they already knew that gifted services were not in place in the state to which they would next be transferred. Despite the fact that gifted services were not available in his new school, John was pulled out of the regular classroom in his

sixth grade year. He had tested out of the sixth and seventh grade reading program, and had the opportunity to participate in an enrichment course that year with a small group of other students in his grade. Although he enjoyed this experience, John's parents were not satisfied that he was being challenged in this school and enrolled him in a Catholic school the next year. A gifted program did not exist in his Catholic school.

Curt was never formally identified as "gifted" either, nor did he participate in a gifted program. This was because he spent the majority of his school career in Catholic schools. Curt's mother said that Curt had some exceptional teachers in these schools who really challenged him. She described his relationship with his eighth grade teacher:

His eighth grade teacher was this tough, little Philippino lady, and she *loved* Curt! I mean, she would tell me, "he's the sweetest boy and he's so gifted." They didn't have a gifted program...you know, these little Catholic schools don't...but she treated him as though he was the smartest kid to ever walk through the doors! She would give him special work, and let him facilitate discussion groups of a literature book they were reading...she did a lot of things to make him feel like he was a model in the class, which meant a lot to him.

Both the Masons and the Taggerts enrolled their sons in Catholic schools because they were dissatisfied with the education their sons were receiving in public schools. Mrs. Mason and Mrs. Taggert said that their sons tended to work only as hard as the students around them. Mrs. Mason admitted, "John would always take the low road if given an option." In Catholic schools, both sons had strict teachers with high expectations, and the other students in these schools were more academically focused and higher achievers. Mrs. Taggert said, "The kids who were popular here were the ones who were also good

students...it was okay to be smart and to study.” Both Curt and John worked harder and performed better in the Catholic school environment.

Barton worked harder with high achieving peers, as well. He recalled that after he was admitted into the gifted program in sixth grade he “saw how smart kids were.” He was excited about a new challenge, and worked hard to keep up with new peers. Unlike the others, Thomas did not respond well to high achieving peers. He was frustrated with the competition and did not want to compete.

Interestingly, the two males who made the fewest number of moves were the ones who remembered repeating curricula after moving to a new school. Thomas spoke of how boring many of his classes were because he already knew the material, and Barton remembered repeating a unit in social studies two years in a row after his move to Virginia. Both Barton and John experienced minor gaps in their education as a result of moving around. Barton remembered this as frustrating and a little scary when he first arrived in Virginia and didn’t know anything about the parts of speech. He said, “It was like standing out in the middle of the freeway...I had *no* idea what they were talking about!”

With the exception of Barton, the males all exhibited underachieving behaviors in school. For Curt it was only when he was in elementary school and only with a particular peer group. Once he got into a more structured and challenging environment with a high achieving group of peers, and teachers with high expectations of him, he quickly became a high achiever as well, and remained so. His mother said, “That was the year when I thought, my goodness...look at this boy! All of a sudden he started working harder than he’d ever worked in his life...and doing really well.” John and Thomas, on the other hand

did well in elementary school, where their classes were easy, but showed increasing underachieving behaviors the older they got. Neither one responded to a challenge and academic competition the way that both Curt and Barton did. John did not want to compete in the classroom. He preferred to “stay underneath the radar” much like Thomas, who liked to just “slack off” and “slide by.”

Barton’s competitive nature was evident in the classroom. He was always striving to be his best. Curt was very much like Barton in this respect. They were both highly competitive students and perfectionists. Both boys alluded to this, but their mothers elaborated. Mrs. Taggert said of her son:

Curt is very competitive academically...I can’t remember what his SAT scores were, but he must have taken them five times! He just couldn’t stand it...he had to get a higher score! He always wanted to go to the best school...whatever it was, he wanted to do the very best that he could.

Barton’s mother described her son similarly:

Barton was always very competitive about academics. It’s interesting...of all my children you can ask, “How are you doing in school?”... Vincent will say, “Oh, I’m doing okay.”... Anna will say, “Pretty good.”...Barton will say, “I’ve got a 98.6 average.” You know, he’s like, always tracking it. He always knows where he is percentage wise, and what he needs to do to get where. He pushed himself and he was always very focused. He was internally motivated to do well, and very competitive.

Predictably, Curt and Barton said that they had always enjoyed school and learning. John always liked the social aspect of school and tolerated the rest. Thomas grew to hate

school by his senior year of high school. He complained that his teachers were inflexible, his courses boring, and that he was just “tired of the whole routine.”

Neither Curt nor Barton had a high achieving older peer to follow. Curt was the oldest child in his family, and although Barton had an older brother whom he tried to keep up with in sports, his brother was not leading the way as a strong student. Both John and Thomas were following in the footsteps of high achieving older sisters. Neither male admitted that he had ever been compared to his older sister(s), but both males marveled at the level of natural ability that their sisters seemed to possess. This ability was described in such a way that suggested that each male thought the traits his sister(s) possessed were things he would never achieve despite effort and that his own achievement did not measure up to that of his sister’s. John said,

Helen was always better in school than I was...she always strived to take higher level courses and all that stuff...she’s got a lot of my dad’s obsessive-compulsive traits... She went to big schools, and I went to little old Sampson State where they don’t really push academics as much as her schools did... She always was academically focused, and I think I lack that ability to focus. She’s an avid reader...I don’t read unless I have to. She just goes through books, and she shares that with Dad. He reads a lot. I definitely don’t have that.

Thomas described his two older sisters similarly:

Mary is like...I mean, I think of me even *pretending* to do some of the things she does, and it would just make me insane! She does all sorts of extracurricular activities...she’s Martha Stewart, basically, and she’s captain of the university swim team...she got a pretty good scholarship to go there, from what my parents



are willing to tell me... Both of my sisters were straight 'A' students in high school...

Thomas was aware that he possessed a higher level of cognitive ability than either of his sisters, but he discounted that ability several times. Parents and teachers had been praising him for his natural ability for years, and yet he was remarkably insecure. He said that although he knew he was above-average in ability, in his magnet school environment, he felt inadequate. He admitted,

The competition is so frustrating...and it's a confidence thing...I did a couple of assignments at the beginning of the year, and I'd see the stuff that other kids in my class were turning out, and it just blew anything that I had out of the water! I explain it to myself this way...I had a level of natural ability, and I guess eventually it runs out. I had to start learning and teaching myself things, and there was another level of effort that needed to be put forth, that I couldn't do...it's a fear of failure, I guess.. and If I'm not competing, I can't lose.

*"She was an extremely good role model."*

In all four families, academic achievement was important. Interestingly, all four mothers were teachers. This is not too surprising when one considers the Navy lifestyle. Families are moved often and sometimes unexpectedly. For this reason, it is difficult for Navy wives to establish and maintain their own professional careers. They are expected to support the careers of their husbands, and when children are added to the family, working outside the home becomes all the more difficult. The teaching profession is appealing to Navy wives for many reasons: 1) there is almost always a need for certified teachers regardless of location, and many states have reciprocal certification policies that

make it fairly easy for individuals to transfer a teaching certificate from one state to another without having to meet additional requirements; 2) teachers work similar hours to their school aged children, allowing them to be home when their children are home; 3) teachers usually enjoy the same vacations as their school aged children, allowing for supervision of children and travel opportunities when school is out of session, a particular necessity at times when the father is away on deployment.

These mothers all went back to school to pursue higher degrees while raising their children. All sons spoke with pride about their mothers' hard work, dedication and accomplishments. John perceived that over the years his mother developed into someone who could take charge. He said, "She has now taken on that 'Captain' role. We all have a lot of respect for what she's done and what she's doing. She's doing really well." The sons marveled at how busy and their mothers always seemed, juggling all of the responsibilities while their husbands were away, yet all four women found ways to go back to school and pursue careers in education.

Two fathers highlighted the positive influence that the mother's pursuit of higher education has had on her son's achievement. Captain Hanford talked about the common interest in computers that grew between Thomas and his mother and how this interest has developed and become one of Thomas' greatest strengths and areas of pride:

Tammy got into computers, and now teaches computer courses. Thomas learned about computers alongside her at a young age... She even found him a job with the county schools, working on computers, and that has been great for him. He is smart like his mother... They're both math and computer oriented. He has now surpassed her though... I mean, she goes to him for hardware advice... and that's

been great. As far as how to operate and fix them [computers], he's probably the best in the house. The computer he's taking to college, he built himself.

Captain Taggert credits his wife's educational goals as contributing to Curt's high level of academic achievement in high school. He said,

One of the greatest turning points for the whole family, in my opinion, in the academic world was their mother. Betsy always took classes...I don't care where we were...and, of course, it took her forever to graduate because she was always following *me* around! So, in any event, she finally was able to get her degree when we were in Northern California. And, of course, all the kids saw this...here's this woman running the house, keeping the children while I'm on deployment...and you talk about a role model!... I think Curt learned about study habits and setting goals and that sort of thing from her... She was a *huge* contributor.

Curt's mother also spoke of the positive influence she perceived her work had on her son.

Betsy Taggert said,

Curt and I did homework together. He saw me study a lot and I think he could always see the rewards and the difficulty in studying. He could see the exhilaration...the really good things that come out of really applying yourself. And so, I think it was really a good thing when I was going to school and he was going to school. He was old enough to see what I wrestled with, and how I handled it.

The four families differed in respect to the ways that parents handled poor academic achievement or any behavior that was less than what parents expected. Both

Curt and John spoke of contracts that were signed between fathers and sons for a certain level of academic achievement. They claimed that these arrangements did help motivate them to improve. In Barton's family, it was his mother who was the one who paid closest attention to his grades and behavior. She motivated her son to improve by threatening to take his athletic opportunities away. Although Barton admitted that he didn't think his mother would ever have actually "yanked him off a team", he said he usually did try harder for her when she had made such threats. Thomas said his parents had always "kind of let him do his own thing", and that his parents did not expect the same level of academic achievement of him (in the way of grades) as was expected of his sisters because he was in a more difficult school. When Thomas did not bring home good grades, started sleeping in class and skipping classes, his parents just discussed it with him or grounded him temporarily. Neither consequence seemed very effective.

#### Adapting to Change

*"You do what you have to do."*

In all four families, both parents had a very positive attitude about the Navy lifestyle. They embraced new challenges and change, and taught their children to do the same. This, no doubt, had much to do with the positive adjustment of their sons. None of the families made moves while their sons were in school. Moves were always made after a school year had ended, even if this meant that Dad moved several months before his wife and children.

Three of the families also made other sacrifices to facilitate their children's positive adjustment. Captain Taggert moved alone to Southern California for Curt's senior year, to allow Curt to graduate in his school in another part of the state. Captain

Landers also made this choice. He moved to New England to attend a six-month school, while the family remained in Southern California during Barton's fourth grade year, and lived a second time away from his family during Barton's junior year of high school. These separations were very difficult for both men. Barton said, "My dad made a sacrifice to allow us to stay in our school. We stayed up here, and he would commute back up here on the weekends. He actually had to miss my brother's high school graduation."

Mrs. Taggart shared that Curt's father had missed some important occasions as well. She reflected on Curt's confirmation and his college application process, expressing guilt that she and her husband were not able to be more a part of these events in their son's life, and also expressed how surprised she was at Curt's ability to handle these activities on his own:

He was confirmed when he was a senior, and he had to take care of it by himself. His dad was gone, and I don't remember going to any classes with him, or being a part of it, which makes me feel really bad as I look back on it. But, he took care of everything, without an utter... And *then*, when he was applying to college...oh, this was amazing!.. He applied to Blakeley, his first choice school, but was not accepted. So he got in to some other schools and seemed okay with going to one of those, but then as it got further and further on, he decided he would appeal Blakeley's decision. He did this all on his own...I am so serious! He had this admiral friend of ours write him a letter, and then Curt wrote the college an appeal based at least in part on his experience as a military child...being pulled up and uprooted and having extra duties because he was the eldest child... and, it turned

out...they accepted him! It was amazing...he did this all on his own. His dad wasn't here and I didn't do it. He did it!

Mrs. Taggert suggested that although Curt and other military dependents she knew had to do things on their own that perhaps their peers did not, this responsibility helped rather than hurt them, making them more independent and responsible adults.

*"I just felt like I needed to be there."*

Both Captain Mason and Captain Landers made conscious decisions to alter their careers in order to make life easier for their children. In the Mason family, Captain Mason made the decision not to go into submarine warfare, a path that would have led him to make several deployments while John was in middle school and high school. Captain Mason felt it was important for him to be home with his son as John made the transition into adolescence. This was not an easy choice for Captain Mason. He explained:

Certain military friends said, you know, "you made the wrong choice...you had so much potential...you really could have gone on and...to make a career change this late is a big mistake...what are you doing?" I never saw it as a sacrifice...I knew it was what I needed to do.

Captain Landers also altered his career for his family. He gave up the opportunity to be considered for admiral. In order to be promoted to this highest rank (something that seemed likely given his experience and skills), he would have had to move his family several more times and make additional deployments. Although Barton was preparing to leave for college at that point, Barton's sister was still in high school. The family's next move would have been to a location in Europe without an American or international high

school. Anna would have had to attend a boarding school away from her parents. The Landers family did not want to put Anna through that, and so Captain Landers gave up his opportunity. Barton expressed such pride in his father for having made this decision. He said,

My dad could have been an admiral, which is like the pinnacle of Navy life, but he said no. He decided not to do it because he was tired of moving his family around. He gave up his dream for his family, and that made me proud of him!

*“Some things are more important than others when you are raising kids.”*

All four of the fathers in this study had a particular experience, event or relationship that influenced their family lives and parenting practices. For Captain Taggart, it was a near death experience he had as a young man. He was flying off of an aircraft carrier at night. His airplane malfunctioned as he was trying to take off, and his plane went off the front of the carrier into the water. Captain Taggart ejected just before the crash, but landed in the direct path of the moving ship. He described the terror he remembers feeling at the time, and how this event altered his values and expectations in raising a family:

My shoot and ejection seat came down almost on the center line ...maybe two or three hundred yards in front of the ship. So, I've got half of my life preserver inflated and I'm floating there half-cocked at about a 45 degree angle in the water, and I can see the carrier bearing down on me. I'm trying to swim off to starboard as quick as I can, but I've got all this crap hanging on me...the parachute and all the survival gear... so of course, the ship goes right by me, and the bow wave kind of turns me over and tumbles me in the surf as it goes by, but I'm right up

against the ship. I'm actually *kicking* against the side of the ship with my feet, shoving off, and, of course, my greatest fear was being sucked down under the ship and around the screws and never coming out. But anyway, I did not go under it, but was held under water for several minutes as this thing went by. In any event, I eventually popped to the surface like a little cork, and obviously, I cheated death. One of the things that goes through your mind when you have a near death experience like that is your family. I mean, vividly, you remember all of the cute little moments. It's incredible how fast-forward your mind will go during that short time. You know, you can see your wife's face, and your kids around the Christmas tree...I remember that very succinctly – that I was thinking, I'll never see these guys again! That was pretty enlightening. I mean, you always knew your family was important, but this kind of reconfirms *how* important family is to you. That's the last thing you think about when you're going to die... I think that experience was life-altering. At that stage, I was young and opinionated. That experience gave me a tremendous increase in my awareness of the family and what was really important, and how precious life is and how some things are more important than others when you are raising your kids... You know, twenty years from now, no one will care if your kid's tongue was pierced, but they will care if he's a miserable drug addict or whatever... That experience gave me more respect for my family as individuals with individual personalities, so in that regard it was a good thing.

Captain Landers did not have a close relationship with his father, and this affected the relationship that he developed with his own children. While growing up, Captain



Landers' father was not involved in his son's school or sporting events. Barton expressed that his dad wanted to be more involved in his sons' activities than his own father had been:

My dad's father was an alcoholic, and he really wasn't ever around for my dad.

My dad was a really big time ball player in high school, but his dad never went to any of his games. My dad made a point of being at almost all of my games. I think he only missed the one...my first one...but after that he didn't miss another."

It was family suicides that influenced father-son relationships in the Hanford and Mason families. Both Captains Hanford and Mason perceived that suicides in their families were important in shaping the way that each man approached fathering his children. Captain Mason shared that his younger brother, Grant, had killed himself when the Masons were living in Florida and John was about nine. Captain Mason perceived that his brother had started "getting messed up" in middle school when their father died of cancer. At that point, he made some poor choices and started getting in trouble.

Captain Mason reflected:

Dad died just as Grant was going into high school, and Grant took that very hard. He got in with a bad crowd and experimented with drugs and that sort of thing, and I think it was probably because he didn't have his father around. My brother and I weren't particularly close because of distance between us in age, and because by then I was stationed far away. I was gone on lots of deployments then, and my brother got involved in drinking and got a D.U.I. It just got worse from there. On the day he got his second D.U.I., he killed himself. He wrote my mother a note saying, "I failed you miserably...I'm too much of a burden...I'm a screw

up and you're better off without me"... I guess I always felt like...and I never really thought about this before...but, my brother screwing up and eventually killing himself really influenced the way I parented. I made a conscious decision to change my career path after that, when we moved back to Maryland. At that point I was given the opportunity to go to submarine school. I knew I would be gone for 15 months right away, and then I'd be back, but in and out for about six years. I didn't want to be gone for John's middle school and high school years...I just really worried about that... So, I decided to get into this other thing so I could be home every night, or most of the time... At one point, my brother said to me...this was shortly before he killed himself...I asked him what was going on with him...why are you doing these things...drugs, drinking, etcetera? He said, "Well, I don't have a father and my brother doesn't care enough to ever be around me" ... You know, I couldn't save my brother, but I decided that I was going to save my children. I think that's why I did it...it was too important. So, I went into the acquisition professional business. I made a conscious career change after my squadron command to be home for my kids and that's all there is to it. I made the adjustments in my career, and it worked out pretty well. I just had the gut instinct that there was something there that needed to be accommodated. I had heard a lot of horror stories about...you know, from my peers and seniors in the military, about problems when they were going away when their kids were going through middle school and high school, and you know, getting into trouble and stuff, and I just felt like I needed to be around.

In the Hanford family there were three suicides in three years. Captain Hanford talked about the impact that these deaths had on the family:

Tammy's sister was the first one...then my brother, Peter, committed suicide while he was living with us in California... then my dad...that was sort of a chain reaction to my brother... So, you've got all these people who chose not to live, and you want to make sure you don't put that kind of pressure on your kids, that they don't ever find life so unenjoyable and so threatening that they figure...well, hell, they did it...it can't be so bad... So, there's a certain sensitivity there...and a certain reluctance in this household to apply a lot of pressure because of the family history...I mean, Thomas wasn't even aware of all the suicides in the very close family...but I know that's something that drives Tammy's method of dealing with our kids, and likewise mine...I think we probably express fewer emotions than the average family, and maybe that has something to do with the family history... There were some hard times there, obviously...so most of what happens to us now...it's just not really a big deal...It's not as if there wasn't discipline at home, it's just that we're not a family that demands a certain level of performance, or else! We had expectations, but they weren't hard expectations.

*"His comings and goings"*

Only Thomas claimed that he had not seen big changes at times when his father left on or returned from a deployment. He described the routine and expectations as "the same thing, minus one." He said that both of his parents were pretty easy-going most of the time and that there were no real differences in parenting styles. The other sons gave examples of differences they noticed. Both Curt and John described their fathers as the

more controlling parent. When their fathers left, the routine and expectations were more relaxed. Although their mothers were less controlling and more permissive, both sons stated that it was their mother who was really in control, whether their fathers were home or away. Barton was alone in expressing that his mother was consistently the more strict and controlling parent and the one in charge. Barton's mother agreed with his assessment. She said, "Sam tended to be the little softie, and I tended to be the hammer."

Curt spoke of adjustments that were made surrounding his father's deployments in terms of a shift in position. Whenever his father was gone, Curt was expected to act as man of the family. He had to shift back down each time his father returned and reassumed the head role. Only Curt remembered increased responsibilities when his father was gone. He knew he had to step up and help his mother because he was the oldest child.

Barton was the only dependent who suggested that his father's absences had been particularly difficult for him. He said he missed his father playing baseball and football with him and that he had been the child in his family to have "the stereotypical outbursts." His mother provided more information about his behavior at times when his father was away. The following example illustrates the frustration Barton felt at times when he missed his father:

When Barton was a sophomore, I thought he was handling his Dad's absence quite well, and then he surprised me. We had this old recliner that Sam and I had decided to get rid of. It was really old...I mean, I used to rock the kids in it when they were born...you know, I mean...17 years old and disgusting, with the same upholstery and everything! Anyway, we had it down in the basement, and I was

going to give it away... Well, Barton had a fit! I mean, he absolutely... I mean, this huge, emotional response!... and I'm going, well, what's going on here? I asked him, tell me why do you want this old recliner? He said, "This chair... you rocked us in it"... and this and that... I mean, he was so upset! He dragged... and this is a huge, overstuffed chair... he brought it up from the basement... all the way up to his room, and it stayed there until he went to college. It was like, oh, I guess we're getting a little upset because Dad's leaving... we're not letting go of that recliner! I realized then that Barton was upset and that somehow this chair was another thing that he did not want to lose at that time.

Mrs. Taggert also provided vignettes that shed light on Curt's sensitivity and the way he missed his father when he was away. The following event occurred during a seven month cruise that Captain Taggert made when Curt was about seven:

Curt was playing soccer then, and you know, as a mom, I can still see this... he had a soccer coach who was a nice guy, in fact he was a dad in our neighborhood and he had a son playing on Curt's team... and after the game, Curt was trying to hold the coach's hand... you know, that's something a child would do... and the coach just really shook his hand off... and Curt didn't do anything about it, but I thought... oh, I felt sorry!... I think Curt thought of him as being... not like his father, but as a male role model... and the guy shook him off... you know, don't touch me, kid. That's one disappointment I remember. I'm sure there were others.

Mrs. Taggert also remembered Curt being very sad the following year, when his father was once again gone for seven months:

Tim was gone on cruise, and this was back in the old days when we used to make cassette tapes. The Dads might record a story and then send it home...and Tim had done this...he had sent Curt a story. And I put it on the machine and said, "Oh, there's Daddy, listen to him"...and you know, he was in there for a couple of minutes listening to him and he didn't really seem like it was anything important, and I was kind of disappointed...and then Curt went into his room and shut the door, and I went in there, not long afterwards, because I thought, gosh...he doesn't even seem excited...well, he was crying, and that's how he reacted to it. So, yeah...it was hard for him.

*"It's sink or swim"*

The male dependents in this study all were fairly social and extroverted individuals. They all came from families with highly social parents, as well. Only Captain Hanford described himself as more introverted than extroverted. He claimed that Thomas was more like his mother in that way:

Thomas is more like his mother in that they're both outgoing. He's more outgoing than I ever chose to be...there isn't anything shy about Thomas...he's a bit of an exhibitionist probably, but there's no way you could say that about me!

The natural social abilities of the participants undoubtedly helped them as they moved to new locations and encountered new situations. All four male dependents said they had not had much trouble making friends in new places. Although Barton, Curt and John all discussed a most difficult move, and said that they experienced "culture shock" at first and that it took a while to adjust, they felt like they made at least a few good friends in a short time and that the adjustment period had not been a terrible one.

Neither Thomas nor Barton had to move after sixth grade, and both males admitted that this might explain the relative ease with which they remembered making transitions. Curt and John had clearer memories of moving, as they both had moved in high school. Both recalled worrying about the “right clothes” to wear on the first day of school. John said he used sports, as always, to fit in after both of his moves in high school. Curt stated that he also did what had worked for him in prior moves; he simply changed his appearance and behavior to fit in with his new peers. He said, “I found myself changing to fit in to the new context...my clothing changed, my friends changed...the type of friend totally changed, as well.” Both John and Curt seemed to be the most adaptable participants: John switching from playing one sport to playing another, choosing the one that would help him best fit in with his new peers; Curt paying close attention to the values and expectations of each new peer group, and altering himself to fit in with these.

None of the sons specifically sought out other military kids whom they knew would relate to their experiences as they moved to new schools. None lived on a Navy base for very long, if at all, and only John ever attended a base school for one year. John said he had always been befriended right away by the other athletes in each new school. Barton made friends after getting to know peers, and discovering interests they had in common with him. Curt did just the opposite, discovering first the group’s interests and then redefining himself to fit in. Thomas was perhaps the most socially confident of all the participants. He claimed to have had all different sorts of friends, “just whomever he found locally.” His friends were many, and spanned different interests and ages. He did

not remember ever changing his appearance or behavior to fit in to a new environment. He just got along well with everyone.

With the exception of Barton, the sons said that they had made smooth transitions during moves in middle school and high school because of the practice that they had had with moving when they were young. Barton had a more difficult time moving across country to Virginia in sixth grade, perhaps because had not made the number of moves that the other three had made. All four sons perceived that the Navy lifestyle had taught them to be as social as they were and had enabled them to fit in with any group of people in any environment. As Curt put it,

Moving came to be easy...it just came to be normal... There was some confidence you could draw from moving so often...you know, I've been able to do this once...I can do it again... You just kind of move on to the next city and befriend more people... You know how to speak to a Southerner, you know how to speak to a Northerner, and you know how to speak to a Californian because you've lived in each one of those places, and you know the people there.

While the parent participants recognized that their sons had inherited an outgoing and friendly nature, they also perceived that the experience of growing up in a Navy family had helped develop their children's social abilities. Captain Hanford said,

I think moving was actually a *good* thing for him as far as not being an introvert. I don't know if it came natural or if moving built that into him, but it certainly didn't hurt. I'd say there was no trauma associated with moving...quite the contrary...it built character.



Although Mrs. Hanford agreed that the Navy lifestyle had facilitated good social skills, she added that she believed Thomas would have been very social regardless of how he was raised. She said, “Thomas is a very social kid who happens to be smart.” Mrs. Mason also described her son as highly social by nature:

John weathered it better than his sister, but I think their personalities had a lot to do with it. He’d run in from school, and he didn’t even want to take time to pee in order to get back out the door and tumble down the street to be with his friends. I’d have to go roaming the neighborhood, trying to find him with a whistle every night. He was always so caught up in his friendships. Making friends was such an easy thing...he never pondered it.

Captain Mason reflected similarly about John’s experiences, “Were transitions difficult for him? Heck, no! In fact, he laughs about it being no big deal.” Captain Taggart asserted that the Navy lifestyle had helped his children to “embellish their personalities from a societal perspective.” He did acknowledge, however, that the lifestyle would be bad for someone who “was not particularly adept at adjudicating conflict and integrating himself into different segments of society.” He perceived that his own children had done well adapting and he claimed that the military lifestyle “helped them to become outgoing simply because it’s sink or swim.” He added, “My kids can interface with any group of people because they’ve done it...they’ve taken the fear out of it. Being raised in a Navy family makes you a more engaging and a more engage able human being, which is something that the world needs a lot more of.”

#### Participation in Sports

*“It was my plan from the beginning to encourage, to the point of nudging forcefully, my children into sports.”*

In all four families, there was a strong emphasis on sports. All four fathers had been high school and college athletes, and all had encouraged their children to participate in team sports from an early age. Captain Jack Mason said, “We never really asked them [the kids] if that’s what they wanted to do, we just kept sending them out there [on the soccer field], until they’d develop a passion for it.” The fathers spoke of the many benefits of participating in team sports to include: learning to work together with others toward a goal; the exhilaration of winning; learning to deal with loss; developing healthy habits and improved social skills. All four sets of parents agreed that participation in sports had helped their sons adjust to frequent relocations. Captain Mason asserted,

Sports were indispensable for easing transitions. That gave John an instant identity whenever he showed up someplace new. He immediately had a place to find himself and get started making friends. It gave him an outlet and an inlet for a lot of things...The self-esteem thing was indispensable!

Mrs. Hanford said that sports had also helped her son to fit in with new peers in new places when he was young: “We always had the kids involved in athletics. It was a good mixer, you know, to make friends.” Participation in sports was mentioned as being a good way for these boys to relieve stress, extra energy, and emotion as well. Mrs. Taggart said, “When Curt was little, he played all sorts of sports with his friends. Sports kept him busy, which was important.” Mrs. Landers offered, “Sports was a good outlet for Barton. He was so competitive and aggressive and he needed that outlet I think.”

Although not specifically mentioned by John and Curt, both Barton and Thomas stated that sports had helped their school performance. Thomas thought this had to do with the increase in energy he seemed to have for everything whenever he was

exercising regularly, while Barton explained this phenomenon in terms of the discipline that he learned playing sports and its carry-over into the classroom.

While all four families, especially the fathers, encouraged sports, the fathers claimed that it did not matter which sport was played, as long as there was involvement. All four sons tried a variety of sports when they were little. Captain Taggert said,

I'd always pushed them into sports...whether it was soccer or baseball or football...whatever...I pushed them, meaning, I got them out there. If they didn't want to stay, fine, but if they signed up for a season, then they *did* the season.

Captain Mason had similar thoughts to share. He said, "Sports was a plan from the get-go...it was going to happen, one way or another...and when they [the kids] both liked soccer, I learned soccer... whatever the sport, I encouraged them to give it their all."

Barton mentioned that his father had also stressed that Barton should be committed to whatever sport he chose. Through sports, these three fathers taught their sons to do their best, to persevere and to finish whatever they had started.

For the Hanford family, this was not so much the case. Neither parent nor Thomas mentioned this sense of commitment that was instilled in the other three sons. Thomas said, "They pretty much let me do what I wanted", and both Captain Hanford and Mrs. Hanford admitted that they had never really pushed Thomas in any endeavor. They encouraged him to try swimming because that was what his older sisters were doing, and soccer was a sport that they knew could be played almost anywhere, but they didn't want to *pressure* him to continue in any sport. Captain Hanford did express some disappointment at Thomas giving up on playing sports and he offered a rationale for Thomas' decision:

He gave up on swimming because that's pretty regimented and takes some sort of dedication... he didn't like that. He was a better than average baseball player, in my opinion, but he didn't like that either... He's played on competitive soccer teams and what have you, but those teams have always had losing records.

Thomas has never really experienced any overwhelming triumph or glory in the athletic endeavors he has undertaken.

Captain Hanford felt that Thomas might have stuck with a sport if he had just had a taste for the sense of accomplishment that comes after a hard match and a well-earned win.

*"Sports was something that cemented them...bonded them together"*

Curt, John and Barton all said that they had used sports to help them fit in with peers at different times in their lives. Barton admitted, however, that the main reason he chose to play baseball and football was because those were the two sports that his older brother was playing. Unlike Thomas and John, both Curt and Barton ended up playing the same sports in high school that their fathers had played. These sons not only shared an interest, but also inherited their fathers' natural ability for playing these sports. While their father's love of the sport certainly influenced their initial participation, both sons stated that it was their own interest in the sport that made them want to continue, not pressure from their fathers.

Both Captain Taggart and Captain Landers revealed what the experience of sharing a sport with a son has meant in their lives. Curt's participation in tennis has meant a great deal to Captain Taggart:

Nobody really took off in the sports arena except Curt, and that was not until about the eighth grade. I had always loved the game of tennis, so I was always

trying to get the kids to play, you know, a carry-over sport...something they could do later in life... So, finally, in eighth grade, Curt said, "Dad, let's go hit the tennis ball", and, of course, I was up like a shot!...and we still play today, and it's one of the highlights, quite truthfully. When he comes home, I really enjoy that. It's another opportunity to, you know, shoot the breeze...one-on-one kind of thing.

Captain Landers also revealed how much Barton's participation in football has meant to him:

One of my proudest moments was...Barton made the varsity football team. He was a freshman, and at the end of the season, the coach brought all of the freshman kids up to play, and they went on to the state championship. Vincent was a receiver and Barton was a quarterback, and they won the championship game. Dad took a picture with both boys, and, you know, it was pretty cool!

Neither Captain Mason nor Captain Hanford experienced the close connection with their sons through sports that was apparent in the other families. Although both fathers described being as involved as possible in their sons' athletic endeavors, to include coaching their sons' teams when they were young, sports did not do as much to facilitate closeness between father and son.

### Pride

Pride was evident in all four families. The sons all expressed pride in their father's naval accomplishments and in the Navy lifestyle in general. Barton spoke of the ideals taught to his father in the Navy, and how those ideals had been passed down to him. Barton said he was proud to be living up to the ideals of respect, honor and

discipline, just like his father. Barton also expressed a desire to possibly enter the military in the future.

The mothers of all four males commented on their son's pride and respect for his father. Three mothers also mentioned their son's unwillingness to follow in his father's footsteps, despite enormous pride and respect, for fear of not measuring up. It seemed that John, Curt and Thomas put their fathers on a pedestal and didn't believe they could ever come close to achieving as much as their fathers had accomplished. Mrs. Mason said:

I think both of my kids perceive their dad as being somewhat perfect, and I don't think they thought they could be perfect. I don't think John would ever have put himself up to the measure because he perceived his dad as being something that he wasn't going to be...he didn't ever want to be measured with that same stick.

Mrs. Taggart had a similar comment about Curt:

Curt never wanted to become a Navy pilot. I think that's because he could see that his dad was a lot more physical...more dare devil...not afraid of anything than Curt will ever be... I think Curt always felt that he wasn't as good as his dad wanted him to be or that his dad was himself.

Mrs. Hanford explained why she perceived that her son will not choose to follow in his father's footsteps: "Thomas sees, I think, the hard work and dedication involved in what his Dad did...that's intimidating for him, probably."

#### Summary

Overall, the four families participating in this study were similar in many ways. Despite the fact that each family made several moves and experienced frequent

separations from the father, the sons claimed to have had little or no difficulty adjusting to new situations. Participation in sports was emphasized in all four families and fostered smooth transitions with peers, improved academic achievement and a close relationship between father and son. Although their academic experiences were quite different, all four sons participated in accelerated or honors programs while growing up, and academic expectations were high for all four sons. Strong social skills were common among participants, and perceived to have been improved by the nature of the Navy lifestyle. All four families made sacrifices to accommodate the needs of their children, and modeled a very positive attitude toward both change and challenge.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The themes uncovered in this study reveal several underlying beliefs commonly held by the Navy families that participated. All four families believed strongly in the value of hard work, perseverance, commitment, teamwork, and a positive outlook on both challenge and change. This final chapter frames these findings within the context of existing literature, addressing consistencies as well as discrepancies. Implications for future studies are highlighted, and recommendations for teachers and counselors working with Navy dependents are provided.

#### Expectations and Goals for Doing Well and Fitting In

In all four families, both parents had a very positive outlook on Navy life. They recognized the hardships involved, but refused to dwell on these. Instead, all four families looked for the good in each new experience, and focused on the many positive things that could be learned from changes and new challenges. They expected their sons to do the same. Mrs. Taggart expressed this philosophy held by all four sets of parents with the following quote:

Children learn how to react from their parents...you know, they say, "let me see how the parent is handling it"...and I think if the parent puts on...and they don't even have to be strong all the time...but if they admit to feeling sad, but don't dwell on things...I think the children follow this model.



All four male dependents in this study were able to adopt their parents' philosophy, and rose to their parents' expectation in this regard. The positive example set by the parents seemed critical in these families in shaping a healthy approach to change and challenge in their sons. Plucker & Yecke (1999) supported the idea that the family environment has much to do with how well children and adolescents deal with change. Several other studies have pointed to the importance of family cohesion and the degree to which the father and mother identify with the military (e.g., Marchant & Medway, 1987; McKain, 1973; Pittman & Bowen, 1994). In families where both parents have positive attitudes about the military lifestyle, the children seem to be better adjusted and perform better academically.

Because it was a goal in all four families to adapt well and quickly to change, all four sets of parents did whatever they could do facilitate their children's transitions surrounding relocations and deployments. Parents made personal sacrifices to this end. None of the male dependents were required to move during a school year, and in the Taggart and Landers families, the father made one or more moves without the family to allow his children to remain in a particular setting. Both Captains Mason and Landers altered the path of their careers and cut them short to accommodate the needs of their families.

This willingness of fathers (and mothers) to make such sacrifices is an important finding. Naval officers are taught the idea of subordination of self. Do many officers put the needs of their families ahead of their own career needs? If so, do they make these choices as the fathers in this study did, because of critical events or relationships in their

own experience, or do they make these choices for other reasons? Research is needed to explore this area.

The mother's attitude toward the Navy lifestyle and her expectations for her children's positive attitude, smooth transitions and high achievement seemed critical in these families. Few studies have suggested the importance of the mother's role on the positive adjustment of children from military families. Instead, studies typically have focused on the negative effects of the military lifestyle on military dependents when the mother has a difficult time adjusting herself (e.g., Hunter, 1982; Kelley, 1994; Marchant & Medway, 1987; Pittman & Bowen, 1994; Plucker & Yecke, 1999; Wood, Scarville & Gravino, 1994). The mothers in this study admitted to the stress they experienced during relocations and surrounding deployments, but claimed that it wasn't so difficult overall. They had support from friends and family and dealt with sadness by keeping very busy. The following quote from Mrs. Hanford sums up the way all four mothers in the study dealt with stress and sadness: "...if you get sad, you get mad, and then you get busy. It was important to keep busy and to keep the routine going." They kept their children busy, and kept busy themselves, each one returning to school and working towards a career in education while raising her children.

The career and achievement of the non-military spouse and its influence on the children is yet another potential area for research. An increasing number of Navy wives are working outside of the home now as expectations for their role in supporting the career of their husband decreases. Is it now common for military spouses to work outside the home, and if so, which careers are best suited for a lifestyle of frequent relocation? Are the children in military families with mothers who work outside the home better

adjusted and higher achievers than children from families where the mother stays at home to help support her husband's career?

Much research is needed related to the increasing number of families with mother serving in the military as well. In what ways are families influenced when it is the mother who has the dangerous job that requires her to be separated for long periods of time from her family? What are the spouses of these female service members like? Also, there are an increasing number of families where both mother and father are serving in the military. Research is needed to investigate the cognitive, social and emotional development and achievement of the children from such families.

All four families had high expectations for the academic performance of their highly capable sons. Despite the high ability of all four male dependents, three of the four reported underachieving behaviors in school. Recent studies have indicated that many high-ability military dependents suffer from low self-esteem and underachievement (e.g., Johnson & Hayes, 1997; Marchant & Medway, 1987; Plucker & Yecke, 1999), and that underachievement may be more common among males than females (Colangelo, Kerr, Christensen & Maxey, 1993). Studies of high-ability underachievers point to characteristics that are typical of these children. The characteristic found most frequently among underachieving children is low self-esteem (Colangelo & Dettman, 1983), which leads to avoidance behaviors such as procrastination, low expectations, perfectionism, and rebellion against authority. Both John and Thomas suffered from low self-esteem in school, and with the exception of perfectionism, the avoidance behaviors mentioned above describe both males. Curt's underachieving behaviors were only evident for a short

time when he was in elementary school, and he seemed to possess a high level of self-esteem.

The underachieving behaviors of the participants in this study did not seem related to the relocations and family separations that these males experienced. For Curt, his underachieving behaviors in elementary school were related to the low academic goals and expectations of his peers. Once he was in a school with high achieving peers, he adapted his goals and expectations to match theirs. Studies have reported findings related to the importance of peers on level of academic achievement. Because children and adolescents need to feel they belong, they are likely to adopt the goals and values of those who help them meet those needs (e.g., Berndt, 1999; Connell & Wellborn, 1991).

Adolescence is for many an especially difficult time. During this stage, individuals are searching for an acceptable identity and also for acceptable standards. It is a period of uncertain status, a time of need for social acceptance, and with adolescence often comes an anti-scholarship climate (Willings, 1980). What is acceptable to teachers and parents may be unacceptable to the peer groups on whom the adolescent depends for a meaning to life. It is often at this stage that the high ability adolescent will deliberately underachieve in order to gain group acceptance (Clinkenbeard, 1996; Willings, 1980). They begin to underachieve, and as they do, their peer relationships take on a higher priority. These students are often positively reinforced for underachieving behaviors by their peer group (e.g., Frasier, 1991; Loeb & Jay, 1987; Rimm, 1995; Wolfle, 1991). Although this research does not explain Thomas' underachieving behaviors, as his closest friends were all high academic achievers, it may explain John's underachievement in middle school and high school. He admitted that he was most concerned with athletics,

that he chose athletes as his friends, and that his social relationships were most important to him. Thomas' underachieving behaviors are more likely explained by the laissez faire parenting style evident in his family. Neither Barton nor Curt seemed to have underachieving peers in high school. Instead, both males commented on the effort they put in to keeping up with their talented peers.

These findings have important implications. John mentioned that he would play whatever sport his new peers were playing in order to best fit in. It takes a talented athlete to do this. Can academically talented military dependents practice this same thing...underachieve to fit in when necessary, and then easily transition to that of a super achiever in the next setting? Curt was able to do this. Are there other military dependents like him? If it is common for military dependents to adopt the academic behaviors of their peers as they move from place to place in their efforts to fit in, parents, teachers and counselors need to pay close attention to these bright children and adolescents and help them to fit in right away with the highest achievers before lower achieving peers are found instead.

Dependents requiring special programs to meet their needs, such as high ability students, may be at particular risk for developing underachieving behaviors. These children are even less likely to be challenged in school than civilian students of high ability because they are so often transferred. It is not uncommon for military dependents to move to a new location and to be presented with the very same curriculum that they completed in their last school (Tittle, 1985). Varying identification criteria in different schools for gifted programming may prevent these students from receiving enrichment and acceleration as well (Plucker & Yecke, 1999). Three of the four dependent

participants were affected by variations in gifted programming. John, Thomas, and Barton were all denied opportunities to participate in certain locations. Both Barton and John noticed gaps in their education resulting from inconsistent curricula, and Thomas and Barton mentioned occasions when they had entered a new school and had to repeat content they had already mastered. None of the dependents perceived that these gaps, repetitions or inconsistencies had harmed them in any way. In fact, Barton stated that repeating material in sixth grade had actually been helpful at a time when he was focusing on fitting in with new peers. Curt did not mention such inconsistencies related to his education. This is quite probably due to the fact that he spent most of his years in Catholic schools.

Future research is needed in this area. Are other military dependents more negatively influenced by gaps in their education as they move around from school to school? Is repeating curricula a common experience, and do other dependents find that this negatively affects their feelings toward school and learning, or are they, like Barton, relieved when material is repeated, as this provides an opportunity for them to focus on social concerns rather than on academics in a new school environment? If high ability military dependents are experiencing gaps in content and/or are repeating curricula and turning off to school, teachers and administrators need to address this issue. Increased efforts to challenge high ability students, who may or may not have been identified for gifted services in their previous schools, need to be on the minds of educators and parents alike. For this to happen, teachers need to know as much as possible about their students' academic skills as well as their social and emotional needs. Parents and teachers need to work together to meet student needs.

### Adapting to Relocations

Not one of the four fathers expressed a belief that his son had ever had difficulty with relocating. Likewise, the mothers and sons themselves claimed that moving had never been unbearable. The boys spoke only of initial social difficulties that lasted perhaps a matter of weeks. The positive experiences that these participants seemed to have had are supported by the findings of other researchers who found that multiple moves had little or no negative academic or psychological impact on children in military families (e.g., Marchant & Medway, 1987; Plucker & Yecke, 1999; Whalen & Fried, 1973). Marchant & Medway (1987) theorized that the military and other military families provide support for families not available in the civilian population, and that this support reduced the stress caused by relocation. Although none of the participants in this study spent much time (if any) living on a Navy base or attending a base school, they always lived in communities with a heavy military population. Support from other military families was there if needed.

Plucker & Yecke's study of gifted military dependents (1999), which did not involve either adolescent or adult male dependents, reported that academic performance did not seem to be hindered by moving. These researchers theorized that the intellectual skills and talents of high ability students may mediate the academic impact of multiple relocations. High levels of self-esteem and self-confidence also appear to have a powerful influence on successful adaptation. I found the same to be true among my participants.

The participants in this study were all social individuals. Their social skills helped them to feel comfortable with a variety of different people all over the country and to make friends easily. Whether they were naturally extroverted, or whether the Navy

lifestyle taught each participant to be outgoing and friendly is a difficult question to answer. Perhaps these dependents would all have been highly social regardless of their upbringing because they each came from highly social parents. In any event, there is a need for future research investigating the social skills of military parents and how these behaviors influence the children's own social behaviors and adjustment.

#### Adapting to Father's Absence

Research examining the adjustment of military children shows that fighting, defiance, anger, anxiety, sadness, and school difficulties are common among military children with absent fathers (e.g., Hillenbrand, 1976; Hunter, 1982). Although none of the participants in this study said that school difficulties were related to the father's absence, Barton and Curt admitted feeling sad at times when their fathers were away. Both boys' mothers also supported their sons' admissions. Neither John nor Thomas nor their mothers could remember examples of sadness, anger or anxiety on the son's part when the father was away.

Research suggests that males with absent fathers experience a poorer sense of masculinity (Beaty, 1995), and greater interpersonal difficulties (e.g., Biller & Bahm, 1971; Hetherington, 1966) than do boys who are not separated from their fathers. If the father's role is crucial to the healthy adjustment and achievement of his children, then in military families where the father is often gone on long deployments while his children are young, we would expect to find a greater incidence of social and academic difficulties among young children, especially males. I did not find social difficulties to be a problem among my participants. Although the fathers in my study were frequently absent for long



periods of time, all four sons reported many healthy personal relationships, and none seemed to have experienced a poor sense of masculinity.

Pollack (1998) found that fathers had more impact on the social and academic functioning of their sons than did mothers, and that boys were more likely to be underachievers if the father was absent from the home. Although the fathers in my study were often separated from their sons, when they were home all four spoke of efforts to bond with their sons. All four fathers served as coaches and/or scout guides when their sons were young and reported attending as many school and extracurricular activities as possible when they were home. Captain Taggart took his son on a “manly” father-son vacation each year, and Captain Mason even chose to alter his career in order to be home during John’s middle school and high school years. Pollack (1998) found that the more shared experiences a boy had with his father, the more education he completed, and that boys with caring, active fathers had increased levels of self-esteem, and lower incidence of social delinquency and depression in adolescence. When fathers were actively involved in their sons’ lives, the boys were usually less aggressive, better able to express their feelings, and were less likely to act out or show aggression in order to win their father’s love and attention.

Curt and Barton were the closest of the four dependents to their fathers. This closeness was facilitated by a shared interest in sports. Perhaps this interest and closeness explains in part why these two boys are the most well-adjusted and highest achievers of the group. Rimm (1995) theorized that children tend to identify with the parent who has common interests. Thomas and John lacked this close connection with their fathers, and as a result, these fathers and sons did not spend as much time together as the other two

pairs. Johnson & Hayes (1997) reported that a male's identification with his father is related to his self-perceptions, achievement and behavior. Because Thomas and John did not perceive that they were much like their high achieving and hard working fathers, they seemed to identify more closely with their mothers. Because they did not identify with their same-sex parent, their achievement and self-perceptions were not as high as those of the other two boys.

Findings related to the identification of sons with their fathers have important implications for future studies. Additional research is needed investigating families where the father is gone often during the son's adolescence. When male dependents do not identify closely with their fathers in adolescence, does their achievement suffer as the experiences of John and Thomas suggest? Do male dependents identify more closely with their mothers when their father is absent? Do they identify more closely with the father whenever he returns, or is the identification that is formed a more constant variety? When sons and fathers do not share common interests, how is identification between father and son affected?

#### Other Influences on Behavior and Achievement

It is interesting to look at the research on sibling relationships and achievement and the ways that my study both supports and disagrees with other findings. Hillenbrand (1976) suggested that father absence may be experienced quite differently for boys and girls, and that boys with older siblings, especially older sisters, have the most trouble adjusting to the absence. These boys may have trouble dealing with stress, may be overly aggressive and have greater difficulty achieving in school. These boys may also experience depression-- feeling angry at a situation over which they have no control.

Barton had an older brother. While Barton did not have difficulty achieving in school, both he and his mother mentioned that he was more aggressive when his father was away. Barton said, “I probably had more of the stereotypical outbursts than my older brother did.” Barton perceived, however, that his brother actually had the more difficult time with their father’s absences than Barton did, in part because Barton did find ways to express his feelings. His older brother tended to keep emotions inside.

Both Thomas and John had older sisters, and both of these boys did have difficulties in school and had lower self-esteem than the two boys without older sisters. Curiously, neither of these boys admitted to ever missing their fathers when they were away. Given the pride that both of these boys expressed in their fathers, it is surprising that they would not have missed them. Perhaps in addition to struggling to prove themselves as they grew up in the shadow of high achieving older sisters, these boys have had a more difficult time because they were afraid to show their true feelings.

There is a need for additional research involving the influence of sibling relationships on behavior and achievement. Research is also needed related to the male dependent’s ability to express emotion. Perhaps in military families where “macho” values are encouraged, sons grow up fearful of showing sadness or fear. They deny these feelings or keep them repressed, which may affect their overall adjustment.

In military families where the military father is frequently coming and going, consistency in parenting style and expectations is difficult to establish. One parent is typically more nurturing and permissive than the other. In all four families in this study, parent expectations were said to be fairly consistent, but the mother was identified as the more permissive and nurturing parent. All four sons explained that they could usually get

away with more when Dad was gone because Mom was more lenient. A power pattern that Rimm (1995) has named “Father is an Ogre” seems apparent in all four families. In this pattern, the father is viewed as the successful and powerful parent. To exert his power over his children, the father often restricts or prohibits the desired activities of the children. The mother, who is viewed as the more kind and nurturing parent, tries to help her children, by convincing the father to change his mind. If the father cannot be persuaded, the mother often goes behind his back to permit the children to get their way.

This pattern can worsen as the children get older and the father recognizes his lack of power over his family. He becomes more and more authoritarian as he tries to cope with his powerlessness. Because the military fosters a strong sense of discipline and respect for authority, and officers are accustomed to their positions of power, they may have a hard time switching gears when they return home to their families. All four fathers spoke of the struggle they experienced each time they returned home. They always felt a need to control their families, but did not want to alienate their children. This power pattern was most evident in the Taggert and Mason families.

Rimm found that boys in these families tend to underachieve because they do not see an effective role-model in their father. They fear and resent him, but do not wish to be like him. They identify more closely with their mother (Rimm, 1995). Such cross-gender identification of sons with their mothers was also linked to underachievement in males in a landmark study conducted by Terman and Oden (1947). The gifted underachieving men in this study possessed the following characteristics: lack of self-confidence, inability to persevere, a lack of integration toward goals, and the presence of inferiority feelings. Although John Mason did seem to identify with his mother, and

exhibited a lack of self confidence in his academic ability, Curt did not display any of these behaviors. Curt's healthy self-esteem and high academic achievement may be explained by his identification with his father due to their shared interest in sports.

Implications of these findings include a need to further explore the nature of parenting styles and power patterns in military families. Is it common to see the "Father is an Ogre" pattern, or are other patterns equally common? Is it common for male dependents to identify with their mothers when they do not see an effective role model in their fathers? No studies to date have specifically investigated the influence of power patterns in military families on the adjustment and achievement of military dependents.

The ideas that children develop about their abilities can have important and long-lasting effects on their ways of approaching learning materials (Eccles, Wigfield & Schiefele, 1998). Researchers have reported that perceived teacher support was associated with both perceived competence and intrinsic interest in early adolescent students (e.g., Goodenow, 1992; Harter, 1989). Both Curt and Barton spoke of close relationships with teachers who thought highly of them and had high expectations for them. It seems likely that these positive relationships with teachers helped encouraged their continued efforts in school. Both John and Thomas admitted that by high school they had become known among their teachers and peers as students who did "just enough to get by." Because many of their teachers were expecting to see underachieving behaviors, the cycle of underachievement was tough to break.

This finding has particular implications for teachers. Teachers are instrumental in shaping self-confidence and interest in students. They need to have high expectations for every student from the beginning. Teachers must try to learn as much about each student

as quickly as possible, focus on the student's strengths and interests, and treat him or her as Mrs. Taggart put it, "as if he [or she] was the smartest kid to ever walk though the door."

### Sports

Perhaps the most noteworthy finding in this study is the strong emphasis on team sports that was common among the four families in this study. The fathers had all participated in high school and college athletics, and it was very important to each father that his son would participate as well. These fathers spoke of pushing their sons into sports at times, because they knew their sons would learn so many positive lessons by participating. Two of the boys stated that their academic achievement was better when they were involved in a sport, and all four said they had used sports at some point to help them fit in with new peers.

All four boys used sports as a way to spend time with their fathers and to strengthen the father-son relationship. Curt and Barton gained the most from sports in this respect because they not only chose to participate in the same sport that their father had loved best, but they also seemed to have a great deal of inherent interest and talent for this sport. Largely due to their participation in sports, the two highest academic achievers and seemingly most well-adjusted individuals in this study grew up with a close connection to and identification with their fathers. Because they felt secure in their relationship with their father, they had self-confidence. This confidence helped them to succeed with their peers and translated into success in the classroom.

This finding regarding the importance of participation in sports has implications for future research in this area. Studies are needed to further investigate the value of

sports in the following areas: in helping male and female dependents to make smooth transitions into new communities; in relation to male and female dependents' academic achievement; in helping male and female dependents to relate to their athletic fathers; the value of participation in sports when the father does not share a similar passion. Studies also need to investigate military dependents who do not participate in sports. How do these individuals meet new friends after a move? What is their level of academic achievement? Are they busy with other activities, or do they have extra time on their hands? If they are not busy, do they spend more time worrying and dwelling on difficult changes they must make than dependents like those in this study who kept very busy and had little time to dwell at all?

The findings in this study suggest that the underlying beliefs of parents in military families regarding challenge and change may do much to shape the experiences and attitude of military dependents. In the families participating in this study, the sons adopted the positive attitude that was modeled by their parents. With a positive approach to the Navy lifestyle, these high ability male dependents made relatively smooth transitions from one school to another, made friends easily and were able to deal well with separations from their father during military deployments. Participation in sports was also found to be instrumental in improving the social, emotional and cognitive development of the male dependents in this study. Ideals such as goal setting, teamwork, perseverance, and discipline were taught through participation in sports, and participation facilitated a closeness between fathers and sons that led to increased self-esteem and improved academic achievement. Parents, teachers and counselors should be aware of the

many ways participation in sports and a positive attitude toward change may help military dependents as well as other children and adolescents making frequent transitions.



## REFERENCES

- Alvino, J. (1991). Social and emotional well-being: An investigation into the needs of gifted boys. *Roeper Review*, *13*, 174-180.
- Amen, D., Jellen, L., Merves, E. & Lee, R. (1988). Minimizing the impact of deployment on military children: Stages, current preventative efforts, and system recommendations. *Military Medicine*, *153*, 441-446.
- APA Monitor. (1996, August, p.6). Long-term effects of absent fathers. In *Research confirms the risks associated with growing up in a fatherless home*. Retrieved May 21, 2000, from <http://npin.org/pnews/pnew996/pnew996m.html>
- Beatty, L. (1995). Effects of paternal absence on male adolescents' peer relations and self-image. *Adolescence*, *30*, 873-880.
- Beckman, K., Marsella, A. & Finney, R. (1979). Depression in the wives of nuclear submarine personnel. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, *136*, 524-526.
- Berger, P. & Luckman, T. (1966). *The social construction of reality*. New York: Doubleday.
- Berndt, T. (1999). Friends' influence on students' adjustment to school. *Educational Psychologist*, *34*, 15-28.
- Biller, H. & Bahm, R. (1971). Father absence, perceived maternal behavior, and masculinity of self-concept among junior high school boys. *Developmental Psychology*, *4*, 178-181.
- Blount, W., Curry, A. & Lubin, G. (1992). Family separations in the military. *Military Medicine*, *157*, 76-80.
- Blumer, H. (1980). Mead and Blumer: The convergent methodological perspectives of social behaviourism and symbolic interactionism. *American Sociological Review*, *45*, 409-419.
- Bronstein, P. & Duncan, P. (1996). Family and parenting behaviors predicting middle school adjustment. *Family Relations*, *45*, 415-427.
- Clandinin, D. & Connelly, F. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

- Clark, K. (1991). *The psychological effects of husband/father separation and reunification in military families*. (Report No. CG023590). Biola University. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED346082)
- Clinkenbeard, P. (1996). Research on motivation and the gifted: Implications for identification, programming and evaluation. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 40, 220-221.
- Coffey, A. & Atkinson, P. (1996). *Making sense of qualitative data: Complimentary research strategies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Colangelo, N. & Dettman, D. (1983). A review of research on parents and families of gifted children. *Exceptional Children*, 50, 20-27.
- Colangelo, N., Kerr, B., Christensen, P. & Maxey, J. (1993). A comparison of gifted underachievers and gifted high achievers. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 37, 155-160.
- Connell, J. & Wellborn, J. (1991). Competence, autonomy, and relatedness: A motivational analysis of self-system processes. In M. R. Gunnar & L.A. Sroufe (Eds.), *Self processes and development: The Minnesota symposia on child development* (Vol. 23, pp. 43-78). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Conroy, P. (1976). *The great Santini*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Decker, K. (1978). Coping with sea duty: Problems encountered and resources utilized during periods of family separation. In E. J. Hunter & D. S. Nice (Eds.), *Military families: Adaptation to change*. New York: Praeger Publishers.
- Department of Defense Office of Personnel Support: Families and Education (2001). Retrieved November 28, 2001, from <http://www.defenselink.mil>.
- Dowdall, C. & Colangelo, N. (1981). Underachieving gifted students: Review and implications. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 26, 179-184.
- Eccles, J., Wigfield, A. & Schiefele, U. (1998). Motivation to succeed. In W. Damon (Series Ed.) & N. Eisenberg (Vol. Ed.), *Handbook of child psychology: Vol. 3* (5<sup>th</sup> ed., pp. 1017-1095). New York: Wiley.
- Felner, R., Abet, M., Primavera, J. & Cauce, A. (1985). Adaptation and vulnerability in high-risk adolescents: An examination of environmental mediators. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 13, 365-379.
- Frasier, M. (1991). Disadvantaged and culturally diverse gifted students. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 14, 234-245.

- Goodenow, C. (1993). Classroom belonging among early adolescent students: Relationships to motivation and achievement. *Journal of Early Adolescence, 13*, 21-43.
- Grolnick, W. & Kurowski, C. (1999). Family processes and the development of children's self-regulation. *Educational Psychologist, 34*, 3-15.
- Hamilton, M. (1977). *Father's influence on children*. Chicago: Nelson-Hall.
- Harter, S. (1989). Causes, correlates, and the functional role of global self-worth: A life-span perspective. In I. Kolligan & R. Sternberg (Eds.), *Perceptions of competence and incompetence across the life-span* (pp. 67-97). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Hatch, J. & Wisniewski, R. (Eds.).(1995). *Life history and narrative*. Washington, D.C.: The Falmer Press.
- Hetherington, E. (1966). Effects of paternal absence on sex-typed behaviors in negro and white preadolescent males. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 4*, 87-91.
- Hill, M. (1997). Roles and responsibilities: Who does them when you are gone? – Family life month packet 1997. The Ohio State University. Retrieved May 21, 2000, from <http://ericps.crc.uiuc.edu/npin/library/1998/n00040/n00040.html>
- Hillenbrand, E. (1976). Father absence in military families. *The Family Coordinator, 451-456*.
- Hunter, E. (1982). *Families under the flag: A review of military family literature*. New York: Praeger Publishers.
- Jalongo, M. (1985, September). When young children move. *Young Children, 51-57*.
- Jensen, P., Martin, D., and Watanabe, H. (1996). Children's response to parental separation during Operation Desert Storm. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 35*, 433-441.
- Johnson, W. & Hayes, D. (1997). An identity-focused counseling group for men. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling, 19*, 295-304.
- Kelley, M. (1994). Military-induced separation in relation to maternal adjustment and children's behaviors. *Military Psychology, 6*, 163-176.
- Kerr, B. (1994). *Smart girls: A new psychology of girls, women and giftedness*. (Rev. ed.). Scottsdale, AZ: Gifted Psychology Press.

- Khatena, J. (1978). President's message: Some suggestions for parents & educators on handling the creative child. *The Gifted Child Quarterly*, 22, 145-154.
- Kramp, M. (In progress). Exploring life and experience through narrative inquiry.
- Lamb, M. (1981). *The role of the father in child development*. (2<sup>nd</sup>. Ed.). New York: Wiley.
- Loeb, R. & Jay, G. (1987). Self-concept in gifted children: Differential impact in boys and girls. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 31, 9-14.
- Maccoby, E. & Martin, J. (1983). Socialization in the context of the family: Parent-child interaction. In P.H. Mussen (Series Ed.) & E.M. Hetherington (Vol. Ed.). *Handbook of Child Psychology: Vol. 4. Socialization, personality, and social development* (4<sup>th</sup> ed., pp. 1-101). New York: Wiley.
- Mandel, H., Marcus, S. (with Dean, L.). (1995). *Could do better*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Marchant, K. & Medway, F. (1987). Adjustment and achievement associated with mobility in military families. *Psychology in the Schools*, 24, 289-294.
- McKain, J. (1973). Relocation in the military: Alienation and family problems. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 35, 205-209.
- Midgley, C., Feldlauer, H. & Eccles, J. (1989). Student/teacher relations and attitudes toward mathematics before and after the transition to junior high school. *Child Development*, 60, 981-992.
- Mischler, E. (1986). *Research interviewing: Context and narrative*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Nord, C., Brimhall, D. & West, J. (1997). Fathers' involvement in their children's schools. Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics. ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 409 125.
- Norwood, A., Fullerton, C. & Hagen, K. (1996). Those left behind: Military families. In R. Ursano & A. Norwood (Eds.). *Emotional aftermath of the Persian Gulf War: Veterans, families, communities, and nations*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Press.
- Olenchak, F.R. (1999). Affective development of gifted students with nontraditional talents. *Roeper Review*, 21, 293-297.

- Orosan, P., Weine, A., Jason, L. & Johnson, J. (1992). Gender differences in academic and social behavior of elementary school transfer students. *Psychology in the Schools, 29*, 394-402.
- Payne, S. (1999). Interviewing in qualitative research. In A. Memon & R. Bull (Eds.), *Handbook of the psychology of interviewing* (pp. 89-102). New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Peshkin, A (1988). In search of subjectivity—One's own. *Educational Researcher, 17*, 17-22.
- Pillen, B., Jason, L. & Olson, T. (1988). The effects of gender on the transition of transfer students into a new school. *Psychology in the Schools, 25*, 187-194.
- Pittman, J. & Bowen, G. (1994). Adolescents on the move: Adjustment to family relocation. *Youth and Society, 26*, 69-92.
- Plucker, J. & Yecke, C. (1999). The effect of relocation on gifted students. *Gifted Child Quarterly, 43*, 95-106.
- Polkinghorne, D. (1988). *Narrative knowing and the human sciences*. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press.
- Polkinghorne, D. (1995). Narrative configuration in qualitative analysis. In J. A. Hatch & R. Wisniewski (Eds.), *Life history and narrative*. Washington, D.C.: The Falmer Press.
- Pollack, W. (1998). *Real boys*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, Inc.
- Redding, R. (1990). Learning preferences and skill patterns among underachieving gifted adolescents. *Gifted Child Quarterly, 34*, 4-21.
- Reis, S. (1998). *Work left undone: Choices & compromises of talented females*. Mansfield Center, CT: Creative Learning Press.
- Riessman, C. (1993). *Narrative analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Rimm, S. (1995). *Why bright kids get poor grades*. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc.
- Rohall, D., Segal, M., & Segal, D. (1999). Examining the importance of organizational supports on family adjustment to army life in a period of increasing separations. *Journal of Political and Military Sociology, 27*, 49-65.
- Ryan, R. & Stiller, J. (1994). Representations of relationships to teachers, parents, and friends as predictors of academic motivation and self-esteem. *Journal of Early Adolescence, 14*, 226-248.

- Seidman, I. (1998). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Segal, D. & Segal, M. (1993). *Peacekeepers and their wives: American participation in the multinational force of observers*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Silverman, L. (Ed.). (1993). *Counseling the gifted and talented*. Denver, CO: Dove Publishing Company.
- Silverman, D. (2000). *Doing qualitative research: A practical handbook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Simpson, G. & Fowler, M. (1994). Geographic mobility and children's emotional/behavioral adjustment and school functioning. *Pediatrics*, 93, 303-310.
- Singer, M. (1970). You owe yourself a drunk: James P. Spradley's enduring perspective. In J. P. Spradley, *You owe yourself a drunk: An ethnography of urban nomads*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.
- Smardo, F. (1981). Geographic mobility: How do we help children cope? *Childhood Education*, 58, 40-45.
- Spencer, M. (1999). Social and cultural influences on school adjustment: The application of an identity-focused cultural ecological perspective. *Educational Psychologist*, 34, 43-58.
- Terman, L. & Oden, M. (1947). *Genetic studies of genius* (Vol. 4). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Tittle, B. (1985). Gifted military dependents: Do they get lost in the shuffle? *Gifted Child Today*, 23, 23-25.
- Van Maanen, M. (1990). *Research lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. London, Ontario: State University of New York Press.
- Weiss, R. (1994). *Learning from strangers: The art and method of qualitative interview studies*. New York: The Free Press.
- Wentzel, K. (1999). Social influences on school adjustment: Commentary. *Educational Psychologist*, 34, 59-70.
- Whalen, T. & Fried, M. (1973). Geographic mobility and its effect on student achievement. *Journal of Educational Research*, 67, 163-165.
- Whitmore, J. (1980). *Giftedness, conflict and underachievement*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, Inc.

- Willings, D. (1980). *The creatively gifted*. Cambridge, England: Woodhead-Faulkner.
- Wolcott, H. (1995). *The art of fieldwork*. Walnut Creek, CA: Sage.
- Wolfe, J. (1991). Underachieving gifted males: Are we missing the boat? *Roeper Review*, 13, 181-184.
- Wolkind, S. & Rutter, M. (1973). Children who have been "in care": An epidemiological study. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 14, 97-105.
- Wood, D. & Halfon, N. (1993). The impact of family relocation on children's growth, development, school function, and behavior. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 270, 1334-1339.
- Wood, S., Scarville, J. & Gravino, K. (1995). Waiting wives: Separation and reunion among army wives. *Armed Forces & Society*, 21, 217-236.

APPENDIX A  
INTERVIEW GUIDE

Tell me a little about yourself.

Tell me about your family.

Tell me about your experiences (your son's experiences) relocating.

Tell me about times of separation and reunion in your family.

Tell me about your experiences (your son's experiences) in school.

What does the experience of growing up (raising a son) in a military family mean to you?



## APPENDIX B

## QUERY FOR PARTICIPANTS

Friends,

My married daughter Elizabeth is writing her doctoral dissertation at UGA on family dynamics in military families. She hopes to interview fathers, mothers and sons in this area in June. Volunteers would be most welcomed. Her latest e-mail to me is quoted below.

"I want to make you aware of a couple changes in my selection criteria for my study. I am now searching for three Navy families to participate in interviews this May. I'd like to interview the son twice, and the mother and father only once each (but separately). The focus of the study is on the experiences of high ability males growing up in Navy families. The son should be atleast 18 years old (simplifies the consent forms and human subjects approval process a lot!), and his father needs to have been active duty for most of the son's adolescence. Number and gender of siblings does not matter. I am hoping to find all three families in one area - either Jacksonville, Va Beach or Washington."

Her thesis is that the rigors of military family life offer unique challenges for the boys of military fathers. Please let me know if you would be interested in helping her. Many thanks.

Doug Connell

## APPENDIX C

## INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS

Dear Captain \_\_\_\_\_,

Thank you for your interest in my research. As my father told you, I am interested in the experiences of gifted military dependents. For this study, I plan to focus on the experiences of male Navy dependents. I would like to explore family perceptions of the influence of the military lifestyle on the son's social, emotional and cognitive development. Specifically, I am interested in perceptions about the influence of deployments and frequent relocations on academic achievement. I plan to interview members of three Navy families as follows: the son, the father, the mother, and then the son again. Interviews will each be approximately 60 minutes in length. I also hope to gain access to any archival data that the families would be willing to share. These might include photographs, writing samples, report card comments, letters, etc.

My study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Georgia, and I hope to begin interviewing participants in May. I am planning to come up to Vienna from May 13-24 for this purpose.

The criteria I have for the sons in my study are as follows:

- 1) He must be at least 18 years of age.
- 2) He must be of high ability (as evidenced by a standardized achievement test score at the 90th %ile or above).
- 3) He must be willing and able to discuss his experiences growing up in a military family.

I will not be able to offer any sort of compensation for your participation. You and your family may benefit, however, from the satisfaction of sharing your personal stories with me. Your participation will be kept confidential, and participants' names will not be used on any materials collected during the research process.

I hope that results of this study will benefit parents, teachers and counselors working with children in military families.

If you and your wife and son would be willing to participate in my study, and think we might schedule our interviews in May, I would love to hear from you! I'll be interested in knowing how often your family moved during your career and also the frequency of your deployments.

I look forward to hearing from you soon!

Thank you,  
Elizabeth Connell Pee

Landers Family Chart
----------------------------

## APPENDIX D

## SAMPLE INDIVIDUAL DATA CHART: BARTON

Year	Location (family home)	Moves Made	Dad Away	Grade Level	Gifted program	Extra-Curricular Activities	Dad Retired	Other Significant Events
1978								
1979								Vincent is born
1980								
1981								
1982	Arizona							Barton is born
1983	AZ and RI	yes						
1984	RI and CA	yes	4 mo. cruise					Anna is born
1985	CA							
1986	CA		6 mo. cruise					
1987	CA							
1988	CA		12 mo. cruise	K		T-ball		
1989	CA			1		Baseball, scouts		
1990	CA			2		Baseball, scouts		
1991	CA			3		Baseball, scouts		
1992	CA		12 mo. school	4		Baseball, scouts		Dad lived in New England for a year
1993	CA		5 mo. cruise	5		Baseball, scouts		
1994	CA and VA	yes		6	yes	Baseball, football		
1995	VA			7	honors courses	Baseball, football		
1996	VA			8	honors courses	Baseball, football		
1997	VA			9	honors courses	Baseball, football		
1998	VA		4 mo. cruise	10	I.B. program	Baseball, football		
1999	VA		6 mo. cruise	11	I.B. program	Baseball, football		Dad lived in another part of the state all year, commuting home on weekends
2000	VA			12	I.B. program	football		
2001	VA			college		football	yes	
2002	VA			college		football		

APPENDIX E  
COMBINED DATA CHART

Categories	Mason	Hanford	Taggart	Landers
Mom- stayed home with young kids	X	X	X	X
Mom- more permissive	X	sometimes	X	no
Different parenting styles, rules and routine	X	same	X	X
Dad – wants to be “in charge” when home	X	Not really	X	X
Mom really is “in charge”	X	X	X	X
Mom- worried for Dad’s safety and career		no	X (says mom)	X (says son)
Mom- positive attitude toward lifestyle	X	X	X	X
Mom- role stressful!		Yes (says mom)	X (says mom and son)	X (Says mom and son)
Mom- high achiever/ back to school	X	X	X	X
Mom – a teacher	X	X	X	X
Dad- “macho”	X	No	X	X
Son liked school	X	Not HS	X	X
Son – active in sports (for social reasons)	X	X (not specifically)	Not specifically	X
Son – lots of friends (social)	X	X	X	X (not as much as brother, though)
Son – not challenged in school	X (challenged in HS)	No	X (challenged in H.S.)	X (challenged in HS)
Gaps in education	X	X	No	X
Repeating curriculum with moves	X (says mom)	X	No	X
Son – competitive in school	No	No	X	X
Son- competitive in sports	X	No	X	X
Son – self-motivated	X (in sports only)	No	X	X
Underachieving Behaviors	X	X	X (in public school, when young)	No
Moves made mid-year	No	No	No	No
Fled public school	X	No	yes	No
Academic achievement mirrors peers’	No	No	Yes	Yes
Missing Dad	No	No	X (coach story, crying )	X (chair story)
Parents – high academic expectations	X	X (no pressure, though)	X	X
Relocations difficult for son	Yes, at first (9 <sup>th</sup> grade)	No	Yes, move from VA to CA	Yes (but there was only one)
Difficulty leaving peers	No	No	No	Some
Examples of dad-son bonding	X (sports)	No	X (trips, tennis)	X (Sports!)
Family split to prevent move for son	no	X (in H.S. twice)	X (12 <sup>th</sup> grade)	X (4 <sup>th</sup> grade and H.S.)
Son wanted to be Navy pilot	No	Yes, when little	No!	Yes
Dad altered career to be home with son	Yes	No	No	(no, but did for daughter)
Traumatic event(s) affected parenting styles	X (suicide of Dad’s brother)	X (suicide of Dad’s brother and father; suicide of Mom’s sister)	Near death experience of Dad when Curt was a baby	Dad’s father was an alcoholic and not around much
Parents strongly	X	X	X	X

encouraged team sports				
Father's position	Test pilot	Fighter pilot	Fighter pilot	Surface Warfare (ships)

## APPENDIX F

## DATA IN CATEGORIES

	Curt	John	Thomas	Barton
Philosophy	<p>"I try to limit the competition to appropriate circumstances." "I am pretty self-motivated"</p>	<p>"I work to live, I don't live to work", "if you can stay underneath the radar, then you don't have to worry", "my measure of success is how well you get along with everyone", "you just don't need to be so uptight about stuff"</p>	<p>"I just kind of slide by...do the minimum."  "If I'm not competing, I can't lose."  "I don't ever think about the future that much. I take it one day at a time."</p>	<p>"open the door for a lady, don't hit girls..."  "you can tell a lot about a person by the way he plays or prepares for football"</p>
Dad	<p>"A career military man", "not as strict as people would assume", "regimented", "accustomed to taking charge", "efficient", "stern", "business-like", "a great father-great guy"</p>	<p>"Domineering", "controlling", "regimented", "Captain", "entrenched in Navy", "barked out orders", "just do it", "conservative", created "contracts" for certain level of academic achievement, "always trying to push me", "always a commander kind of thing going on"</p>	<p>"was a naval aviator", "one of these people that always has to be working",</p>	<p>"a captain for pretty much all I can remember", "very sports oriented", "very old school", "a big time football player in high school – heavily recruited", "chose academics over athletics", "never really pushed me into football", "very patient, but once you've crossed the line...it's over!" "Dad never pushed me in any direction...just let me go my own way – something I really respect about him", "he kind of taught me and my brother to be a 'man's man"</p>
Sports	<p>Baseball, soccer, football, swimming, and "then when I moved to CA I started playing tennis, and that continued through H.S." "None of my classmates played tennis, so that wasn't something that helped me socially." "I played sports with people who did not go to my school."</p>	<p>"real important", "how I met my friends", "made changes easier", "enabled me to stand out in the crowd and to get respect", "always did better in school when involved in sports", "taught me how to deal with people and leadership roles"</p>	<p>"I used to be one of those kids who played a different sport every season" "I did winter swimming for a while, but I was burnt out by the time I was 12 or 13."  "When I broke my arm and stopped playing soccer, my grades went down." "I just never took the initiative to get in shape to play varsity soccer senior year." "Now I play soccer in a regular club league. That's a lot of fun – there's no pressure because it doesn't matter."</p>	<p>"I grew up playing all kinds of sports", I played football in 6<sup>th</sup> grade to meet kids", "my brother was very good – I was always being compared to him and trying to catch up to him", "Football teaches kids life lessons: you have to work to get better; once you start something, finish it.", "sports also teaches one to be tough and how to handle adversity...It's a great way to escape from reality, let out any type of emotion, to bond with teammates, achieve something great, to have fun."</p>
Peers	<p>"I found myself changing to fit in."</p>	<p>"made friends quickly", "my friends were the athletes –the guys I played soccer with",</p>	<p>"We never lived on base, so it wasn't like everyone was military." "I had military friends, but basically, it was</p>	<p>"took a while to establish myself with too many best friends", "I would just go out to recess and kind of sit around", "my brother was</p>

			whoever I found locally.” “I have lots of friends from H.S. and middle school, and neighborhood friends.”	always showing me what was ‘cool’-he was real good to me and always helped me out”, “the majority of my friends weren’t military kids – we never lived on base”
Moving	“I was prepared. I knew inevitably we would move, so it wasn’t a surprise.” “It was always a little disappointing to pick up and leave.” “It came to easy...normal.” “Even if you didn’t want to leave a group of friends, you had done it before, and you could do it again.” “I’ve always lived in Navy towns, where people were familiar with Navy brats.” “Moving from VA to CA was pretty dramatic...culture shock. I was confronted with an entirely new social environment...it was difficult...I found myself changing to fit in to that context.”	“didn’t hurt me”, “missed some experiences”, “seeing lots of things”, “I like changes”, “interesting to go somewhere new”, “never had trouble fitting in”, “a fact of life”	“You become more adept to change.”	learned a lot of geography and history while traveling, after moving from CA to VA there was culture shock, “a neat experience to see all that”,
Dad, after retirement	“I was curious to see what would happen to him. He was accustomed to taking charge at home and at work...what he said went. On the ship, you couldn’t question him...you had to accept what he said. There wasn’t any insubordination or anything like that. When you don’t have that authority anymore...I thought he might be upset that no one would listen to him...no one <i>had</i> to listen to him anymore. That’s been good for him, because he has become more mellow and more tolerant of different perspectives. He can no longer dictate how the conversation goes, and his perspective isn’t always right.”  “Now that I’m getting older, our relationship is getting stronger and close.”	“starting to wind down”, “more light-hearted”, “relaxation in his demeanor”	“He’s still a work-a-holic.”	
School experience	Grades K-1 were private school. Grades 2-5 were public school. Grades 6-12 were Catholic school.  *Never in gifted program (mainly because it wasn’t offered in private school).  “In public school, I remember getting into trouble and not really caring or even bothering to learn.” “In 6 <sup>th</sup> grade I went to Catholic school. I felt totally out of my	Grades K-6 were public school. Grades 7-8 were Catholic school. Grades 9-12 were public school. *Participated in special pullout program in grade 6. “got in trouble in middle school”, “goofing off”, “don’t read unless I have to”, “lack the ability to focus”, “I could get by on a minimal amount of effort”, “get the ‘B’ and	Public school all the way up. *Identified gifted in grade 3 (not served until grade 6 because no gifted in S.D.) *Magnet school for 6-8 grade *T.J. magnet H.S.  “I’m definitely a math student. I hate to read” “Words were never my thing” I work better when I	Public school all the way up. *Identified gifted grade 6. *IB program in H.S. “in VA I had the opportunity to go to the gifted class – I hadn’t had that before –it made me realize how smart some kids were!”, “gifted class gave me the chance to break away from repetitive sorts of things – we were encouraged to think off the wall”, “there were

	<p>element. I had to wear a uniform and had very strict teachers. I didn't know how to act in that environment. I was expected to do my work, and so I started focusing on school, and things went up from that point."</p>	<p>you're off the radar", "likes teachers who got involved", "took the path of least resistance", "wasn't really interested", "if I had to work at it, I'd just sit by and do nothing"</p>	<p>can learn a system"          "I have been skipping classes lately. I don't want to be in school"          "Writing is too time-consuming"          "It's not like the class I'm failing is hard – it's just that I don't want to do the assignments. It's incredibly boring"          "I'm an above-average student, but in my school, I'm in the lower third because it's a magnet school...it's frustrating"          "I have a level of natural ability, and it has run out. I had to start learning and teaching myself things and that required a level of effort that I couldn't do"          "I like hands-on learning with a lot of freedom"          "I like teachers who are dynamic – who understand that different students require different things"          "I wasn't ever challenged in math"          "I've been the kid who slept in class...and could still get by"          "I basically slid by, but I was a lot more relaxed than the other kids – I enjoyed myself more so I don't regret it"          "The competition in school is frustrating. If I'm not competing, I can't lose"          "If I thought I didn't need to know, or if I thought I could learn it later, I'd put my head down and sleep."</p>	<p>definitely gaps in my education – it was like standing in the middle of the freeway...I just had no idea what they were talking about!", the curriculum was also repeated after a move: "I got to learn about Colonial America two years in a row, but it was probably good that school was easy that year, because it was such an adjustment that year", "The IB program really challenged me. I had to work harder than the other kids."</p>
<p>When Dad was gone</p>	<p>"I was the oldest child and a guy, so when dad was gone, I would go sit in my dad's chair, and would help out with dinner and these sorts of things. My mom would really count on me because she was so busy and there was no one else."           "I remember dropping him off at the ship one time on my birthday. I remember being in the car and just sort of crying."</p>	<p>"I remember goofing off more", "there wasn't someone pushing you to do all the chores and stuff", "more relaxed"</p>	<p>"When he was away, it was just the same thing, minus one person...no real difference in routine."          "We'd get letters from him, and we'd all kind of gather around like it was story time."          "I guess he never went on a long cruise when I was old enough to really notice the difference."          "I think it was something I was so</p>	<p>"it was really tough on my mom- she was always upset and irritable", "there were lots of neighbors who pulled together to help", "he wasn't around to play catch with us", "neighbors' dads would help out", "I had stereotypical outbursts", "dad cried when he left for Newport- that's when it hit me how much he cared about us and how big a deal this was", "his uniforms always had this distinct smell that</p>



			used to...it was just kind of the normal thing.”	reminded me of him and comfort and home”
When Dad returned	<p>“When he came home it was kind of weird because we had gotten so accustomed new these roles ...I had to shift back down. The biggest slice of chicken went to him again...all these little changes...that’s just indicative of the larger changes...the rules and stuff.”</p> <p>“He would come back, and what he said went! It would overrule anything that you and your mom...any systems that you had set up. He was like, no – we’re not doing it that way...we’re doing it this way, and I don’t care if you argue or not... We’d kind of look at each other and say, okay, Dad...and then we’d wait for him to leave again.”</p> <p>“He’d come home and want to make up for lost time, so he’d plan these great big trips.”</p>	“let him believe that you were doing it his way”,	“Dad was the assertive one – Mom was more lenient.”	“Dad was always willing to take me and my brother to the batting cages to hit some baseball”, “Dad kind of came home and wasn’t used to how things were”, “model rockets- something my dad and I shared – he’d give me pointers”, “he’d never tire of throwing the football with me”
Expectations	<p>“My parents expectations changed in 6<sup>th</sup> grade because then they were paying for school, and they expected a return.”</p> <p>“My dad had an incentive system for getting good grades. Not that it really drove you, but it sort of set the bar...”</p> <p>“My dad really wanted me to go to Annapolis, but he didn’t really push it on me.”</p>	“always expected to do well in school and in sports”, “do well in whatever you do”, “never a push to go into the Navy”	<p>“My parents are pretty much fans of do your own thing”</p> <p>“Sometimes I’m nervous about showing them grades, but I pretty much know what to expect every time – they won’t blow up at me...they’ll just be disappointed...ask why...kind of discuss it with me.”</p> <p>“I’m sure my parents probably thought I could do more, but they never made any sort of petty threats about if my grades weren’t this and this.”</p> <p>“They never put any stress on me...it wouldn’t have been productive.”</p>	“Mom had the same expectations for me as my dad”
Pride in the Navy lifestyle	<p>At a change of command: “It was really strange to have this entire ceremony in honor of him...and you read his biography, and hear all these people talking about him, and it’s like...oh, wow...he did a lot of great things! It was eye-opening because it was seeing that your dad really did have all this responsibility and power and...you know, you lived with this person!”</p> <p>“I never really stayed in one place very long, so it feels stagnant if I stay beyond a year</p>	“a lot of pride for dad”, “a high amount of respect for what he did”, the lifestyle fosters “the ability to adapt”, “a part of growing up -I didn’t realize it that’s not what other kids were doing”	<p>“You learn to be more sociable, because you have to restart every so many years.”</p> <p>“It’s nice getting to know new people all of the time.”</p> <p>“I didn’t mind the moving.”</p> <p>“I was too young to notice not having my dad around. I just accepted it because it had been happening since I was so young...so that didn’t influence me that</p>	“the military lifestyle was absolutely great for me!”, “proud of my dad and of how successful he’s been”, “it taught me to be respectful to adults, and manners, and things like that”, “it gave me opportunities to be so competitive both in the classroom and on the field”, “the ideals he taught me – that the military taught him- helped me take advantage of all the opportunities offered to me”

	<p>in a certain place.”</p> <p>“I don’t have childhood friends or anything like that, and that would be nice...but I did get to move...so, you know, it’s the good and the bad.”</p> <p>“When I was little I only saw the fun and excitement. (Santa as back seater story)</p> <p>“You moved around so often, and you were introduced to so many different people and so many different perspectives...that enabled you, when you got older, to deal with new types of situations and interact with different types of people. You know how to speak to a southerner and a northerner and a Californian because you’ve lived in each of those places and you know the people there.”</p> <p>“I can’t imagine having a regular style upbringing. We probably would have killed each other!”</p>		<p>much.”</p> <p>“My favorite part was being able to say, my dad’s a pilot!”</p> <p>“I wanted to be a pilot, of course! I wanted to be just like my dad! But that changed when I realized how much work it was. I’m not exactly one who enjoys a lot of discipline and a lot of hard work and things like that.”</p>	
--	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--

## APPENDIX G

## EMERGENT THEMES AND PARTICIPANT QUOTES

## Expectations and Goals

- Curt  
 “There was a general expectation that I would do well.”  
 “In sixth grade things changed because my parents were paying for school.”  
 “My mom really counted on me.”
- John  
 “I was always expected to do well in school and in sports.”  
 “I never tried to get the ‘A’...Stay underneath the radar...”  
 “I work to live...I don’t live to work.”  
 “When dad came back, things had to be done a certain way.”
- Thomas  
 “I’m sure my parents thought I could do more...but they never put stress on me.”  
 “I’m just content to do the minimum...I just kind of slide by.”
- Barton  
 “My parents had high expectations for me, and I had high expectations for myself.”

## Adapting to Change

- Curt  
 “I found myself changing to fit in.”  
 “Moving came to be easy – normal...”  
 “You get used to one system and then its gone.”
- John  
 “Moving was always a little difficult at first...but it was no big deal.”  
 “Just let dad believe you were doing it his way.”
- Thomas  
 “Changing houses every few years takes its toll, but with each move, you become more adept to change.”  
 “When Dad was gone, we just set one less spot.”
- Barton  
 “I didn’t have friends for awhile, so school is basically what I did.”  
 “It was like standing out in the middle of the freeway – I just had no idea what they were talking about!”  
 “Dad would come home, and wouldn’t be used to how things were...”

## Participation on Sports

- Curt  
 “Not many of my classmates did play tennis, so that wasn’t something that helped out socially.”
- John  
 “Getting involved with sports right away helped, because then I knew kids when school started... playing soccer enabled me to stand out in the crowd a bit...and get respect...”
- Thomas  
 “When I stopped playing soccer, my grades went down.”
- Barton  
 “You can tell a lot about a person by how he plays football.”

## Pride

- Curt  
 “He did a lot of great things, and I lived with this person.”  
 “He’s become a lot more tolerant of different perspectives.”
- John  
 “I grew up all over.”  
 “Mom has now taken on the Captain role.”  
 “Dad has always been an active supporter...”
- Thomas  
 “Of course I wanted to be a pilot, I wanted to be just like my dad!”  
 “You learn to be more sociable...”  
 “I’ve always been the kid who could sleep through class and still get by.”
- Barton  
 “My dad gave up his dream for his family...”  
 “My dad never really pushed me in any direction.”  
 “The military lifestyle was absolutely great...”

## APPENDIX H

## SAMPLE PORTRAIT OUTLINE: BARTON

- I Expectations and Goals
  - a. New Schools and peers
    - 1. *It takes a lot of preparation and hard work to achieve the desired results*
    - 2. *My parents had high expectations for me, and I have high expectations for myself*
    - 3. *Vincent was a really good baseball player, and I was always trying to catch up with him*
  - b. When Dad deploys
    - 1. *Mom stressed academics more than Dad*
    - 2. *'I have no trouble yanking you off that team!'*
  - c. When Dad returns
    - 1. *Mom expected the same things that Dad did*
  
- II Adapting to Change
  - a. New Schools and peers
    - 1. *I didn't have any friends for a while, so school is basically what I did*
    - 2. *The intellectual level was a step above that of the regular classroom*
  - b. When Dad deploys
    - 1. *Mom was upset and irritable*
    - 2. *I probably had more of the stereotypical outbursts*
  - c. When Dad returns
    - 1. *He wouldn't be used to how things were*
    - 2. *We've been doing this for six months while you've been gone!*
  
- III Participation in Sports
  - a. New Schools and peers
    - 1. *When I began playing football, I did it to meet kids*
    - 2. *The life lessons it has taught me are immeasurable*
  - b. When Dad deploys
    - 1. *Dad wasn't going to be around to play catch with my brother and me*
    - 2. *He wasn't able to do the little things...like go to our baseball games*
  - c. When Dad returns
    - 1. *He'd never tire of throwing the football with me*
    - 2. *He never pushed me*
  
- IV Pride
  - a. New Schools and peers
    - 1. *I am very competitive and willing to do the work necessary to compete at high levels*
    - 2. *The military lifestyle was great for me...no question about it!*
  - b. When Dad deploys
    - 1.
    - 2.
  - c. When Dad returns
    - 1. *Dad gave up his dream for his family*
    - 2. *Dad was doing pretty well...he could have been an admiral*