

AN ANALYSIS OF CONSTRAINTS FACED BY MILITARY VETERANS WHEN  
RECREATING OUTDOORS

by

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An Analysis of Constraints Faced by Military Veterans When Recreating at Outdoor  
Parks

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## **DEDICATION**

This is dedicated to everyone who has supported me on this journey and to those who are choosing a similar path and believe they don't have what it takes. You can do anything you set your mind to with the right people around you and the right amount of effort and determination.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Theory of Planned Behavior.....	TPB
Post-traumatic stress disorder.....	PTSD

## **ABSTRACT**

### **AN ANALYSIS OF CONSTRAINTS FACED BY MILITARY VETERANS WHEN RECREATING AT OUTDOOR PARKS**

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George Mason University, 2019

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This thesis presents a qualitative analysis of the constraints that veterans face when participating in recreation at outdoors. Often there are interpersonal, intrapersonal, and structural constraints that prevent people from participating. The kinds of constraints differ for distinctive groups based on individual needs, experiences, and challenges. Veterans, due to the unique lifestyle they experienced during their enlistment, have specific constraints that are relevant to them. There is a focus on utilizing the Theory of Planned Behavior to explain this phenomenon. The purpose of this research is to explore which unique constraints exist with veterans before and after their transition to civilian life, and analyze how that may impact their intention to participate in outdoor recreation.

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **Background on Military Veteran Population**

#### ***Population Statistics***

According to data from 2016, there are 20.4 million veterans living in America (Bialik, 2017). Of this total population, 91% of them are male and 9% are female. It is predicted that there will be an increase in female veterans by 0.7% annually (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, 2018). In addition, there is evidence to predict that the minority population of veterans will increase from 23.2% in 2017 to 32.8% in 2037 (National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, 2016).

In 2014, it was reported that 3.8 million veterans had been diagnosed with a service related disability (US Census Bureau, 2015). This report estimated a total veteran population of 19.3 million. Therefore, about 19.5% of veterans have had a service related disability. Assuming the percent of veterans with disabilities stayed constant, at a minimum estimation, in 2017 there were close to four million veterans who experienced a service related disability. According to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs' 2016 Annual Benefits Report, the five most prevalent disabilities that veterans seek compensation for are tinnitus (ringing of the ears), hearing loss, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), lumbosacral or cervical strain, and scars. PTSD "is a mental health problem that some people develop after experiencing or witnessing a life-threatening event" (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2017, p. 1).

Regarding specific disabilities being researched among the veteran population that relate to recreation are PTSD, traumatic brain injuries (TBI), depression, and spinal cord injuries (SCI) (Bennet, Piatt, & Puymbroeck, 2017; Hartman & Porter, 2014; Hawkins, Townsend, & Garst, 2016; Johnson et al., 2018; Prout & Porter, 2017). All of these studies showed that recreation experiences improved the physical, mental, social, and emotional skills of participants relative to the symptoms that the program was looking to alleviate or minimize. Although current research puts an emphasis on how recreation can benefit veterans with a disability, recreation provides many benefits to the general veteran population as well. Therefore, it is also important to ensure that all veterans have access to the benefits of recreation and to understand what constraints may be barring them from participation. More information on these benefits will be discussed further in the “Benefits of Recreation” section of the thesis.

### ***Lifestyle and Culture of Military Veterans***

The military offers a unique lifestyle that is specific to the service men and women who belong to this population. They have experiences and cultural norms that apply solely to them, and it is these specific lifestyle characteristics that make the population so exclusive and worthy of study. There are two researchers, Hall and Segal (Hall, 2011; Segal, 1986), who have completed extensive research on this population and have compiled characteristic that encompass the lifestyles of these personnel. It is important to note that these studies are focused on how military life impacts the family of a service member, rather than the service member themselves. However, the information is still relevant, as it provides context and insight into the military lifestyle. It helps

connect the experiences that military members go through with the constraints to recreation they face upon becoming veterans.

### *Hall's Characteristics of Military Culture*

A list of unique facets of the military life was created by Ridenour in 1984 (Ridenour, 1984). In a more recent analysis, Hall (2011) argues that these military life characteristics from over three decades ago are still relevant today. These facets can be found in Table 1 below.

<b>Table 1: Hall's Characteristics of Military Life</b>
Frequent separations and reunions
Regular household relocations
Living life under the umbrella of the "mission must come first" dictum
The need for families to adapt to rigidity
Regimentation and conformity
Early retirement from a career in comparison to civilian counterparts
Rumors of loss during a mission
Detachment from the mainstream of nonmilitary life
The security of a system that exists to meet the families' needs
Work that usually involves travel and adventure
The social effects of rank on the family
Lack of control over pay, promotion, and other benefits
Source: Hall, 2011

### *Segal's Framework of Military Life*

In addition, Segal created a framework of four military lifestyle characteristics that impact members of the military: risk of injury or death to service members, frequent relocations, periodic separations, and foreign residency (Segal, 1986). These four themed experiences make the military lifestyle unique compared to that of civilians.

For the purpose of this research, focus will not be placed on specific characteristics from either study, but rather on broader concepts that encompass aspects of both the studies created by Segal (1986) and Hall (2011). This distinction was made because if every characteristic was analyzed the breath of the study would be too large for a single project. Instead, the concepts will include: authoritarian structure, isolation and alienation, importance of mission, risk of injury or death, frequent relocation, and periodic separation.

### Authoritarian Structure

Military life is controlled by a rigid and authoritarian structure (Hall, 2011). Often, military members will retire and still maintain an authoritarian lifestyle at home. This can sometimes cause issues within the family, as children begin to rebel when they associate with children from traditional family structures that are unlike their own (Hall, 2008). Within the authoritarian family structure, there are clear rules and no room for activities or behaviors that allow for individualization.

### Isolation and Alienation

The isolation and alienation of military life stems from constantly having to relocate during active duty. Transfers can happen as often as every year. The family begins to lose their willingness to make commitments to friends or communities as they anticipate the next move (Hall, 2011). Isolation is also felt in terms of language. People who do not come from a military background often do not understand the idiosyncratic terms, which are used by military families. Having to ask for clarification on these words could cause alienation for the veterans (Hall, 2011).



### Importance of Mission

Military unit cohesion is based on total commitment to the military and a unit's mission (Martin & McClure, 2000). The mission is the purpose of the military and requires military members and their unit working to make the world a better and safer place (Hall, 2008). Their unit becomes an integral part of their life, and they become dependent upon these individuals. This dependency and loyalty to the military can result in family issues as military members begin to put the needs of their "military family" over their home family (Hall, 2011).

### Risk of Service Member Injury or Death

A service member's risk of injury or death is an inherent and unescapable part of the military lifestyle. Although it may seem that this risk is only present during times of war, the risk is also present during "humanitarian and peacekeeping missions, as well as during field-training exercises" (Burrell, Adams, Durand, & Castro, 2006, p. 45). With this risk, comes feelings of fear for any threat to a service member's well-being, safety, and security. This fear will often manifest itself not just emotionally, but also physically as these individuals become "physiologically aroused, have nervous tensions, pursue efforts to escape or withdraw, and seek attempts to gain control" (Burrell et al., 2006, p. 45). There have also been reports of anxiety and depression being caused from this constant threat of injury or death (Adler, Bartone, & Vaitkus, 1995).

### Frequent Relocations

The military requires personnel to relocate as a necessary requirement to achieve their overall mission and objectives. As a result, soldiers and their families (if they have one) are forced to relocate on average every two to three years (Burrell et al., 2006). Often, this causes a disruption in the social life of a soldier by placing a hindrance on their family life, friendships, and other supportive relationships in the community and forcing them to continually seek out and develop new relationships in their new placement location (Copeland & Norell, 2002). This leads to constant adjustments by individuals within the military. There is often not enough time to form a real routine outside of work. Included with these adjustments is the requirement to familiarize themselves with these new places and learn their way around (Segal, 1986).

### Periodic Separations

Sometimes military personnel are assigned to units that travel or are frequently deployed. These orders cause separation between the soldiers and their family, as well as with the community in which they reside. These separations can span from a few days to several months depending on the assignment (Burrell et al., 2006). Constant separations then cause reunions between service members and their loved ones. The “reunion requires readjustments under the best of circumstances and can precipitate family problems” (Segal, 1986, p. 20). These separations have been found to have negative effects on the well-being of the families and the veteran, as well as create a negative impact on marital relations (Burrell et al., 2006).

## ***Conclusion***

Although the two studies from above are analyzing the military lifestyle impact on families rather than the service members, the information is still valuable because the veterans share and are impacted by these experiences, just as their families are. These experiences create tensions and cause disruption within the military member's life. This description of the military lifestyle involving a commitment to the military, frequent relocating, periodic separations from home, and the authoritarian structure of it, all grants insight to what experiences military members may have. These traits allow connections to be made between military lifestyle and the constraints that service members experience when trying to participate in outdoor recreation opportunities. It is hoped that the research will show these unique experiences impact a veteran's willingness to participate in outdoor recreation that is different from the rest of the population and dictates the need for research regarding this group.

## **Problem Statement**

Everyone in society undergoes constraints when trying to participate in outdoor recreation opportunities (Nyaupane, Morais, & Graefe, 2004). Some populations face more constraints than others, and some are specifically unique to certain populations. In the case of military veterans and their unique lifestyle that includes frequent relocations; risks of injury and death; periodic separation from home; and authoritarian structure; particular constraints may relate exclusively to them. Using a qualitative study, this

research will look into what constraints exist for this population and how those constraints influence veteran's intention to recreate outdoors.

## **Hypothesis**

It is difficult to create a hypothesis for this qualitative research project because it is exploratory in nature and there are no true variables. In addition, the reasoning that “qualitative work is held to be inductive rather than hypothesis testing that is deductive” (Pope & Mays, 1995, p. 43). It is important that prior biases are not imposed from the researcher's own knowledge or opinions during the data analysis process. Using a specific hypothesis will not truly allow for the understanding of feelings and thoughts of this sample population, but rather will cloud the analysis with preconceived assumptions. Instead, research questions have been developed to help guide the study and they can be found in Chapter Three of this thesis.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Military Veterans and Recreation**

#### ***Benefits of Recreation***

The benefits and positive outcomes of outdoor recreation, sport, and exercise for veterans are well documented. These benefits can be seen in all aspects of a veteran's life including, but not limited to, their psychological well-being, their social functioning, and their quality of life. There is plenty of research that provides evidence for the benefits that recreation has to offer this population.

There is ample research to support the psychological benefits recreation has for veterans. Benefits of this nature include being more relaxed, having a positive attitude, or being more confident in oneself and one's abilities. In a study assessing the benefits of fly fishing, it was found that participants said they had a more positive outlook on life and had more confidence by being successful (Bennet, Puymbroeck, Piatt, & Rydell, 2014b). Another study that collected and analyzed results from past studies to support the benefits of recreation for veterans found that recreation helps veterans with disabilities to better handle stress, feel more in control of their life, and feel more positive and experience a sense of relaxation (Caddick & Smith, 2014). The same study also provided evidence for recreation reducing the symptoms of PTSD for veterans.

The veteran population has also been found to benefit socially from recreation. Although most of the research involving social well-being has been focused on veterans and their partners, recreational programs have been seen to increase a veteran's ability to

function better as a partner in a relationship, as a family member, and as an everyday community member. This resulted from the opportunity to be distracted, develop meaningful relationships, produce positive emotions, and enhance the perception of their own competence as they focus on learning a new activity or improving an already existing one (Kleiber, Hutchinson, & Williams, 2010). In one study involving a couple's adaptive sports program, it was determined that the experience helped to reduce PTSD symptoms and improve marital satisfaction for both parties (Bennett, Lundberg, Zbriskie, & Eggett, 2014a). A second study found that during a family snow sports program for veterans with disabilities, both the veteran and their significant others saw benefits in social reconnection, being distracted from negative emotions associated with the disability, and increased positive emotions (Bennett, 2013).

Speculative evidence for an enhanced quality of life for veterans can also be identified in recent research on this population. This specific benefit involves an individual's perceptions in life, regarding goals, values, their social structure, life satisfaction, standards, and expectations. There are some studies that search for a correlation between quality of life (QoL) improvements with veterans' participation in nature, but there have not been many studies with significant results. In one study that evaluated the impact of a five-day sports program on veterans with various disabilities, it was found that there were no significant improvements in QoL (Caddick et al., 2014). However, the study showed a promising trend that if regular participation in this program continued, then overall QoL would increase as "mood states and perceived competence in the associated activities are enhanced" (Lundberg, Bennett, & Smith, 2011, p. 117).

Another study involving a U.S. military Paralympic sports camp found similar results. There was not a significant increase in QoL, but an improvement in lifestyle areas like positive changes in the perception of their disability, overall improved motivation, and an increase in self determination that could influence the QoL later in life (Hawkins, Cory, & Crowe, 2011). Once understanding the research on what benefits recreation has for the veteran population, it is then important to explore what recreation activities this research has been utilizing.

### ***Types of Recreation***

#### ***Fly fishing***

There are a few studies and some research that have been done on the positive effects of fly fishing on the military veteran population. Researchers found that “reductions in PTSD symptoms, depression symptoms, anxiety, negative mood states, and increases in leisure satisfaction and sleep quality have been attributed to participation in the fly fishing program” (Bennett et al., 2014b, p. 171). The reduction in PTSD symptoms is created by the attentiveness of the environment and focus of the veteran participants on this new skill. The increased attention mixed with the peacefulness of nature suggests that outdoor recreation creates a state of calm alertness in the participants. It is this state that may help distract veterans from “intrusive thoughts of combat- related trauma, which is a key symptom of PTSD” (Vella et al., 2013, p. 258).

#### ***Surfing***

Surfing is another activity that has been researched on its effects of helping veterans deal with the aftermath of war. Most research involved participants who

experience PTSD, where surfing has been found to have positive impacts on those participants. In one study researchers discovered that surfing allowed men with PTSD to accept and embrace their disability in a masculine way, allowed veterans to experience a deeper connection with other veteran surfers, and “enable(ed) them to push their troubles into the background and experience a feeling of respite from their suffering” (Caddick, 2014, p. 75). Another study stated that “participant reports of PTSD symptom severity were significantly lower after the five week study period with PTSD symptom scores lowering by 21 points” (Rogers, Mallinson, & Peppers, 2014, p. 401).

#### *Horseback riding*

Horseback riding is a therapeutic recreational activity that has seen success with veteran populations that have been diagnosed with various disabilities. One study researched the effects of horseback riding on veterans with PTSD and TBI. The program was six weeks long which showed a statistically significant decrease in PTSD scores after three weeks and clinically significant decreases after six weeks (Johnson et al., 2018). Reasons for these decreases in scores are linked to an increase in human-horse affiliation reducing anxiety, an increase in self-efficacy and confidence as the veterans learn a new skill set, and an increase in relaxation from quiet interaction with a horse. Results for coping, self-efficacy and emotional regulation were not significant, but found to be moving in a positive direction. The lack of significance was attributed to a diminishing sample size and the possibility that better results would have been realized if the length of the program was longer. A second study of participants who had a spinal cord injury resulted mainly in physical outcomes including an increase in balance and a growth in



muscle strength (Asselin, Penning, Ramanujam, & Neri, 2012). However, there is also evidence to support emotional growth from learning a skill. The veterans reported emotional benefits from experiencing positive social interactions with volunteers and being in the outdoors interacting and learning about the horse.

### *Kayaking*

A recreational opportunity for veterans lacking research is kayaking, however, it is beginning to be advertised more as a summer recreation opportunity for this population. A Milwaukee Veterans Administration Medical Center has begun to utilize this activity with veterans who have a SCI because of their upper body strength rather than their lower body. It allows for veterans to “improve their arm strength, core, and balance” (Mulhollon & Casey, 2016, p. 22). It is also beneficial in allowing veterans to escape their home and city life. There was an additional study completed that researched the impacts of white water kayaking on a 60 year old male veteran who had depression. The study resulted in the participants experiencing increased self-awareness and a perception of independence when individually completing tasks that were required prior to kayaking, such as: putting on a floatation device, putting on a kayak skirt, and properly holding a paddle (Hartman et al., 2017).

### *Hiking*

Hiking has also been seen to have many benefits for participants. However, there is little research regarding veterans as participants. In one study, veterans who completed

at least half of the Appalachian Trail were interviewed for a program called Warrior Hike. The researchers uncovered several themes as a result of these veterans hiking. Veterans reported an increase in social connection as they bonded with fellow hikers in their group and others on the trail, a renewed sense of motivation to tackle the things needed to improve and change their life, and a better understanding of themselves as they had time to reflect and process their current life changes upon returning from combat (Dietrich, Joye, & Garcia, 2015).

### ***Relevancy***

Based on the above research and data, it is clear that participating in recreation holds numerous benefits for veterans. These benefits include helping veterans function better within their family, reduce their stress and anxiety, increase their overall quality of life, and much more. Due to the fact that recreation has such a positive impact on this population it is imperative that there be further study on what constraints may be denying veterans from accessing or participating in these recreational activities and programs.

## **Constraints to Recreation**

### ***General Constraints to Recreation***

A constraint to leisure is a barrier or obstacle that is keeping a person from being willing or able to participate in a recreational or leisure activity. Constraints may not always necessarily prevent participation in leisure, but they may instead influence the level of involvement (Zanon, Doucouliagos, Hall, & Lockstone-Binney, 2013). These general constraints are not exclusive to any one demographic or subject group, but can affect all people. Knowing these general constraints allows for a better understanding of

why a person may choose not to pursue active participation in an activity. This list of general constraints may then be employed as a base guide to understand more subject group specific constraints that are only inclusive of personnel who belong to or identify with that group.

These constraints can sometimes be shared among activities, but their importance to participants varies depending on the activity with which they associate (Nyaupane, Morais, & Graefe, 2004). For example, researchers compared rafting, canoeing, and horseback riding and found that rafting elicited more intrapersonal constraints than the other two activities (Nyaupane et al., 2004): “Specifically, rafting was perceived as being significantly more physically demanding, risky, and costly” (Nyaupane et al., 2004, p. 551). Horseback riding, in comparison, has factors such as not liking horses, not being able to ride them, and not having information about providers of this type of activity as being the most important constraints (Nyaupane et al., 2004). From this information, it can be concluded that exploring constraints that may exist for all leisure or recreation activities that can be done would be unfeasible and impractical. As a result, for the purpose of this study, the focus of these leisure constraints will be on outdoor recreation.

### *Crawford and Godbey's 3-Dimensional Hierarchical Model of Constraints*

In 1987, Crawford and Godbey proposed a framework to better understand leisure constraints (Crawford & Godbey, 1987). This framework can be explained with a three-dimensional hierarchical model as seen in Figure 1 below.

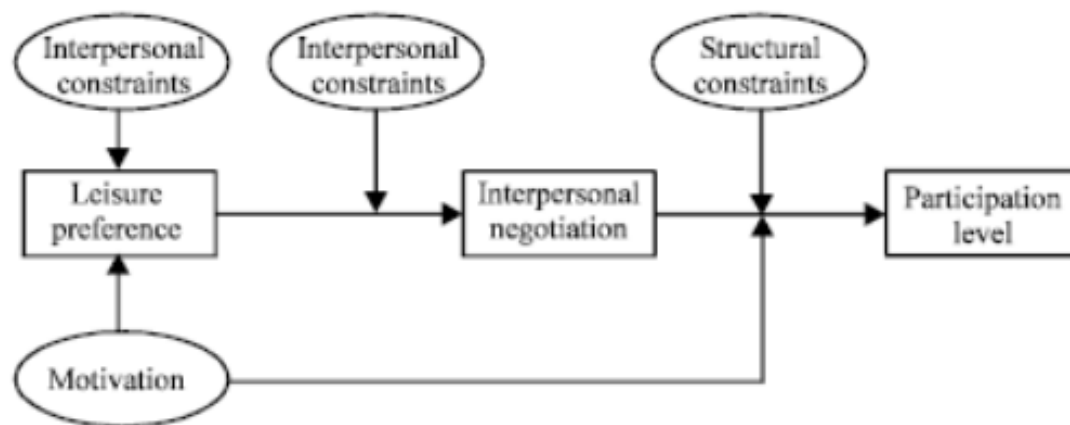


Fig. 1: The hierarchical model of leisure constraints (Jackson, Crawford, & Godbey, 1995)

The model proposes that constraints are categorized into three levels; intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural (Nyaupane et al., 2004, p. 543). These three categories of constraints are encountered in a hierarchical fashion beginning with intrapersonal and ending with structural. Since its inception, the framework has become the primary guiding theoretical framework for many studies (Godbey, Crawford, & Shen, 2010, p. 113). However the hierarchical aspect of this leisure model has faced some disputes from other researchers saying that it is culturally bound (Chick & Dong, 2005);

that the concept of leisure constraint is too general (Mannell & Louck-Atkinson, 2005); that the starting point may not be intrapersonal constraints (Godbey et al., 2010, p. 124); or that it can only be applied to leisure behavior (Godbey et al., 2010, p. 124). Although there appears to be evidence supporting this hierarchical model, it is beyond the scope of this study to support or disprove this framework. As a result, the focus of this framework will be on the three categories rather than the hierarchical approach.

A study, using a meta-analysis approach, utilized the categories in order to determine the key constraints to park visitation based on various socio-demographic factors. The research integrated the findings of 22 North American studies with 541 estimates of park use constraints conducted over a 30-year period (Zanon, Doucouliagos, Hall, & Lockstone-Binney, 2013). This analysis will serve as a resource for identifying common and general constraints of leisure that exist across all races, ages, genders, education, and income levels.

### *Intrapersonal Constraints*

Intrapersonal constraints include an individual's psychological state and other characteristics that may impact a person's leisure preferences. These include things such as "stress, depression, anxiety, religiosity, kin, and non-kin reference group attitudes, prior socialization into specific activities, perceived self-skill, and subjective evaluation of appropriateness and availability of various leisure activities" (Nyaupane et al., 2004, p. 543). In the context of this framework, intrapersonal constraints are viewed as being the most powerful and having the greatest impact on a person's decision to participate in an activity or not.

Although the list of intrapersonal constraints is all-encompassing, not all people experience each and every one of these. Some traits are exclusive to certain groups or populations, but there are general intrapersonal constraints that are experienced by a majority of people. The intrapersonal constraints that were applied in the meta-analysis study were “lack of interest, poor health, and fear” (Zanon et al., 2013, p. 478). These three constraints were chosen as they were commonly examined in parks and recreation literature. Lack of interest, specifically, can be seen generally amongst most nonuser groups (Schroeder & Wiens, 1986).

#### *Interpersonal Constraints*

Interpersonal constraints exist when an activity requires at least one partner (Nyaupane et al., 2004). However, this constraint may also exist with activities that do not require a partner, but the person participating prefers that they have someone else to do the activity with them. As a result, an interpersonal constraint may also include “the ability for someone to find a partner or friend(s) with whom to pursue the desired leisure activity” (Hawkins, Peng, Hsieh, & Eklund, 1999, p. 180). These constraints are focused around the want or need for social interaction or to establish a support structure when participating in activities. In regards to park visitation, the constraint example used in the meta-analysis article was “lack of a partner to visit with” (Zanon et al., 2013, p. 478).

#### *Structural Constraints*

Structural constraints “involve resources and reasons that intervene between leisure preferences and activity participation” (Hawkins et al., 1999, p. 180). These constraints are most often seen when a person has already formed a desire to participate

in, or increase their participation in an activity. These constraints can range from not having the knowledge that a facility or site exists to not having a facility at all to use.

When looking at the meta-analysis and park visitation specifically, the general structural constraints that people experience are “cost or a lack of finances, a lack of facilities, a lack of knowledge and information regarding facilities or activities, a lack of transportation, a lack of time to participate, and a lack of proximity to a park” (Zanon et al., 2014, p. 478). Another constraint that is often experienced, but was not utilized by the meta-analysis study, was inclement weather. It is important to note that all of these constraints can relate to either a facility or site, as well as a specific activity. Literature suggests that the most salient constraining factor affecting park visitation is a lack of time (Zanon et al., 2014).

#### *Negotiation of Constraints*

Although the negotiation of leisure constraints is not the focal point of this thesis, it is still important to mention to provide a full understanding of the leisure constraints model. Negotiation refers to how leisure constraints are overcome or navigated by those who experience them (Jackson, Crawford, & Godbey, 1993). In most cases, negotiation research focuses on identifying the strategies and resources used by individuals to combat constraints. The greater negotiation efforts are for an individual, the higher the chances that the constraint they are facing will be overcome and deemed irrelevant. Participation is not dependent on the complete absence of any constraints, but on an individual's negotiation through them (White, 2008).

### ***Veteran specific Constraints to Recreation***

Access to recreation is supposed to be equal for everyone in society. However, this is rarely the case, as everyone has constraints and barriers to their participation in recreation. In some cases, there are unique population-specific constraints that may apply only to certain groups of people because of their lifestyle and culture. Veterans are unique and have experiences that are specific to them (Hall, 2011, p. 4). There is not a large amount of research related to veteran specific constraints, but there are some studies that have been conducted as to why veterans will not or cannot participate in recreational activities.

In one study, researchers conducted interviews with veterans and found that there were four common military-related themes that served as barriers to their recreation. These themes are “military life created impermanence, military life imposes structure, deployment influences who I am, and deployment and discharge produce a cycle of adjustment” (Taff, Dattilo, Davis, & Moeller, 2016, p. 274).

Impermanence refers to the constant relocation of military members. Most of their time in active duty involves traveling from one place to another. They are never in one place long enough to engage in a recreational activity long-term. This is congruent with a theme of the military lifestyle requiring frequent relocation, as discussed earlier (Segal, 1986).

The structure of military life refers to the schedule that the military requires, and which dictates the amount of free time. As they move up in rank, they gain responsibility and have less free time to pursue leisure. This also is in line with military life being very



authoritative (Segal, 1986). Since the military is dictating how time is spent during the day, veterans lack the freedom determine how they spend their own leisure time, which is limited (Hall, 2011).

The theme “military influences who I am” refers to how the military member has changed over the course of their service. The main premise is feeling uneasy in places where they should feel comfortable. Since combat taught them to be alert at all times, veterans often feel anxious when participating in recreation and trying to relax. This effect is even stronger with those diagnosed with PTSD. A connection can be made between this theme and the description of military life as having a risk of injury and death (Burrell et al., 2006).

The last theme of constant adjustment refers to veterans never being able to discover who they are as recreationalists. Since these people are constantly on the move, they never get to explore different kinds of recreation. They have no idea what they would enjoy doing or are interested in, and so they are unwilling to try new activities. This can be caused by their constant relocation due to deployments (Segal, 1986).

Another constraint facing veterans discovered by Mittal (2013), specifically for those with PTSD, is the concept of stigmas and stereotypes. Common stereotypes of treatment-seeking veterans who have PTSD are “crazy” or “dangerous/violent” (Mittal et al., 2013, p. 89). There is also a common belief by society that combat veterans are responsible for their own PTSD, as if they were the ones who choose to go into combat and are to blame. These stereotypes make it harder for veterans to reintegrate into society and discourages them from pursuing recreation as an activity or as a treatment (Greene-

Shortridge, Britt, & Castro, 2007; Sharp et al., 2015; Zinzow, Britt, McFadden, Burnette, & Gillispie, 2012). Another part of this stigma is relative to veterans personally. This is a stigma they have about themselves and a feeling that they need to be strong and self-sufficient. They feel the need to handle their issues themselves rather than seeking out treatment (Forsyth, 2017).

When doing research into the Outward Bound program involving Canadian veterans, it was found that another barrier to participation was the struggle of transitioning into civilian life. During their time in the military, veterans were provided with structure, rank, power, responsibility, and a strong sense of loyalty and comradery to one another. Upon retirement, veterans feel a “sense of isolation and aloneness, often feeling misunderstood or simply out of place with the civilian world” (Black & Papile, 2010, p. 384). This feeling has the potential to cause veterans to avoid recreation opportunities because of the interpersonal constraints that exist.

It is important to note that veterans also are subject to the same constraints as non-military personnel. Just like most of society, veterans have reported constraints to recreation such as “a lack of time and associated fatigue, spouses having differing interests, family/spouse obligations, limited finances, and physical injuries” (Taff et al., 2016, p. 274). However, the focus of this research is on constraints specific to the veteran population because they are unique and under researched. Bennett et al. (2014a) have called for further research within this population beyond those who have a disability. It is these constraints specific to veterans that make accessing and participating in recreation and leisure opportunities more difficult than for non-military personnel. Being able to

identify and plan around these additional barriers is what makes this research significant and imperative.

### **Theory of Planned Behavior**

The Theory of Planned Behavior, or TPB, was first utilized in research by Icek Ajzen in 1985. The main goal of the theory was an attempt at predicting and explaining human behavior. This included factors like behavioral dispositions, such as social attitudes and personality traits (Ajzen, 1991). The theory is an extension of the Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), which argues salient beliefs affect intentions and subsequent behaviors through either attitudes or subjective norms. TPB helps address the theory's limitation in dealing with incomplete control over choices that influence behaviors.

Similar to Theory of Reasoned Action, TPB shares a central factor of an individual's intention to perform a specific behavior. Intention is the focal point of this theory and is assumed "to capture the motivational factors that influence a behavior. They are indications of how hard people are willing to try, of how much of an effort they are planning to exert, in order to perform the behavior" (Ajzen, 1991, p. 181). The stronger the intention, the more likely that a behavior will be performed. However, this theory only works if the participant has volitional control over the behavior that is being studied (Ajzen, 1991). From this, it can be assumed that motivation and the ability to interact on those intentions "would be expected to influence performance to the extent that the person has behavioral control, and performance should increase with behavioral control to the extent that the person is motivated to try" (Ajzen, 1991, p. 183).

There are three factors that affect intention and which predict behavior. These three factors are attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (reference Figure 2 below). All three of these factors have been found to predict behavioral intentions accurately (Ajzen, 1991). They are guided by “three kinds of considerations: beliefs about the likely consequences or other attributes of the behavior (behavioral beliefs), beliefs about the normative expectations of other people (normative beliefs), and beliefs about the presence of factors that may further or hinder performance of the behavior (control beliefs)” (Ajzen, 2002, p. 665). Behavioral beliefs are formed by associating a behavior with certain attributes, such as cost or physical effort. These attributes are already valued positively or negatively in a person’s mind and automatically affect the attitude a person has towards that behavior. Normative beliefs are those that are concerned with the likelihood that important individuals or groups approve or disapprove of the behavior. These beliefs result in perceived social pressure which refers to a subjective norm. Lastly, control beliefs are those that emerge when there is the presence or absence of requisite abilities, resources, or equipment to perform the behavior. This belief gives rise to a perception of the difficulty attached to performing a behavior known as perceived behavioral control. “In combination, attitude toward the behavior, subjective norm, and perception of behavioral control lead to the formation of a behavioral intention” (Ajzen, 2002, p. 665).

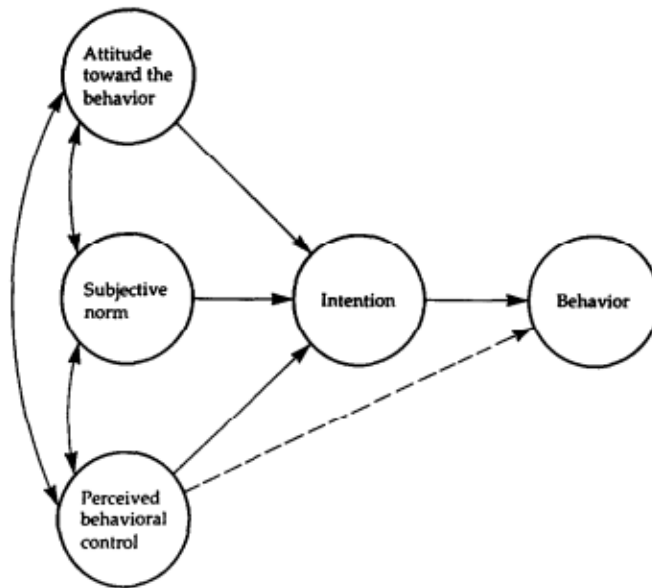


Fig. 2: The three factors of TPB (Ajzen, 1991, p. 182)

When these intentions are then combined with perceived behavioral control, it has the ability to account for a considerable proportion of variance that may exist in a behavior, making the results of a study more consistent (Ajzen, 1991). Ultimately, the application of this theory to a particular area of interest, like regional park use, can provide an abundance of information that is useful in understanding a participant's behaviors. Researchers can then create interventions that may be implemented to help effectively change the specific behavior that is being studied.

### ***Use of TPB***

TPB has been applied to several capacities over the years. There is evidence of its use in specific behaviors like; multi-day vitamin use (Sheeran & Sheina, 1999), regular

physical exercise (Courneya, Bobick, & Schinke, 1999), cannabis use (Armitage, Armitage, Conner, Loach, & Willetts, 1999), attending a health check (Sheeran, Conner, & Norman, 2001), voting (Netemeyer & Burton, 1990), condom use (Godin & Kok, 1996), and alcohol consumption (Schlegel, D'Avernas, Zanna, DeCourville, & Manske, 1992). These examples are dated in terms of current research, and there seems to be a trend that is shifting the theory from the health field to the realms of business, entrepreneurship, and sustainability as shown by the more recent research below.

There are recent studies that better describe the behaviors of consumers, and the businesses from where they are consuming their goods and services (Lortie & Castogiovanni, 2015). Evidence for this can be seen from studies used to predict entrepreneurial intentions (Kautonen, Gelderen, & Fink, 2013), explore environmental behavioral intentions in the workplace (Greaves, Zibarras, & Stride, 2013), predict consumers' intention to visit green hotels (Chen & Tung, 2014), select eco-friendly restaurants (Kim, Njite, & Hancer, 2013), and segment food festival visitors (Horng, Su, & So, 2013). This same trend is seen in studies of consumer behavior in terms of environmental consciousness. Included is research on intentions of consumers to visit eco-friendly businesses and restaurants, consumer recycling behavior (Park & Ha, 2014), consumers' intention to adopt hybrid electric vehicles (Wang, Fan, Zhao, Yang, & Fu, 2014), and organic food consumption (Al-Swidi, Huque, Hafeez, & Shariff, 2014). Although this theory seems to be utilized more in the two related fields above, it is not exclusive to these realms. The theory is also being employed to continue the study of health behaviors, the behaviors of students in school, behaviors of drivers on the road,

and organ donation behavior. Unfortunately, there seems to be less research conducted in the parks and recreation field, which is a possible future direction for this theory.

### **Theory of Planned Behavior in Recreation**

In the past five years, there seems to be a very limited amount of research involving TPB and application to parks and recreation. Most of the current research is focused on three recreational areas. These areas are physical activity and exercise, influencing park visitor behaviors, and a visitor's willingness to pay.

#### ***Physical Activity and Exercise***

In terms of physical activity and exercise, there seems to be several studies that apply TPB in their research. One example is research predicting physical activity in overweight/obese populations (Plotnikoff, Lubans, Costigan, & McCargar, 2013). The purpose of the study was to test if TPB could be utilized as a tool to help predict physical activity. It was found that the theory was able to “account for 66% and 56% of the variance in intention and 38% and 56% of the variance in physical activity behavior in the overweight and obese subsamples, respectively” (Plotnikoff et al., 2013, p. 421). The results showed support for the use of TPB in explaining physical activity behavior within this sample of obese and overweight children.

This study provides good evidence for applying TPB in future physical activity research. However, even though physical activity is a form of recreation, it is only a piece of the entirety of recreation and what it entails. More research utilizing TPB within outdoor recreation specifically is necessary to better understand behavioral intentions related to outdoor recreation use.

### ***Influencing Park Visitor Behavior***

In the past ten years, there has been an increase in TPB research to explain the behaviors of park visitors. Generally, these behaviors include environmentally conscious and sustainability behaviors as a means of influencing park visitors to be more aware of their actions and take preventative measures to reduce their ecological impact on the parks they are visiting (Ramkissoon, Weiler, & Smith, 2012, p. 259).

In one study, researchers applied this theory to implement interventions to solve the problem of bird feeding at picnic areas and dog walkers not using a leash within parks (Hughes, Ham, & Brown, 2009). It was found that using the TPB approach can enable managers to identify and measure beliefs regarding a specific behavior (Hughes et al., 2009). By using this information, managers were then able to formulate possible solutions to their problem. Targeted messaging was employed in an attempt to influence the behaviors of the visitors regarding their dogs and their bird feeding habits. The research found that the information provided by the theory was successful in helping managers find a viable solution, as more than “90% of first-time visitors did not feed the birds and there was a 19% increase in walkers keeping their dogs on leashes” (Hughes et al., 2009, p. 51).

Another study was completed at the Pools of Ohe`o in Hawaii’s Haleakalā National Park. The researchers hoped to use the results of this theory to improve the design of visitor education and information messages in order to decrease the number of visitors exploring the pools (Reigner & Lawson, 2009). The researchers wanted to see whether this kind of indirect management could meet the objectives of the National Park



Service in regards to visitor use of the pools, or if more direct management strategies would be necessary. The study found that TPB was an effective model for understanding visitor behavior and “for evaluating the efficacy of persuasive messages designed to discourage visitors from exploring the pools” (Reigner et al., 2009, p. 37).

### ***Willingness to Pay***

Application of the TPB was utilized in the field of parks and recreation with regards to a visitor’s willingness to pay. “Willingness to pay represents the amount of money/income that has to be given up by the consumer to attain an increased level of utility” (Venkatachalam, 2004, p. 91). This willingness to pay can involve entrance fees into a facility, paying to participate in a program or activity, or paying to have a facility built or maintained. However, the focus of most of these studies are on the willingness to pay for conservation efforts of a park facility.

López-Mosquera, García, and Barrena (2014) employed TPB to determine a group of 190 visitors’ willingness to pay for the conservation of Taconera Park in Spain. In this study, the theory was enhanced with additional variables, specifically the case of moral norms, which the authors describe as moral fundamental element in deciding whether citizens will be willing to behave in a pro-environmental way. It was found that the TPB model “offered a useful and effective framework to analyze the inter-relationships that exist between attitudes, subjective norms, moral norms, and perceived behavioral control, as well as helping to identify how these psycho-social determinants motivate the intention to pay for the conservation of an urban park” (López-Mosquera et

al., 2014, p. 96). The theory resulted in a finding of 12.67 euros as the median amount that visitors to this park were willing to pay for conservation.

In another study, researchers wanted to examine if TPB had the potential to explain willingness to pay for entrance into Zurich's city forests in Switzerland. The research focused on analyzing the visitor's attitudes towards restriction of free access to these forests, as well as attitudes towards financing the recreational use of these forests (Bernath & Roschewitz, 2008). The researchers concluded that the potential for TPB to explain a visitor's willingness to pay was dependent upon the focus of the analysis. For example, the theory successfully analyzed attitudes towards paying an entrance fee to the forest, but not attitudes towards the goods to be valued. This is because when exploring the valuation of forest recreation, "it is difficult to observe variability in the attitudes towards the good to be valued, because respondents generally hold positive attitudes towards urban forests" (Bernath & Roschewitz, 2008, p. 165). As a result, similar to López-Mosquera et al. (2014), it appears that TPB needs further extensions and additions, like past behaviors or knowledge of the resource to be valued, in order to accurately explain and analyze a visitor's willingness to pay.

### ***Relevancy***

Although there is little research on TPB and its application to the recreation field, there seems to be evidence to support that this is a possible future direction for the theory, because of its accuracy to predict someone's intention to behave regarding a specific activity. The theory has been effectively used to predict a person's behavior when they are exercising, visiting a park, and a person's willingness to pay for a park. It begs the

question, why this same theory cannot be utilized to predict a person's behavior when it comes to their intentions of participating in recreation at outdoor settings? That is the purpose of this study, and the lack of research using TPB in this field shows that there is a need to explore its relevance and potential applications.

### **Theory of Planned Behavior and Veterans**

TPB has been used to focus on veterans' predictive behavior of certain health care options and treatments (Britt et al., 2011; Stecker, Fortney, Hamilton, & Ajzen, 2007; Stecker, Fortney, Hamilton, Sherbourne, & Ajzen, 2010). The research is not necessarily exclusive to veterans who served during a specific time frame or to veterans who have a specific disability. Thus, TPB research has been employed to veterans with a wide array of characteristics.

Some of the studies applying this theory have included research on veterans seeking physical and mental treatment after retirement (Britt et al., 2011; Stecker et al., 2007; Stecker et al., 2010). Many of the results of these studies find that stereotypes and stigmas discourage veterans from seeking health treatment. This is important because similar stigmas have been seen as a constraint to recreation by this population (Mittal et al., 2013). Besides this pool of research, there is not much, if any, research focusing on the use of parks for recreation by veterans that utilizes TPB.

Taff et al. (2016) conducted a study that involved an interview of 10 combat veterans of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. The interviews were coded and organized into themes of barriers and constraints for the participants in pursuing recreational activities, as well as what methods facilitators applied to help them pursue

these recreational behaviors. “Twenty-five themes emerged from the interviews, 10 of which were unique to the combat veterans” (Taff et al., 2016, p. 265). These 10 unique themes were organized into categories of constraints, facilitators (what helps people experience leisure), and outcomes (negative and positive results associated with the leisure). All 25 themes can be seen below in Figure 3. Those unique to combat veterans are in bold.

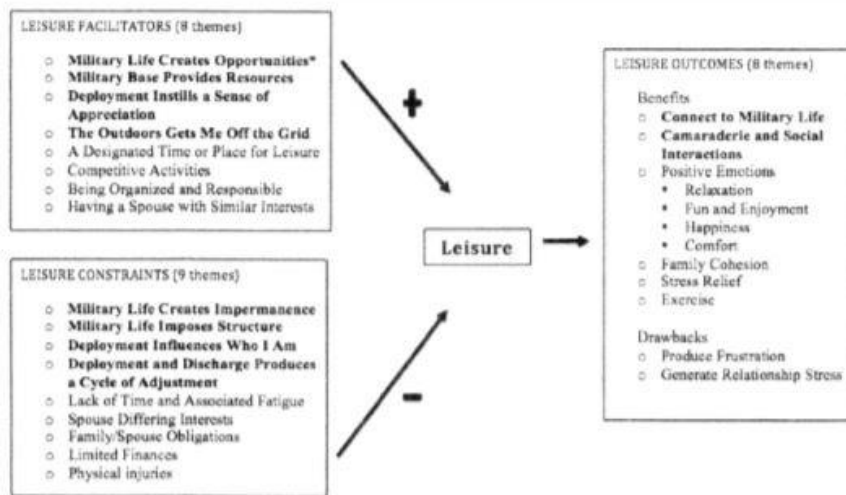


Fig. 3: Leisure related themes (Taff et al., 2016, p. 272)

This research is important because it provides evidence that there is a need for more research on veterans within recreation because of their unique constraints. Ultimately, the researchers found “the theory of planned behavior to be useful in

interpreting results and exploring strategies to improve the well-being of combat veterans” (Taff et al., 2016, p. 265).

From these studies, it can be determined that there is evidence that TPB can be applied with veteran populations. There is evidence to support its use in predicting the behavior of veterans seeking treatment and could be adapted to inform researchers about veterans’ recreational choices. There is also evidence that the theory is helpful in understanding the constraints veterans face in recreational leisure, and how facilitators can help this population achieve productive outcomes. Considering the benefits derived from outdoor recreational activity, this same kind of research can be achieved with veterans regarding their behavior as it relates to outdoor recreational pursuits.

## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Questions**

1. Which outdoor activities do veterans frequently participate in or not participate in and why?
2. What kinds of feelings or emotions do veterans have towards outdoor recreation?
3. How does the aspect of socialization influence their choice to participate in a recreation activity?
4. What kinds of structural constraints may or may not exist that keep veterans from visiting an outdoor settings and recreating there?
5. How does a veteran's military lifestyle impact their intention of participating in recreation outdoors?

### **Research Design**

There is little research on veterans and the constraints they face when participating in outdoor recreation. A qualitative interview study design allowed for the researcher to obtain a better understanding of the world through the eyes of these veteran participants in regard to this topic (Matthews & Kostelis, 2011). A qualitative design allows for the participants to express their feelings and articulate their experiences in more depth. A quantitative study would not be able to offer these same results as the study would be more focused on a "yes" or "no" answers rather than "how" or "why." As a result, a quantitative design would not be able to explain deeper underlying meanings and explanations, account for how the social reality is shaped and maintained, or how

people interpret their actions (Rahman, 2017). Collecting qualitative data will serve as new knowledge regarding the constraints that veterans of diverse backgrounds experience, which influence their intentions of recreating outdoors.

This project employed a qualitative, in-depth interview design. Qualitative research involves “seeking to understand, explain, and analyze in depth a particular phenomenon or event” (Matthews & Kostelis, 2011, p. 109). A qualitative design was necessary for this thesis because the researcher has a vested interest in understanding the experiences of these veterans. In addition, quantitative analysis would have been difficult as there is no previously explored data around this population and topic, and therefore there is not enough information to know what variables would be pertinent for that research. This is attributed to the fact that veterans are under-researched in the park and recreation field (Bennett, 2014a), and when research has been completed, it has focused on a homogenous population (Taff et al., 2016).

Additionally, Taff et al. in 2016 utilized a sample of “White-Non-Hispanic” men from three military branches (Army, Marines, Air Force) of the five (Coast Guard, Navy, Army, Marines, and Air Force). Taff et al. (2016) acknowledges that “future research should attempt to solicit information from a more diverse sample by implementing purposeful strategies that incorporate recruitment in regions that have greater diversity” (p. 277). Therefore, this research purposefully included participants from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

### ***Question Design***

The Theory of Planned Behavior was implemented to inform the interview questions created for this study. The Theory of Planned Behavior states that the intention of a person to behave in a certain way - in this case participating in outdoor recreation - is dictated by their attitude toward a behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). Therefore, the interview questions were designed to allow insight into these three factors as a means to understand a participant's intent on performing outdoor recreational behaviors. In addition, the interview helped identify any constraints that the interviewee may or may not be facing when intending to recreate outdoors. As a result, the questions were structured in a way that allowed for participants to elaborate on their perceptions and feelings of past and current leisure, social-normative perceptions of their behavior, and the amount of perceived control that a participant has over this behavior (Taff et al., 2016). Follow-up questions were asked regarding how these three factors related to their recreation perceptions. There was also one follow-up question regarding their future intent to recreate outdoors. This question provided information to see if there was a connection among the responses about the three factors of TPB. See the Appendix for the preliminary interview schedule. The interview guide and survey instrument were submitted for review to and approved by the George Mason University Institutional Review Board (ack).

### ***Sampling procedures***

Due to the nature of the targeted population and a lack of an appropriate sampling framework, nonrandom sampling methods were required for this study. The two types of



nonrandom sampling applied were convenience sampling and snowball sampling.

Convenience sampling involved choosing “participants who are readily available and accessible to participate in the research study” (Matthews & Kostelis, 2011, p. 166).

Since diversity in the sample was being targeted, the overall possible participant sample pool was smaller than if the focus was on any individual.

Snowball sampling engaged an initial participant helping the researcher recruit more participants for the study (Sadler, Lee, Seung-Hwan, & Fullerton, 2010). This sampling technique is often used for difficult-to-reach populations, such as minorities. In addition, this sampling method helped to “shorten the time and diminish the cost required to assemble a participant group that would be representative of the specific target group” (Sadler et al., 2010, p. 370). As a result, the research tried to recruit participants who belonged to diverse races and military branches.

The data-gathering approach applied was a semi-structured interview. A semi-structured interview allows for the researcher to ask predetermined questions as a guide, but also accounts for some flexibility within those predetermined questions (Matthews & Kostelis, 2011). A semi-structured interview was ideal for this under-researched population because it allowed the interviewees the freedom to express thoughts, feelings, and perspectives on their own terms (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). The semi-structured interviews for this study were conducted either over the phone or face to face. All interviews were recorded.

## *Analysis*

Once the interviews were completed, all identifying information was removed before the transcription process to ensure anonymity. Once the interviews were fully transcribed, the participants received a copy of the interview to make edits, approve the transcribed interview and ensure the accuracy of the data. The data was analyzed using a thematic analysis process that was consistent with the six steps created by Braun and Clarke in 2006 (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis was chosen because it is flexible in its ability to answer a variety of research questions (Clarke & Braun, 2013). It also allowed for an analysis of experiences relating to a specific phenomenon, focusing on a phenomenological epistemology, which helped with understanding the reality of someone's everyday life (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis ensured that primacy is given to the responses of the participants, and that the theory came secondary to that understanding through the data thematic process.

This method of coding and analysis is broken into six steps, as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). The six steps are not a linear model, rather a recursive process where the researcher may repeat and revisit certain steps numerous times as needed to allow for the discovery and analysis of new themes. The six steps to this method of analysis can be seen below in Table 2 as presented by Braun and Clarke (2006).

<b>Table 2: The Six Phases of Thematic Analysis</b>
<p>1) Familiarization with the data: is common to all forms of qualitative analysis – the researcher must immerse themselves in, and become intimately familiar with, their data; reading and re-reading the data (and listening to audio-recorded data at least once, if relevant) and noting any initial analytic observations.</p>
<p>2) Coding: Also a common element of many approaches to qualitative analysis (see Braun &amp; Clarke, 2012a, for thorough comparison), this involves generating pithy labels for important features of the data of relevance to the (broad) research question guiding the analysis. Coding is not simply a method of data reduction, it is also an analytic process, so codes capture both a semantic and conceptual reading of the data. The researcher codes every data item and ends this phase by collating all their codes and relevant data extracts.</p>
<p>3) Searching for themes: A theme is a coherent and meaningful pattern in the data relevant to the research question. If codes are the bricks and tiles in a brick and tile house, then themes are the walls and roof panels. Searching for themes is a bit like coding your codes to identify similarity in the data. This ‘searching’ is an active process; themes are not hidden in the data waiting to be discovered by the intrepid researcher, rather the researcher constructs themes. The researcher ends this phase by collating all the coded data relevant to each theme.</p>
<p>4) Reviewing themes: Involves checking that the themes ‘work’ in relation to both the coded extracts and the full data-set. The researcher should reflect on whether the</p>

<p>themes tell a convincing and compelling story about the data, and begin to define the nature of each individual theme, and the relationship between the themes. It may be necessary to collapse two themes together or to split a theme into two or more themes, or to discard the candidate themes altogether and begin again the process of theme development.</p>
<p>5) Defining and naming themes: Requires the researcher to conduct and write a detailed analysis of each theme (the researcher should ask ‘what story does this theme tell?’ and ‘how does this theme fit into the overall story about the data?’), identifying the ‘essence’ of each theme and constructing a concise, punchy and informative name for each theme.</p>
<p>6) Writing up: Writing is an integral element of the analytic process in TA (and most qualitative research). Writing-up involves weaving together the analytic narrative and (vivid) data extracts to tell the reader a coherent and persuasive story about the data, and contextualising it in relation to existing literature.</p>
<p>Source: (Braun &amp; Clarke, 2006)</p>

The thematic process was completed over a three-week period to ensure there was time to revisit certain steps and code for themes, as well as sub-themes or topics that may have existed within the data. The coding was completed using the NVivo 12 software.

## Participants

Seven veterans (ages 31-45,  $M = 38$ ) consented to participate in this research project. Six of the seven participants identify within a minority race: Black ( $n = 4$ ), Filipino ( $n = 1$ ), or Hispanic ( $n = 1$ ) and one identifies as female. In addition, all of the participants completed some level of college and have a household income greater than \$100,000 ( $m = \$132,000$ ). Six of the seven participants are married with five of them having one or more children. However, all participants reported having an additional partner or family member living with them. For specific personal demographic data relating to the participants of this study, see Table 3.

**Table 3: Participant Demographics**

<i>ID#</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Race</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Household Income</i>	<i>Family Dynamic</i>
<i>1</i>	34	Male	White Non-Hispanic	Master's Degree	\$200,000+	Wife, Son, and Dog
<i>2</i>	43	Female	Black	Master's Degree	\$100,000+	One Daughter
<i>3</i>	31	Male	Black	Bachelor's Degree	\$100,000+	Wife, 2 Sons, and Dog
<i>4</i>	36	Male	Hispanic	Some College	\$100,000+	Wife, Daughter, Son, and Dog
<i>5</i>	44	Male	Black	Master's Degree	\$170,000	Wife
<i>6</i>	45	Male	Black	Bachelor's	\$130,000	Wife, Son, and Daughter

7	32	Male	Filipino & White	Associate's	\$125,000	Wife, Son, Daughter, and Dog
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Table 4 describes the participants' military background. The participants served across three military branches; Air Force (n = 3), Marine Corps (n = 3), and Army (n = 1). The active military service of these individuals ranged from three to 22 years. The deployments ranged from six months to 14 months, with two participants not being deployed at all during their enlistment. Lastly, all participating individuals are either separated or retired from the military and have been non-active for a minimum of one year to a maximum of seven years (m = 3.5 years).

**Table 4: Participants' Military Characteristics**

<i>ID#</i>	<b>Military Branch</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Years of Enlistment</b>	<b>Longest Deployment</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Years as Non-Active</b>
<i>1</i>	Air Force	Captain	3 Years	6 Months	Separated	7 Years
<i>2</i>	Marine Corps	Gunnery Sergeant	20 Years	14 Months	Retired	3 Years
<i>3</i>	Marine Corps	Lance Corporal	4 Years	Never Deployed	Separated	6 Years
<i>4</i>	Army	Sergeant	5.5 Years	6 Months	Separated	3 Years
<i>5</i>	Air Force	Major	20 Years	6 Months	Retired	1 Year

<b>6</b>	Marine Corps	Master Sergeant	22 Years	9 months	Retired	4 Years
<b>7</b>	Air Force	Airman First Class	9 Years	Never Deployed	Separated	1 Year

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

### Findings

The veterans interviewed in this study shared information about their experience with outdoor recreation, and how these experiences may have been impacted by time in the military. Through the intentional design of the research questions and keeping in line with the TPB, the interview questions were created to gather information on how the military experience of veterans have impacted or not impacted a participant's intent to recreate outdoors. The data was organized into six main themes as seen below in Figure 4: attitude toward the behavior during the military; subjective norms during the military; perceived behavioral constraints during the military; attitude towards the behavior after the military; subjective norms after the military; and perceived behavioral control after the military (Ajzen, 2002). Through the analysis of these themes, there were several topics or sub-themes that emerged. Some of these topics were consistent with the previous research of Taff et al. (2016) and some were unique to this research population. Moreover, some topics were unique to veterans and some are also experienced by the general public. However, the purpose of this research was focused on the factors that are unique to veterans and their military experience. As a result, the non-military themes were mentioned for the purpose of showing them as findings, but will not be explored in detail.

The topics deemed as being specific to veterans, within the context of the themes, resulted from their experience in the military and included; *the military instills*



*appreciation for quality time with family; the military creates animosity towards an activity; the military requires a certain level of fitness/training; the military provides exposure to new people; the military provides a free park pass; the military provides recreation opportunities; and the military provides exposure to new locations.* It is understood based on the TPB that these themes and topics are what influence a participant's intention to behave a certain way. Knowing this, the framework was implemented to better understand how the participants will behave by participating in outdoor recreation. The research uncovered two distinctive categories; during the military and after the military, which highlights how access to outdoor recreation changed from their time of enlistment to inactive status. This can be seen in Figure 4 below.

Topics unique to the veteran population are represented in bold. There were also topics that had a positive influence (+), a negative influence (-), or both a positive and negative influence ( $\pm$ ) within each theme. Lastly, topics that represent special cases (\*) will be discussed later in this chapter, but include; lack of knowledge around opportunities for recreation and lack on convenient recreation facilities.

## During the Military

## After the Military

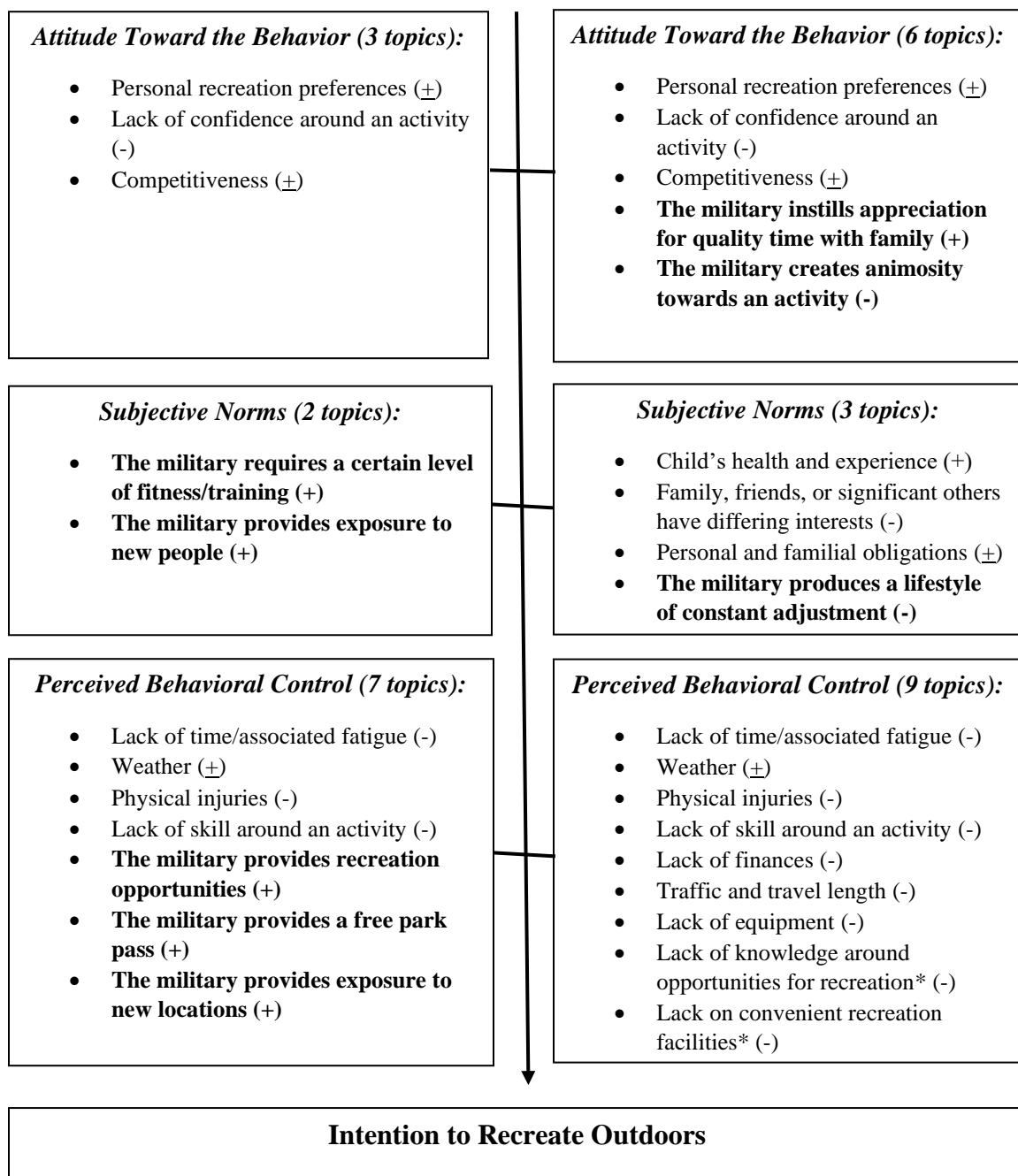


Figure 4: Themes that Impact Veteran's Intentions to Recreate Outdoors

### ***Participants' Recreation Activities***

This section features not only the current activities that participants are performing, but also those activities for which they took part in while enlisted in the military and prior to joining the military. This context is important for understanding the consistency and change of the participants' recreation activities over time. It also allows for the understanding of what activities the participants are involved in when they are being discussed and quoted later in the findings. In addition, the section includes future recreational pursuits in which the participants would like to participate in next. These activities can be seen in Table 5 below. The abbreviations next to the activities indicate the frequency of participation: F = Frequent, LF = Less Frequent, S = Seldom, and Y = Yearly.

**Table 5: Types of Recreation Participated in Over Their Lifetime**

<b><i>ID#</i></b>	<b>Prior Enlistment Activities</b>	<b>Activities During Enlistment</b>	<b>Activities After Enlistment</b>	<b>Future Planned Activities</b>
<b><i>1</i></b>	-Ultimate frisbee (F) -Local parks (F) -Visit state and national parks (F) -Float trips (LF)	-Ultimate frisbee (F) -Gym workout (F) -Basketball (F) -Visit state and national parks (LF)	-Ultimate frisbee (F) -Gym workout (F) -Local parks (F) -Basketball (LF) -Visit state and national parks (S) -Hiking (S) -Camping (Y)	-Not discussed

2	-Track/running (F)	-Gym workout (F)	-Gym workout (F)	-Swimming
		-Running (F)	-Orange theory (group workout) (F)	
3		-Local Parks (F)	-Travel/vacations (F)	
		-Swimming (F)	-Visit state and national parks (Y)	
4		-Shooting (F)	-Shooting (Y)	
	-Basketball (F)	-Rucking	-Basketball (F)	-Soccer
5	-Football (F)	(Backpacking) (F)	-Football (F)	
	-Visit state and national parks (S)	-Football (F)	-Boxing (F)	
6		-Basketball (F)	-Reading (F)	
			-Local parks (LF)	
7			-Ultimate frisbee (S)	
			-Softball (S)	
8	-Mechanic stuff (F)	-Mechanic stuff (F)	-I.T. activities (F)	-Soccer
		-Rucking	-Local parks (F)	-Flag football
9		(Backpacking) (F)	-Mechanic Stuff (S)	-Combative
		-Sky diving (F)	-Visit state and national parks (S)	training
10		-Combative training (F)	-Camping (Y)	
		-High intensity workouts (F)		
11		-Hiking (LF)		
		-Visit state and national parks (LF)		
12	-Wood working (F)	-Wood working (F)	-Ultimate frisbee (F)	-Flying
	-Working on cars (F)	-Working on cars (F)	-Orange theory (group workout) (F)	-Mountain biking
13		-Soccer (F)	-Hiking (S)	
		-Flying (F)	-Visit state and national parks (S)	
14		-Hiking (LF)	-Gardening (S)	
		-Visit state and national parks (LF)	-Wood working (S)	

			-Working on cars (S)	
6	-Gym workouts (F)	-Gym workouts (F)	-Gym workouts (F)	-Hiking
			-Local parks (F)	
7	-Hiking (F)	-Hiking (F)	-Local parks (F)	-Hiking
	-Mountain biking (F)	-Visit state and national	-Visit state and	-Golf
	-Skateboarding (F)	parks (F)	national parks (S)	
	-Visit state and	-Mountain biking (LF)	-Museums (S)	
	national parks (F)			

It is important to recognize that the table is not inclusive of every activity in which the participants are involved. The table is comprised of the activities that were brought up during the semi-structured interview. It is also important to note that some activities may not be deemed as “recreational” by some readers, but are considered recreation by the participants who were interviewed. Lastly, the frequency for which the activities are given were descriptors chosen by the researcher for the purpose of trying to generalize how often each activity was done. It is beneficial to know that the activity “local park” involves taking children to a park near their house and that “Future Planned Activity” includes past activities that participants had stopped doing, but want to reengage in. Lastly, the context provided by the participants presented many of these activities as social activities. Recreational companions include friends, family, co-workers, and pets.

### ***Attitude Towards a Behavior***

The veterans were asked questions related to their attitude and feelings towards outdoor recreation. As explained by Ajzen (2002), these attitudes are a reaction to attributes of outdoor recreation that are already valued positively or negatively in a person's mind, thus impacting their intention to participate. There were nine topics found within this theme; three during the military and six after the military. Within these topics, two are believed to be military specific and seven are applicable to the general population. The attitudes resulting from unique military experiences are as follows: 1) *the military instills appreciation for quality time with family*; and 2) *the military creates animosity towards an activity*.

#### ***The Military Instills Appreciation for Quality Time with Family***

*The military instills appreciation for quality time with family* is a topic that represents how military members feel upon their return home from deployments as well as their transition to non-active personnel. Over the course of their career in the military, several participants discussed how they were often deployed or worked long hours and missed time spent with their family and children. Participant 2 discussed how, during returns from deployments, she was constantly having to reconnect and reestablish her relationship with her daughter. She stated, "With my family, well the communication changed because I wasn't home and I didn't go home often. So, there was a lack of communication for many years because of the distance between us." This led her to using recreation, in the form of travel, to bond.

She expressed, "I take vacations more often now since I've been retired. I look forward to doing things with my daughter

because I didn't do a lot of that when I was in the military. So, you know, we go on summer vacations. We leave here and go different places for winter or we got our spring break. I take time off the spring break to hang out with her. So, I try to spend more time with her now since I have been retired.”

Participant 7, when referring to having more free time, said that

“it makes me want to go out and do something more. Not really make up time, I know I've been out for a year, but I kind of want to make better use of the time than I have, rather than before. Typically, we've been trying to find more stuff to do that's not just hanging around the house. It's been kind of rough because of the weather but I mean, it's always fun to get out of the house, instead of just letting the kids play downstairs. But yeah, it beats just the normal routine and stuff, so it always helps to try to get out.”

Additionally, Participant 4 had a similar mindset around wanting to get out more and spend time with his family upon retiring from the military. He talked about how he wished he had spent more time with his kids than he had during his time as an active duty member. When referring to how the military impacted his outdoor recreation he responded saying,

“I'd love to be able to get out more. I look back at the time I spent with my mom and dad and clearly remember the times we went out to parks. We were always running around and riding our bikes. Those are the memories I cherish and I want to leave those for my kids as well. I want to be able to have them remember those fun times.”

The participants gained more appreciation for time spent with their family after leaving the military. The recreation aspect relates to a desire to make up for lost time, but also doing something that is more active. Participants showed that they wanted to do more with their family, such as helping them practice soccer, taking them to a local park, or traveling more. The concept is that because of the unique lifestyle of the military

experience and their deployment, some of the veterans were instilled with a new appreciation for time spent with family. Participant 7 explains,

“I guess I could look at it as, "Oh, I lost out on time that I could have been doing other stuff," or hanging out with my family on the weekends, but realistically, the times that I've had at work, I guess, made me appreciate the time that I have now a lot more.”

It was found that the veterans seemed to choose recreation-based activities as a means for quality family time. Overall this topic often represented a positive impact on a veteran's intent to recreate outdoors.

#### *The Military Creates Animosity Towards an Activity*

There appears to be animosity towards certain activities that were required during military service. The specific activities included hiking, running, swimming, and camping. One example is seen from Participant 2, as she said “we did hiking and shooting and all of that. Just since retiring, I don't want to do it anymore. I've done it for 20 years so I don't want to do it anymore.” Participant 4 adds, “camping...I'm not a huge fan of it, because of the military experience, being out in the woods soaking wet and raining. You're just cold and hungry and not being able to sleep.”

Many of the activities of military personnel take place outdoors in natural areas. Therefore, this animosity, specifically, plays a large role in impacting the intention of participation in outdoor activities. In addition, this topic was also seen as a having a positive impact during their military duty as a subjective norm by *mandatory fitness and trainings* helping introduce new activities to participants and help them form outdoor recreation habits and routines. Therefore, the result of this required training has both



negative and positive impacts during different times of a veteran's life. However, one reason for the discrepancy is that the participants who no longer enjoy activities that were required by the military are also the participants who had the longest enlistment periods. Participant 2 and 4 both were enlisted for 20 years, which could explain their animosity towards certain activities. However, participant 6 was enlisted in the military for the 22 years, but does not experience the same animosity. This could be because he was in the Air Force, where the physical requirements are less extreme as other branches (Worden & White, 2012). Ultimately this phenomenon requires further research before any other conclusions can be made.

### ***Subjective Norms***

The veterans were asked questions related to how others impact their intentions to recreate outdoors. The approval of an activity by others, as well as their combined participation, has a large impact on a person's intention to participate in that activity (Ajzen, 2002). The responses resulted in six total topics that emerged. Three of these topics were specifically related to veterans alone and both occurred during their military enlistment. The other three topics were related to the general public and all occurred after military enlistment. The three military specific subjective norms were: 1) *the military requires a certain level of fitness*; 2) *the military provides exposure to new people*; and 3) *the military creates a lifestyle of constant adjustment*. These three topics may impact other areas related to recreational behaviors, but were included in the theme of subjective norms because they involved an additional individual or group.

### *The Military Requires a Certain Level of Fitness/Training*

During their time in the military, all of the participants mentioned mandatory fitness that was required by their branch. This mandatory fitness often involved running, rucking (hiking with a pack on), hiking, shooting, swimming, and weight lifting. Although this activity is not required after service, it has become a habit in which most of the participants continue to engage in today. The only caveat is that some of the activities, specifically running, were not continued after military service because of injuries. Specifically, Participants 2, 3, 4, and 6 mentioned having injuries that were sustained during their enlistment that now impact their recreation participation.

Participant 2 mentioned that when participating in recreation, most of what she does is a continuation of what she did in the military. She said, “Well, (the military) influences what I do now, going to the gym more. It's just to continue what I was doing in the military. Just try to stay in good shape and good health and it's a good stress reliever.” In many cases, those who mentioned working out at the gym during their enlistment also mentioned working out in the gym now, or doing group class workouts like Orange Theory: a science-backed, technology-tracked, coach-inspired group workout designed to produce results from the inside out (“More Than A Gym”, 2019).

In some cases, these required fitness and activities resulted in participants discovering new activities for which they found enjoyment in. Participant 4 said, “But at the same time, because some of these things, they go hand in hand with getting promoted. So the better you do at certain things, whether it be physically or you take on school, or anything to better yourself, any kind of self-improvement. Basically, it gives you

promotion points. So, I took on a lot of things and I found I discovered all these activities. Before that, I never did really did this stuff. But I find that it's just a lot of fun.” In addition, there are also cases where participants may have stopped doing a specific activity that they did during their enlistment, but want to get back into that activity in the future. For example, Participant 4 mentioned doing a lot of combative training during his enlistment and wanting to get back into it in the future. When asked about what activities he wanted to do in the future he responded by saying, “Yeah. I would definitely like to get out and play some real competitive soccer or flag football. That kind of stuff. Some combative, some U.F.C. type M.M.A.”

There is evidence to suggest that the military’s physical fitness requirement has helped veterans create habits revolving around recreation. It also causes veterans to value this kind of physical fitness in their daily lives. In turn, this results in a positive impact on their intention to participate in recreation. It is important to recognize that physical fitness is also required in other careers that are non-military. However, this theme is being considered one that is veteran specific as cited by Hall’s 2011 characteristic of regimentation and conformity. In addition, although this mandated fitness/training was a positive factor during the military, as a social norm it also created a negative impact after the military by altering the veterans’ attitude towards those behaviors. For some, these activities were done so frequently that they no longer have the willingness to continue such activities. This was seen with the earlier topic of *the military creates animosity towards an activity*. Again, this will be reviewed in the discussion portion of this chapter.

### *The Military Provides Exposure to New People*

This topic encompasses the concept that veterans' intentions to participate in outdoor recreation are positively impacted by the new people that they meet through the military. The introductions may occur on deployment or as they move from base to base. When Participant 6 described the influence of people in the military on his recreation he said, "Yeah there's a lot of people willing to try different things, but we didn't always get out again because there's so much going on. But when we did get out with our group of people, even if they didn't want to, they would go out and try whatever we were doing and most of the time everybody enjoyed it." He went on to say that, "I think the biggest change when you're in the military is that you're always around new people, young people kept me fresh. Someone would try something with you. So, there's more comradery I guess." These recreational opportunities created bonds amongst the participants involved in the activity.

Secondly, Participant 5 mentioned about how the people he met over this time in the military have been more outdoorsy and therefore have influenced his willingness to participate in more outdoor activities. He said, "For the past 20 years or so, my friends are always doing something some place, at some lake or whatever. A bunch of country type folk, so they're always mountain climbing, mountain biking, and whatever." This was in response to being asked about individuals who encouraged him to participate in outdoor activities. Another participant, Participant 4 stated, "I was questioning doing hiking, but one of my friends was like, 'Yeah we should go out there'. I would be like, 'I don't know. I never really cared to do it'. But I got out there and found that I enjoyed it."

These participants showed that because they met new people they experienced new things and established new recreational preferences.

### *The Military Produces a Lifestyle of Constant Adjustment*

Veterans go through social adjustments during their transition to in-active personnel. This topic is similar to the theme found in Taff and Datillo's research, described as deployment and discharge produces a cycle of adjustment (Taff et al., 2016). This topic, unlike the earlier two, happens after military service and has a negative impact on participation in recreation.

This adjustment usually involved learning how to live within the boundaries of other individuals. Veterans are no longer able to do activities whenever they are free, but have to plan around their family and civilian obligations. Participant 4, when asked about factors preventing him from participating in recreation after retirement, said,

“I think the biggest thing would be that I'm not alone anymore... Before, if I was alone, I could just say ‘Hey, I'm going somewhere.’ I just get up and go. But now, with a family, you've got the kids’ activities and school or whatever. And the wife and so everybody's got their activities. You’ve got to plan around those things.”

The participants must now make sacrifices and compromise with their families to ensure other obligations are met. In addition, Participant 3 said,

“Sometimes when I make a commitment, I think like you're married, you've got a wife, kids, and then some things you want to do, and you ask your wife like, ‘You cool with it?’ And she's like, ‘No, I'm not cool with it.’ And you're like, ‘Oh, okay. I can't do it then.’ So my time now really ... I mean, I do have time, but it really isn't my time.”

This adjustment also means having to make new friendships and reconnect with family who may not share similar recreational interests. Participant 6 stated,

“I think the biggest change when you're in the military is you're always around new people, young people kept me fresh...Now, since I'm retired, I'm a big family man. Kids at home or moved out, they come home and just don't go out and do anything. We're all older so no one wants to go out and do the things that I would like to do. So I think it's just finding someone who's interested in doing the things I would like to do.”

In addition, when he was in the military, his children were younger and his wife spent more time with them than he did. As a result, she instilled them with her passions and interests, which were not the same. He said, “then we had two kids. Then I was deployed to Iraq the first time for nine months and Afghanistan for another nine months a year later. The wife has her interests and I have mine and together you combine it. Well, since I was gone most of the time, it's been her way and I guess that's stressful as far as coming back and you don't really have a say.” Therefore, upon returning to home, his family was not interested in the same activities as he was, because his wife was not into the outdoors like he was. As a result, he needed to adjust his life to them.

Participant 2 had a similar struggle trying to learn to reconnect with her daughter. She said,

“My child, well, we all live together. So, when I was gone for a year, we communicated but once I came back from Iraq, it was a transition. It was a time period where I had to get used to her and she had to get used to me again because we've been separated for a year... there are some times we were where we had to reconnect, so to speak.”

As a result, she had to find ways in which to reconnect with her upon retiring, as well as finding activities and things for which they had in common. With this participant, she said that, “I look forward to doing things with my daughter because I didn't do a lot of that when I was in the military. So I do a lot of, you know, we go on summer vacations.” These vacations were the way in which they could connect.

It is important to mention that the three participants who mentioned this topic are also the three who were enlisted the longest. The impact of this specific topic could be related to the amount of time that the participant was enlisted in the military. There is still a need to do more research to provide evidence to support this connection.

### ***Perceived Behavioral Controls***

During the interview, the participants were asked questions regarding the barriers they faced which impacted their intention to recreate. The barriers and constraints represent perceived behavioral control, as it is understood by Ajzen (2002). These control beliefs emerge when there is the presence or absence of requisite abilities, resources, or equipment to perform a certain behavior. These beliefs may create a perception of difficulty attached to performing a behavior (Ajzen, 2002). The data showed that within this theme, there were seven topics that occurred during the military and nine that occurred after the military. Four of these topics existed in both time frames. In addition, almost all of the topics presented after the military were perceived negatively or neutral, while three of the topics that were presented during the military were perceived positively. These three topics are also the only three topics that were considered to be military specific and they include: 1) *the military provides a free park pass*; 2) *the*

*military provides recreation opportunities; and 3) the military provides exposure to new locations.*

### *The Military Provides Recreation Opportunities*

This theme represents the resources and opportunities for recreation that military personnel experience while living on base during their enlistment. During his interview, Participant 1 mentioned that every base has a golf course. In addition, there are areas on base for recreation including gyms, basketball courts, pools, multi-purpose fields, and more. Participant 1 said. “In the military, when you have that base and you have all this stuff and I could go to the gym and workout, play basketball, use the fields, pretty much whenever I wanted. They had intramurals. I played football, basketball, softball, kickball. Intramurals for just like esprit de corps and camaraderie and those sorts of things.” Therefore, opportunities to participate in recreation on base were abundant and easily accessible.

In addition, there were also opportunities for off base recreation as well. There was usually a trip office through which veterans could sign up to do activities, like hiking or kayaking. Participant 5 mentioned,

“We have this Tours, Tickets and something else office ... I can't remember. We have recreational offices on each base and you go there and they'll do anything from shows, to National Parks. You can go in there and say, ‘Hey. I need tickets.’ Or, ‘I need cool things nearby.’ So, they'll tell you what's nearby, so that expands your horizons while you're in. A lot of it's for free. A lot of it's in nature. All these parks that I never knew existed if I hadn't left my home or been in the military and had that type of resource available at every base.”



Essentially, when living on base or near base, there is easy access to recreation opportunities, facilities, and equipment which promotes outdoor recreation as active duty military receive the opportunity to take trips to nearby state parks to recreate. He went on to say that these opportunities “probably increased my chances of going to parks and increased my interest in those kinds of things.”

This topic impacts recreation participation positively during enlistment and helps motivate continuance upon becoming non-active duty. However, this topic also can serve as a negative factor if veterans are not educated on how to access the same resources once regular access to the base’s resources and opportunities are gone. As shown in Figure 4, this can be positive during military service, but negative after leaving the military.

#### *The Military Provides a Free Park Pass*

While enlisted in the military, members are provided free access to any and all national parks. The pass is an annual pass and is provided to all active duty military personnel. This topic, very similar to *the military provides recreation opportunities*, was mentioned specifically and seemed to have a large impact within perceived behavioral control when participating in outdoor recreation.

Participants discussed how free entrance to national parks increased the convenience of visiting those parks and participating in recreation. In addition, Participant 5 mentioned how he was first stationed near a national park and when he discovered he got free entrance, it encouraged him to go to these parks more often. He said, “We go to our first park and the worker says, ‘Hey. Are you military?’ ‘Yeah.’ ‘Cool. All right. Here's this card. You get in for free.’ It kind of brings you into the

education of what's out there.” He said the ability to do this has increased his exposure to the kinds of experiences available, and all of the parks that exist. Participant 1 put it simply by saying that “it is just nice knowing you don’t have to pay.”

Free access not only promotes recreation, but also facilitates outdoor recreation, which is a focus of this study. However, like many of the topics in this theme, once this ease of access is taken away, the frequency of that activity drops. This lack of access then has a negative impact as veterans are not knowledgeable on how to adjust to the transition from easy access to finding access on their own. This is a trend that will be discussed more in the bottom of this section.

#### *Military Provides Exposure to New Locations*

The last topic in this section is focused on how the military allows for members to travel to new areas and experience the outdoors within those areas. This travel normally occurs during deployments or when the member is stationed at a new base. Although these moves may have negative impacts in other areas of a member’s life, it was shown in this research that it was considered a positive factor when it came to outdoor recreation. These frequent relocations allowed for some of the participants to be exposed to experiences that they would have never seen without the military experience.

Some of the participants experienced these new places within the United States. For example, Participant 5 said,

“So, the military does a good job or has a good resource at least for you to find out about those things...’Hey. I’m in the middle of nowhere, Montana. It sucks.’ ‘I’m in North Dakota.’ ‘All right. Cool. Well, here’s some parks you can go to’...Stuff like that. So, they kind of expose you to stuff that you wouldn’t be exposed to.”

Additionally, Participant 6 discussed how he did way more outdoor activities in California. He said that while stationed in California,

“I used to love outdoor recreational activities. Maybe it was the weather I don’t know, but since coming to Northern Virginia there is maybe a park a few miles down this way and another 10 or 15 miles down that way. It is just an open grass field with nothing to really do, but stand around and look at trees.”

He not only felt like there were not convenient outdoor recreation locations, but that the ones that were close did not have the same appeal that California did while he was there. This fits into this topic because he was stationed in California as part of the military, but chose to move to Northern Virginia on his own accord, showing that being stationed in California actually enhanced his outdoor recreational experience.

For other veterans, this experience occurred outside of the United States.

Participant 4 originally said that “I never understood why people just go to the mountains and walk around.” However, after hiking in the mountains of South Korea, he realized that he enjoyed that activity. He said, “It’s actually a lot of fun. So, I took that up in Korea, and I enjoyed that. It was stair climbing and that kind of stuff, because they built stairs on the mountains. So that was pretty cool.”

Relocation, overall had a positive impact on the participants’ intentions to recreate as this exposure to different areas of the world encouraged them to want to see more. Intending to see something new and interesting encourages some of these participants to recreate more. Participant 4 says that, “So, something new or interesting that I haven’t done would be an impetus to go to a different park as opposed to keeping close to the convenient parks that are near me.”

### *Special Cases*

The special case topics are indicated in Figure 4 by the asterix. The two topics were lack of knowledge on opportunities for recreation and lack of convenient recreation facilities. These topics were considered to be general topics that non-military personnel may experience, but there is evidence to support that the way in which veterans experience these constraints is different because of their past military lifestyle.

The two topics involve the loss of the services provided by the military, such as facilities, equipment, and opportunities for recreation. This transition may be harder because these veterans need to find new sources of recreation and new people to participate with, but they also must educate themselves on how to find these opportunities. Participant 1 stated that, “I knew that those were things that were available...like you can go to the gym and workout or you can go run around on the fields and things. It's just like it's there, you know about it. It's one of those things when you have it there, you don't use this much, and then when you don't have it, you wish that was there.” He expanded upon this thought by saying, “In the military when you have that base and you have all this stuff and it's there and it's like I could go to the gym and workout, play basketball, use the fields, whatever, pretty much whenever you wanted. Because it's all right there. It's covered. It's just on base.” Now in his current state, he says, “a lot of the field and recreation space is either taken or you just have to pay for it...you can only do that if you have something specific set aside that somebody paid to rent the space and lights for that time.”

Participant 5 brought up the loss of the free park pass and said, “The only thing that has really changed for me was the park card access being taken away. I have to pay to go to parks. If I don’t think it’s going to be a fun time, I’m not going to pay for it.” The loss of the park card has resulted in this participant no longer being willing to explore new parks and have new experiences, unless it is going to be worth it and guaranteed fun.

### *Safety*

Another issue that was brought up by a participant, but is not considered a topic because it was an isolated idea, was safety. Despite not being a topic, the concept was important to discuss due to its impact on recreation and because of the extent of this constraint impacting this specific veteran. Safety issues comes from the experience that veterans face when in combat or in an environment where there is danger, and they must have heightened awareness of their surroundings.

Participant 2 said that because of her experience in the military, she is always aware of her surroundings. Even if she were to visit a park in the day time she would still have “heightened awareness that there could be a shooter somewhere, there could be a sniper somewhere.” She specifically referenced her military training being partially responsible for this reaction saying, “It probably has something to do with it. Being in open spaces, can be hazardous. And I guess the thought process behind being in the park, it might be too crowded and there could be somebody in the crowds. It's because of probably the military training where you are really thinking and looking and making sure you're safe.” This response when going to outdoor parks is important because it is directly connected to the participant’s experience during her time in the military.

Although it may not have been experienced by the other participants, it brings up a unique constraint that deserves to be recognized.

### ***Recreation Negotiations***

During the interview process, the participants were asked about what negotiations they have made or will make to overcome some of the negative influences they face related to outdoor recreation. These negotiations are important because they enhance a participant's intentions to participate in a behavior, as seen by the hierarchical model of leisure constraints (Jackson, Crawford, & Godbey, 1993). For the most part, all of the participants had different individual responses. However, one negotiation was mentioned by all the participants. This negotiation was participating in a behavior for the social experience.

Social interaction was found to be a driving factor in a lot of the participants reasonings for participating in outdoor recreation. Participants were more willing to recreate when other participants were attending. Regardless of the activity, location, or the participant's preferences, the interviewees said that they would recreate if the "right people" or "fun people" asked them to go. Participant 4, who likes outdoor recreation, said, "it's easier to go out and go to a park, visit a park, or whatever, or do an outdoor activity when your friends like to do it as well." Participant 2, who dislikes outdoor recreation, when referring to visiting parks said, "I think it would be cool if you had the right crowd to go with."

Participant 7 mentioned how the only time other people really impact his recreation is if he can't find anyone to go with him, including his family. He said, "I

guess it just comes down to whether or not they want to go as well. So, if we're trying to go to a park or whatever, and we can't convince anyone else to go, or they want to go do something else, I guess that would deter us from participating.” It is apparent that aspects of socialization play a large role in someone’s intention to participate in recreation. It appears that socialization has implications on a participant’s intention to recreate as it relates to the hierarchical model of leisure constraints (Jackson, Crawford, & Godbey, 1993).

### ***Intention to Recreate***

In terms of the participants’ willingness to begin or continue outdoor recreation, all but one said they would continue participating in outdoor recreation activities if they had the time and ability. In terms of the military’s impact on their recreation preferences and their willingness to recreate in outdoor setting, the responses were mixed. Three participants said that the military had little impact on their current participation in those activities. They felt that their preferences for recreation remained the same throughout their lifetime, and that the military did not necessarily influence them. They felt like the military provided resources to recreate, which made participating in those activities easier during their service. However, in terms of their continuance of those activities, they felt prior military experience did not influence them. The largest impact came more from new obligations and less free time.

The remaining participants felt like the military actually increased their willingness to recreate in outdoor parks. Without the positive military influence, these individuals felt that they would not have been exposed to the joy of outdoor activities. As

a result, they felt that the military increased their willingness to participate because their experience in the military made them alter their preferences towards more outdoor recreation, thus increasing their willingness to participate in such activities.

Only one participant said that the military negatively impacted her willingness to recreate in outdoor parks. She felt that because she spent so much time outdoors during the military, she no longer wants to do those same activities. In addition, she never preferred outdoor activities initially, so the military only reestablished her attitude.

Overall every participant said that they had a positive military experience and that, in most cases, what impacts their current participation were injuries sustained during their time in the military. The participants are willing to participate in recreation at parks because of the benefits parks offer, and because they enjoy the activities despite the constraints that keep them from participating on a more frequent basis.

## **Discussion**

### ***Adding to Already Existing Research***

The purpose of this research was to add to the bulk of research already existing around veterans and their constraints to recreation. This is important to do because this population is under researched, and there is a call for further research of this population beyond that of strictly those with disabilities (Bennett, 2014a). Even though, the veterans in this study were not required to disclose if they had disabilities, the recruitment process did not focus on veterans with disabilities exclusively.



An additional benefit to this research was that it collected data from a diverse group of veterans in terms of race. The researcher interviewed seven veterans of which six of them belonged to minority races. This is important because there is evidence that by 2037, the minority population of veterans will grow to 32.8% (National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics, 2016). Therefore, this research included six minority veterans as a means to add to the body of knowledge for an under researched population.

The similar themes that relate to Taff and Datillo (2016) include: 1) *the military provides recreation opportunities* and military life creates opportunities; 2) *the military produces a lifestyle of constant adjustment and deployment* and discharge produces a lifecycle of adjustment; and 3) *the military instills appreciation for quality time with family* and deployment instills a sense of appreciation. As a result, even though this was not the primary purpose of this research, the thesis was able to offer supporting evidence to claim that veterans do experience factors that impact their participation in recreation that are unique to them as a population.

### ***Real Life Implications***

Understanding what impacts a veteran's intention to participate in outdoor recreation is imperative because of the benefits that come from outdoor recreation. Research shows that these include: having a more positive outlook on life and having more confidence (Bennet, Puymbroeck, Piatt, & Rydell, 2014); better handling stress, feeling more in control of their life, and feeling more positive and experience a sense of relaxation (Caddick & Smith, 2014); developing meaningful relationships, producing positive emotions, and enhancing the perception of their own competence (Kleiber,

Hutchinson, & Williams, 2010); and social reconnection, being distracted from negative emotions, and increasing positive emotions (Bennett, 2013). Due to these benefits, there is a need to explore how this information can be applied in the real world.

### *The Transition Period*

When analyzing the data from above, there is a major discrepancy between themes that positively impacted recreation during a veteran's time as active military versus after the military. Figure 4 shows five positive topics impacting recreation occurring during time in the military and only one that was mentioned after the military, not including topics labeled as neutral ( $\pm$ ). The topics that are positive were deemed as being military specific. Ultimately, what this means is that something changes during the transition from active to inactive status that causes these veterans to reduce motivation for outdoor recreation. Therefore, it is important to understand how the specific lifestyle of the military may be impacting the recreation experiences of veterans.

Many of the characteristics that affect a veterans family life (Hall, 2011; Segal 1986); there are connections that can be inferred to recreation as well. By understanding these constraints and how characteristics of the military life cause these constraints, park and recreation managers can better provide appropriate resources to enable veteran participation in outdoor recreation.

### Attitude Toward a Behavior

Attitude toward a behavior implies that during their military service, participants felt like the military did not change their personal perception on outdoor recreation

during their enlistment, but after the military, these motivators increased. Veterans want to experience recreation with their family due to a *new appreciation for quality time spent with their family*. This reaction can be connected back to the military lifestyle of *periodic separations*. These separations have been found to have negative effects on the well-being of the families and the veteran (Burrell et al., 2006). However these separations were found to cause veterans to value time with their family more. Veterans used recreation as a vehicle to experience quality time with their families.

Knowing this, recreation and park facilities can better serve the veteran population by offering programs and events that intentionally include family participation. By focusing on a veteran's family, and not just the individual, outdoor recreation providers may increase the likelihood that a veteran will attend and participate in their programs. TPB supports this as a person's attitude towards a behavior impacts their intention to participate in that behavior. In addition, family style programming for veterans has found to be both successful and beneficial based on past research. Studies by researchers Kleiber et al. (2010) and Bennett (2013) show that family programs can help increase marital satisfaction and help families and loved ones reconnect and experience more positive emotions.

In addition, veterans are also negatively impacted from participating in outdoor recreation because they may have *animosity towards several outdoor recreation activities* like; running, hiking, swimming, shooting, and camping. This is a result of doing these activities so much during the military that they no longer want to continue the activity because of the animosity they feel. These results are actually surprising as there is

research showing that veterans benefit from activities related to their experience in the military, specifically hiking (Dietrich, Joye, & Garcia, 2015).

There is evidence to support this animosity through specific research on veterans participating in hiking (Dietrich, Joye, & Garcia, 2015). The study resulted in veterans having a renewed sense of motivation to tackle the things needed to improve and change their lives, and a better understanding of themselves. Based on past research, there is evidence to support that outdoor recreation relating to a veteran's past role in the military can be both helpful and beneficial to the participants. In the project conducted here, there is reason to believe this case is true, as well, because for some of the veteran respondents felt like the *required trainings and fitness from the military* actually positively impacted their intention to participate in outdoor recreation. The mandated participation helped them create a habit of performing certain activities, but also exposed them to new recreation that they liked, which they would not have experienced if it were not for the military. This is seen under the theme for subjective norms.

However, there may be an explanation for this continuance of exercises from their training in the military based upon the findings of this research. The idea of *authoritarian structure* shows how the military is controlled by a rigid and authoritarian structure (Hall, 2011). Sometimes this authoritarian structure is continued as participants were shown to continue similar activities they were required to do in the military. However, of the seven participants, three respondents mentioned that they had animosity towards an activity that they did during the military. These same three were enlisted for the longest amount of

time. As a result, there is reason to believe that animosity towards a specific activity correlates with the length of period being an active duty military member.

This knowledge is important because it influences the way in which recreation and park managers could program for this population. When programming for veterans, an array of activities should be offered including things that relate to their role in the military. Some veterans may still enjoy these activities. However, it is also necessary that new activities are included for which they have yet to participate to increase the intentions of those veterans to become familiar with new activities. Not only will some veterans enjoy these activities more, but research also shows that mastering a new skill or activity has been shown to benefit the veteran population (Vella et al., 2013). Mastering a new skill causes veterans to focus more on that task and ultimately helps them reach a calmer state of being.

### Subjective Norms

Within the subjective norms theme, there were three topics that were veteran specific. *Exposure to new people* during the military was a positive influence that occurred during military service and the *lifestyle of constant adjustment* occurring after the military was negative. Due to the fact that the topic of *the military requires a certain level of fitness*, this section will focus on the two remaining military specific topics.

The topic of *military providing exposure to new people* identified that people related to other members of the military, and the people they met during their enlistment positively impacted their intentions to participate in outdoor recreation. Once leaving

active-duty, they experienced an almost inverse impact as veterans felt disconnected from their families and their recreational preferences differed from that of their friends and families. This impact may be caused by *periodic separations* and *frequent relocations*. The more military members move around and are separated from friends and families, the more adjustments they go through. The research shows that these adjustments have created a negative impact on a veterans intention to recreate.

Knowing this information, outdoor recreation managers can help increase the veteran's intentions to participate in their services by connecting them to similar minded individuals. For example, a recreation program that involved other veterans or individuals with similar recreation interests may increase a veteran's willingness to participate in that specific program. Programs like these do already exist and have been known to be successful. One example is data on increased social connection as veterans bonded with fellow hikers along the Appalachian Trail (Dietrich, Joye, & Garcia, 2015). In addition, research involving a group of veterans participating in surfing found that it allowed veterans to experience a deeper connection with other veteran surfers (Caddick, 2014).

Additionally, it can be argued that veterans and their families can benefit from finding an activity that they have in common. This common interest would help veterans better reconnect with their family and ease their adjustment to being an integral part of the family. To achieve this, outdoor recreation providers can provide exploratory opportunities for veterans and their families. These would include things like free trials of programs and activities. This would allow for veterans and their families to have an

opportunity to explore new activities and outdoor recreation opportunities that they might enjoy together.

### Perceived Behavioral Control

The themes of perceived behavioral control experienced a similar trend to that of subjective norms. There were three topics that had positive impacts on a veteran's intention to recreate during the time in the military, However, upon becoming inactive the topics no longer existed and the positive impact was lost. The topics that specifically were lost include: 1) *the military provides a free park pass*; 2) *the military provides recreation opportunities*; and 3) *the military provides exposure to new locations*.

Ultimately the above topics revolved around the military providing opportunities for current active duty members to participate in outdoor recreation. These opportunities included having free facilities for them to access (fields, fitness centers, pools); organizing intramural sports and competitive group recreation; offering free trips and equipment to participate in outdoor recreation at nearby state and national parks; and allowing them to qualify for free entrance to national parks. When these opportunities are taken away, the veterans now struggle to find the same opportunities at a low cost and at the same kind of outdoor locations. They do not have the knowledge and education to find these opportunities, and therefore their intentions to recreate are negatively impacted.

The above themes can be related to the military lifestyle characteristic of frequent relocations. These relocations are said to require military personnel to familiarize

themselves with new places (Segal, 1986). This characteristic mainly references military personnel moving from base to base as well as place to place during their enlistment, but the same phenomenon could be attached to members moving from on base to off base upon retiring. Since moving off base may be to a location they are unfamiliar with, the veterans may have trouble familiarizing themselves with recreation opportunities, resources, and facilities.

As a result, in order to overcome these factors, outdoor recreation managers should focus on disseminating their services and resources to this underserved population. Marketing might include tabling at public sites and disseminating newsletters to local residents or at local veteran/military facilities. In addition, recreation centers could also help by implementing open houses where they offer a tour of their facility and discuss the services they provide. In addition, it would be beneficial to make a position within organizations that specifically focuses on serving the veteran population. This would be especially helpful in high veteran residential areas. This dedicated position might work specifically on helping educate and expose veterans to outdoor recreation opportunities. Essentially outdoor recreation managers need to ensure that the opportunities they offer are being shared with the veteran population.

Secondly it would be a good idea to introduce a practice where parks offer free entry to veterans during holidays related to the military such as Veteran's Day or Memorial Day. The National Park Service did a good job implementing this strategy in 2018 by allowing free park access and hosting special events nationwide for veterans over the Veterans' Day holiday (National Park Service, 2018). In addition, veterans with



a disability are eligible for unlimited free access to these parks according to the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (2019). It would probably be unfeasible to offer all veterans access, but allowing them free entry during certain holidays would positively impact their intention to participate in recreation at these locations. The TPB supports these interventions, as it shows that the more access someone has to pursuing a certain behavior and the more knowledge they have of where participation is provided, then their intention to participate in that behavior may increase.

### *The Power of Socialization*

The last aspect of this research that deserves recognition is the negotiation of participating in a behavior for the social experience. As seen by the hierarchical model of leisure constraints (Godbey et al., 2010), these negotiations are used to overcome the constraints that may be keeping a person from participating in a behavior. As a result, parks and recreation providers being able to capitalize on this negotiation will help increase a veteran's intention to participate in outdoor recreation.

This idea of socialization makes sense since during the military, veterans experienced a lifestyle of *isolation and alienation*. This involves a loss of willingness to make commitments to friends or communities due to constant moves (Hall, 2011). Again, the focus of this lifestyle impact was on a military member's family, but it can be inferred that it may also have an impact on their recreation experiences as well. The alienation they experience results from not having friends to recreate with, and this may negatively impact their intent to recreate overall.

It is suggested that outdoor recreation managers allow for veterans to have as many social opportunities during their participation as possible. This may include things like organizing a bring a friend night where a friend can come and participate for free, offering more family focused programming for the veteran population, or ensuring that the service is group based and not individual. The results of this study revealed several participants who participated in group workout classes like Orange Theory or team sports like frisbee and basketball.

The focus should not necessarily be making the team or group event competitive, but on emphasizing it as a social event. This would be a successful intervention as research shows that veterans benefit from this kind of social recreation interaction. Those benefits have been summed up as increasing a veteran's ability to function better as a partner in a relationship, as a family member, and as an everyday community member (Kleiber et al., 2010). In addition, this socialization will hopefully help veterans overcome some of the specific constraints that are negatively impacting their willingness to participate in outdoor recreation.

### ***Limitations***

During the completion of this research, there were several limitations that were experienced that may impact the validity and credibility of this study. With only seven participants, the data is not generalizable across all veteran populations. As a result, the data can only be used to add supporting evidence to already existing claims. Secondly, there was diversity in race, age, and enlistment period, but there was a lack of diversity within the military branches. There were three Marine Corps participants, three Air

Force, and one Army veteran. However, the branch of the Coast Guard and the Navy were completely absent from the study as whole. Consequently, the data collected may not be applied to members of those branches as their experiences may be different.

Another limitation to this study was the terminology used during the interview process. The interview questions were designed to allow for the participants to determine and interpret “outdoor recreation” and “parks” as they deemed fit. As a result, there was not as much information collected specifically around recreation in outdoor parks. Some participants understood “parks” as being playgrounds and therefore their response could not be connected to national or state parks specifically, but just outdoor recreation as a general activity. However, because the participants were allowed to interpret the questions as they felt appropriate, the data collection recognized a better understanding of how the participants defined recreation and what it appeared to be to them.

The last limitation to this study was the lack of inter-rater reliability during the coding process. The research was conducted by a single researcher, and the interview was not coded by multiple parties. Although the researcher coded the data several times over a three week period to simulate several different people coding, it was not significantly reduced enough to avoid researcher bias that probably exists.

### ***Future Research***

There is a plethora of future research possible to better understand the experience of the veteran population when trying to pursue recreation in outdoor parks. The data and literature shows that this population still needs further research (Bennett et al., 2014a).

Specifically, future research should focus on how the length of enlistment magnifies constraints, as well as positive impacts on participate in recreation outdoors during the military, that become negative impacts after separation from the military. There is also a need to further explore what occurs during this transition period from active to inactive status.

The research revealed that for some participants the impact of constraints like safety, the military creating animosity towards an activity, and the military producing a lifestyle of constant adjustment, were magnified compared to their impact on other participants. The severity and the extent for which veteran participants experienced constraints was higher than other non-veterans. These are the same participants who were enlisted in the military for the longest, at least 20 years. This data shows that there may be evidence of different constraints or severity of constraints existing for veterans depending on their length of enlistment.

Additionally, the topic of safety deserves more research because it may relate to a characteristic of the military lifestyle called *risk of service member injury or death*. This military lifestyle characteristic creates a fear that will often manifest itself, not just emotionally, but physically as these individuals become “physiologically aroused, have nervous tensions and pursue efforts to escape or withdraw” (Burrell et al., 2006, p. 45). Therefore, the idea of safety and its possible impact on a veteran’s intention to recreate should be included in future parks and recreation research.

A second area of future research is the transition of facilitators that become constraints when transitioning from active to inactive duty. For example, a lot of the positive topics during the military regarding recreation involved available resources, facilities, and opportunities that were provided to the participants during their time living on base. However, when discussing the current constraints impacting their lives, the participants brought up a lack of knowledge on opportunities for recreation and a lack of convenient recreation facilities. These data leaves room for research on why this phenomenon occurs and whether or not constraints are experienced on a higher level than the general population. It also suggests research to find interventions and strategies to help ease that transition.

Lastly, there is room for future research on how the military lifestyle characteristic of *importance of mission* might impact a veteran's recreation behavior. This characteristic involves the feelings of duty to protect taking over the personal life of the military member. The members may begin to put the needs of their "military family" over their home family (Hall, 2011). There were no findings to allow for conclusions to be drawn related to this characteristic, but research focused on this characteristic may yield different results.

### ***Conclusion***

Based on the literature review, it appeared that veterans were under researched (Bennett et al., 2014a). There was also evidence that there was a need to explore what constraints veterans faced that impact their participation in outdoor recreation versus the numerous benefits that veterans can gain from participation. Ultimately, this study

provided insight on what attitudes towards outdoor recreation, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral controls are experienced by military veterans when it comes to participating in outdoor recreation.

Based on the findings, there is reason to believe that the specific lifestyle characteristics that veterans experienced during the military do, in fact, impact their intentions to participate in outdoor recreation, as supported by the TPB (Ajzen, 2002). For the most part, the factors that positively impacted intent were experienced during the military and the factors that negatively obstructed intent experienced after the military. By identifying these factors parks and recreation managers can better promote participation in outdoor recreation by veterans. They can find ways to simulate the beneficial factors that increased intent during the military or utilize the negotiator of socialization as a way to overcome the negative factors that occur after serving in the military. In the end, overall data supports the belief that veterans do indeed experience unique factors that impact their intentions to participate in outdoor recreation and because of this need more research must be done to find ways to overcome these negative attitudes towards a behavior, social norms, and perceived behavioral controls.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Preliminary Interview Schedule for Veterans**

**Question 1: Please briefly describe your time in the military and your transition to life as a veteran.**

***Possible follow up questions:***

1. How long were you enlisted in the military for? In what branch? In what location or locations?
2. Have you ever been deployed away from home for long periods of time? How often were these deployments and how long did they tend to be?
4. How would you say your dynamic with your family changed during your enlistment?
5. Is there anything that you want to elaborate on more and discuss your experience with from the questions that have just been asked regarding your military experience?
6. How long have you been retired from the military?
7. What in your life has changed since retiring from the military, interests, hobbies, relationships, residential location?
8. What transitions may have occurred that I have missed?

**Question 2: In general, what recreation pursuits do you participate in currently?**

***Possible follow up questions:***

1. Do you enjoy recreation activities? Do you participate in any recreation activities? How often do you participate in recreation activities? What activities are these and where do they normally take place?
2. Who else, if anyone, participates in these activities with you? Do you do them with your family, or friends, or pets etc.?
3. How have your recreation preferences changed or stayed the same since retiring from the military?
4. Are there any recreation activities that you want to participate in, but haven't? What do you think keeps you from doing them?

**Question 3: Do any of the recreation activities you currently participate in or wish to participate in take place at outdoor parks?**

***Possible follow up questions:***

1. Do you visit parks at all and if not why? If you do go, how often do you visit these parks? What parks do you normally visit and why?
2. Do you go with other people to these parks? Who do you go with? Do the people you go with participate in the same activities?
3. Do you find that you want to recreate at parks more than you currently do? What is preventing you from doing so?

**Question 4: What feelings and thoughts stand out the most when thinking of your current experiences with recreating in parks?**

*Possible follow up questions:*

1. How do you feel about recreation? How do you feel about recreating in parks?
2. What thoughts or pre-existing notions do you have about recreating in parks?
3. Have these feelings and thoughts changed since your retirement and if so explain?

**Question 5: How do other people in your life impact your experiences with recreating in parks?**

*Possible follow up questions:*

1. What certain significant other has encouraged you or discouraged you from your participation?
2. Are there certain people whom influence your participation with recreation at parks and how?
3. Have those people's influence change since your retirement?

**Question 6: What main factors have prevented you from participating in recreation at parks and what main factors have helped you? How do you get around those factors that prevent you?**

*Possible follow up questions:*

1. What factors influence your decision to participate in recreation at parks?
2. What factors influence your decision to participate in a specific activity or use a specific location?
3. What barriers might exist that have influenced your participation?
4. How does the environment for which you exist impact your participation?

**Question 7: Overall do you think your past experience in the military influence the way in which you recreate in parks today?**

*Possible follow up questions:*

1. Do you feel your military experience has positively or negatively (or both) impacted the way which your experience recreation and the locations for which you recreate at?
2. What final thoughts might you have about how your military experience has impacted your recreation experience overall and at parks?
3. Do you have any intention on beginning to or continuing to visit parks for recreation in the future? Why do you feel that way?

**Demographic Questions (if not already answered during previous questions)**

1. What age are you?
2. What race/ethnicity do you identify with?
3. What gender do you identify with?
4. What is your education level?
5. What is, or estimate, your annual income as a household?
6. What is the current dynamic of your household/family?
7. What branch of the military did you belong to?



8. How long have you been retired from active duty military?
9. What rank were you when you retired from the military?
10. How long were you enlisted in the military for?

**Final Question:** Is there anything you can think of that I haven't asked that might allow for further insight around what may positively or negatively impact your intention to recreate at a park? Are there questions that you think I need to be asking in future interviews or are there specific groups of people that I should be trying to contact? Is there anything else you would like to mention for any reason so that I might better understand your experience and your overall responses?

## APPENDIX B

### **Analysis of Constraints Faced by Military Veterans When Recreating at Outdoor Parks**

#### ***Informed consent form***

##### *Research procedures*

This research is being conducted to analyze the constraints faced by military veterans when participating in recreation at outdoor parks. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in a one-on-one personal interview which will take approximately 1 hour of your time. These interviews will be recorded, however no personal information will be gathered. You will be emailed a copy of their interview transcript to confirm accuracy before we use the data for our research.

##### *Risks*

Participation in this research study may involve some added risks or discomforts. These include a small risk of loss of confidentiality but we will take steps to reduce this risk. In addition there may be some emotional discomfort during the interviews as some questions may lead to unpleasant memories. This risk will be limited as you as the participant can choose what to reveal or not to reveal to us during the interview process. There will be no physical harm resulting from your participation

##### *Benefits*

There are no benefits to you as a participant other than helping to further the research on veterans and their constraints when trying to recreate in outdoor parks, as well as adding to the knowledge that already exists within this topic.

##### *Confidentiality*

The data in this study will be confidential. Personal data, names and other identifiers will not be placed on transcripts or other research data. All audio recordings will be kept in a password protected file on a personal computer that belongs to one of the researchers. Upon transcription and the participant approving the transcript, the recordings will be deleted. The transcripts will be kept on a password protected USB in the principal investigator's on campus office for 5 years and will only be accessed by the research team. After 5 years, they will be destroyed. Participants who choose to be interviewed over Skype, may review Skype's website for information about their privacy statement. <https://www.microsoft.com/privacystatement/en-us/skype/default.aspx>. While it is understood that no computer transmission can be perfectly secure, reasonable efforts will be made to protect the confidentiality of your transmission. In addition identifiers may be removed from the data and the de-identified data could be used for future research without additional consent from participants.

*Participation*

In order to participate in this research you must be a military veteran and age 18 or older. Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. If you decide not to participate or if you withdraw from the study, there is no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. There are no costs to you or any other party.

*Contact*

This research is being conducted Jeremy Steinel, Sports and Recreation Studies Master's Student, George Mason University. He may be reached at +1 757-510-4382 for questions or to report a research-related problem. You may contact the George Mason University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Office at 703-993-4121 if you have questions or comments regarding your rights as a participant in the research.

This research has been reviewed according to George Mason University procedures governing your participation in this research.

*Consent*

I have read this form and agree to participate in this research.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Signature

Version date:

## APPENDIX C

### Participant Recruitment Document

George Mason University, Sports and Recreation Studies, is conducting a study to better understand the constraints faced by veterans when recreating in outdoor parks and how those constraints impact those veteran's intentions to recreate at these locations. In particular, we are looking to focus our research on minority races within the veteran population. These minority groups are under researched in the field and we are hoping to further gain insight on the constraints faced by all veterans as opposed to a singular homogenous group.

Our research questions are:

1. Which activities do people frequently participate in or not participate in and why?
2. What kinds of feelings or emotions do veterans have towards recreation in parks?
3. How does the aspect of socialization influence their choice to participate in a recreation activity?
4. What kinds of structural constraints may or may not exist that keep veterans from visiting an outdoor park and recreating there?
5. How does a veteran's military lifestyle impact their intention of participating in recreation at outdoor parks?

**We will be conducting one-on-one interviews in person, via skype, or over the phone. These interviews will take approximately 1 hour of your time. Participation is voluntary and confidential**

If you have any questions regarding this project, please contact Susan Slocum at [sslocum@gmu.edu](mailto:sslocum@gmu.edu).

IRB Number: 1351196-1

\* Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefit. There are no foreseeable risks to participating in the study. The results of this study may be published but no names will be used and individual responses will be maintained in confidence by the researchers. Anonymity and confidentiality will be assured.

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Jeremy D. Steinel graduated from Landstown High School, Virginia Beach, Virginia, in 2013. He received his Bachelor of Science in Health, Fitness, and Recreation Resources with a concentration in Therapeutic Recreation from George Mason University in 2017. He is employed as a Park Specialist with NOVA Parks and received his Master of Science in Sports and Recreational Studies with a concentration in Recreation Administration from George Mason University in 2019.