Eighty-six mother-child dyads (in which the father was Active Duty) completed questionnaires to examine the impact of geographic mobility, family functioning, and maternal wellbeing on military youth’s mental health. Children’s reports of peer relationships, self-esteem, and loneliness were predicted by family cohesion, length of time in current home, and mother-child relationship quality. Children’s aggression and noncompliance were predicted by maternal depression and mother-child relationship quality.

### Key Findings:
- Children who had lived in their current residences for longer periods of time had better peer relationships and less loneliness than those who had lived there for shorter timespans.
- The length of time in the current residence and family relationships predicted children’s fear of negative evaluations from others.
- Maternal depression predicted children’s anxiety, withdrawal, and sadness.
- Child-reported positive mother-child relationships, maternal-reported family cohesiveness, and longer time in current residence predicted children’s’ reports of their self-esteem.
- Length of time in current home was a stronger predictor of child functioning than frequency of family moves during child’s life.

### Implications for Programs:
- Programs could offer welcome events for new families at their installations, helping parents and youth meet other families and learn about community resources.
- Programs could create a buddy system, matching new military youth with mentor youth who could help the child feel welcome and meet new friends.
- Programs could offer supportive classes for mothers managing depression, including offering structures for peer support and other enjoyable socialization opportunities.

### Implications for Policies:
- Policies could recommend that decisions about the frequency of military family moves take into consideration the impact on the family, including children.
- Policies could dedicate funding to orientation programs at military installations, enabling them to provide outreach and support services to new families.

### Avenues for Future Research:
- Future research could examine these questions among younger children to see if results may differ (average child age in this study was 11 years old).
- Additional studies could consider children’s functioning related to geographic moves in different family types (e.g., dual career couples, female Service members, single parent families).
Families were recruited via a letter sent home from the child’s school, school newsletters, or advertisements in the military newspaper or Girl Scout office.

Mothers completed questionnaires assessing family cohesiveness and adaptability, marital satisfaction, maternal depression, and stress. They also completed surveys regarding their children’s behavior, including sadness, anxiety, withdrawal, aggressiveness, and noncompliance.

Children completed questionnaires assessing loneliness, social avoidance and distress, fear of negative evaluation, peer relationships, perceptions of global self-worth, and attitudes toward their mothers.

Correlations and regression analyses were conducted to examine relationships among maternal psychological adjustment, family environment, children’s feelings toward their mothers, rate of family mobility, and children’s psychological functioning.

Participants:
- 86 mother-child dyads (father was Active Duty) participated in the study.
- Average child age: 11.6 years; average mother age: 36.1 years.
- Mother’s ethnicity: 65% White, 11% African American, 5% Pacific Islander.
- Family’s average time in current residence: 2.9 years.

Limitations:
- Data were cross sectional, so causal conclusions cannot be drawn.
- Most of the fathers in these families were career military personnel; the extent to which the experience of other military families may differ is unknown.

Assessing Research that Works

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<th>Quality Rating</th>
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Overall Quality Rating: ☒ ☒ ☐