

Take a walk in her boots: Mother's family leisure experiences in the Canadian Armed Forces

by
Carlee Schaefer



VANCOUVER ISLAND
UNIVERSITY

Take a walk in her boots: Mother's family leisure experiences in the Canadian Armed Forces

By

Carlee Schaefer

Presented as part of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts in Sustainable Leisure
Management within the Department of Recreation and Tourism Management at Vancouver

Island University

Co-Supervisor: Dr. Jackie Oncescu, Recreation and Sport Studies,

University of New Brunswick

Co-Supervisor: Dr. Charlene Shannon-McCallum, Recreation and Sport Studies,

University of New Brunswick

June, 2020.

Keywords: Family Leisure, Intensive Mothering, Military, IPA, Semi-structured Interviews

DECLARATIONS

This thesis is a product of my own work and is not the result of anything done in collaboration.



Carlee Schaefer

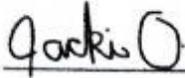
I agree that this thesis may be available for reference and photocopying, at the discretion of Vancouver Island University.



Carlee Schaefer

THESIS EXAMINATION COMMITTEE SIGNATURE PAGE

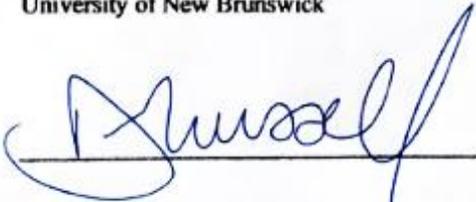
The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Department of Recreation & Tourism Management for acceptance, the thesis titled *"Take a walk in her boots: Mother's family leisure experiences in the Canadian Armed Forces"* submitted by Carlee Schaefer in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Sustainable Leisure Management.



Dr. Jackie Oncescu, Supervisor
Professor
University of New Brunswick



Dr. Charlene Shannon-McCallum, Co-Supervisor
Professor
University of New Brunswick



Dr. Dawn Trussell, External Examiner
Associate Professor
Brock University

Abstract

Given the environmental context of the military lifestyle, women who are spouses to military personnel find themselves reflecting on the challenges and hardship associated in supporting their familial routine. The purpose of this study was to explore the family leisure experiences of mothers who are spouses to military personnel (MSMP). Semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were conducted with 12 women, whose husbands had been previously posted and deployed. Findings indicated that the loss of control in day-to-day lives, the struggle to establish and maintain routine, and navigating single parenthood to the women's concentrated focus on child well-being and intensive mothering practices. Understanding the lived experiences of MSMPs navigating family leisure pursuits during period of spousal absenteeism and transition deepen the understanding of existing literature on military families and the mothers' experience of family leisure.

Dedication

I would wish to dedicate my thesis to my Supervisor Dr. Jackie Oncescu

Jackie, I will be forever thankful for the opportunity to learn, play and work by your side. Your positive spirit and infectious energy kept me motivated and excited to continue my academic journey. You fostered a greater appreciation of my capabilities, and encouraged me to grow through the process. I look forward to collaborating with you in the future.

Acknowledgements

I must take this as an opportunity to thank my family. Because of their compassion and encouragement, I always felt as though I could maintain my 'head above water' when dealing with the challenges of life. The continuous support of my family enabled me to leave the comforts of my home, and seek out my desired learning environment and mentor (not to mention be re-united with Vancouver Island). To my husband, Austin, thank-you for raising me up, and challenging me to achieve my goals. Your love and support is what allowed me to completely immerse myself in the process, while putting at ease the stressors of a long-distance relationship.

I owe my deepest gratitude to Dr. Jackie Oncescu, whose guidance and emotional support progressed me from the conception of my research topic to seeing my thesis take flight. Jackie completed my Masters experience, broadening my horizons to the potential and impact of qualitative research. I will be forever grateful to the opportunities you provided to me, from working with the facilitators and families of ROC, to meeting admirably scholars in our field. These opportunities gave me confidence and passion in my pursuits. Thank-you also, to Dr. Charlene Shannon- McCallum, for opening my eyes to the world of phenomenology, and all it has to offer. I feel truly fortunate to have had an opportunity to develop my qualitative understanding, and rotate the lens in which I see human interaction, under your charge. Lastly, I want to express my true admiration to all of the women of whom participated in my study. Your stories of courage, love, and devotion at times brought me to tears, and others had me bowing in respect to all that you have accomplished. Thank-you for sharing your experiences, and being willing to express vulnerability in the process.

Contents

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	09
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	15
Canadian Armed Forces (CAF)	15
Military Family Life	17
Family Leisure	21
The Role of Mothers who are Spouses in Military Family Life and Leisure.....	25
Recreation Opportunities for the Military Family.....	27
Gaps in the literature	28
Research Questions.....	29
CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY	30
Phenomenology and IPA	30
Sampling.	33
Data Collection.	34
Data Analysis	37
Insider/Outsider Role.	39
Ensuring Trustworthiness of the Data.....	42
Limitations of the Study	43
Ethics	44
CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS.....	47
MSMPs experiences in a military family.....	47
Lack of control.....	55
Being a married, single parent: Adapting to the roles of solo parenting.....	59

Establishing routine: The purposeful use of leisure.....	66
CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION.....	79
MSMPs experiences in a military family.....	80
Lack of control.....	85
Being a married, single parent: Adapting to the roles of solo parenting.....	90
Establishing routine: The purposeful use of leisure	97
Recommendations for Future Research	105
Implications for Practice	107
CONCLUSION.....	108
REFERENCES	110
APPENDIX A—Interview Guide	127
APPENDIX B — Consent Form.....	133
APPENDIX C – Certificate of completion	136
APPENDIX D – Invitation Script	137
APPENDIX E – Recruitment Poster.....	139

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) present a unique set of occupational demands for serving members, including operational deployments, the risk of injury or death, frequent separation from the family, and unit postings, all of which can negatively disrupt the family unit (Huffman, Culberston, & Castro, 2008). These experiences, combined with frequent bouts of isolation from traditional support sources such as family, social networks, and stable community relationships (Black, 1993), commonly result in heightened levels of personal and/or interpersonal stress among military families. Military families relocate three to four times more often than civilian families, often with limited notice, putting these families at a high risk of divorce, elevated psychological distress, poor mental health, domestic and family violence, and adolescent behavioral issues (Gewirtz & Youssef, 2016; Hogan & Furst Seifert, 2010; Padden, 2011; Skomorovsky & LeBlanc, 2017). Postings require families to uproot their livelihood to a new community, thereby forcing them to leave employment, schools, and social supports behind (Lowe, Adams, Browne, & Hinkle, 2012).

As a result of frequent relocations and deployments, mothers who are spouses of military personnel (MSMPs) are often relied upon to adapt to the role of primary family caretakers, make occupational sacrifices, manage household financial concerns and organize relocations for their family. Military family resource centers (MFRC) and Personnel Support Programs (PSP) offer programs aimed at supporting families through experiences of transition and unit postings, however, there remains a number of families that struggle to maintain positive family functioning (Farrell, Bowen, & Swick, 2014; Huebner, Mancini, Bowen, & Orthner, 2009). Military-induced stressors make it difficult for families to create, establish and sustain positive family functioning and cohesion.

The lives of mothers who are also spouses of military personnel are characterized by multiple layers of stress (Green, Nurius & Lester, 2013). Sustaining family wellbeing in the face of frequent geographical moves, distancing from kin networks, and the demands of military culture, require courage and adaptability (Green et al., 2013; Palmer, 2008). Mothers often rely on individual and community resources to mitigate the challenges of a military lifestyle, including family leisure experiences. Family leisure experiences (e.g., family time, daily activities, and family togetherness) can support family cohesion, bonding and relationship strength (Hawks, 1991; Orthner & Mancini, 1991; Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001). The literature has highlighted the importance of having satisfying family leisure experiences as key in the development of individual and family well-being, specifically as a catalyst for improved quality of life (Brajša-Žganec, Merkaš, & Šverko, 2011; Hodge, Duerden, Layland, Lacanienta, Goates, & Niu, 2017), family life satisfaction (Agate, Zabriskie, Agate, & Poff, 2009), and socialization of children and adolescents (Arnon, Shamai, & Ilatov, 2008; Shaw & Dawson, 2001).

Leisure studies research has identified family leisure as a contributing factor to the wellbeing among family units. Participating in family leisure activities promotes opportunities for family members to develop the ability to navigate difficult times in life, and in turn develop coping strategies (Orthner, Zimmerman, Bowen, Gaddy, & Bell, 1991). In the context of families going through a divorce, Hutchinson, Afifi, and Krause (2007) determined that following this period of familial stress and transition, parents often utilize leisure experiences as a means to support and promote family well-being (Hutchinson, Afifi, & Krause, 2007). Family leisure has been shown to help promote family cohesion (Schwab & Dustin, 2015; Shaw & Dawson, 2001; Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001), create memories (Hilbrecht, Shaw, Delamere, &

Havitz, 2008), enhance well-being (Burrell, Adams, Durand, & Castro, 2006; Godbey, 2003; McCabe, 2015), and promote resiliency (Farrell, et al., 2014; Gewirtz & Youssef, 2016; Hutchinson, Afifi, & Krause, 2007; Iwasaki, Mactavish, & Mackay, 2005) within the family unit. These implications of employing family leisure experiences as a means to mitigate the stress associated with periods of difficult family transition, further support the role of family leisure participation in reducing military-induced life stressors experienced by the family unit.

The facilitation of family leisure experiences is largely a parent responsibility. According to Raymore (2002), parents act as *interpersonal* facilitators to their children's leisure pursuits, playing an integral role in "promot[ing] the formation of leisure preferences and encourag[ing] or enhanc[ing] their participation in leisure" (p. 46). Leisure is viewed as an important parental responsibility by both mothers and fathers (Shaw & Dawson, 2001; Trussell & Shaw, 2007), however, there remains a gendered differential of how leisure and family leisure activities are experienced (Shaw, 1997). Parents, specifically mothers, commonly experience family activities as 'work' rather than 'leisure' (Shaw, 1992; Shaw 1997) given the considerable amount of effort involved in facilitating family leisure activities (Thompson, 1999). Samuel (1996) explored the role of leisure in the lives of women around the world, in her book *Women, Leisure and the Family in Contemporary Society*, through which she illustrated the persistence and importance of a 'family orientation' for women (p. 298). Despite the value placed on autonomous leisure pursuits, a women's commitment to leisure tends to focus primarily on the familial unit and family leisure (Cyba, 1992), especially for women who are mothers.

Military spouses are an increasingly growing population in the military community (Walker, 2013). An America Community Survey (ACS; 2016) revealed that working-aged military spouses (defined as spouses aged 18-65), are predominantly female (92 percent) with 70

per cent of them being under the age of 35. As a result, women who are MSMPs play an integral role in cultivating and maintaining a cohesive and stable family environment (Shores & Scott, 2005) among military families across the nation. Green et al. (2013) argue that a military spouse “holds the keystone role in establishing and maintaining an environment conducive to the needs of both children and adults” (p. 756), thereby indicating the responsibility placed on the spouse to ensure healthy well-being amidst the series of life alterations. The demands of living within the parameters of a military lifestyle can result in MSMPs acting as a quasi-single parent (Agazio et al., 2014; Bonura & Lovald, 2015; Burrell et al., 2006) when they are left to manage childcare and family leisure experiences (Werner & Shannon, 2013) due to spousal deployment, relocation and/or time away from home.

For many individuals, both adults and children, home and family are the most common location and context for leisure (Kelly, 1993; Shaw, 1997); however, for mothers at least, family leisure activities stray from the conventional leisure form (Shaw & Dawson, 2001). A majority of a MSMP’s time and energy is focused towards the maintenance of leisure activities for and with their children, specifically during times of transition and spousal deployment (Werner & Shannon, 2013). However, participation in family leisure activities is complicated by the challenges imposed by a transitional lifestyle, presenting constraints that include, but are not limited to, scarce social support, language and cultural barriers, diminished personal well-being, inadequate program supports, and marital conflict (Gewirtz & Youssef, 2016; Huebner et al., 2009, Werner & Shannon, 2013).

The unique lifestyle of military families may influence and impact the opportunities for participation, the ways in which family leisure is facilitated, and the resources promoting family leisure engagement. The extent in which the literature has explored military family leisure to

date remains limited. Specifically, family leisure scholarship has merely grazed the surface of understanding the true complexities involved in military family leisure, and of the lived experiences of mothers facilitating these family leisure opportunities. Purposive leisure, where underlying intentions of parents' efforts to organize and facilitate family leisure activities are to develop and instill lifelong skills and morals for their children (Shaw & Dawson, 2001), may present a lens through which to view military family leisure. Family leisure may help mitigate military induced stressors and promoting family functioning, and therefore, warrants further exploration.

Considering the complexities of the military lifestyle, the role of leisure in family wellbeing, and the dearth of literature on military family leisure experiences, the purpose of this study was to understand the family leisure experiences of mothers who are military spouses. Central to this investigation was the exploration of how mothers facilitate family leisure including the factors that enable and constrain that facilitation, how the purpose of family leisure changes across military life circumstances, and how mothers personally experience family leisure. The knowledge obtained through this research has the potential to impact decisions on an individual and professional level. First, the focus of this study was to provide military families the opportunity to share their family leisure experiences, specifically how these experiences are created and whether there are factors which constrain and/or enable participation in family leisure. In addition, the discussion speaks to the role of community and municipal recreation provisions and how these provisions support military family leisure experiences. Second, this study aimed to address the current literature gaps in family leisure, specifically addressing the factors involved in creating family leisure among military families, military family leisure needs, and how community recreation can best support these experiences. Finally,

the knowledge from this study has the potential to assist military and community recreation practitioners in the development of appropriate and sustainable recreational opportunities that meet the needs of, and offer adequate programming for military families.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will first present a review of the Canadian Armed Forces and military family life to create an understanding of the context of the study. The literature review will then follow by reviewing the phenomenon of family leisure and the role of MSMPs in military family life and leisure, thus leading into a description of the recreational opportunities available to the military family. At last, the review will address the gaps identified in the literature, highlighting the purpose and objectives guiding the research.

Canadian Armed Forces (CAF)

The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) is a large federal government department which supports and implements government decisions regarding the defense of Canadian interests at home and abroad (National Defense and the Canadian Armed Forces (NDCAF), 2016). Employing Air Force, Army, and Naval personnel, the CAF has 38 military posts established across Canada. The mandate of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) includes: (a) Protecting Canada and defending sovereignty; (b) Defending North America in cooperation with the United States, Canada's closest ally; and, (c) Contributing to international peace and security through operations around the world, most often in partnership with allies from other countries (NDCAF, 2016). To meet operational and institutional needs, individuals who pursue a career in the CAF must acknowledge the unique work, family, and lifestyle demands.

The Canadian Armed Forces employs many families across Canada. Occupational demands and stressors imposed by the CAF directly impact the function of military family units, specifically regarding familial well-being and cohesion. The Ombudsman's 2013 report, *On the Homefront: Assessing the Well-being of Canada's Military Families in the New Millennium*, stated that there three main occupational characteristics that shape the CAF lifestyle for both

serving members and their families: mobility; separation and risk (Daigle, 2013). Military members relocate to different CAF units for three principal reasons: (a) promotion or career opportunity; (b) training or development requirement; (c) filling a priority vacancy (Garner, Arnold, & Nunnery, 2014). These relocations, commonly referred to as postings, are decided by the CAF based on organizational and operational needs. As a consequence, families have very little influence over where they move, when they move, and for how long they stay. Members of the CAF and their families are required to relocate frequently at the discretion of the CAF, thereby, being forced to adapt to new communities (Drummet, Coleman, & Cable, 2003) and family roles and routines. Geographic mobility is a constant for military families as they are forced to relocate on a recurring basis, typically moving three times more often than their civilian counterparts (Daigle, 2013). On average, a serving member of the military will relocate every three to four years, with a total of nine relocations over a 20-year career (Berg, 2008). The frequent and unpredictable nature of postings has a disruptive influence on family life and contributes to many of the challenges and stresses that Canadian military families face (Daigle, 2013).

Military Family Life

The occupational experiences of deployment, risk of injury or death to the CAF member, frequent separation from family, and unit postings combined with extended periods of isolation from traditional support sources (e.g., family, social networks, and stable community relationships; Black, 1993), often result in heightened levels of personal and/or interpersonal stress among military families. Literature examining military transitions (e.g., deployment, separations, and unit transfers) has concentrated on the individual CAF serving member, largely dismissing the accompanying family, and the mechanisms required in managing the transition

experience (Figley & Barnes, 2005; Werner & Shannon, 2013).

Scholarship using family systems theory, which emphasizes that family members cannot be understood in isolation from one another when an individual family member experiences a change in the functioning (Bronfenbrenner, 2005), has increased awareness of the available resources. It has also supported the recognition of potential family and community risk and protective factors (e.g., familial support, program engagement, and social connections) that can influence military families' positive well-being (Lucier-Greer, Arnold, Mancini, Ford & Bryant, 2015; Paley, Lester, & Mogil, 2013). Notably, some families are able to adapt to life events (e.g., deployment and transition) relatively smoothly, whereas others may experience a more difficult time responding to a disruption in life events (Paley et al., 2013). This research has focused on enhancing the understanding of, and education towards ways in which military families can manage and adapt to the numerous stressors and demands of military life (Bowen, 1989; Burrell et al., 2006; Drummet et al., 2003; Okafor, Lucier-Greer, & Mancini, 2016; Melton, Townsend, & Hodge, 2018; Walker O'Neal, Mallette, & Mancini, 2018).

In Canada today, there are approximately 54,000 military families, and 49% of all regular force members have at least one child under the age of 18 (Battams, 2016). Further, there are more than 39,000 military spouses in Canada, 89% of which are women, and approximately 40,000 children are in their care (Rowan-Legg, 2017; Wang, Aitken, & CAF Family Research Team, 2016). The Department of National Defence does not have a single definition of 'family', and therefore, definitions are often based in accordance with varying policies and programs. The profile of Canadian military families has changed, just as Canadian families generally have changed (Daigle, 2013). Reflecting the shift in Canadian societal norms and expectations, the average military family presents more complex and transitional arrangements (Diagle, 2013),

resulting in more less-formal relationship arrangements, more complex custodial situations (often involving children from multiple relationships), and more single parent families (Statistics Canada, 2011). As a result, the fabric of military families has become increasingly diverse (Battams, 2016; Berg, 2008; Cramm, Norris, Tam-Seto, Eichler, & Smith-Evans, 2015; Padden, Connors, & Agazio, 2011).

Additionally, the employment status among military parents is becoming more diverse, including not only the categories familiar from civilian life – dual income, single income - but also, unique to the military, dual-service families in which both parents are employed by the CAF (Clever & Segal, 2013). With some women aspiring to pursue their own careers and continuous employment, commonly resulting in the mother working outside of the home, there becomes an increased need for day-care services, dynamic familial logistics, and a collaborative approach to balancing parenting and household roles (e.g., family leisure facilitation; Diagle, 2013).

Based on a survey of approximately 1,800 CAF spouses (married or common-law), the results from the Quality of Life Survey of CAF Spouses revealed that the majority of spouses are post-secondary educated, employed, English-dominant speaking, with two-thirds of the population having children living in their homes. Changing demographic trends, including the increasing proportion of Armed Forces personnel who are married and/or have children as well as the number of military families that are dual-earner households, have led to an increased academic interest in military family life (Kelty, Kleykamp, & Segal, 2010). The Institute for Veterans and Military Families found that overall, among the education levels across military and civilian spouses in the United States, military spouses present higher levels of education. For instance, military wives are more likely to acquire college education compared with their

civilian counterparts. Maury and Stone (2014) support these findings in their own research, which revealed that 12.2% and 24.7% of military spouses had an associate's or bachelor's degree, respectively. Despite the education level of many military spouses, an examination of the employment status indicated that military spouses are less likely to be employed and more likely to be unemployed or seeking employment opportunities when compared to their civilian counterparts (Harrell, Lim, Castaneda, & Golinelli, 2004; Maury & Stone, 2014; RAND, 2004). It is important to note that this study analysed American military spouses and families, and therefore is not a direct representation of the education trends among their Canadian military counterparts.

The completion of professional accreditation (recognition of academic, professional or technical qualifications or credentials), however, does not guarantee easier access to employment opportunities, as many mainstream qualifications are not recognized from one province to another (Borah & Fina, 2017; McBride & Cleymans, 2014). For example, teachers, nurses, and accountants regularly find themselves unable to work in their fields from one posting to the next. In order to do so, spouses find themselves having to re-certify and/or undertake additional training, which can be onerous and may interrupt the family's second revenue stream for extended periods. Military spouses often speak to the negative repercussions of the military lifestyle on their educational opportunities. Tarrow (2007) found that 80% of military spouses reported a desire to work outside the home; however, securing an appropriate occupational path was perceived not a worthwhile venture due to the lack of proper education and frequent relocations faced by military spouses. Frequent postings and relocations often result in delayed completion of degree programs as many spouses have a hard time transferring credits in order to satisfy program criteria (Joseph, 2015).

Military families, specifically military spouses, fall subject to many social, psychological, and economic hardships (Green et al., 2013; Hosek, MacDermid, & Wadsworth, 2013; Lowe et al., 2012; Segal, 1986). Literature of this nature has informed the CAF of the negative and challenging experiences faced by spouses pertaining to education and employment, the effects of diminished social capital and support, and the impact of military family quality of life on retention issues among military personnel (Diagle, 2013; Green et al., 2013; Harrell et al., 2004; Tarrow, 2007; U.S. Department of Defense, 2013), thereby triggering a progressive movement in policy development, specifically targeting spousal satisfaction with military life. The Ombudsman's (2013) report has illustrated that military families are at risk of experiencing a higher level of stress than the typical civilian Canadian family. Green et al. (2013) compared the available resources and associated stressors among military families to civilian families, further assessing how certain experiences influenced the psychological health of MSMP and to what degree socioeconomic resources, social supports, and familial strain impacted MSMP psychological health. The study revealed that military spouses reported greater levels of psychological distress, compared to their civilian counterparts. MSMP who displayed psychological stress also indicated lower levels of academic and economic resources, further describing having difficulty in managing finances, starting a family at a young age, limited social support and elevated familial stress. The researchers concluded that a number of military spouses are struggling to maintain stability in the household.

According to Salzman et al. (2011), there are three mechanisms of risk for military families affected by wartime deployment/parental combat operational stress; (a) incomplete understanding of the impact; (b) incomplete understanding of deployment and combat operational stress; and, (c) inaccurate developmental expectation. These mechanisms shed light

on the behavioral and emotional outcomes experienced by military spouses, which include feelings of guilt, anger and frustration; excessive worry for their children; reduced family cohesion and warmth; family/marital stress; lack of coordinated co-parenting; and increased irritability (Salzman et al., 2011). The demands imposed by the military occupation directly impact families. With these demands comes parental absence and family reintegration (Weins & Boss, 2006); increased risk of psychological harm to the military parent (Bolger, DeLongis, Kessler, & Schilling, 1989; Jolly, 1987); frequent family relocation (Berg, 2008; Drummet, et al., 2003; Werner & Shannon, 2013); disruption to family education, employment and socialization (Payne, Warner, & Little, 1992; Harrell et al., 2004; Segal, 1986); separation from extended family; and continuous uncertainty about the future.

Family Leisure

For much of society, family leisure is a focal part of family life. Kelly (1997) indicated, “what people do together is central to life” (p. 34), and a considerable amount of what families do together constitute leisure activities (Hodge, Bocarro, Henderson, Zabriskie, Parcel & Kanters, 2015). Participation in family leisure experiences often facilitates beneficial outcomes for both the family as a whole and for the individual members that make up the family unit. Family leisure includes leisure activities that require and promote the participation and interaction from family members together and is made up of both leisure involvement (frequency and duration) and satisfaction (quality). When viewed together, family leisure involvement and satisfaction offer a more complete prediction of family functioning than leisure involvement alone (Hodge, Zabriskie, & Poff, 2012; Johnson, Zabriskie, & Hill, 2006).

Family leisure activities provide families opportunities to enhance and develop perceptions of family functioning and satisfaction. Family leisure has consistently been

identified as “one of the most significant behavioral characteristics related to positive family outcomes” (Zabriskie & Kay, 2013, p. 81), and has been demonstrated to actively contribute to strong parent–child relationships (Shaw, Winslow, & Flanagan, 1999). Benefits obtained from family leisure participation include positive outcomes in family interaction and stability enhanced well-being and cohesive family unit (Agate, Zabriskie, & Eggett 2007; Dodd, Zabriskie, Widmer, & Eggett, 2009; Orthner & Mancini 1990; Zabriskie, 2001), improved communication (Huff, Widmer, McCoy, & Hill, 2003), and increased family functioning (Agate, et al., 2007). Despite these benefits, the idealized version of family leisure, where leisure activities result in family togetherness and positive familial bonding, is often unattainable for many Canadian families (Shaw, 2001). Many families struggle to find time to participate in, or focus on, family leisure (Gillis, 2001; Jacobs & Gerson, 2004). Refraining from partaking in family leisure activities has been shown to stem from multiple causes, including increased social pressures regarding parenting (e.g., what is perceived as a ‘optimal’ vs ‘actual’ experience), a lack of time for family leisure, and scarce knowledge of the recreational resources available to families (Bianchi, Robinson, & Milkie, 2006; Jacobs & Gerson 2004; Scott & Jackson, 1996; Scott & Munson, 1994; Shaw & Dawson, 2003).

Given the potential for leisure to be employed purposefully by individual family members to facilitate desired outcomes among the entire family unit, Shaw and Dawson (2001) coined the term ‘purposive leisure’ for the meaning parents attach to shared family leisure activities. They found that family leisure was highly valued by parents, and that they gain a “strong sense of purpose” (p. 223) as a result of family leisure engagement (2001). Shaw and Dawson describe the underlying intentions of parents’ efforts to organize and facilitate family leisure activities as ways to develop and instill lifelong skills and morals for their children.

These ‘purposive’ family leisure tendencies align with parents’ short- and long-term goals for their families. Parents view family leisure participation as a way to promote cohesion and communication, thereby identifying short-term goals as producing “a sense of family” amongst its members (Shaw & Dawson, 2001, p. 224) and laying down good memories of family life. Purposeful family interaction has been found to help foster meaningful relationships, assist in developing skills and competencies (e.g., problem-solving, compromising and negotiation strategies), and influence all aspects of the family environment (Ward & Zabriskie, 2011).

Parents view family leisure as an essential means to build and strengthen the family, and mothers, in particular, put considerable time and effort into organizing and facilitating family leisure activities and opportunities (Harrington, 2005; Larson, Gillman, & Richards, 1997; Shaw, 2001). Raymore (2002) identified parents as interpersonal facilitators to their children’s leisure, further supporting their role in “promoting the formation of leisure preferences and encourage or enhance their participation in leisure” (p. 46). Although both parents play an influential role in their children’s leisure development, there is variability among roles presented in mothers and fathers. The literature describes mothers as the primary caregivers of their children (Bianchi et al., 2006; Rao & Beidel, 2009), and therefore facilitator when it comes to initiating and creating family leisure experiences (Bianchi, Robinson, & Milkie, 2006; Horna, 1989; Rao & Beidel, 2009; Raymore, 2002; Shaw, 1992), despite the current movement to share child care responsibilities between fathers and mothers.

Family leisure activities often involve a degree of work on the part of the parents. Shaw (1992) noted that family leisure pursuits are commonly perceived as work instead of leisure by parents, specifically among mothers. Mother figures tend to put enhanced effort and energy into facilitating family leisure experiences. In support of this, Bella (1992) claimed that the increased

‘work’ of mothers to facilitate family leisure consequently excludes the possibility of them enjoying the leisure activities themselves. Additional researchers have noted the hard work mother figures dedicate towards creating family leisure experiences for their families (Shaw & Dawson, 2001; Trussell & Shaw, 2007; Werner & Shannon, 2013). The hidden work that accompanies the facilitation of family leisure (e.g., the planning, organizing, and scheduling of pursuits), and arguably the process of facilitating leisure itself, becomes complicated for mothers (Haycock & Smith, 2012; Shannon, 2014; Trussell & Shaw, 2012). Given that mothers tend to spend more time with their children on a daily basis (Craig, 2006), they are presented with more facilitation opportunities and moments to expose their children to leisure activities, through which comes the development of life-long positive leisure attitudes and skills (Shannon & Shaw, 2008). As the literature highlights, individual leisure experiences of mothers in this role are often compromised and adapted to meet the leisure needs of the family unit. Recognizing the intentions of mothers in guiding family interactions promotes a deeper understanding of the meanings mothers place on family leisure experiences.

Parents facilitating leisure experiences set out to obtain benefits from family leisure that extended beyond the benefits for the family unit include positive outcomes for their children individually (Shaw & Dawson, 2001). Research across cultures suggests that family leisure participation can correspondingly assist family functioning which includes communication, cohesion, and adaptability (Aslan, 2009; Poff, Zabriskie, & Townsend, 2010). Given the unique dynamics of military family life and stressors that accompany this lifestyle, the importance of positive family leisure experiences is heightened, thereby demanding thoughtful facilitation on behalf of the mother.

The Role of Mothers who are Spouses in Military Family Life and Leisure. Military

families are challenged on a continual basis to negotiate life transitions such as relocation, postings and deployment. The life transitions impact elements essential for family cohesion and adaptability including access to quality education, childcare, healthcare, leisure and recreational provisions and social supports (Rowan-Legg, 2017; Shores & Scott, 2005). Periods of transition, which are a part of the military lifestyle, also has an impact on family leisure experiences (NDCFO, 2013; Werner & Shannon, 2013). Military spouses, often the mother, take the lead in managing child-care and leisure participation because they adapt the role of a quasi-single parent during deployments (Werner & Shannon, 2013). As a result, the majority of a military wife's time and energy is devoted to leisure activities for and with their children. The ability to facilitate family leisure is further complicated by the military's lifestyle due to the constraints of scarce social support, language and cultural barriers, diminished personal well-being, inadequate program supports, and marital conflict (Gewirtz & Youssef, 2016).

For military families, the potential of family leisure to support or undermine individual and family well-being may be amplified because of the additional stressors of military life (Melton, 2017). Some family leisure experiences may support family cohesion and reintegration following family member separation (Bowling & Sherman, 2008), whereas other types of shared leisure activities or environments may be more likely to trigger memories of war and possibly exacerbate post-traumatic stress (PTS) symptoms. Specifically, during times of significant adjustment and transition, mothers report feeling a loss of control over their lives (Harrison & Laliberte, 1994), a result of experiencing constraints, which include work responsibilities, family roles, and an overall lack of time (Shores & Scott, 2005). During reintegration following periods of deployment, military spouses (more often women) and their serving partners have identified changes in leisure needs and the importance of leisure experiences (Duncan, 2017; Shores &

Scott, 2005; Werner & Shannon, 2013; Whyte & Grant, 2003). For example, Werner and Shannon (2013) found that the *personal* leisure among female military spouses experienced significant change, being replaced by *family* leisure experiences to serve as a coping mechanism and provide more meaning in caring for their children. The unique circumstances of military life, such as spousal deployment and times of transition, can result in changes in leisure behavior (Strain, Grabusic, Searle, & Dunn, 2002; Werner & Shannon, 2013).

As the body of family leisure literature continues to grow, researchers have noted the importance of family leisure in determining family life satisfaction (Agate et al., 2009; Shaw & Dawson, 2001; Zabriskie & McCormick, 2003). Agate et al. (2009) set out to determine predictors for family life satisfaction and found that the presence of family leisure satisfaction acted as the primary predictor for family life satisfaction. More importantly, this study claimed that family leisure satisfaction served as a strong predictor for family life satisfaction among both parents and children. Highlighting the integral role of family leisure in establishing family life satisfaction, it could be suggested that family leisure may be a mechanism military families utilize to help combat military-induced family life stressors.

Recreation Opportunities for the Military Family

Community and military recreation services act as an opportunity for families to express individual leisure interests, and to come together as a family. Through the development of recreation programming, the role of community and military recreation is to provide services that meet the recreational needs of the populations they serve. In doing so, community recreation plays an integral part in the development of military communities, promoting a sense of place and the development of familial bonds (Bowen, Mancini, Martin, Ware, & Nelson, 2003; Kowalski, Grybovych, Lankford & Neal, 2012). Military families, specifically spouses who are

mothers, often experience diminished social capital as a result of frequent relocations and postings. Mothers thereby rely on the support of their family, but also the community resources to navigate military-induced life challenges. Family leisure participation offers a context for military families to remedy these stressors (Melton, Townsend, & Hodge, 2017), therefore, community recreation provisions can be an important resource for parents to develop and promote aspects of subjective well-being such as improved quality of family life (Hodge et al., 2017).

Military recreation providers are meaningfully distinct, yet interdependent resources that can contribute to the well-being of military families and military communities (Farrell, Bowen, & Swick, 2014). Military-specific resources aim to enable program participation and engagement of military spouses and their families. For example, each military base/installation has recreation service providers and support services available, including Military Family Resource Centers (MFRC) and Personnel Support Services (PSP). In terms of creating awareness of and access to recreation and leisure opportunities, these resources act as enablers to support mothers in facilitating their family's leisure participation (Rohall, Segal, & Segal, 1999; Shores & Scott, 2005). Enablers can be viewed as a facilitative or motivating factor that links opportunities to behavior (Henderson, Bialeschki, Shaw, & Freysinger, 1996). When opportunities are available, participation is more likely to occur (Henderson & Ainsworth, 2000). Recreation installations located on military bases offer family leisure pursuits that are familiar to MSMP. This familiarity may support participation and encourage leisure facilitation, specifically among families in transition and navigating a new community.

Gap in the Literature

The literature has identified strong correlations between family leisure and family cohesion, family adaptability, and overall family functioning (Agate et al., 2007; Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001; Zabriskie & Freeman, 2004), all of which lend to familial resiliency and strength. A large portion of the literature on military families and military family leisure has focused on the role and experiences of the military spouse, and implications for employment retention among serving members of the CAF (Bissell, Crosslin & Hathaway, 2010; DND, 2013; Drummet et al., 2003; Harrell et al., 2004; Hogan 2010; Werner & Shannon, 2013). Despite the positive development and progressive understanding of the role of leisure among military spouses' during deployment, and its restorative potential for active duty members of the CAF, the value of family leisure among military families, and the mother's role in facilitating these military family leisure opportunities, has received minimal scholarly attention. I acknowledge that leisure-based programs aimed at servicing military families and/or couples do exist. However, family recreation programs available through PSP and MFRC services often focus exclusively on leisure products and/or the outcomes of family experiences (e.g., well-being and family functioning; Melton, 2017). Melton (2017) argues that these programs overlook valuable opportunities to educate military families on creating their own family leisure experiences, thereby promoting sustainable family leisure participation. Literature to date has demonstrated scarce exploration into the leisure needs among military families, and the role of mothers in promoting and encouraging participation in family leisure activities. This is compounded by the lack of evidence that describes the true nature of military family leisure. Without knowing the unique family leisure needs of military families, practitioners and researchers lack the knowledge to support the leisure experiences of these families. The intention of this research is to address

this gap in the literature. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to understand women who are MSMPs experiences with family leisure. Specifically, I sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How do MSMPs create family leisure experiences and what factors enable and constrain the efforts involved in creating family leisure?
2. How does the purpose of family leisure change across military life circumstances: (a) preparing for a posting; (b) following a posting; (c) during a deployment; and (d) during periods in-between postings?
3. How do MSMPs experience family leisure both during and outside times of deployment?

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the study was to explore the family leisure experiences of mothers who are spouses to military personnel (MSMP) within the Canadian Armed Forces. Specifically, understanding the meanings applied to experiences, such as family leisure experiences, can be accomplished through qualitative inquiry (Henderson, 1997). The study employed an interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA), which served to obtain unique and authentic data specific to the phenomenon of focus. IPA is focused on deeply understanding and representing particular individuals' experiences, and not on generalizing and abstracting individual data to a larger scale. This approach was used to gain a complete understanding of family leisure experience among women who are MSMP.

Phenomenology and Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

By using a phenomenological methodology, research aims to "reveal the meaning of a *lived experience* from the perspective of the participant" (Patton, 2002, p. 161), and in doing so allows for the data to focus on individual perceptions of what makes sense of the world. The use of phenomenological methodology is common when working within qualitative inquiry (Creswell, 2013; Howe, 1991; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006; Tuohy, Cooney, Dowling, Murphy, & Sizmith, 2013, Werner & Shannon, 2013), and was employed in this study. When looking through a phenomenological lens, it is important for the researcher to discover and communicate the true meaning of these lived experiences through the use of descriptive language (Fendt, Wilson, Jenkins, Dimmock, & Weeks, 2014), thus highlighting the importance of communicating the true meaning of the lived experience (Patton, 2002).

Strengths of using a phenomenological methodology include a rich collection of stories and data, thereby providing a breadth of information collected on a particular phenomenon (Berg

& Lune, 2012), and the identification of *essences* and meanings derived from everyday events and activities (Pollio, Thompson, & Henley, 1997; van Manen, 2016; van Manen, 2017; Werner & Shannon, 2013). Despite characteristics that promote the use of phenomenology, there are some constraints and drawbacks. A phenomenological approach requires extensive time demands required for data collection and analysis (Tuohy et al., 2013; van Menan, 2017), which can prove to be taxing for research teams and exhaust scholarly ambition. Additionally, the data collected using a phenomenological methodology are content heavy (Howe, 1991; van Menan, 2017). Multiple pages of transcripts can result from a single interview and require a depth of analysis in attempt to transcribe verbatim and condense themes.

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is a specific hermeneutic approach which explores how people make sense of experiences in their lives (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009), thereby, forming explicit commitment to person-in-environment and not just phenomenon-as-experienced (Finlay, 2011). IPA is a branch of focus within phenomenological methodology that enables the individuals under study to become co-researchers given they are “experts in their own experience” (Tuohy et al., 2013, p. 20). This collaboration between researcher and researched allows for the mutual construction of the lived reality that the participant experiences. IPA develops a deeper understanding into the phenomenon of interest, and explores the true essence of the experience (Tuohy et al., 2013). What makes IPA particularly phenomenological is its position that there is “nothing more fundamental than experience...[IPA’s] primary concern is uncovering/expressing/illuminating individual subjective experience” (Eatough & Smith, 2008, p. 181). IPA is focused on deeply understanding and representing individuals’ experiences, and not on generalizing and abstracting individual data to a larger scale.

There are three core concepts of an IPA approach: the phenomenological component which seeks the participants' understanding; the interpretative component which considers cultural and physical environments as they attempt to make sense of the experience; and the renewed insight gained by the researcher (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). An IPA approach was used in this study to achieve the purpose of examining the participants' experiences as they expressed them.

To date, the nature and perspectives of family leisure experiences among MSMPs, are not well understood and has generated little scholarly attention. Epistemologically, research employing IPA methodology engages in a reflective focus on participants' lived experiences and how they make sense of them (Smith et al., 2009), and therefore provided an appropriate methodology for exploring the meanings and experiences of family leisure from perspectives of MSMPs. The phenomenological underpinnings of IPA recognize that an individual's reality and choices (e.g., family leisure experiences) are often correlated with, and influenced by, the situational context (e.g., military-induced lifestyle), or world in which they live. This methodology enables participants to voice the complexities of an experience and individual perceptions of a phenomenon, highlighting what they deem the most valuable aspects that lend to a thorough systematic understanding and analysis of the personal experiences (Howe, 1991). IPA methodology provided the opportunity for the mothers in the study to highlight their experiences, allowing them to reference issues and/or constraints they face personally, in an environment that lends no resistance or judgement from the listener.

Leisure scholarship has used phenomenology to develop greater understanding of the lived experiences of many different populations. Specifically related to this topic, Werner and Shannon (2013) employed phenomenology to study women's leisure during periods of spousal

military deployment. In addition, Whyte and Grant (2003) used phenomenology to understand the role of leisure in the life of a military spouse. The literature mentioned above, have successfully showcased the essences and meanings of individual experiences in leisure. To the best of my knowledge, this study was the first of its kind to employ IPA as a lens to explore the family leisure experiences from the perspective of MSMPs.

Methods

Sampling. Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis encourages researchers to work with small and homogenous samples because it promotes a deeper understanding of the specific phenomena in question (Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Eatough, 2006; Smith & Osborn, 2003). To remain consistent with IPA, purposeful sampling was used. Purposive sampling occurs when participants are recruited on the basis of fulfilling a specific requirement previously denoted and targeted by the study (Babbie & Benaquisto, 2009; Henderson, 2006). This research aimed to uncover and reveal the unique, lived family leisure experiences of mothers with children 18 years old or younger who were married to or living common-law with a member of the CAF.

Purposive sampling resulted in recruitment based on a specific criterion to ensure perceptions and stories were collected from participants believed to be knowledgeable about the phenomena (Todres, 2005). To lend support to the purposive sampling, snowball sampling was used. Snowball sampling invites the participants already involved in the study to promote and share the study with others who meet the participant criteria requirements (Babbie & Benaquisto, 2009; Crabtree & Miller, 1992). Given the close-knit nature of the military family community, ‘snowballing’ (Babbie & Benaquisto, 2009) was selected to assist in mobilization of research efforts, and help aid participant recruitment. Women who are MSMPs acted as gatekeepers

(Holloway, 1997; Greig & Taylor, 1999; Groenewald, 2004; Newman, 2000) in accessing other women who are MSMPs.

Posters and information flyers were distributed in and around the military communities (on and off base), specifically targeting military and community recreation centers (see Appendix E). This investigation focused on recruiting participants from CFB Comox, British Columbia and CFB Edmonton, Alberta. These locations were chosen because they provided a representation of a diverse set of military families, and were geographically accessible by the primary investigator when conducting semi-structured interviews. Twelve participants represented the study sample. This sample was chosen based on both the quality of data collected, and the extensive amount of data the interviews produced. All of the participants experienced their spouse participating in multiple exercises, and at least one posting. Nine participants saw their spouses leave for at least one employment. Table 1 provides more detail on the participants (i.e., number and age of children per family, marital status). Further, as interviews create an extensive amount of data, and result in a detailed transcription process, twelve participants proved an appropriate sample size. In support of smaller sample sizes, Smith (2003) notes that when using interviews as a method of data collection, the researcher must prepare for the difficult process of exploring each testimony in-depth, and in light of that, larger samples may result in, and lead to superficial understandings. The privacy and comfort of the participants was of priority, and therefore interviews were conducted in an agreed upon private space where the participants felt most comfortable sharing their experiences.

Data Collection

Semi-structured interviewing is the primary mode of data collection among scholars employing IPA specifically (Brocki & Wearden, 2006; Smith & Eatough, 2006; Smith &

Osborn, 2003), and qualitative methods generally (Madill & Gough, 2008; Polkinghorne, 2005). Further, IPA supports the use of semi-structured interviews (Olson, 2011), for it encourages a natural flow of conversation, while providing a flexible option of data collection, adapting to the participants narratives through probing and follow-up questions (Patton, 2002). Respecting the IPA guidelines, in-depth semi-structured interviews were used. Such interviews are seen as an effective way to disclose lived experiences (Creswell, 1998). The interviews empowered MSMPs to voice their experiences within the context of their lives (Oakley, 1981).

IPA acknowledges that the most important material is often unexpected to the researcher (Smith et al., 2009), and that interviews guided by an IPA lens do not follow a prescribed process (Smith, 2017). Although the researcher comes prepared with a research question and interview schedule, probing questions and prompts are used to guide the process (Smith, 2017). Questions in this study were ‘directed to the participant’s experiences, feelings, beliefs and convictions about the theme of the question’ (Qelman & Kruger, 1999, p. 196). Smith and Osborn (2003) found that the process of semi-structured interviewing often facilitates strong rapport between researcher and participants, which may lead to further disclosure on their part. Employing semi-structured interviews with IPA underpinnings with MSMPs provided a deep understanding of their family leisure experiences, allowing for the analysis of experiential themes case by case, and further for patterns across cases (Smith, 2017).

The interview guide used included general interview questions, but was flexible in that it could be altered given the flow of, and feedback from, each interview and the participants involved (see Appendix A). Printed material from the community recreation organizations from locations of recruitment (Comox, BC and Edmonton, AB) assisted the continual development of the interview guide. Documents included information from organizations’ websites, public

articles written about the recreation programming, and printed material distributed by each organization (i.e., brochures, recreation reporters, and flyers). Two sources that had great influence on the development of the interview guide were (a) Edmonton's Recreation and Leisure guide (Winer and Spring 2018 editions) and the CAF Connection website (<https://www.cafconnection.ca/National/Home.aspx>) for both Comox and Edmonton. These sources highlighted the current programming and the community/special events offered to families, and the associated cost for access within each military installation. This information gave me greater insight into the potential access to military families, allowing me to probe participants and think more critically towards environmental factors enabling and constraining leisure experiences. The review of this information prior to conducting interviews helped ensure that I was familiar with the leisure opportunities available in the community, thereby supporting the ability to probe participants during the interview process regarding specific events and/or programs available. The flexibility of using a semi-structured interview process allowed for comments to be made regarding what each participant felt was relevant and of importance, enhancing the flow of conversation, and establishing familiarity between researcher and participant (Bowling, 2002). Further, by allowing flexibility in probes and follow-up questions, there was greater opportunity for exploration of unanticipated comments or issues (Patton, 2002). Each interview lasted approximately sixty to ninety minutes. At the end of each interview, mothers were asked for their personal email, to receive their interview transcript for verification. Time was taken to describe the verification process, encouraging personalized feedback and the allotted timeline available to do so. Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim during the analysis stage.

Data Analysis

There is no one way to do phenomenological analysis. As a novice researcher, I relied on the IPA analysis steps outlined by Smith et al. (2009) as a guide to help manage the vast amounts of data collected through the interviews. IPA differs from other qualitative approaches in that it shares focus on a) the participants' process of making sense of their experiences, and b) on the experiences, themselves. IPA suggests that when moving through the motions of data analysis, that adopting a 'reflexive and curious attitude' should take precedent (Smith et al., 2009, p. 26). The process of analysis was an iterative and inductive cycle (Smith et al., 2009), involving subsequent listening to each recorded interview, readings of each transcript, the identification of common themes in the data, the development of a framework in which to identify and explore relationships between themes and identify sub-themes, continuous consultation with my thesis supervisors, eliciting participant feedback, and the development of a short summary describing the themes.

After being transcribed verbatim, the interviews were interpreted with an IPA lens allowed for an extensive understanding of the mothers' subjective experiences of military family leisure to egress, as IPA offers an in-depth uncovering of an individual's lived experience (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Smith et al. (2009) recommended that empathic engagement be balanced with critical questioning on behalf of the researcher throughout the process of analysis, whereby the researcher seeks an empathic understanding of the participant's experience, while remaining curious about the participant's constructed meaning. Golsworthy and Coyle (2001) acknowledge the ability of IPA to recognize the effects of existing biases and preconceived notions on data analysis, and that as the researcher, I was to be aware of my own set of biases throughout the process.

Data analysis consisted of the following steps: 1) I analyzed the experiences expressed in the transcript through sequential re-reading of the transcripts; 2) I identified emergent patterns (e.g., themes) and broad insights within the material, emphasizing both commonalities and nuances, indicating reflection in the left margin; 3) I searched for connections across emergent themes and develop a structure which to illustrate the relationships between themes. In doing so, I clustered together quotes and insights into themes that shared similar meaning. For example, purposeful family leisure facilitation and an aim to maintain a sense of normalcy for their children helped form the theme ‘establishing routine: the purposeful use of leisure’ 4) I employed the use of supervision and collaboration to help test and develop the coherence and plausibility of the theme interpretation; 5) I moved onto the next case; 6) I looked for patterns in themes across cases. For example, the desire for control was a repeated sentiment across the transcripts; however, modalities through which control was obtained varied across the women. This prompted the me to explore control through the lens of family routine, leisure facilitation, personal sacrifice; and 7) I related the themes to the existing literature on military family leisure and family leisure practices in my discussion section.

I used a reflective journal to support the transparency of my own assumptions in the findings, thereby ensuring that the lived experiences of participants were reflected in the themes developed from the data (Shenton, 2004). From the perspective of IPA, everything is contextually situated, and therefore, subjectivity on a topic is unavoidable (Smith et al., 2009). Therefore, it becomes essential that researchers maintain awareness of the ways in which they bring their assumptions and beliefs into a research project. In light of this, I documented my experience and reactions throughout the research process by memoing after each interview, so as to consciously assess my subjective engagement with the topic. For example, I was conscious of

the willingness across the women to share their stories, and the intent driving their desire to share. It was as though in sharing their experiences and, for many, the hardship of being a MSMP, the women seemed to be striving to elicit admiration from the researcher. The women were quick to disregard any notion of sympathy from the researcher; however, when it came to comments of recognition and respect, the women became visibly empowered (i.e., sitting taller, smiling, providing more examples, minimizing their efforts to make it seem as though “it was nothing”). Documentation of my reflection across the interviews lent support in the development of themes and deeper probing in the next interview.

Miles and Huberman (1984) describe the process of ‘memoing’ as when the researcher records field notes on what is heard, seen, experienced, and thought during collecting and reflecting on the data. Further, my reflective journal was used as a means to memo any pre-notions and impressions that I had prior to conducting a review of the literature, and during the process of collecting and analyzing data. For example, I expected to find that military wives’ facilitating leisure experiences for their families would express knowing little about the recreational opportunities available for their families, and I expected that this lack of awareness may be significant. Notably, these expectations were not necessarily evident in the experiences shared by the mothers. By writing memos in my reflective journal, I ensured that the results that emerged from the data were not simply extensions of my own preconceptions of the experiences.

Insider/Outsider role

Participants were recruited from CFB Comox and CFB Edmonton. Notably, I have previously been employed by both locations, most recently CFB Edmonton since 2018. Prior to beginning the recruitment process, I recognized that this may have implications on my data collection and analysis, and therefore, I actively addressed and considered my role as an

insider/outsider researcher. I spent most of my adolescent years living as a military dependent, with my father serving in the CAF. I live now as a military spouse, with my partner being an active serving member. I have experiences being a part of a military family that directly impacted my social networks, family, and leisure.

Given (2008) highlights that an ‘insider/outsider’ researcher is a part of the topic that he/she aims to study. My personal experiences had the ability to influence data interpretation. Daly (1994) further supports this claim, in his belief that a researcher’s past family experiences are not a “contaminating force on perspective, but rather... an essential part of the research process” (p. 62). As the primary researcher, it became my role to reflect on my own experiences (Daly, 1994; Patton, 1990), and further, take them into consideration when interpreting my results. In acknowledging my own experiences, I had an extended understanding of the phenomenon of interest (identifying as a spouse to a military personnel) and was able to empathize to the lived experiences of the families (sourcing family leisure pursuits). This complemented my chosen IPA methodology, given the *double hermeneutic* characteristic that was employed. IPA recognizes the exploration of the meaning of personal experience as an interpretative journey for both the participant and the researcher (Smith, 2017). Put simply, “the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world” (Smith & Osborn, 2015, p. 26). Smith et al. (2009) highlighted that the goal of IPA is to provide a credible interpretation, not to provide the only true interpretation. However, in order to ensure that the interpretation originates from, and relates to the participant’s phenomenological experience, I employed participant checks, by sending original transcripts and developed themes, back to the participant to review. Further, I noted that my own experiences supported the process of participant recruitment, as many of the participants spoke to a greater sense of comfort

and safety, in sharing their personal experiences with me. Because I have my own ‘lived experiences’ as a military spouse and dependent, I was able to lay the foundation from which to generate my interview questions. In recognizing the constraints and enablers military mothers face in day-to-day life, I came to the interviewing table equipped to probe for more detailed data.

Professionally, because of my employment of working for PSP, I have developed supportive and positive relationships with the families, specifically mothers, utilizing the recreation services available. Having been actively involved in planning and facilitating military family events, I have had the opportunity to present myself as a community recreation coordinator to the families in a safe and welcoming environment. I feel that this indirect relationship building, greatly assisted the participant recruitment process and enhanced the story and experience sharing across the mothers (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009).

Despite the benefits that came with being an ‘insider/outsider’ researcher, there were potential downsides to the role. In this role, I had to be conscious not to unknowingly make assumptions of similarity, that may limit the richness of the participants experiences (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Because I am a military spouse myself, and grew-up in a military household, it was important for me to recognize and acknowledge the influence I may have on the participants’ responses. Another concern I had when approaching the process of data collection was that I may, by association, influence the participants’ responses. With that in mind, I hold a degree of separation from the experiences shared by the MSMPs, in that I do not identify as a mother. Weighing against the benefits of being an insider to the study, I recognized that this potential influence was out of my control and that the benefits surpassed the potential negatives to the role.

Ensuring Trustworthiness of the Data

Following the guidelines of Guba and Lincoln (1982), the credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability of the data was checked in order to ensure the trustworthiness of the study. First, to allow for credibility, which is to ensure that the data represented the lived experience of the participant, the individual interview transcripts and experience summary were presented to each research participant, so that authenticity of the data could be verified (Cutcliffe & McKenna, 1999). Depending on the preference each participant had indicated for delivery, the transcripts were either mailed or emailed to each participant. To be trustworthy, the data analysis should aim to extend beyond merely repeating what participants said to providing an interpretation of what it means (Smith et al., 2009). Analysis should identify something interesting or useful about the individual participants, in addition to what is important about the themes it shares (Smith et al., 2009).

Participants in the study had the opportunity to confirm, change, delete or add information on their transcripts, as they saw fit. Feedback came from only one woman, who highlighted the sensitivity of her husband's rank, asking to remove any notion of rank, unit and specific instances where work compromised her family's activities from her passages. If the participants did not alter the transcript, or did not return the transcript within two and a half weeks, as articulated to the participants, I proceeded with data analysis assuming the data was correct. When using IPA, Smith et al. (2009) recommended incorporating a series of verbatim extracts (e.g., quotations and specific examples from the data) from a number of participants to support thematic decisions. In doing so, Smith argues that participants are given a voice in the research. Secondly, transferability, which involves recognizing the external validity and generalizability of the data (Guba & Lincoln, 1982), was established by ensuring that data

collection was purposive in nature and produced a thick description of the context as it pertained to the data sample and collection processes. In the end, a detailed report of the processes within the study was created, so that future researchers can replicate the work (Shenton, 2004).

Lastly, confirmability, which is the ability to demonstrate that the results from the study emerged from the data and not personal bias, and dependability, was established by employing the use of reflexivity, step-wise replication and dependability audits. Research findings were submitted to my thesis supervisors, Dr. Oncescu and Dr. Shannon-McCallum to encourage proper development and unfolding of emergent themes. In doing so, it was made certain that the data was being interpreted and investigated independently. It also provided opportunities for frequent exchange and the discussion of findings (Guba & Lincoln, 1982).

Limitations of the study

The aim of this study was to address family leisure in the context of military families, centralizing around these families' leisure experiences. The qualitative nature of this research provided the opportunity to produce rich, detailed data, in addition to complementing a smaller participant sample size. The use of a small sample size is often viewed as a research limitation, for it produces reduced amounts of data in comparison to the large numbers resulting from quantitative data. Arguably, because of the potential depth of data received from each of the participant's responses in the interviews, a smaller sample size offered valuable insight into the lived experiences of the population under investigation. Employing a phenomenological study of this nature, where the focus is on uncharted perceptions and experiences (i.e., military family leisure), the methodology gave valuable insight into the true meaning and perspectives surrounding family leisure experiences. Notably, these understandings cannot embody the experiences of all military families and their family leisure experiences, and therefore may not be

transferable to all mothers who are married to a military spouse. However, despite the limitations of encompassing all military family leisure experiences given the small sample size, the experiences explored are still worthy of consideration and have the ability to inform future research designs related to this topic.

Another limitation to this study is the generalizability across the wide range of ages of the mothers being interviewed. Given the recruitment criteria focuses on MSMPs who have at least one child 18 years old or younger, there presented an opportunity to have wide range of ages amongst the children in these families. These ages had the potential to impact the leisure facilitation strategies and experiences among MSMPs and are noted in the discussion. While all women may have met the research criteria, one should not assume that these women will be similar and express similarities in their lived experiences as a military spouse. Further, the lives and family circumstances of the MSMPs who chose to participate in this study may not be a direct representation of MSMPs in other military communities, due to community context (e.g., living on or off of the military base) and operational context at each base (e.g., high readiness for deployment, occupational risk, and so on).

Ethics

Ethical approval was obtained from the Vancouver Island University's ethics review board, as this study involved human participants. Mothers who chose to participate in the study were provided a thorough briefing of what the study entails, and were informed of the voluntary nature of the study, meaning that they could choose to withdraw from the study at any point throughout the research and forego answering any questions in the interview process that they did not wish to answer. Consent forms were reviewed with each participant prior to commencing the interview (see Appendix B). Here, the participants were encouraged to voice any questions or

concerns regarding the study with the researcher. Upon reviewing and signing the study consent form and confirming a complete understanding of the study, the interview process commenced.

In attempt to preserve anonymity among the participants, each participant was provided a pseudonym. The pseudonym was used in all written and verbal references to the participating individual as it were related to the collection, analysis, and reporting of data for the study. The signed consent forms remain the only documentation with the real identities of the participants. The true identities of each participant were limited to the knowledge of the principle investigator. Participants were asked if they were comfortable with the conversation being digitally recorded. All participants in the study consented to being recorded. All recorded (audio-files) and hard copy materials (transcripts) have been stored digitally on a password protected computer, only to be viewed by the primary researcher.

Table 1. Participant Family Information

Participants	Marital Status	Number and ages of children	Experiences with absences related to military transitions (deployments, postings, and ‘exercises’)
Sylvia	Married	2 children, ages 4 and 18 months	8 years as a military spouse 1 deployment and 1 posting
Addison	Married	3 children, ages 18, 20, and 24	26 years as a military spouse 3 deployments and 7 postings (one IR)
Danni	Married	1 child, aged 19 months	9 years as a military spouse 1 deployment and 2 postings
Cathy	Married	2 children, ages 6 and 8	8 years as a military spouse 1 deployment and 2 postings (one IR)
Mila	Married	2 children, ages 3 and 6	9 years as a military spouse 1 deployment and 2 postings
Megan	Married	2 children, ages 6 and 18 months	8 years as a military spouse 1 deployment and 1 posting
Brittani	Married	2 children, ages 2 and 4	6 years as a military spouse 1 posting
Anne	Married	2 children, ages 3 and 8	12 years as a military spouse 1 deployment and 2 postings
Corrina	Married	2 children, ages 3 and 4	8 years as a military spouse 1 deployment and 2 postings
Amber	Married	7 children, ages 4, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, and 14	17 years as a military spouse 2 postings
Whitney	Married	2 children, ages 11 and 13	15 years as a military spouse 3 postings
Kirsten	Married	2 children, ages 8 and 10	12 years as a military spouse 2 postings and 1 deployment

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to understand the family leisure experiences of mothers who are spouses to military personnel (MSMPs). Central to this investigation was the exploration of how mothers facilitate family leisure. Specifically, the study investigated the factors that enable and constrain that facilitation, how the purpose of family leisure changes across military life circumstances, and how mothers personally experience family leisure. The data analysis process identified four fundamental themes that influenced the creation, purpose and personal meaning of family leisure experiences: (a) MSMPs experiences in a military family; (b) a lack of control within the lives of MSMPs; (c) being a married single parent: adapting to the role of solo parenting; and (d) establishing routine: the purposeful use of leisure. Each of these findings resulted in specific changes and challenges across the lives of the mothers in this study, consequentially impacting the facilitation roles supporting and delivery of their children's leisure activities and family leisure.

MSMPs Experiences in a Military Family

The MSMPs in the study were a diverse group of women, bringing to the table an array of different academic and professional backgrounds, ages and varying geographical origins. The mothers spoke to their unique spousal relationship and familial dynamics, paths into motherhood, and career aspirations. Despite their differences, the mothers shared the common identification of being a mother in a military family, and within this identification, similarities in their day-to-day experiences. The women spoke to the challenge of initially navigating the role of being a MSMP, communicating a shared set of tactics and resources used to mitigate the demand of a military lifestyle. Despite the perceptual variation of the day-to-day lives among military spouses, deeper conversation with the MSMPs in the study revealed similar experiences of

personal sacrifice and a loss of emotional and tangible support. This theme is composed of two subthemes that were prominent in the participants' descriptions of their experiences being a MSMP in a military family: (a) managing transition: experiencing a loss of support; and, (b) personal sacrifice: selfless devotion to family.

Managing transition: Experiencing a loss of support. For many of the MSMPs in the study, the absence of their spouse not only indicated the transition in and out of solo parenting, but also times where support was scarce, or removed all together. The mothers in this study were united in their expression of experiencing depleted support resources in their lives. In addition to experiencing a loss of support during periods when their spouses were away from the home, the mothers were quick to identify the additional loss of familial support as a result of living away from their own families (e.g., parents, siblings), and not having family members who understood the military lifestyle. The military lifestyle is complicated by frequent postings, happening on average every three to five years. A majority of the mothers expressed the hardship of being removed from their extended family, and how it complicated their efforts of maintaining strong and open familial ties with their families from "back home". Sylvia, a mother of two and military spouse of eight years, described these efforts:

Before moving here, we actually had to live with [my parents] for a little while because we sold our apartment, and it was the best option for us. [My relationship with my parents was] very intertwined, very open. But now, because I was sharing things with them [that] they didn't understand [the military lifestyle], it became so stressful, and the judgement was too much. [It became] easier to close that off and to say I'm just not going to share experiences with you; I'm not going to inform you of certain things because it is just more stressful at the end of the day.

For Sylvia, the added stress of having to manage her family's perceptions and judgement of the life she was living proved too challenging, and therefore, the sharing of life events ceased. Considering her previously "intertwined" relationship with her family, her tone expressed a sense of unhappiness with the current state of open communication and emotional support.

Similarly, moving away from family resulted in Danni, a mother of one child and military spouse of nine years, feeling out of sync with, and purposely removed from, sensitive family circumstances within her extended family. Having experienced a recent posting, which took her from the East Coast to the West Coast of Canada, and away from all of her family, Danni described the challenges she faced in adjusting to a decreased level of support. Her perception of the long-distance relationship with her family described the "new normal" for her familial involvement:

My mom even said today that she is not calling with every little bit of information because she does not want to bother or upset me. And I just found out my grandfather had surgery the other day, and I felt out of the loop because I had no idea when it was happening. And before we left, I was always included. But they just don't want to put a burden on my shoulders, and sometimes that makes me feel a little left out.

Having family members who did not understand the impact of the military lifestyle on family life, left the mothers feeling unsupported. Further, the emotional support provided by extended family members did not meet the needs of the mothers, especially during times of solo parenting.

Resulting from repeated instances of spousal absenteeism, were the experiences of moving into the role of sole parent. The mothers described an intensified challenge of having to

continuously facilitate and maintain their family's leisure, navigate their children's participation in individual activities, and manage household obligations. Further, the challenges of moving in and out of a solo parenting role were compounded by feelings of intensified stress for many of the mothers. Mothers in the study spoke about the stress brought on by the concern for their children's well-being, the uncertainty of how to manage day-to-day activities, and feeling alone in the venture of facilitating leisure for the family. When faced with the challenge of having to manage these concerns, the MSMPs spoke to feeling resistant and reluctant in their actions. The mothers' experiences highlighted resistance towards having to oversee the work associated with maintaining their family's basic needs, and illuminated the challenge of having to step outside of their comfort zones in order to do so. Cathy, a mother of two and a military spouse of eight years, described her challenges of solo parenting, and carrying out basic tasks like feeding her children:

It took six years instead of three years for him to convince me to become a mom.

Because he does go away, and I don't like the whole single parenting thing all that often.

I find it challenging, I need a break. And if you've had a stressful or busy day at work, all you want to do it come home and relax and eat a bag of chocolates for dinner. That's all I want to do, but no, I have these little humans that I have to feed.

Cathy's awareness pre-motherhood, of the immanent challenge of solo parenting that she would face as a military spouse and mother, was reflected in her passage. This brings to light the difficult choice military spouses make when choosing to become a mother in a military family.

Spousal absenteeism was common during periods of transition associated with postings, deployments, and the mothers in the study expressed the immediate impact and awareness of their increased roles and responsibilities within the household. Addison summarized this

experience by saying: “[There are] the challenges of acting as a single parent, sometimes. You are trying to do it all by yourself, running a household, being there for the kids, and still supporting your husband at the same time with his career”.

The majority of the mothers spoke to the importance of being able and willing to adapt to the changes the military life presents. Being resilient was reflected in being able to balance and adapt to roles and responsibilities while being on their own, and was shown to support some of the mothers during times of transition. Corrina described what it is like to manage intensified roles and responsibilities of solo parenting:

You hear the word resilient thrown around a lot, and it is so true. Like you just adapt, you grow as a mother in a way that is so uniquely different. In a way, you kind of see how a single mom feels... because the kids are constantly transitioning to dad being gone, dad being home. So, you have [to manage an] emotional rollercoaster.

Corrina speaks of resilience through having to manage a lack of consistency in her children’s home environment, specifically the coming and going of her children’s father, and demonstrates the level the effort, including emotional energy, that is required while solo parenting. Corrina further described having to take on the added responsibilities:

[My husband] was more often the one tucking them in at night, so that became my role [with him leaving]. [Also, my husband normally] likes to do the shopping, and I hate shopping, so now I am the primary shopper. I hate cooking, my husband normally does all of the cooking in the house. So again, that now falls on me.

Kirsten, a mother of two and military spouse of twelve years, also described the solo parenting experience and the intensified roles and responsibilities that come with it, including the challenges:

You sort of adjust to [your husband's] schedule, which works on a temporary basis. And there is always the transition, and things kind of normalize, but then they go away. I am the one who organizes everything, and then they [husband] are home, you begin to organize them, even though they are a part of this family. So, it's like how do you navigate those new roles when they are home?

Despite finding enjoyment in her career, Anne, a mother of two and military spouse of twelve years, expressed feeling unsupported as a military mother, specifically within her work environment during times of solo parenting:

There are not a lot of people in my world, who I am close to, that understand [my life]... work doesn't really know military life. So even though we try to incorporate [the military] in our lives as much as possible, there are those sides that are so separate... Like I have been with my work for nine years, but [my co-workers] don't really understand, so when my husband is gone for a long time and one of the kids is sick, well what do I do? I have to be there for my kids. And my work just doesn't seem to understand the idea of not having that other parent there.

While Anne highlighted her desire to actively be a part of the military community, there was emphasis on the separation and lack of understanding between the military community and surrounding civilian communities. As an added challenge, this lack of understanding contributed to situations in which mothers did not perceive or receive support when their husbands are away from home.

Personal sacrifice: Selfless devotion to family. The mothers in the study described in length, the effort and commitment required in maintaining a familial routine, and cultivating time together as a family unit. The talk of sacrifice, specifically within one's career and personal

leisure time, was common across all of the experiences shared. For Sylvia, she could not avoid sacrificing something in her life to achieve balance:

Honestly, like there's one word [to describe my experience], and that's sacrifice because you sacrifice everything. Especially as a mother, especially as a woman, you sacrifice everything... There is no way in my opinion that you can have a family, well balanced children, [be] a mother with a career, and a husband in the military... You have to sacrifice something, to obtain what is important to you.

Sylvia's reference to sacrificing "everything" was likely to emphasize that she sacrificed in two significant domains of her life – her career and her personal life. Sylvia spoke to having to give up her career progression:

So as a mother, like for me for example, I had to sacrifice my career. I had to completely give up what made me happy for a job [that was progressing to] my career. I had to completely give that up. Because my children were more important than my career, even though my career was so important. [I was] passionate about it, it drove me, it woke me up in the morning, but in the end my children will trump everything.

This passage emphasizes that her career progression was compromised and there was a ripple effect of sacrifice affecting her personal happiness and well-being, particularly because she was passionate about her career. The sacrifice was for the sake of her children and her family.

Kirsten also talked about the necessity of having to prioritize her family over the development of her career. This meant sacrificing her academic pursuits in order to support her family:

My career path, or my job, comes second. Like it's not at the forefront. I was going to go back and do my Masters, but life changed and things changed. And that was the plan, but

the plan has changed. So, it is re-establishing our priorities. And we made the choice, and based off of that it is really important that I am always available to the family and the kids.

These mothers sacrificed their career and educational goals, but did so because they perceived that focusing on their career development and educational goals would not allow them to be consistently present for their children. The mothers viewed having a consistent parental figure in their children's lives as a means to counter the coming and going of their spouse.

How mothers managed stress and handled the complexities of the military lifestyle, were described to have a direct impact on the familial well-being. The mothers in the study reflected on the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle and self-care, as a means to uphold household responsibility. As Corrina, a mother of two and military spouse of eight years, described:

I know when I am having a hard time, everyone is having a hard time. I would say that I am the central unit. So, if I am not doing well, then my husband is worrying about that, and he cannot focus on his work. And my kids suffer because I can't parent at the level I expect for myself.

While the notion of sacrifice was represented in each of the mothers' stories, all alluded to the action taken to maintain self-care to support themselves in their roles as caregivers, and to support the rest of their family (e.g., to ensure that their kids do not suffer and allow their husband to focus on their career progression). In this way, the self-care was purposeful and linked to their roles as caregivers as opposed to engaging in self-care for its own sake. It was this self-reflection that prompted many of the mothers to highlight the need to take action and initiate more self-care measures in their lives.

This theme revealed the inevitable reality of losing social and emotional supports, and the coinciding sense of sacrifice that ensued, from having to navigate and manage familial transition in the context of the CAF. This compromised the strength of familial relationships with extended family members, and narrowed the social circles through which the mothers elicited connectivity. Feeling misunderstood in their role of being a military spouse, the mothers were left to their own devices to support their family, often disrupting and challenging gender roles and responsibilities. In doing so, the mothers sacrificed their career development, and adjusted their view of self-care to reflect a more neoliberal approach to maintain and support family functioning rather than serving their own individual needs.

Lack of Control

Mothers in this study shared experiences that emphasized a lack of control in their lives, specifically as it pertained to planning for family leisure. The mothers expressed the perception and challenge of having “no voice” and “limited say” in their family’s day-to-day life. The experiences shared highlighted that while there are some aspects of daily life that the mothers held little control over (e.g., postings, deployments and military exercises), there were facets of their family life that presented an opportunity for control (e.g., family leisure). Mothers’ experiences of lacking control and the influence it had on the planning and facilitation of family leisure, specifically during times of spousal deployment and familial postings, is explored in this section. This theme is composed of two subthemes that were prominent in the participants’ descriptions of experiences that highlighted a lack of control in their lives: (a) the unpredictability of family leisure: scheduling for the unknown; and, (b) establishing control through leisure facilitation.

The unpredictability of family leisure: Scheduling for the unknown. Within the mothers' experiences, the challenges faced in planning family leisure within the parameters of a military lifestyle were at the forefront. The experiences described by the mothers spoke to the purposeful decision of choosing not to be informed of up-coming events in their spouses' job until action or change was to happen. A couple of the mothers spoke to the uncertainty of, and the necessity to stay out of their partners' career as a means to mitigate stressful aspects in their lives. The participants expressed discontent towards the "ups and downs" of the frequent courses and training exercises that coincide with a military career. Kirsten described the increased responsibility of managing the "what if" in her life:

I don't want to know until it is actually happening. I don't want to manage the what if.

Because then you start looking to plan for help, and childcare, how to manage work, only to have the tasking dissolve or the dates change. You just have to be flexible, and not let that uncertainty get under your skin.

The "what if" uncertainty highlighted in the experiences contributed to the emotional challenges faced by the spouses. Megan, a mother of two and a military spouse of eight years, described the emotional hardship associated with not being able to plan:

It can be stressful, it can be emotional. Because there are a lot of times where they tell you one thing, and something else happens, or they say 'oh you're being sent on this course', and then a week before [the course begins] they pull him off of the course. Or two days prior, 'you are actually back on the course'. So, there are a lot of ups and downs. And I think you have to be a strong person to live this lifestyle.

The unpredictable nature of their spouses' absenteeism and irregular experiences of the military lifestyle, specifically not knowing the duration or timings of the spouse being away from

home, was described to directly impact the mothers' ability to plan family leisure. This uncertainty frequently required the mothers to be flexible and adaptable in their preparation for leisure activities. Cathy highlighted this necessity when describing her experiences:

Play everything by ear. You can make plans all you want, but often times the military will throw a monkey wrench into your plans, and your plans have gone out the window, and there's nothing you can really do about it. So, just be relaxed about it and play it all by ear, because there's no point in stressing out about things that are not in your control.

Even when both parents were home, the transitional nature of the spouses' career often resulted in a shift of leisure activities from being strictly family based, to incorporating friends and other families. Addison, a mother of three and a military spouse of over twenty years, described how her family's leisure changes leading up to, or following a posting:

[Yes, our family leisure changes] because you just get so busy. Like with the move, pre-packing, and getting organized. A lot of the times it was like 'go play with a friend, mommy and daddy are busy'.

Addison's reflection highlighted how the stress of her spouse's postings impacted the facilitation of her family leisure, specifically redirecting her children to play with their friends outside of the home because she and her spouse did not have time for family leisure. Having to "schedule for the unknown" was a repeated sentiment, across all shared experiences.

Establishing control through family leisure facilitation. The experiences shared by the mothers in this study highlighted possessing little to no control in the coming and going of their spouse, being forced to move into the role of sole caregiver, and while navigating the impact of postings and deployments. As an outcome, many of these experiences resulted in mothers seeking control over other aspects of their day-to-day lives, to serve and meet their

individual needs. Most notably, mothers were establishing control and finding a purpose within their family's leisure. Brittani, a mother of two and military spouse of six years, described the benefit she received from overseeing her family's leisure routine: "I feel I benefited from it. Because I'm a huge planner, I always had my calendar out and had hourly daily schedules. It was great. I felt it gave me a purpose, something to do, something to plan for". The positive tone and emotional reaction to the idea of control was gained through planning her family's leisure activities highlighting a sense of pride and purpose in her role as a mother.

Maintaining control of family leisure was also evident when a couple of the mothers recognized the desire to maintain the roles of leisure planning and facilitation as their own, even when their spouse was home. This was evident specifically during times leading up to and proceeding spousal absenteeism. Cathy described her intentions:

When he is about to go away and I start planning activities and stuff, it is a weird feeling because I am kind of keeping him out of things. Like no, you don't have a say because these are things we are going to be doing without you. I try to pull him into more activities before he goes, but even when he is here and I am planning things for when he is gone, he doesn't really get a say in it.

For Cathy, maintaining a primary role over her family's leisure pursuits, offered an opportunity of control in her day-to-day life, specifically related to the military induced transition that she did not have control over. Despite the unpredictable nature of the military lifestyle, Cathy was able to establish a sense of power, in her ability to make decisions on, and have control over her environment both during and outside times of spousal absenteeism. Similarly, as an attempt to preserve control over her family's activities, Sylvia spoke to the actions of telling her spouse whether or not he was to participate in their family leisure:

I don't really give him the option, like 'no, you're going to come on a walk with us', [or] 'no, you're going to come to the park with us', and stuff like that. I don't really give him the option, 'cause it's like, [I don't want him] to miss out on certain family things, but then I don't want [him] to be a part of them at the same time.

Notably, when the mothers were on their own, support was recruited and family leisure was shared with other spouses and families; however, when their spouse was home, the focus of family time was confined within the parameters of the familial unit. The mothers recognized the importance of ensuring sufficient and meaningful time as a family when their spouses were home. Brittani described her tendency to adapt who is involved in family activities based on her husband's presence at home:

I feel like when my husband is at work - whether that is here or away - I tend to do more with other families, and moms and their kids. But when he is at home, we tend to keep our family activities just with us. And, I've never really thought too much into it as to why, but subconsciously just to spend that quality time together as a family and not share our attention with others.

This theme highlighted the necessity of, and resistance towards, spontaneous family leisure as a means to ensure engagement, and the maternal perception of parental role distribution. Intersecting the ideologies of intensive mothering and the perception of adhering to acceptable ethic of care practices, this theme captures the mother's purposeful use of leisure, placing great emphasis on providing novel and routine family activities, as a means to support familial functioning, both through the lens of a private and public eye.

Being a married, single parent: Adapting to the roles of solo parenting

Interviews with the mothers highlighted the many instances of transition pertaining to spousal deployments and training exercises through which mothers had to manage their household and family routine on their own. Of the twelve mothers in the study, nine had experienced at least one overseas deployment where their spouses were gone from three to nine months at a time. The experiences shared by the mothers spoke to the challenge of having to go through major life events on their own. For example, mothers shared experiences of giving birth to a child, having a miscarriage, and coping with the death of an extended family member, all on their own. Accompanying the experiences of deployments, were the spontaneously timed military exercises, extending from one week to a couple of months at a time. All of the mothers in the study expressed difficulty in having to manage the unpredictable occurrence of military exercises that would have their spouse away from home, creating an experience of solo parenting. The mothers in this study identified challenges in navigating the roles and responsibilities of being the primary caregiver alone, or solo parenting, and the impact of having minimal support in their day-to-day lives. This theme has two subthemes that spoke to the experience of solo parenting: (a) family leisure while solo parenting; and, (b) it takes a village: support for leisure facilitation.

Family leisure while solo parenting. Accompanying the stress of having to navigate periods of solo parenting, was the challenge of creating and facilitating family leisure pursuits. A couple of mothers spoke to the pressure associated with being prepared to facilitate activities for her children on an on-going basis. Sylvia highlighted the pressure she experienced in having to continuously provide her children with novel leisure experiences, when her husband is gone:

It gets kind of stressful because I feel like on days where if we're just staying home, and what not, if my kids are bored then it's all on me because I didn't plan anything, you

know. So, it is a lot of pressure to ensure my kids are stimulated and learning and doing things.

Some of the mothers described experiences where they felt alone and unsupported in their day-to-day activities, many of them specifically referencing family leisure time. Cathy spoke to her reluctance towards participating in family leisure when solo parenting:

I often give kudos to mothers who are single parents, because I get, like as a military spouse, I get a glimpse of single-parenthood for only a few times a year, for a couple of months at a time... [In regards to family leisure time] sometimes I will go [out] with [my daughters], and sometimes I won't want to. Because I don't want to do everything by myself all of the time. I want to have someone with me, a partner. Like to have that support in activities because it can be hard to go at it alone.

Despite the challenges and hardship associated with the intensified responsibilities of parenting alone, many of the mothers were proud of what they were able to manage on their own. There was an overarching sense of pride in their capabilities, as Addison described:

I was just so happy we could do all of that for [our children]. 'Cause there were too many times when I could have just been like 'no, I can't do this by myself', right? But, the kids pretty much got to do everything that they wanted to do.

The mothers proved and felt accomplishment in their ability to provide family leisure opportunities even when on their own.

The perspective of feeling capable in the facilitation of family leisure, and competent in their ability to continue facilitation even when on their own was shared across the mothers' described experiences; however, a couple of the mothers expressed feeling overwhelmed by the process of seeking-out and facilitating leisure on their own. For Cathy, the stress of facilitating

family leisure alone, specifically during attempts to travel and visit family, acted as a limiting factor: “I am fine with the crafting, the play places, with them on my own. But traveling with them on my own, pushes me outside of my comfort zone. I want to be more comfortable, but I am not quite there”. During times of solo parenting, Cathy’s family leisure is greatly impacted by her perceived capabilities and comfort levels.

Whether due to familial financial need or the choice to continue working after starting a family, a majority of the mothers in the study were engaged in full-time employment outside of the home. These mothers faced the challenge of having to coordinate and adapt employment schedules during times of spousal absenteeism. During times of solo parenting, these work commitments became a constraining factor to facilitating quality family leisure activities. As a result, the mothers spoke to having the continuous stress of being able to provide quality family time looming over them. Megan, mother of two and military spouse of ten years, described her challenge of creating family leisure experiences around her work schedule:

We used to do a lot of activities with one family, but because I am working more now, our weekends have become our family time [with just the family unit] for the most part. But, [when my husband is gone] we do try to get other families involved, sometimes to make it a bit more fun and extra special for the kids. It is just a challenge making it work with my work schedule.

The need to return to work shifted the timing and appearance of Megan’s family time, both during and outside of times of spousal absenteeism. The constant need to regularly balance family leisure with employment and parenting roles was apparent, proving to be a challenge for women in the study.

It takes a village: Support for leisure facilitation. Establishing a household and family leisure routine presented challenges which included that of accommodating individual leisure interests, time management of activities and coordination of commitment across both parental figures to see the routine through. Living and thriving under a roof that demands temporary periods of solo parenting, further impacted the ability to maintain a sense of normalcy and consistency within the day-to-day routine. Solo parenting resulted in added responsibility that could not be met by the mothers alone. The mothers in the study described experiences where an increased need for support was paramount.

A couple of mothers spoke to the idea of being a part of a military community and having an “unspoken alliance”, or a mutual sense of support and situational understanding, with other military spouses. This was emphasized when Whitney, a mother of two and military spouse of fifteen years, discussed the importance of the military spouse community that supported her:

[I have been able to meet] amazing people. And learn resilience from others. Because there are times where you are not the only one in a situation, and you talk to other people, the other moms, and the other spouses who are dealing with the same thing that you are.

And just seeing how they are dealing with it, and learning [different] mechanisms.

Some of the mechanisms included accessing MFRC [Military Family Resource Centre] supports during transition periods, developing supportive relationships with other military spouses to build a sense of community, and overcompensating family time during spousal absenteeism.

It was within the military community that many mothers found friendship and familial support, specifically during times when their spouse was away from the home, or when arriving in a new location following a posting. However, eliciting support presented a challenge for some mothers. After experiencing a displacement from familial resources following a posting, Cathy

described her experience having to seek out new social connections to assist and support her family:

Since moving to Alberta, I don't really have that family connection with me. So, we have kind of made our own family out here, with other military families and friends. We have created our own support system, where we lean on each other and help each other out when needed.

Corrina reflected on these challenges in saying:

I depend more on a support network outside of my husband to help raise my family. And typically, when you build your village to raise your children, it is a village for life. But for us, it is a new village over and over again.

The challenge of reestablishing "a village" of support, presented further layers of hardship that mothers were forced to manage during times of transition.

These experiences outlined the heavy reliance on other mothers, families, and the community around them to support and help navigate their children's leisure during times of spousal absenteeism. As a result of the unpredictable military lifestyle and spousal absenteeism, the mothers in the study spoke to the challenge of facilitating their children's leisure activities, and shared experiences where having to rely on a village of support was necessary to ensure that their children's activities happened. Whitney described this challenge:

You just don't know. You sort of base your world on 'can we do this with one person?'. Like our extracurricular activities and leisure, can this be done with just one person driving the kids around? Because I can't rely on him as a result of his job. You fall back on either ensuring that you got it all covered, or falling back on other parents who can help you get to and from activities.

A shared experience among the mothers was that finding support to assist their children's leisure routine (i.e., ride sharing and child care), was one of the biggest challenges faced. This was coupled closely with having to adapt to a new environment during a posting, and fostered the need to develop supportive relationships with others in the community. Making friends and building a village, as a means to support the family, became a priority when experiencing a posting. Corrina's experience creating supportive connections proved difficult, but necessary:

[You need to build] a village. One of the hardest things about moving all of the time is you begin to get jaded because it is exhausting to try to make friends, and the goodbyes become too hard. But you have to get over that, and you have to learn to trust people really quickly. Whether that's for having someone watch your kids, or just the emotional supports and trusting someone to confide in.

While the need is recognized, a couple of mothers expressed resistance in eliciting support from those around them, as they did not want to burden others with their requests for assistance.

Addison, a mother of three and military spouse of twenty-six years, described her struggle to find balance between facilitating her children's leisure on her own, and seeking out help from her 'military family':

You know so many times you feel bad, and you don't want to take help. I know I'm like that, but it gets to a point where you're like 'no, I need help. He's gone again, I have three kids and I have one I have to take to hockey and the others have dance, and a school recital at the same time, and I can't be in three places at once'. And the military, is your extended family and they step in. Because they all get it. We have all been there.

She further described her experiences having to reach out to others for support, to ensure that she could engage her children in leisure activities.

I did have to rely on help a little bit. Which, as a parent, you just want to try and do it all for your kids, but there were times when I had to let our kids go with another family to his activities, just in attempt to juggle everything with all of the schedules. That was challenging.

Despite the effort channeled towards ensuring that each of her children were able to maintain participation in their sport activities, Addison expressed the stress of having to balance her time and physical presence at each of her children's leisure activities. Learning of similarities and common experiences with other military spouses seemed to be a catalyst towards being comfortable in asking for help. There was a strong sense of understanding across the mothers in the study, where they all could relate to the hardship of parenting on your own which, for some, supported their ability to facilitate leisure for their children.

Many of the mothers spoke to seeking out support from the military and non-military communities around them. Despite the efforts put towards planning and facilitating their family's leisure routine, a couple of the mothers expressed feeling unsupported by the community they resided in, specifically in regards to providing recreation programming as a means to provide mothers with a break from organizing family activities. Many of the mothers recognized this need as a mechanism of support towards their personal self-care. Megan expressed the desire for more community recreation activities in the planning of her children's leisure activities, and for the benefit of her own self-care:

I feel like sometimes [the community] does not have enough programs to put our kids into, or supports [for the mothers]. Like there are [few] programs that are offered to give us as mothers, some downtime... especially if our spouses are away [from home].

The interpreted intention behind Megan's action of sourcing out facilitating leisure to community programs for her children was to provide a break from her role of activity planning and organization. Megan's need for "a break" from this role during periods of solo parenting was reflected in the purposeful shift of leisure activities from family leisure pursuits to structured programs for her children. Sourcing out leisure facilitation that reduced the amount of effort required by Megan to plan and facilitate her children's activities is an example of mothers finding a balance between providing leisure opportunities for their children while ensuring their own self-care.

The third theme reveals the complexities mothers face in constructing emotional support and connectivity, while navigating the intensified demands of assuming, and thereby negotiating, parental roles. Mothers had to navigate managing their day-to-day family routines frequently, as a single parent, further compromising their ability to facilitate family leisure at a level that was perceived adequate in an ideal family setting. The external judgment, and ideology of successful parenting, associated with mothering in the military led many of the women to create a 'second family' through which support was elicited from other military mothers. In turn, the mothers shared experiences with other military mothers, supported their efforts in providing leisure pursuits for their children.

Establishing routine: The purposeful use of leisure

A desire for routine in day-to-day life was paramount in the experiences shared by the mothers in this study. In recognizing the impact of parental absenteeism on the children, mothers sought to provide normalcy and consistency through family leisure. However, with the development of a family leisure routine, came the challenge of spousal re-integration within family time, and negotiation of leisure facilitation roles and responsibilities. This theme is

comprised of four subthemes: (a) family leisure: an intended means to support familial routine during frequent transition; (b) spousal reintegration: influencing the facilitation of family leisure; (c) ensuring the children's well-being: optimal timing of family leisure; and, (d) purposeful family leisure: strategies for coping during times of familial transition.

Family leisure: An intended means to support familial routine during frequent transition. Many of the mothers described experiences that highlighted an intensified demand towards establishing stability and routine during times of transition, specifically military exercises and spousal deployment. While the experiences of transition were different across the mothers in the study, the constant unpredictability of the serving spouses' schedules, summoned the need for a consistent routine in day-to-day life. Mothers in the study employed leisure as a means to cope, and mitigate the stress associated with the frequent bouts of transition of their spouse. As Danni described: "We have routine, and we stick with it ... I feel that provides us something solid and some structure in life". While many expressed a need for routine, a couple of the mothers expressed the challenge associated with establishing, maintaining, and at times, re-establishing a routine within the household. Megan recalled this challenge: "the first few weeks are hard for me. And then it gets a bit easier, as we re-establish our routine of me being the single parent at home"

For Mila, the purpose of incorporating family leisure into her family's routine was to ensure that family time happens, and remains a priority, specifically during spousal deployment: "Making it part of the routine, so that it is not really an activity or a chore, it is just everyday life. So, in order to make that manageable, it has to be expected and planned into the routine, as much as you can". Despite the challenge associated with planning family leisure with the

unpredictable nature of their spouses' career, planning became evident and necessary when managing a household routine during deployment.

While the desire to establish routine was paramount across the experiences mothers shared, a couple of mothers expressed the challenge of maintaining routine during times of transition. Amidst the increased responsibility of managing paperwork, property sales, house-hunting trips, and school relocations that come with a posting, re-establishing a family routine in a new home environment presented added challenge for military mothers. The mothers in the study recalled the decline in family time, experienced during a posting, noting the temporary absence of routine. Addison described her experience:

[Family time] takes a back seat because you just get so busy... I felt a little guilty [telling them to play with friends], but I was just trying to entertain them. But we always knew that we would make up for that on the trip to our new home... [However], it would probably take a good couple of months before we were able to get back into routine.

The mothers spoke to the importance of maintaining a sense of normalcy for their children, as it pertains to family time and leisure. It was obvious that despite moving in and out of solo parenting, mothers recognized the importance of making time for family leisure, for it was shown to help the family as a whole adjust to changing life circumstances. Normalcy in day-to-day life was propelled by having family activities to do after school and on weekends, and ensuring that the children were being offered novel experiences. Putting these experiences into action provided the mothers with a sense of ease, in that they perceived their children to be better supported during transition. Anne illustrated this experience: "I try [to] keep consistency in the kids' lives. Because whether dad is home or not, consistency and structure is important to us so that their lives don't change a great deal, other than dad being home now". Consistent family

leisure became a priority in daily routines, as the mothers did not want their children to fall into emotional hardship with the coming and going of their father figure.

Spousal reintegration: Influencing the facilitation of family leisure. Many of the mothers in the study expressed the desire to create stability in their lives through a family leisure routine. However, after establishing a family leisure routine, mothers were faced with the common challenge of integrating their spouse into their routine. This would happen after temporary periods of solo parenting, and for some mothers, it threatened the sense of control and consistency in their lives.

Due to the nature of a military lifestyle, much of the family time described by the mothers in this study did not involve the serving member spouse. This rendered the mother as the primary facilitator and planner of family leisure. While the overarching aim of providing family leisure was to achieve quality family time, a couple of mothers discussed their conflicting feelings in how they perceived their ideal family leisure experiences. The mothers with these experiences expressed that, while family leisure may be, at times, more enjoyable with their spouse not involved, there remained a desire to have all family members participate. Sylvia described this conflict:

[Family leisure] is hard. Because I want to enjoy it, but I feel like I, I hate to admit this, but I almost feel like I enjoy it more when it's just me and the kids, because I'm not used to all that family time, perhaps. But it is a nice feeling, but it's a feeling that it should happen more, basically.

For Cathy, the challenge to facilitating leisure was in relation to motivating her spouse to participate in family time:

I find a lot of times it is difficult to get [my husband] to want to get out and do anything leisurely [with the family]. I find when he gets back from a [military] exercise or from being away, he just kind of wants to be a bum. It is like pulling teeth to be like 'hey let's go out, let's go do this, or let's take the girls here or there'... Sometimes I will go with the girls [by myself], and sometimes I won't. Because I don't want to do everything by myself all of the time. I want to have someone with me, a partner. [I] like to have that support [in family time].

Cathy often found herself excluding her spouse when he returned from being away from home: Oh, let me tell you. Having him come back and try to integrate into the family is a huge challenge. I am usually sending him for time-outs. Like stop yelling at the kids for stupid stuff, and just go! Like go to your room, read a book, go play on your phone, just let us be. We are perfectly fine, we are in our routine, we know what we're doing. Just get out of our way.

Given the challenge of re-integration, many of the mothers spoke to the effort that becomes directed towards re-establishing the spousal and parental relationship. Amber highlighted the adjustment process of having her spouse return from extended periods away from home: "It is very important that we make time for each other. It takes a few days for him to de-stress... [and have] him adapt back into the family routine". She recognizes her husband's adjustment from "single mode" to "family mode" upon his return home.

Addison spoke to the challenge of integrating her spouse into a pre-established routine, after undergoing an imposed restriction (IR) posting. An IR posting is when a Canadian Armed Forces member is authorized to proceed unaccompanied, without their family, to their new place

of duty. An IR posting is intended to be a short-term option to mitigate potential conflict between military service and familial obligations (Military family services, 2016):

We had four years there where my husband missed out [on family events], the kids missed out [on times with their father], and it was hard. And [the challenge was] trying to build that relationship up again. For me, I became the disciplinarian... Dad would come home for a visit, and it was like ‘yay dad!’, and he would never say no [to the children]. And, I would be like, ‘no, you can’t disrupt our routine!’

Breaking away from the role of solo parenting was a challenge for many of the mothers in the study. Upon their spouses’ return, a couple of mothers expressed the continuation of solo parenting, feeling challenged to be inclusive and not treating their spouse as an additional child. Mila, a mother of two and military spouse of nine years, struggled to adapt the routine to the coming and going of her spouse:

Like it is hard transitioning between relying on him when he is home, and then not relying on him when he is gone. So, I just play the primary role consistently, and finding the routine of things. We really try to keep the routine consistent when dad is home or not, so for that reason my role is basically [being a] single mom.

While some mothers viewed spousal re-integration as a challenge, others saw it as a seamless transition back into originating parental roles and responsibilities. Mila spoke to her husband’s return as a break from parenting and leisure facilitation: “When he is home, he pushes for [family time] and likes planning activities...Especially when he is gone on course for six weeks, when he gets back... I just want to chill, and he’s like ‘okay... let’s go!’ ”.

Ensuring the children’s wellbeing: Optimal timing of family leisure. The mothers’ experiences of solo parenting and their desire for routine stemmed from their concern for how

the children are coping with constant change and transition. Throughout the interviews with the mothers, there was discussion regarding the mothers' concern for the emotional well-being of their children during times of spousal absenteeism and continuous change in routine. Brittani explained the challenge of supporting her daughters' (two and four years old) emotions during transition: "that's the hardest part...watching the stress my kids go through. When my husband is gone for two weeks and home for two weeks... the girls don't really have a concept of time, so they usually get stressed".

Given the concern pertaining to the adjustment of their children, a noticeable amount of effort was channeled into planning and preparing for events of transition. Amber, a mother of seven and military spouse of seventeen years, expressed worry about her children coping with their father coming and going, and the steps taken ready her family:

Each of them acts differently when dad leaves. And even then, it depends on their ages. I find they each react differently, every time, when dad goes away. So, it's preparing different reward systems, and different responses to their behavior. Because, they usually act out negatively as soon as he leaves for a couple weeks.

Amber's use of a reward system for positive behavior played an integral part in giving the children choice in family activities. By "collecting" positive behaviors, the children were able to choose to spend individual time with one or both of their parents (once enough positive behaviors were collected), or as a family as a whole:

[My husband and I] collect one on one, or even group time with our kids, and it builds in a bank. We all like Dr. Who [except for my husband]...so, when he's gone, we sit down and watch Dr. Who [as a family]. That would be a reward. Right now, we are reading a chapter a night of Harry Potter [as a reward]. So, when I'm home and not busy, we will

sit down, as long as they've had a good day, and read Harry Potter... It's not usually a big thing, rather [small examples of family time].

The concern of the children's well-being was shown to impact the decisions and choices the mothers made. The mothers expressed feelings of guilt over their children's reactions, as a result of their spouses' absence and the impact of the military lifestyle, specifically having to navigate familial postings and parental deployments. Addison discussed the impact of the military lifestyle on her daughter, highlighting the struggle to support and nurture her children when experiencing battles with mental health.

I would have to say the military has taken the most toll on [our daughter]. Bullying and mental health...I think I counted ten different schools in six years. You know and trying to fit in and make friends. I felt bad for her. And then she got bullied, and then the mental health started happening. But we stood by her and got her through the hard times.

Many of the mothers discussed the reality of how family routines and responsibilities change, thereby intensifying the reliance on, and presumably the responsibility of, mother figures. As a result, mothers described a conscious effort towards developing and facilitating family time, as an attempt to demonstrate care and attention towards the children. For Brittani, making quality time for her children became a personal priority, despite the compounded responsibility:

I have to consciously involve them in everything that I do, because I don't want them to feel like they have been forgotten. Whenever my husband goes away, my daughter tends to have a harder time at school drop-off, and is like 'you better be here to pick me up mom'... I [found that it has helped] to give the girls different experiences and something new and exciting. Keeping them very stimulated, because during that time it's not that

they forgot about daddy, but at least they are not sitting still trying to keep themselves busy and thinking of dad.

The mothers' use of leisure is displayed as a means to protect the children from the emotional hardship that coincides the experiences of managing a military lifestyle, particularly when the father figure is away from home.

Purposeful family leisure: Strategies for coping during times of familial transition.

The mothers in this study all shared how they would overcompensate, as a means to apologize for, and distract their children from their father's absenteeism. Overcompensation, by means of intensified family leisure activities, was a conscious and strategic effort to help their children cope with the continuous coming and going of their fathers. Many of the mothers spoke to the benefit of having their children be school-aged and out of the house during daytime hours, as it offered an opportunity for someone else to be tasked with distracting them for a period of time. However, for Brittani, having both her daughters, aged two and four years, not at school age meant that she was the primary source of distraction during times of transition. Brittani described her efforts into supporting the emotional reactions of her daughters:

I realized a little while ago, maybe subconsciously, I tend to make things slightly more fun and am a little more relaxed. And I don't know if that's 'cause I want to ensure my kids are extra happy, just 'cause they do miss dad all the time and they're asking for him, and stuff like that. So, I try to be a fun mom, especially when they're away, when he's away. I try to do more, just to keep them occupied to, like we'll go on way more walks, normally when it's nice out, normally we'll do one walk a day. But last time when he was away, you know we went on three walks a day. Like literally, like morning, lunch

and dinner, just to do something because it's like when it stops, it's like then the kids start asking, and then their minds start going, and so it's just like constant movement.

Many of the mothers described experiences of overcompensating through family leisure primarily during periods preceding, during, and proceeding transition (i.e., deployments, unit exercises, and postings). Mila described the purpose of overcompensation, leading up to a family posting:

Perhaps in the lead-up [to a posting, our family leisure changes], because we wanted to spend more time together, and do a lot of activities together as a family. Even right now, I find we are doing a lot, because it almost feels like we are apologizing for the posting. It's like 'okay, let's go do all of these fun things now, so you don't hate us when we have to pack-up and move', right?

Brittani shared this sentiment, in response to having to manage her children's initial reaction to her husband being away from home: "The first day is awesome for them, because I overcompensate... After a couple of days and daddy hasn't been home to tuck them in, it's a lot of bedtime snuggles... I have to consciously make more time for them".

In addition to Brittani, similar sentiments to the above comments were shared by multiple mothers in the study, including that of Mila, Cathy, and Addison. Overall, the mission of these mothers was to keep the children busy with activities and novel leisure experiences. Anne highlighted her intent to distract herself and her children from what is happening around them: "We keep busy, because you have to. We have done swimming lessons, and piano lessons, and we make sure we are going to the park and hanging out with friends. Just keep everyone's minds off of it". Taking into consideration the added responsibility of solo parenting, Anne put a lot of

effort into incorporating activities for the kids, and activities for the family, into her family's leisure routine.

Lastly, this theme described the intensive focused mothers placed on ensuring their children's wellbeing, and the strategic use of leisure to create a sense of normalcy and family togetherness for their children. The continual renegotiation of roles, and reintegration of the paternal figure, caused for disruption in day-to-day routine. Tension was noted in the re-integration practices and perception of spousal involvement, between the husband's need for self-care (i.e., choosing to distain from family leisure facilitation), and the desire to reproduce gender roles within the parental relationship (i.e., mothers resisting the re-negotiation of roles and responsibilities with the return of their husband). In spite of the tension, mothers emphasized the desire to facilitate father-child relationships, and staged leisure opportunities leading up to, during, and following parental absenteeism.

Chapter Summary

Highlights from the four major themes shed light on the mothers' strategic use of leisure, and further, the intensive mothering practices mothers utilized to gauge their successes and failures in supporting their families. Mothers faced the challenge of having to reconstruct their family unit time after time, renegotiating parental roles and responsibilities, all while continuously (re-)creating a 'second family' for support.

The need for support was heightened as the mothers often felt misunderstood and judged in their role as a military spouse and mother, challenged mothers' abilities to elicit emotional connectivity from those who did not share the military mother identity. This sense of judgement produced ideals of what motherhood is to look like in the context of the military environment, which proved unattainable for some of the mothers. These ideals minimized the creation of novel

friendships (i.e., frequently limiting them to other military spouses), and was reflected in how mothers performed and displayed their family's leisure participation. As an outcome, the women immersed themselves completely into being a mother, forgoing self-care and career development to ensure complete dedication could be placed on their family functioning.

The mothers described intentional effort to engage in neoliberal self-care practices as a means to support familial functioning. Shadowed by feelings of guilt, and motivated by ethic of care and the idealization of military motherhood, personal leisure was used as a vehicle to maintain family cohesion and adaptability. This approach to well-being highlights the tension of the term 'self-care' and reflects the mothers' intentions towards developing their capacity as a mother (i.e., making them a better mom). Intersecting the idea of intensive mothering further, were the mothers balance in their efforts that drove the display of family leisure as a means to perform in accordance with the idealization of their role, and within the parameters of their lived experiences. Adapting performance to meet the ideal military mother standards, proved common when viewed through the lens of other military families and under notions of spousal rank, adding an additional hurdle to achieving 'success' as a military mother. Opposing poles of thought were highlighted in the perspectives shared by the mothers, thus highlighting a diverse and complex set of lived experiences.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to understand the family leisure experiences of mothers who are military spouses to military personnel (MSMPs). Central to the investigation was the exploration of how mothers facilitated family leisure, in and outside of times of transition. The guiding research questions were; what are the factors that enable and constrain that facilitation; how does the purpose of family leisure change across military life circumstances; and how do mothers personally experience family leisure. In Chapter Four, the MSMPs described the underlying challenges and hardships faced, sharing experiences that included a lack of control in their day-to-day lives, experiencing moments of solo-parenting, and having to continuously establish and re-establish their familial routine. The findings suggested that family leisure played an integral role in supporting the military spouses and their children during periods of transition, acting as a medium through which mothers could find purpose and ensure quality family time.

This section will address the research objectives guiding the study and further inform the literature on the experiences of (a) being a mother and military spouse, (b) the direct impact of the military lifestyle on perceptions of control, (c) resistance and resilience during solo-parenting and (d) purposeful leisure routines. The discussion of the findings is organized in relation to the key findings presented in Chapter Four. Each of the major themes outlined in Chapter Four are discussed in relation to existing literature. Limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, and the implications of practice for leisure practitioners, the military community, and those serving military families at large are offered.

MSMPs Experiences in a Military Family

The findings of this study illuminated how having limited support in navigating periods of transition and personal sacrifice contributed to the challenges associated with the day-to-day experiences of a MSMP. This section aims to highlight some of the factors that enable and constrain leisure facilitation for MSMPs, in relation to this study's findings and the existing literature. Spouses' deployments, their requirements to be away from home for exercises and training, and notices of postings resulted in the MSMPs experiencing noticeable changes in their familial routines. Living and functioning as a single parent, the mothers spoke to the compounded stress of having to navigate intensified roles and responsibilities, specifically that of managing all household duties and childcare.

Managing transition: Experiencing a loss of support and role change. Much of the intensified stress was a direct outcome of the mothers' perceived lack of support from friends and extended family. MSMPs described instances where they felt judged by their extended family and close friends during times of personal hardship. Judgement over their chosen lifestyle and marital expectations often left the MSMPs feeling misunderstood in their role as a military spouse and mother. These feelings of misunderstanding often resulted in the MSMPs restricting the personal information and life events they chose to share with family and friends. Minimizing day-to-day challenges meant mothers could not access the support they needed from key family members and close friends who were not familiar with the complexities of a military lifestyle. In addition to the hardship of navigating daily challenges with reduced emotional support, the choice to restrict the sharing of information forced mothers to actively pursue and establish new friendships and support systems with each posting and relocation.

The differences in life experiences compared with friends and family members challenged the MSMPs willingness to communicate life events, affecting the formation of novel friendships and maintenance of existing relationships. Mailey, Merhson, Joyce, and Irwin's (2018) research revealed similar findings, such that upon having faced frequent relocations, spouses often found themselves surrounded by individuals with different values, backgrounds, and life experiences. Further, Mailey et al. revealed the intensified challenge of forming or maintaining relationships with civilian friends due to difficulty understanding and empathizing with the other's lifestyle. Unique to the mothers in this study was the outcomes of feeling misunderstood. MSMPs limited their sharing of personal experiences and the hardship they endured, distancing themselves from interactions through which they would have to entertain the idea of having to explain themselves. As a result, the women often found themselves limiting their friendships to other military spouses, and creating a 'second family' comprised of other military families to fulfill their familial and needs (i.e., emotional connectivity and parental supports). The lack of understanding among friends and family showed an intensified impression of isolation and thereby, experiences of perceived lack of support in their day-to-day lives.

Personal sacrifice: Selfless devotion to family. Frequently mentioned across the experiences shared by the MSMPs was an overarching notion of sacrifice. When asked 'If someone did not know anything about living in a military family, how would you describe what it is like living in a military family based on your experience?', almost all of the MSMPs highlighted the unavoidable outcome of having to sacrifice something in life in order to support the military family lifestyle. The military lifestyle made it difficult for MSMPs to pursue career development and goals. Similarly, Castaneda and Harrell (2008) revealed that many military spouses cite

frequent and disruptive moves as a primary obstacle in personal career progression. Negative outcomes have been found in spouses who have relocated for the benefit of the other spouse's career. These 'trailing spouses' are more likely to experience a loss in their own career development (Cooke & Bailey, 1999), warranting a lower income (Jacobsen & Levin, 1997), reduced hours and weeks worked (LeClere & McLaughlin, 1997), and an increased count in negative attitudes toward work (Spitze, 1984) in comparison to spouses who have not experienced a relocation.

Many of the MSMPs were disheartened by having to sacrifice their career goals; however, despite these emotions, it was evident that the sacrifice resulted in an intentional effort to maintain self-care, specifically engaging in leisure as a means to support their familial well-being. Leisure literature indicates that women often feel guilty about taking time for leisure and for themselves (Bialeschki & Michener, 1994). Many of the MSMPs illustrated a desire to engage in their personal leisure away from the household; however, they were unable to move away from the feelings of guilt and the ethic of care for their family.

The mothers engaged in personal leisure as a modality to maintain and ensure appropriate support for the family unit. Lafrance (2011) further supports this notion, in that women in her study discussed leisure in ways that position it as something women *should* do as a means to encourage the health of their children, and support their role as caregiver. She found that for women, while recognizing self-care as an imperative practice to replenish one's energy, the importance of personal leisure centered around the outcome of benefiting others, not just the self. In both Lafrance's and the current study, the women placed their needs as secondary to the needs of others, specifically their children. The MSMPs present implications of the ongoing and continuous efforts towards being a good mother through their discourse justifying their personal

leisure. Frequent in the discourse were references of feeling ‘guilt’ for the hardship their children experienced as part of a military lifestyle. This guilt imposed greater perceived responsibility for the mothers, resulting in overcompensation and child-centered practices within their leisure.

Over time, the definition of ethic of care has extended into intensive mothering. Intensive mothering refers to heightened parenting role expectations that have emerged for mothers to overwhelmingly prioritize their child’s emotional, physical, and social needs and development — nearly at all cost (Douglas & Michaels, 2004; Hays, 1996; Knoester & Fields, 2019; Lareau, 2003; O’Brien, Lloyd, and Riot, 2017; Stone, 2007). Implications of intensive mothering in the context of the military institution have received an additional label; ‘military mother work’, to encompass the extension of maternal intensity military mothers endure. Coined by Murray (2017), military mother work is unique in the sense that in raising their children, mothers must adapt to deployments and all the risks associated with combat. Like the participants in Murray’s study, the MSMPs were intensely child focused, displaying surmountable love and affection, and the complete devotion of their time and energy to their children. They expressed an increasing concern for their children's adjustment during the times of transition and expressed a desire to ensure their children's needs were met, despite any maternal consequences.

Murray (2017) argues that the defining factor between military mothers and their civilian comparison group was the intensified feelings of love and devotion onto their children. While mothers in general feel love and affection towards their children and are concerned of their emotional and physical well-being, the lives of military families are burdened by the fear and uncertainty of the well-being and physical safety of their husbands/their children’s fathers. This

results in mothers making a more conscious effort to maintain stress-free home environments for their children. The sentiment of military mother work proved true across the experiences shared by the MSMPs in this study. Mothers poured their emotional resources into ensuring the well-being of their children, both during and outside of times of transition, overcompensating to distract and protect their children from the realities of their parental absence.

Child-centered priorities and the intensive mothering practices present a potentially troublesome approach to family leisure in the context as military families, given the stress and personal hardship endured. Many mothers described leisure pursuits, that could be argued were not freely chosen (i.e., optimal leisure preferences), but rather chosen on the basis to serve the basic purpose (i.e., alone time away from the family unit). Given the host of physical, emotional, and social benefits leisure offers, some mothers were allowing some opportunities to mitigate personal stressors slip through their grasps. There is a need to elicit experiences that allow mothers to attend to their personal leisure objectives, without inviting feelings of ‘guilt’. With the focus weighing heavily on their family’s well-being, negotiating priorities and shifting the recognition of the leisure benefits from others to one’s self may offer opportunity for mothers to access optimal leisure activities while reaping the personal benefits of leisure.

Literature on the emotional geography of leisure time among mothers with young children speaks to the inability of mothers to justify creating space for leisure time physical activity (LTPA) if they hold the judgement that they have not fulfilled their domestic and maternal responsibilities (O’Brien et al., 2017). O’Brien et al. found that in these instances, mothers elicited self-blame as a function of their inability to create leisure time physical activity (LTPA), attributing it to their own ‘laziness’ instead of the performance and challenges of being a mother. In contrast, a majority of MSMPs in this study attributed much of the challenges they

faced in facilitating their family's leisure to being a mother within the context of the military institution. There were almost no accounts of self-blame across the MSMPs. Instead, the MSMPs were quick to acknowledge their achievement, and speak to the pride they felt in managing leisure facilitation in spite of their familial context.

These findings extend the current understanding of personal leisure among military spouses, putting into context the varying motivations behind personal leisure, and developing further the definition of military 'mother work'. The intention of MSMPs to participate in personal leisure (i.e., going to the gym to work-out, combining family time with other military spouses, and going out for a run when their children were sleeping) was not to better their own personal well-being, but rather as an act to support the functioning and well-being of their children and husband. The mothers recognized that a low in their emotional well-being would have a direct impact on the effectiveness of their parenting. The MSMPs broadly demonstrate the sacrifice of self, in order to ensure the functioning of others. The assessment of their family's needs predicted much of the mothers' choices to participate or not in personal leisure.

Lack of Control

The findings of this study helped deepen the understanding of the mothers' experiences facilitating leisure for their family, specifically their perception of possessing little to no control in the lives, and the challenge it posed in planning and facilitating their family's leisure experiences. Interviews with the MSMPs revealed that mothers viewed family leisure as one of the methods employed in an attempt to establish a sense of control and feelings of purpose in their lives. This section focuses on the research objectives related to family leisure and the leisure experiences of military spouses, specifically the constraining and enabling factors women

face in facilitating their family's leisure. Further, links will be made between research findings and existing literature.

The unpredictability of family leisure: Scheduling for the unknown. The unpredictable nature of their spouses' absenteeism and irregular experiences of the military lifestyle, specifically not knowing the duration or timings of the spouse being away from home, was described as impacting the mothers' ability to plan family leisure. When it comes to leisure, the act of planning often involved organizing activities to fulfill an intended experience among those who participate. However, for the families in this study, mothers were forced to plan for the unknown, often resulting in an experience that varied from the original intention. Mothers, as facilitators, had to be flexible and adaptable in their preparation for leisure activities, ensuring that the execution of leisure experiences could be reworked across variable circumstances. Many of the MSMPs expressed having to generate varying plans to execute their family's leisure, recognizing that in a moment's notice, they may be forced to resort to plan b, plan c, or even plan d. While some mothers found purpose in their role of family leisure facilitation, others found it to be a frustrating feat, often resulting in avoiding the action of planning altogether and overseeing spontaneous family activities instead.

As a result of their inability to plan and schedule with certainty, many of the MSMPs frequently engaged in spontaneous leisure pursuits. Daly (2001) explored the meaning of family time, only to highlight the paradox of the 'ideal' family activity, where parents desired family activities, but had a preference towards unscheduled activities that developed spontaneously. Put simply, parents wanted leisure to happen, but at the same time they wanted it to happen without their influence. Attributed to the scheduling demands presented in their day-to-day lives, parents sought to engage in family time that would bring about familial cohesion that did not encompass

the constraints of everyday responsibilities and stressors. Within the context of highly scheduled familial lives, Daly argued that in the pursuit of family time, parents expressed the expectation that it be spontaneous in nature. Valuing spontaneous pursuits was produced by the perception that by removing the family from a schedule, leisure offered family time free of structure and schedule.

While Daly's (2001) study included both paternal and maternal figures, the everyday experiences of family time activity proved similar to the MSMPs in the current study. The MSMPs in the study reflected on their inability to plan, and therefore facilitate much of their family leisure pursuits in a spontaneous fashion; however, they differed from the participants in Daly's study in that structured activities remained the preference. The women viewed the scheduling and planning of family activities as an avenue of control in their lives, finding pride and purpose in their role of overseeing their family's leisure. Unlike the ideals of family activities being spontaneous and not influenced by the parents highlighted by Daly (2001), the MSMPs described a preference towards maintaining control over planning and scheduling of family activities. In fact, the mothers frequently attributed spontaneity as a negative outcome of being unable to schedule, rather than consider its potential in alleviating their roles and responsibilities in facilitating leisure.

Given the challenge of planning, or intentionally not planning family leisure pursuits, the mothers in this study expressed a shift in leisure activities from being strictly family based to incorporating friends and other families. The frequent incorporation of other families into their family leisure routines provided stability and assurance for the MSMPs. Even in the instance of last-minute demands of their spouses' work, the mothers would have the support of other mothers in seeing their planned family leisure activities through. The mothers described their

inability to rely on their spouses, and their proceeding action of taking control over the roles related to their family's leisure pursuits (i.e., roles of planning, organizing, and facilitating leisure).

Establishing control through leisure facilitation. While the MSMPs in the current study expressed feelings of obligation towards having to organize and facilitate family leisure activities, there were some who highlighted excitement in being able to provide novel leisure experiences for their children. The experiences described by the MSMPs highlight the facilitation and use of both core and balance activities to support their family's functioning, and support the findings of Zabriskie and McCormick (2001), of whom highlighted that for families to address both stability and change or adaptability, both relative amounts of core and balance family leisure involvement is essential. Core activities categorize often home-based, low cost, regular everyday activities that families participate in together. Participation in these leisure activities support the family's needs for familiarity, structure, and stability, thereby supporting efforts towards familial cohesion. Conversely, as that of balance leisure activities, which encompass special and occasional events (i.e., family vacations), sustaining the needs for novelty, variety and change, thereby promoting familial adaptability (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001).

Facilitating family leisure provided the MSMPs a sense of purpose, specifically feeling a sense of responsibility for overseeing the development of family leisure activities. The mothers revealed their perception of purpose through the discussion of their commitment to ensuring that participation in leisure activities occurred on a regular basis. This was a commitment that included planning, organizing schedules and timelines, and coordinating with other families.

As the primary facilitators of leisure activities, both during and outside periods of transition, the mothers expressed a desire to take the lead in activity sourcing, planning, and facilitation. In a way, by maintaining precedence over these roles, the mothers were able to develop a sense of control in their role as a MSMP, thereby indirectly experiencing purpose in their day-to-day lives. Both mothers and fathers view family leisure as an important parental responsibility (Shaw & Dawson, 2001; Trussell & Shaw, 2007). However, specifically within the context in which children can be physically active, feel a sense of belonging, and learn values including the importance of family (Shaw & Dawson, 2001), the responsibility of family leisure plays a significant role in the lives of women. MSMPs described immense responsibility of ensuring the outcomes of physical activity participation and emotional stability for their children, specifically during parental absenteeism.

Existing literature on family leisure states that leisure is not freely chosen or intrinsically motivating for parents, mothers in particular (Harrington, 2005; Shaw & Dawson, 2001). Further, women are inclined to feel responsible for the facilitation of family leisure, and it has been suggested that time spent with family can be viewed as an obligation for women (Larson, Gillman, & Richards, 1997). Within the current study, some of the MSMPs described how planning family leisure activities brought them enjoyment and pleasure. In some instances, some of the mothers described themselves as being ‘planners’, thereby positively supporting their role as leisure facilitator, and giving the mothers a sense of pride and purpose in such roles. Conversely, Shaw and Dawson (2001), in their research on family leisure, found that parents deemed the organization of family activities as a parental obligation, with the expectation that activity facilitation be a necessary part of a parental role. Whether enjoyable or not, Shaw and Dawson’s research further suggests that family leisure is not freely chosen for the mother figure.

Facilitating leisure within the context of the military lifestyle proved purposeful in the eyes of some mothers, offering opportunity for enjoyment and pride in their parental role.

As an outcome of the mother's desire to oversee and control family leisure facilitation, some of the mothers described instances where they took away the freedom and intrinsic motivational aspects of leisure for their spouses. The MSMPs laid down expectations for what their family leisure was to look like, including the quantity and quality of their family leisure, leading up to and following the return of their spouses leave for work. Fathers, in these instances, may not have had the opportunity to experience these family activities as leisure, but rather as obligations that they had to meet prior to their departure.

Hornberger et al. (2010) found that while family leisure functioned similarly across single and dual-parented families, family leisure played a significant role in single parent households. Because single-parent families reported less family leisure involvement, greater emphasis is placed on the quality of their family leisure. For military families, when considering additional challenges MSMPs experienced when solo parenting (i.e., work demands, time constraints, challenged emotional support systems, and intensified roles and responsibilities), it is possible that family leisure involvement played a greater role among these families. The findings from this study highlighted the mothers' desire to produce quality family time in their family leisure activities, where the attention is focused solely on the family unit, during leisure pursuits. Similar to the findings of Kremer-Sadlik, Fatigante, and Fasulo (2008), the meaning of family time (and more broadly of family) is linked to the experience and the desire of privacy and separation from the outside world that threatens to draw family members away from one another. Further, the way of being together and doing "family time" requires special times and specific activities such as child-oriented activities.

The traditional view of quality family time reflects the romanticized version of family life, by placing emphasis on having dual-parent families spending ‘quality’ time together with the intent of enhancing the collective well-being (Daly, 2001). This central ideal challenged the MSMPs in their attempts to facilitate family time, given their experienced lack of spousal support. The pressures of family time and the efforts associated in facilitating familial pursuits were heightened for many of the mothers, given the unique pattern of family and work structures. Literature to date has recognized that the achievement of quality time requires a purposeful effort on behalf of the mother (Daly, 2001; Kremer-Sadlik, et al., 2008). For a majority of the MSMPs, quality time as a family, and by extension the quality of one’s parenting, was measured based on the amount of effort they put into attending to her children, and engaging in appropriate activities (that would interest the child rather than the adult).

Measurements used to gauge ‘quality’ included, but were not limited to, child participation, behavioral responses from the children, and the provision of novel leisure experiences for the children. However, despite efforts aimed at providing quality family time, the effects of military life on their children’s well-being often complicated the MSMPs’ attempts. Mothers expressed a lack of quality family time, specifically with both parents present. These findings were similar to Daly (2001), who found that the most common lament associated with the experience of family time was that there was never enough. However, what stood apart from Daly’s findings were the focus on the extent of time over the quality measurement of the time. The primary concern among Daly’s participants was that they had insufficient time with their children, as opposed to a concern with the quality of time. A repeated sentiment across the MSMPs was a desire for quality time as a family especially when their husbands were home.

There was recognition that time was limited, and therefore the intent of leisure facilitation, no matter how limited, was to ensure family togetherness and a positive experience.

Being a Married, Single Parent: Adapting to the Roles of Solo-parenting

The MSMPs in the study spoke to the experiences of having to navigate the added challenges of sourcing additional childcare and other household responsibilities (i.e., making meals; engaging in bedtime routines) that become the primary responsibility of the mother during times of spousal absenteeism. Literature reflects these findings, where mothers expressed having to face additional roles and responsibilities when navigating parenthood on their own. When the spousal figure from whom she can draw support is absent, mothers display conscious effort towards developing novel familial leisure routines and methods for navigating new roles (Bowling & Sherman, 2008). Because the MSMPs move in and out of single parenthood in a marital context, there seems to be additional pressures placed on leisure facilitation with the intent to ensuring positive family functioning and involvement.

Resilience through transition: Overcoming the challenges of solo parenting. During deployments and away-from-home field exercises, the spouse at home assumes sole responsibility for running the household, maintaining family functioning, and, in the case of this study, eliciting and sourcing childcare and activities for their children. Mothers whose partners have been deployed or away from the home on a temporary basis, experience motherhood through the lens of a single mother or, as Trussell and Shaw (2007) described in the situation of farm women, experience “single parenthood within the marital context” (p. 382). These women experience single motherhood, despite being married. Mothers navigating the parental challenges of farm life and military family, share these types of spousal relationships, which places the onus on the mothers to oversee the leisure for the family unit and the children.

The findings shed light on some of the challenges the MSMPs faced when having to navigate parenthood alone, specifically factors that enabled and constrained the facilitation of family leisure. MSMPs experienced frequent bouts of solo parenting that had consequences for facilitating and executing family leisure. During periods of deployments and military training exercises, many MSMPs had to navigate their children's activities and family leisure experiences on their own which, for most mothers, was stressful. As mentioned previously, family leisure, whether or not it is deemed enjoyable, is often not freely chosen for the mother (Harrington, 2005; Shaw & Dawson, 2001). For the MSMPs, this experience was heightened given the significant amount of time spent filling the role of sole parent and no spousal support for leisure facilitation.

Frequent relocations influenced the ability to maintain and develop supportive relationships and resulted in the MSMPs experiencing feelings of isolation and being alone on their journey. MSMPs described being alone in relation to not knowing anyone in their new community (posting), and having to manage the logistics of moving without their spousal's support. Literature has highlighted the military spousal experience with isolation and feelings of loneliness; however, it is limited to instances of navigating spousal absenteeism as a result of deployment (Borah & Fina, 2017; Huebner, Mancini, Wilcox, Grass, & Grass, 2007; Padden, Connors, & Agazio, 2011; Werner & Shannon, 2013). Borah and Fina (2017), who analyzed the perspectives of military and veteran spouses on the relationship between military life and marital strain, revealed that spouses expressed feelings of isolation and abandonment due to frequent time apart and military deployments. This was the case for the MSMPs in this study; however, their feelings of isolation were deepened further by the limited emotional support they received from family and friends who did not understand what it is like being a military spouse. This

limited support existed while mothers were striving to maintain the well-being of their children. While Borah and Fina's (2017) findings were restricted to the experience of deployment, the current study offered a deeper understanding through the broader examination of spousal experiences, taking into consideration deployments, absences due to training/exercises, and family postings.

Experiencing feelings of isolation and the expression of a loss of a support in the mothers' day-to-day lives, directly influenced the mothers' ability to facilitate their children's leisure. For some mothers, the process of organizing and planning leisure pursuits proved to be overwhelming, specifically during times where the mothers were forced to take on additional household chores and responsibilities. Time was a valuable resource among the mothers, with a majority of that time channeled into their children's activities. Despite the support elicited from their 'second family', the mothers perceived their children's well-being as their primary responsibility, and therefore expressed an obligation towards ensuring the provision of novel leisure experiences and many opportunities for leisure engagement. Sporadic spousal absenteeism and being removed from supportive friendships and family supports complicated mothers' time reserves that were set aside for creating children's leisure activities while also producing feelings of guilt and obligation driving their facilitation efforts.

Family leisure experiences while solo parenting seemed to create two experiences for the MSMPs: (a) they felt overwhelmed by the responsibility of organizing and facilitating family leisure, and (b) when the MSMPs did plan leisure and were successful in doing so, it produced a source of pride and sense of accomplishment. The MSMPs in this study expressed the conscious efforts aimed at overcoming the parental challenges they faced, specifically organizing and facilitating family leisure on their own; however, in doing so, some of the mothers expressed

experiencing a ‘role overload’ during spousal absenteeism. Pollmann-Schult (2018) highlighted the ‘role-overload’ and time pressures single mothers experience given the absence of support from a spouse or live-in partner. While a majority of the mothers expressed a genuine interest towards engaging in leisure activities with their children, they frequently resorted to combining family leisure time with other families, and enrolling their children in community recreation programs, as a means to find relief in their facilitation roles. Eliciting parental relief through childcare services, which included recreation programming, has been shown to reduce the stressors of role overload and associated time pressures (Mirowsky & Ross, 2002; Pollman-Schult, 2018).

Notably, experiences where the MSMPs did plan leisure pursuits and were successful in doing so, produced an overarching sense of pride and accomplishment. This sentiment was also found in Waters’ (2002) discourse among ‘astronaut spouses’ managing households alone while their spouses work overseas. The ‘astronaut spouses’ experienced a majority of their negative experiences within the initial stages of their separation and settlement. However, the women were quick to acknowledge the positive development of their independence and overall quality of life over time. Similar to that of the MSMPs, the mothers expressed a sense of accomplishment in their ability to overcome the first year of hardship following their arrival to a new home and navigating motherhood alone. Additionally, in analyzing the ‘problems and strengths’ among single-parented families, Richards and Schmiede (1993) revealed that adversities that were overcome were a source of pride among single parents. Pride in personal growth encompassed feelings of having succeeded despite self-doubt and uncertainty, and approaching times of hardship with a positive outlook. Parents expressed their sense of pride in their descriptions of their parenting, family communication, and family management skills –

traditional indicators for strong single parent families (Hanson, 1986). While solo parenting was not considered easy across the participants, it was expressed to become easier with time.

The current study extends the understanding of solo parenting and the perceptions of pride and accomplishment across single parents. While MSMPs do not experience single parenting on a continuous basis, they experience many instances of motherhood on their own, accompanied by limited parental support. Amidst the challenges of military motherhood, many of the mothers acknowledged their continued personal growth as a mother, and the sense of pride gained in overcoming obstacles of motherhood and solo parenting. These findings broaden the scope of parental dynamics that share some of the complexities of single parenthood.

It takes a village: Support for leisure facilitation. It was evident that the MSMPs experienced levels of stress when navigating periods of solo parenting, many expressing the distain from having to navigate family activities on their own, highlighting the desire to have support on a day-to-day basis. What stood out as a deliberate action among all MSMPs in the study was the conscious action of seeking out support and, in a sense, creating a ‘second family’ to provide relief during spousal absenteeism. In creating a ‘second family’, the mothers in the study found themselves supported by an ‘unspoken alliance’, or a mutual understanding, with other military spouses. It is evident that within the military lifestyle, there are frequent solo-parenting experiences. Solo parenting, on the one hand, left mothers constrained to having to oversee day-to-day activities by themselves; however, it also provided an opportunity for the mothers to reach out and connect with other mothers. The MSMPs spoke to ‘building a village’ and eliciting support from other military spouses, specifically during times of spousal absenteeism. The mothers put effort into sourcing out, and creating a ‘second family’ through which they could elicit emotional connectivity and parental support. In doing so, the mothers not

only acquired maternal relationships that encouraged their own personal well-being, but also established a sustainable support system for their children's leisure involvement and participation.

Stories of other 'trailing wives' highlighted similar experiences of having to navigate a drastic change in routine imposed by a relocation. Waters (2002) brought attention to the personal experiences of those who live within an 'astronaut family', specifically the women who undergo international migration to benefit the career progression of their spouse. Waters highlights the various negative implications of family mobility to include the adjustment period that takes place prior to establishing a manageable family routine. Through migration, the majority of women had given up their career, thereby sacrificing their economic independence (Bonney & Love 1991; Halfacree 1995). They had lost the tangible and emotional support of friends and extended family (Creese, Dyck, & McLaren 1999) and, significantly, the daily and in-person support of their spouse. While unique in the context of their trans-international family structure, the women shared similar experiences to those of the MSMPs. Being left to raise their family with their spouse away from the home front, like the MSMPs in the current study, required the women to place great effort towards community integration. Conscious efforts towards expanding their social networks, often through a significant increase in leisure participation, deemed a necessary action in their pursuits for support and independence.

Literature exploring the experiences of a military spouse highlights the value of social support in addressing the challenges of military life. Borah and Fina (2017) revealed the perceived positive value in eliciting social support from both military and non-military friends, highlighting that the mere experience of "being physically around others [helped] lift [one's] spirits better than anything else" (p. 153). It was within the military community that many of the

MSMPs found friendship and familial support, specifically during times when their spouse was away from the home, or when arriving in a new location following a posting. However, eliciting support presented a challenge for some mothers. The MSMPs in the study frequently referenced the importance of a ‘second family within their experiences, which included the support of other military mothers and spouses, and the integration of their families. The stories shared by the MSMPs highlighted the necessity of a ‘second family’ in surviving the military lifestyle and in getting children to and from activities during spousal absenteeism. The experience of receiving a posting every three to four years further complicated this necessity, requiring on-going efforts and stress of sourcing and creating their ‘second family’.

To date, family leisure scholarship has not explored the notion of a ‘second family’ as a support to leisure facilitation and child leisure participation. While the impact of the military lifestyle (i.e., deployment and postings) on familial resiliency has received some academic attention (Farrell, et al., 2014; Gewirtz & Youssef, 2016; Salzman, et al., 2011; Weins & Boss, 2006), there is much to be learned about the modalities and mechanisms that are enabled by MSMPs to support family leisure participation. Specifically, the notion of a ‘second family’ being used to assist and support family leisure engagement during periods of spousal absenteeism.

Community provisions were sourced as an additional mechanism for support in the mothers’ attempt to facilitate family leisure. However, despite the efforts put towards planning and facilitating their family’s leisure routine, many of the mothers expressed feeling unsupported by the military community they resided in, specifically in regards to recreation programming as a means to provide mothers with a break from organizing family activities. While MSMPs made mention of underutilizing the programs and services offered on base, their reasoning was not a

result of the quantity of programming available. Many of the women chose leisure provisions based on the proximity to the family residence, enrolling their children in classes held out of near-by facilities. For the MSMPs, program location significantly influenced their children's program enrollment. Recognizing that many military families live off base, many of the women described experiences of off-base recreation participation.

Further, the women expressed the need for support in their leisure facilitation, seeking avenues through which they could participate in the leisure freely and have a third party (i.e., recreation leader or program instructor) take on the role of facilitation. This highlighted the desire the women had to continue their leisure participation as a family, but with the relief from having to organize and plan for the leisure activity itself. The MSMPs' inability to source out family leisure programming, through which all members of the family could partake, challenged this desire, thereby resulting in the mothers being left to continually facilitate their family's leisure on their own.

Establishing Routine: The Purposeful Use of Leisure

A desire for routine in day-to-day life was paramount in the experiences shared by the MSMPs in this study. The mothers described planning and facilitating purposeful family leisure as a means to manage the negative responses to an evolving family routine and parental presence. The literature reflects the findings of employing family leisure to reinforce normalcy and consistency in the lives of children facing adversity, and as an opportunity for distraction from negative life events for the family as a collective (Hutchinson et al., 2007; Iwasaki, MacKay, Mac-Tavish, Ristock, & Bartlett, 2006; Werner & Shannon, 2013). As a means of protection for their children, the mothers described their experiences in purposefully planning their family's leisure and the mechanisms through which they relied on in order to do so.

Family leisure: An intended means to support familial routine during frequent transition.

Research has shown that for military families, the restorative potential of family leisure to support personal and familial well-being is subject to amplification given the additional stressors of military life (Melton et al., 2018). The MSMPs spoke to the importance of maintaining a sense of normalcy for their children through family leisure during bouts of parental absenteeism. In an attempt to ease the transition, mothers would take on additional roles and responsibilities, originally assumed by their husbands, to ensure a continuity in routine for their children. Normalcy in day-to-day life was propelled by having family activities to do after school and on weekends, and ensuring that the children were being offered novel experiences. These examples further support the presence of both common (core) and novel activities (balance) in the mother's facilitation efforts, and overarching pursuit of maintaining family functioning. While the direct aim was to benefit the children, the mothers also benefited from these actions by experiencing a sense of relief in perceiving that their children felt supported during transition.

Werner and Shannon (2013) revealed a similar sentiment across military spouses with family leisure being viewed as a modality to maintain the normalcy and consistency the women wanted for their children during transition. For mothers in that study and the current one, family leisure played a significant role in creating a familial routine, and easing the process of transition. What was unique to the mothers in the current study was the sentiment of integrating family leisure into the daily routine, to ensure that it happened day after day. Making family leisure part of the routine made it a priority and essential regular activity.

Spousal reintegration: Influencing the facilitation of family leisure. Much of the discourse thus far has explored the strategies MSMPs employ in the lead-up to spousal absenteeism and during periods of solo-parenting. However, the challenges mothers face in navigating spousal

re-integration proceeding the temporary periods of parenting alone should not be overlooked. Upon establishing a family leisure routine that attends to the needs of the family members left behind, the MSMPs were forced to manage the re-integration of their spouse, specifically being inclusive to their emotional needs and incorporating their physical presence within the planned activities.

Previous research has noted that partners of deployed military service members demonstrated a shift in focus, from individual to family leisure as a means of coping with the loss of daily support (Werner & Shannon, 2013). It is upon reunion and reintegration with the serving member spouse that family roles and boundaries are again renegotiated (Melton et al., 2017). Reintegration proved to be a trying time for the mothers in this study, experiencing major disruptions to how the family functioned in the absence of the serving member. The MSMPs in this study, in the absence of spousal support, reflected on the renegotiation of roles and boundaries, such as taking a permanent role of family leisure facilitation. What was interesting across the MSMPs was the permanency of assuming these roles. The mothers, in attempt to avoid frequent role negotiation, expressed not wanting to ‘give back’ roles to their husband, knowing that it would soon become theirs to assume the next time their spouse left for work. Previous literature supports the stance the MSMPs took suggesting that in families, the individual who has resolved boundary ambiguity (i.e., during deployment and other periods of spousal absenteeism) and reassigned responsibilities by assuming such duties, is often reluctant to relinquish them (Riggs, 1990). The research also noted that women frequently experience frustration in having to give-up roles, in attempt to create familial harmony and promote a ‘return to normal’ upon their husband’s return.

Due to frequent bouts of spousal absenteeism, much of the family time described by the mothers in this study did not involve the serving member spouse. While the overarching aim of providing family leisure was to achieve quality family time, a couple of mothers discussed their conflicting feelings in how they perceived their ideal family leisure experiences. For some, there was an urgent desire to have all family members participate in family leisure activities; however, others described feelings of uncertainty, expressing that the incorporating of their spouse threatened their sense of control and effort towards consistency in their daily life. Waters (2002) described the renegotiation of women's newly established independence upon the return of their spouse, following an extended period away from the home. She described the participants' recollection of experiencing a sudden disruption in their established routines and independence, frequently resulting in diverging interests, and spousal disagreements and conflict. The physical absence of the spouse had a significant impact upon the familial relationships and individual experiences and growth.

Ensuring the children's wellbeing: Optimal timing of family leisure. Green et al. (2013) argue that the military spouse "holds the keystone role in establishing and maintaining an environment conducive to the needs of both children and adults" (p. 756), and thereby supports the idea of heavy responsibility placed on the spouse to ensure healthy well-being amidst the series of life alterations, and further reinforces the theme development described below. During times when the active duty spouse is away from the home, family routines change, including the mothers' personal leisure pursuits and the objectives driving family leisure participation. It is within these instances that mothers described purposefully using leisure to help their children deal with the stress associated with parental absenteeism (i.e., deployment and off-base field exercises). Aligning with Werner and Shannon's findings (2013), in response to the heightened

concern for their children's well-being and ability to cope during periods of transition and parental absenteeism, the MSMPs immersed themselves into motherhood. The mothers used family leisure time to buffer the adjustment process leading up to, during, and proceeding the absence of their husband. They put effort into ensuring that their children were coping with the absence of their father by spending time in family leisure pursuits and trying to keep daily activities and time as a family normal and consistent.

Children vary in their ability to adapt to a parent's ambiguous absence. In the instances of a negative response, the remaining parent must manage the children's emotional and behavior reactions. Feelings of fear pertaining to abandonment, or changes to the family schedule, responsibilities and rules (Huebner et al., 2007) may influence a child's emotional response to the happenings around them, and as a result, may command additional support and energy on behalf of the remaining parent (Figley & Barnes, 2005). Family leisure offers an opportunity to experience family togetherness, create memories, and strengthen parental bonds with their children (Shaw, Havitz, & Delamere, 2008). What was unique to the mothers in the study was heavy focus on parental bonds, as a means to protect the well-being of their children.

A majority of the mothers in this study expressed concern and, for some, a fear that their children would develop a poor relationship with their father as a result of frequent bouts of parental absenteeism. This fear commonly acted as a catalyst to provide family activities where the children could develop a deeper relationship with their father. To capture these attempts, mothers described a strong focus on father-child 'dates' and family activities where only a few members of the family participated. Despite the argument that family leisure plays a significant role in the lives of the women in the study, the experiences shared exemplified a complicated set of feelings as to the perception of ideal family leisure. For some of the women the purposeful

impact of the role was to facilitate family togetherness between children and their father, and not to directly participate in the family activities. In these instances, the women demonstrated the role of ‘the protector’ and, in a sense, ‘the rebuilders’ in their efforts to maintain strained familial relationships through family activities. In other cases, the women desired leisure pursuits that were both inclusive and exclusive across family members. On one hand, some of the women aimed to include only the members of the family, with the intent of separating family leisure participation from others (i.e., separate from their ‘second family’). On the other hand, women shared times when they preferred not to include their husband since it disrupted the familial routine.

While the mothers in the study expressed a desire to oversee the family leisure pursuits, it was often a result of moral obligation to help children cope during times of parental absenteeism and familial transition (i.e., postings). Mothers acknowledged that their children did not choose the military life for themselves, and therefore, overcompensated with extra attention and enjoyable experiences through family leisure pursuits to make up for the hardship of parental absenteeism. The mothers exhibited great effort and investment of resources (i.e., time, effort and money) to present novel leisure activities for their children, depicting balanced family leisure patterns. In doing so, the outcomes of using balanced family leisure activities were to maintain family functioning. Current literature, including that of Werner and Shannon (2013), emphasized similar implications and motivational factors behind the military mothers’ request to organize family leisure pursuits during deployments. This current study extends the understanding of the scope of purposive leisure in broadening the interpretation of why and how military mothers oversee family activities leading up to, during, and proceeding deployments and

postings, and lend perspective to the leisure patterns mother's employ in their efforts to maintain family functioning.

Purposeful family leisure: Strategies for coping during times of familial transition. Another significant finding from this study was the MSMPs intentional use of leisure, known as purposive family leisure (Shaw & Dawson, 2001). According to Shaw and Dawson, not all leisure is freely chosen or intrinsically motivated, but rather leisure sometimes can be goal-oriented and aimed at achieving specific extrinsic benefits for those involved. They found that parents, specifically the mothers, intentionally facilitated family leisure to benefit their children, such as health and fitness outcomes, and the importance of sportsmanship. More recent is the findings of Werner and Shannon (2013), who revealed the evolving meaning and purpose of family leisure during periods of deployment. Women initially viewed family leisure as a means to maintain normalcy and consistency for their children; however, family leisure evolved further into a coping mechanism and a means of distraction for the women during the deployment, and then as an additional context through which the women could demonstrate care for their children.

Similar to the findings of Werner and Shannon, (2013), the MSMPs described the intentional use of leisure activities aimed at promoting well-being of their children, particularly to help the children cope during their father's absence, and to create a sense of normalcy during times of spousal absenteeism (i.e., leisure routines). The mothers utilized family leisure as a means to positively distract both themselves and their children during periods of transition, specifically valuing the efforts of keeping busy in their routine and diverting the family's attention away from the hardships of spousal absenteeism.

The MSMPs were intentional about the objectives they hoped would be achieved for their children (i.e., normalcy, distraction, coping with father's absence) and for themselves (i.e.,

purpose, opportunity for control, personal stress relief). While the objectives driving family leisure participation were different in relation to the objectives described by the mothers in Shaw and Dawson's (2001) study, there was commonality in the underlying use of a goal-orientated approach to motivate their facilitation. To this end, this current study offers insight into additional objectives that might be present when mothers plan, facilitate and participate in family leisure pursuits. The mothers in the study demonstrated purposeful intent when facilitating leisure, employing family-based activities as a way to achieve extrinsic benefits for their child. The mothers went beyond the extrinsic goals found in Shaw and Dawson's (2001) study and used leisure opportunities as the vehicle through which they could assist their children in managing life transition.

Many of the MSMPs referenced the importance of family togetherness and leisure as a means of distraction as two of the main benefits of participating in family leisure pursuits; however, what was evident across many of the MSMPs' experiences was the subconscious use of family leisure for the mothers' own distraction from life events. Consistent with existing literature, the planning, organizing and facilitating of family activities kept the mothers' mind and body busy, offering little time to wallow in their current circumstances (Werner & Shannon, 2013; Wood et al., 1995). Using leisure as a means to re-route the mothers' attention away from the negative life events was shown to assist in coping during periods of spousal deployment and periods of transition. Wood et al. (1995) revealed that following the spousal separation during a deployment, women expressed adjusting better when they kept themselves busy and occupied by work, community, family, and/or spirituality.

It was apparent when discussing family leisure that the MSMPs shifted the discussion towards their children's leisure activities. For a majority of the MSMPs, their children's leisure

activities were how they viewed family leisure. For example, when discussing family togetherness, MSMPs described experiences where they were driving their children to and from their leisure activities. For these mothers, the heavy focus on children's leisure pursuits when describing their family's leisure frequently stemmed from intensive mothering practices and the notion that the wellbeing of the children trumped family leisure. While the MSMPs did not always participate physically in the activities themselves, they chose to engage through leisure facilitation, specifically organizing activities, providing transportation to and from activities, ensuring proper preparation leading up to activity participation, for this brought them a sense of accomplishment and pride in their role as an MSMP.

Recommendations for Future Research

While mothers indicated controlling and directing family leisure (including overseeing the father's involvement), how fathers experience mothers' efforts related to family leisure is not well understood. In recognizing these instances, how fathers may interpret these experiences may be an act of facilitation by their partners that they appreciated, or perhaps viewed them as an obligation (welcomed or not). These questions have been posed for fathers in family leisure research in general; however, should be considered in the context of the military family: What does the family leisure look like for your family? Who oversees the leisure planning, organizing, and facilitation roles in your household? What enables and challenges your family leisure participation? Broadening the scope of experiences to include a father's perception on a mother's efforts in facilitating family leisure, and the father's own intentions and motivations towards family leisure, would encourage a deeper understanding of the implications for family leisure and the stress, or reduced stress, that shadows the roles and responsibilities of a military spouse.

This study focused on the family leisure experiences of mothers who were spouses to military personnel. However, in recognizing the current state of more women serving in the Canadian Armed Forces, it would be important to extend research towards exploring the experiences of fathers who are spouses to military personnel. While there has been research revealing the experiences of fathers in transnational families (Waters, 2010), little is known about the extent of male spouses to female serving members. What are men's experiences with personal leisure and family leisure? How do men manage the stress of additional parental roles and responsibilities? How fathers navigate concern towards their children's ability to cope and adjust to the military lifestyle? Eliciting information pertaining to the paternal spouses' experiences, it is important to explore whether the perceived stressors and responsibility across their maternal counterparts remain consistent, specifically the concern for children's adjustment and ability to cope, and whether additional supports and reliance on others is deemed necessary.

Implications for Practice

The findings from this study present implications for leisure practitioners, the military community, and those serving military families at large. The women in the study spoke to the importance of family leisure in multiple facets: as a means to distract the family from life stressors, as a way to support mothers during frequent periods of solo-parenting, to sustain feelings of normalcy in day-to-day life, and to employ routine under a roof where uncertainty was rooted.

Recreation and leisure service providers working directly with military communities may opt to work to reassess their approach in providing opportunities for family leisure programming. While MSMPs made mention to underutilizing the programs and services offered, their reasoning was not a result of the quantity of programming available. Instead, they chose leisure

provisions based on the proximity to the family home and their efforts to accommodate the diverse leisure interests across the family members. The mothers alluded to areas for improvement across military leisure provisions in their struggle to source out recreational programs that encompasses the entire family (all-ages programming). Family programming should consider activities where children and parents can participate together, and not be required to enroll separately based on age. Some examples of all-ages programming include family friendly drop-in programs (i.e., dance, Zumba, and cooking) and family swims. All-ages programming would offer ease in registration for mothers, and encourage social opportunities and friendship development among mothers and children alike.

Additionally, the mothers described the desire for the ability to ‘opt out’ of family leisure, where they would have the option to participate or not. The challenge of driving their children to multiple activities was a consistent sentiment across the mothers with multiple children. Leisure providers may wish to offer diverse programming simultaneously to assist mothers in accommodating the diverse needs of their children. Some examples of diverse programming include offering aquatic programs (for multiple age groups), physical land-based programming (i.e., soccer, basketball, karate) and cultural/arts land-based programming (i.e., cooking, painting, music classes) within the same facility and time offerings. Practitioners and leisure providers working to serve the greater community located off of a military base should aim to recognize the military integration in the populations they serve, taking into account all-aged and diverse programming needs. Broadening this perspective would help support military mothers during times of fatigue and stress, and encourage family leisure participation without the added responsibility and stress.

Conclusion

The mothers in this study were frequently forced to manage the stress and challenge of adapting to new parental responsibilities and help support the children's emotional reactions to parental absenteeism, all while adopting the role of a primary caregiver. The present study adds to the literature on the experience of a military spouse by suggesting that periods of military-induced transition were not only an ongoing source of stress and uncertainty for the spouse, but made it difficult for them to navigate the intensity in parental responsibility and manage being a solo parent. The coming and going of the serving member spouse and the feelings of inconsistency in family routine resulted in a variety of consequential effects on the mothers. These included the reliance on others for support and a push towards a sense of normalcy and consistency within family activities. The unpredictability of their spouses' time away from home left the mothers feeling out of control in their day-to-day lives. Family leisure offered a means for control for many of the mothers, granting them choice and a voice in how to spend family time, and what family leisure looked like for their family.

A majority of the women identified and placed priority on the well-being and coping ability of their children during times of transition (i.e., postings and deployments) as purposes of family leisure. As an attempt to nurture and care for their children, the mothers in the study devoted effort towards maintaining normalcy and consistency across family time and leisure. Many perceived the children's opportunity to participate in novel and engaging leisure pursuits as a means of distraction from their father's absence, and overcompensation for having to experience the stress.

Intensive mothering was prevalent in the experiences shared by the MSMPs. Discourses of intensive mothers position the needs of the children as more important than the mothers' own needs. Therefore, the mothers perceived family leisure as a necessary modality in assisting the

coping practices of their children. As mothers experienced the positive outcomes from successfully planning, organizing and facilitating family leisure activities, they also experienced feelings of pride and achievement in their parental accomplishments. These feelings overshadowed the originating expression of feeling overwhelmed by the intensified parental roles and responsibilities, thereby encouraging the continual efforts towards family leisure facilitation. MSMPs faced the challenge of redistributing roles and responsibilities upon the return of their spouse following deployments and training. In light of the findings, military families may consider having conversations prior to deployment that focus on how they will redistribute roles and responsibilities both during the period of spousal absenteeism and upon the conclusion of their tasking. While the stress of the present may overshadow the future, pre-planning what spousal reintegration will look like through a joint decision making process may help mitigate some of the stress families experience with reintegration.

Although a few studies document military wives' experiences of personal leisure during their partners' deployment (e.g., Shores & Scott, 2005; Werner & Shannon, 2013; Whyte & Grant, 2003), this study was the first of its kind to explore mothers' experiences with family leisure both during, and outside of times of military induced transition (i.e., deployments, postings, and periodic off-site exercises). The current study offers insight into additional purposes family leisure may serve during circumstances of adversity, and suggest the value in continuing the exploration of the meaning attached to family leisure across varying family structures and parenting dynamics (i.e., stay-at-home fathers, blended families, dually employed parents, or trailing spouses). Military family leisure is a growing field of study, however, the implications of planning and facilitating leisure activities presents an avenue waiting to be explored further. This study contributes to, and deepens the understanding of the existing

research on military families and the mothers' experience of family leisure. The more that is known about the lived experiences of parents in facilitating family leisure across the various aspects of the military institution (i.e., including rank, gender of spouse, base location), the more opportunity there is to add to family leisure facilitation education, such as strategies to support and enable development and delivery practices.

References

- Agate, S., Zabriskie, R., & Eggett, D. (2007). Praying, playing, and successful families: An examination of family religiosity, family leisure, and family functioning. *Marriage and Family Review, 42*(2), 51-75.
- Agate, J., Zabriskie, R., Agate, S., & Poff, R. (2009). Family leisure satisfaction and satisfaction with family life. *Journal of Leisure Research, 41*(2), 205–223.
- Aslan, N. (2009). An examination of family leisure and family satisfaction among traditional Turkish families. *Journal of Leisure Research, 41*(2), 157-176.
- Babbie, E. R., & Benaquisto, L. (2009). *Fundamentals of social research*. Scarborough, ON: Cengage Learning.
- Battams, N. (2016). A snapshot of military and veteran families in Canada. Statistical snapshots. The Vanier Institute of the Family. Retrieved January, 2018 from <http://vanierinstitute.ca/snapshot-military-veteran-families-canada/>
- Bella, L. (1992). *The Christmas imperative: Leisure, family, and women's work*. Halifax, Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publishing.
- Berg, B. L., & Lune, H. (2012). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences* (8th ed.). Boston: Pearson.
- Berg, K. F. (2008). Easing transitions of military dependents into Hawaii public schools: An invitational education link. *Journal of Invitational Theory and Practice, 14*(41), 41-55.
- Bianchi, S. M., Robinson, J. P., & Milkie, M. A. (2006). *Changing rhythms of American family life*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Bissell, K., Crosslin, R., & Hathaway, J. (2010). Military families and their housing choices. Retrieved March, 2018 from [http://www.acq.osd.mil/housing/FH percent20Choices.pdf](http://www.acq.osd.mil/housing/FH_percent20Choices.pdf)

- Black, W. J. (1993). Military-induced family separation: A stress reduction intervention. *Social Work, 38*(3), 273-280.
- Bolger, N., DeLongis, A., Kessler, R., & Schilling, E. (1989). Effects of daily stress on negative mood. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 57*, 808-818.
- Bowen, G. L. (1989). Family adaptation to relocation: An empirical analysis of family stressors, adaptive resources, and sense of coherence (Technical Report 856). Alexandria, VA: U.S.
- Bowen, G., Mancini, J., Martin, J., Ware, W., & Nelson, J. (2003). Promoting the adaptation of military families: An empirical test of a community practice model. *Family Relations, 52*(1), 33-44.
- Bowling, A. (2002). *Research methods in health: Investigating health and health services*. New York, NY: Open University Press.
- Bowling, U. B., & Sherman, M. D. (2008). Welcoming them home: Supporting service members and their families in navigating the tasks of reintegration. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 39*(4), 451.
- Brajša-Žganec, A., Merkaš, M., & Šverko, I. (2011). Quality of life and leisure activities: How do leisure activities contribute to subjective well-being?. *Social Indicators Research, 102*(1), 81-91.
- Brocki, J. M., & Wearden, A. J. (2006). A critical evaluation of the use of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) in health psychology. *Psychology and Health, 21*(1), 87-108.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (2005). *Making human beings human: Bioecological perspectives on human development*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Burrell, L. M., Adams, G. A., Durand, D. B., & Castro, C. A. (2006). The impact of military

- lifestyle demands on well-being, army, and family outcomes. *Armed Forces & Society*, 33(1), 43-58.
- Castaneda, L. W., & Harrell, M.C. (2008). *Military spouse employment: A grounded theory approach to experiences and perceptions*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.
- Cramm, H., Norris, D., Tam-Seto, L., Eichler, M., & Smith-Evans. (2015). The current state of military family research. *Journal of Military, Veteran and Family Health*, 1(2), 2-6.
- Craig, L. (2006). Does father care mean fathers share? A comparison of how mothers and fathers in intact families spend time with children. *Gender & Society*, 20, 259–281.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Research design: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Cutcliffe, J., & Mckenna, H. (1999). Establishing the credibility of qualitative research findings: The plot thickens. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 30(2), 374-380.
- Cyba, E. (1992). Women's attitudes towards leisure and family. *Loisir et Societe*, 15, 79–94.
- Daigle, P. (2013). On the home front: Assessing the well-being of Canada's military families in the new millennium. Special Report to the Minister of National Defence. Ottawa: DND/CF Ombudsman.
- Daly, K. (1994). Using qualitative methods to study families. In G. Handel & G. G. Whitchurch (Eds.), *The psychosocial interior of the family* (pp. 53-68). New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Daly, K. (2001). Deconstructing family time: From ideology to lived experiences. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62(2), 283-294.
- Department of National Defence (DND) (2013). Evaluation of military family support programs

- and services. Retrieved January, 2018 from <http://www.crs-csex.forces.gc.ca/reports-rapports/2013/194p0970-eng.aspx#profile-military>
- Dodd, D., Zabriskie, R. B., Widmer, M., & Eggett, D. (2009). Contributions of family leisure to family functioning among families that include children with developmental disabilities. *Journal of Leisure Research, 41*(2), 261–286.
- Drummet, A. R., Coleman, M., & Cable, S. (2003). Military families under stress: Implications for family life education. *Family Relations, 52*(3), 279-287. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-3729.2003.00279.x
- Duncan, J. M. (2017). Constraints to family leisure and perceptions of family functioning of U.S. army personnel who have experienced deployment. Doctor of Philosophy, Florida State University, FL. Department of Family and Child Sciences.
- Dwyer, S. C., & Buckle, J. L. (2009). The space between: On being an insider-outsider in qualitative research. *International journal of Qualitative Methods, 8*(1), 54-63.
- Eatough, V. & Smith, J. A. (2008). Interpretive phenomenological analysis. In C. Willig & W. Stainton-Rogers (Eds.) *The Sage handbook of qualitative research in psychology* (pp. 179-194). Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.
- Farrell, A., Bowen, G., Swick, D. (2014). Network supports and resiliency among U.S. Military spouses with children with special health care needs. *Family Relations, 63*, 55-70. doi:10.1111/fare/12045
- Figley, C. R., & Barnes, M. (2005). External trauma and families. In P. C. McKenry & S. J. Price (Eds.), *Families & change: Coping with stressful events and transitions* (3rd ed.) (pp. 253-284). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Garner, J. K., Arnold, P. L., & Nunnery, J. (2014). Schoolwide impact of military-connected student enrollment: Educators' perceptions. *Children & Schools, 36*(1), 31-39.
- Gewirtz, A., & Youssef, A. (2016). *Risk and Resilience in Military and Veteran Families*. Springer International Publishing, Switzerland.
- Gillis, J. (2001). Never enough time: Some paradoxes of modern family time(s). In K. Daly (Ed.) *Minding the time in family experience*, (pp. 19–36). Kidlington: Elsevier Science.
- Given, L. M. (2008). *The Sage encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CS: Sage Publications.
- Godbey, G. (2003). *Leisure in your life: An exploration* (6th ed.). State College, PA: Venture Publishing.
- Green, S., Nurius, P., & Lester, P. (2013). Spouse psychological well-being: A keystone to Military family health. *Journal of Human Behavior and Social Environment, 23*(6), 753-768.
- Groenewald, T. (2004). A phenomenological research design illustrated. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 3*(1), 42-52.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1982). The place of values in needs assessment. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 3*(3), 311-320.
- Harrell, M. C., Lim, N., Castaneda, L. W., & Golinelli, D. (2004). *Working around the military: Challenges to military spouse employment and education*. Rand National Defense Research Institute, CA.
- Harrington, M. (2005). Family leisure and parents' subjective identities: Gendered ways of being a 'good parent'. In *Abstracts of papers presented at the eleventh Canadian Congress on Leisure Research, May* (pp. 17-20).

- Haycock, D., & Smith, A. (2012). A family affair? Exploring the influence of childhood sport socialization on young adults' leisure-sport careers in north-west England. *Leisure Studies*, 33(3), 285-304.
- Henderson, K. A., Bialeschki, M., Shaw, S., & Freysinger, V. (1996). *Both gains and gaps: Feminist perspectives on women's leisure*. State College, PA: Venture.
- Henderson, K. A. (1997). A critique of constraints theory: A response. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 29(4), 453-457.
- Henderson K. A. (2006). *Dimensions of choice: Qualitative approaches to parks, recreation, tourism, sport, and leisure research*. State College, PA: Venture Publishing.
- Henderson, K. A., & Ainsworth, B. E. (2000). Enablers and constraints to walking for older African American and American Indian women: The cultural activity participation study. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport*, 71(4), 313-321.
- Hilbrecht, M., Shaw, S. M., Delamere, F. M., & Havitz, M. E. (2008). Experiences, perspectives, and meanings of family vacations for children. *Leisure/Loisir*, 32(2), 541-571.
- Hodge, C., Zabriskie, R., & Poff, R. (2012). International family leisure functioning: A comparative study. *Abstracts from the 2012 Leisure Research Symposium*, Ashburn, VA; National Recreation and Park Association.
- Hodge, C., Bocarro, J., Henderson, K., Zabriskie, R., Parcel, T., & Kanters, M. (2015). Family leisure: An integrative review of research from select journals. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 47(5), 577-600.
- Hodge, C., Duerden, M., Layland, E., Lacanienta, A., Goates, M., & Niu, X. (2017). The association between family leisure and family quality of life: A meta-analysis of data from parents and adolescents. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 9(3), 328-346.

- Hogan, P., & Furst Seifert, R. (2010). Marriage and the military: Evidence that those who serve marry earlier and divorce earlier. *Armed Forces & Society, 36*(3), 420-438.
- Horna, J. (1989). The dual asymmetry in the married couples' life: The gender-differentiated work, family, and leisure domains. *International Journal of Sociology of the Family, 19*(1), 113-130.
- Hosek, J., & MacDermid Wadsworth, S. (2013). Economic conditions of military families. *The Future of Children, 23*(2), 41-59.
- Huebner, A., Mancini, J., Bowen, G., & Orthner, D. (2009). Shadowed by war: Building community capacity to support military families. *Family Relations, 58*(2), 216-228.
- Huebner, A. J., Mancini, J. A., Wilcox, R. M., Grass, S. R., & Grass, G. A. (2007). Parental deployment and youth in military families: Exploring uncertainty and ambiguous loss. *Family Relations, 56*(2), 112-122.
- Huffman, A., Culbertson, S., & Castro, C. (2008). Family-friendly environments and U.S. army soldier performance and work outcomes. *Military Psychology, 20*, 253-270.
- Hutchinson, S. L., Afifi, T., & Krause, S. (2007). The family that plays together fares better: Examining the contribution of shared family time to family resilience following divorce. *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage, 46*(3/4), 21-48.
- Iwasaki, Y., Mactavish, J., & Mackay, K. (2005). Building on strengths and resilience: Leisure as a stress survival strategy. *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling, 33*(1), 81-100.
- Iwasaki, Y., MacKay, K. J., Mactavish, J. B., Ristock, J., & Bartlett, J. (2006). Voices from the margins: Stress, active living, and leisure as a contributor to coping with stress. *Leisure Sciences, 28*, 163-180.
- Jacobs, J., & Gerson, K. (2004). *The time divide: Work, family, and gender inequality*.

Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Johnson, H., Zabriskie, R., & Hill, B. (2006). The contribution of couple leisure involvement, leisure time, and leisure satisfaction to marital satisfaction. *Marriage and Family Review, 40*(1), 69-91.
- Jolly, R. A. (1987). *Military man, family man: Crown property?* London, UK: Brassey's Defence Publishers.
- Kelly, J. (1993). Leisure-family research: Old and new issues. *World Leisure and Recreation, 35*(3), 5-9.
- Kelly, J. R. (1997). Changing issues in leisure-family research—again. *Journal of Leisure Research, 29*(1), 132-135.
- Kelty, R., Kleykamp, M., & Segal, D. (2010). The military and the transition to adulthood. *The Future of Children, 20*(1), 181-207.
- Kowalski, C., Grybovych, O., Lankford, S., & Neal, L. (2012). Examining constraints to leisure and recreation for residents in remote and isolated communities: An analysis of 14 communities in the Northwest Territories of Canada. *World Leisure Journal, 54*(4), 322- 336.
- Lafrance, M. (2011). Reproducing, resisting and transcending discourses of femininity: A discourse analysis of women's accounts of leisure. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health, 3*(1), 80-98.
- Larson, R. W., Gillman, S. A., & Richards, M. H. (1997). Divergent experiences of family leisure: Fathers, mothers, and young adolescents. *Journal of Leisure Research, 29*(1), 78-97.
- Mackenzie, N., & Knipe, S. (2006). Research dilemmas: Paradigms, methods and methodology.

- Issues in Educational Research*, 16(2), 193-205.
- Madill, A., & Gough, B. (2008). Qualitative research and its place in psychological science. *Psychological Methods*, 13(3), 254.
- Mailey, E., Mershon, C., Joyce, J., Irwin, B. C. (2018). “Everything else comes first”: A mixed-methods analysis of barriers to health behaviors among military spouses. *BMC Public Health*, 18(1013), 1-11.
- Maury, R., & Stone, B. (2014). *Military spouse employment report*. Institute for Veterans and Military Families.
- McCabe, S. (2015). Family leisure, opening a window on the meaning of family. *Annals of Leisure Research*, 18(2), 175–179.
- Melton, (2017). Family activity model: Crossroads of activity environment and family interactions in family leisure. *Leisure Sciences*, 39(5), 457-473.
- Melton, K. K., Townsend, J., & Hodge, C. J. (2018). The Creation of Military Family Leisure Experiences. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 10(3), 602-619.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1984). *Qualitative data analysis: A sourcebook of new methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Military Family Services, 2016. Retrieved from August 2018 from <https://www.cfmws.com/en/ourservices/militaryfamilies/pages/default.aspx>
- Murray, K. (2017). Intensive mothering on the homefront: An analysis of army wives. *Sociological Spectrum*, 37(1), 1-17.
- National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces (NDCAF), 2016. Evaluation of Military Family Support Programs and Services, January 2013. Retrieved March, 2018 from <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/about-reports-pubs-audit-eval/194p0970.page#ftn3>

National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces (NDCAF). Mandate of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces. Retrieved January, 2018 from

<http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/about-us.page>.

National Defence and Canadian Forces Ombudsman (NDCFO) (2013). On the homefront:

Assessing the well-being of Canada's military families in the new millennium. Ottawa:

Office of the Ombudsman, National Defence and Canadian Forces. Retrieved from

<http://www.ombudsman.forces.gc.ca/en/ombudsman-reports-stats-investigations-military-families/military-families-index.page>

Okafor, E., Lucier-Greer, M., & Mancini, J. A. (2016). Social stressors, coping behaviors, and depressive symptoms: A latent profile analysis of adolescents in military families. *Journal of Adolescence*, *51*, 133-143.

Orthner, D. K., Zimmerman, L. I., Bowen, G. L., Gaddy, G., & Bell, D. B. (1991). *Development of a Measure of Family Adaptation to the Army*. Research triangle institution (RTI). Research Triangle Park, NC.

Orthner, D. K., & Mancini, J. A. (1990). Leisure impacts on family interaction and cohesion. *Journal of Leisure Research*, *22*(2), 125-137.

Padden, D., Connors, R., & Agazio, J. (2011). Stress, coping, and well-being in military spouses during deployment separation. *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, *33*, 247-67.

Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). Two decades of developments in qualitative inquiry: A personal, experiential perspective. *Qualitative Social Work*, *1*(3), 261-283.

Payne, D., Warner, J., & Little, R (1992). Tied migration and returns to human capital: The

- case of military wives. *Social Science Quarterly* 73(2), 324-339.
- Poff, R., Zabriskie, R., & Townsend, J. (2010). Modeling family leisure and related family constructs: A national study of U.S. parent and youth perspective. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 42(3), 365–391.
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (2005). Language and meaning: Data collection in qualitative research. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52, 137-145.
- Pollio, H. R., Henley, T. B., & Thompson, C. J. (1997). *The phenomenology of everyday life: Empirical investigations of human experiences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rao, P.A., & Beidel, D.C. (2009). The impact of children with high-functioning autism on parental stress, sibling adjustment, and family functioning. *Behaviour Modification*, 33(4), 437-451.
- Raymore, L. (2002). Facilitators to leisure. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 34(1), 37-51.
- Rodham, K., Fox, F., & Doran, N. (2015). Exploring analytical trustworthiness and the process of reaching consensus in interpretative phenomenological analysis: Lost in transcription. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 18(1), 59-71.
- Rowan-Legg, A. (2017). Caring for children and youth from Canadian military families: Special considerations. *Pediatrics & Child Health*, 22(2), 1-6.
- Rohall, D. E., Segal, M. W., & Segal, D. R. (1999). Examining the importance of organizational supports on family adjustment to army life in a period of increasing separation. *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*, 27, 49-65.
- Salzman, W. R., Lester, P., Beardslee, W. R., Layne, C. M., Woodward, K., & Nash, W. (2011). Mechanisms of risk and resilience in military families: Theoretical and empirical basis of family-focused resilience enhancement program. *Clinical Child and Family*

- Psychology Review*, 14, 213-230.
- Samuel, N. (Ed.). (1996). *Women, leisure and the family in contemporary society: A multinational perspective*. Wallingford, UK: CAB International.
- Segal, M. (1986). The military and the family as greedy institutions. *Armed Forces & Society*, 13(9), 9-38.
- Schwab, K. A., & Dustin, D. L. (2015). Towards a model of optimal family leisure. *Annals of Leisure Research*, 18(2), 180-204.
- Scott, D., & Jackson, E. L. (1996). Factors that limit and strategies that might encourage people's use of public parks. *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*, 14(1), 1-17.
- Scott, D., & Munson, W. (1994). Perceived constraints to park usage among individuals with low incomes. *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*, 12(4), 79-96.
- Shannon, C., & Shaw, S. (2008). Mothers and daughters: Teaching and learning about leisure, *Leisure Sciences*, 30(1), 1-16.
- Shaw, D. S., Winslow, E. B., & Flanagan, C. (1999). A prospective study of the effects of marital status and family relations on young children's adjustment among African American and European American families. *Child Development*, 70(3), 742-755.
- Shannon, C. (2014). Facilitating physically active leisure for children who are overweight. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 46(4), 395-418.
- Shaw, S. M. (2001). The family leisure dilemma: Insights from research with Canadian families. *World Leisure Journal*, 43(4), 53-62.
- Shaw, S. M., & Dawson, D. (2001). Purposive leisure: Examining parental discourses on family activities. *Leisure Sciences*, 23(4), 217-231.
- Shaw, S. M. (1992). Dereifying family leisure: An examination of women's and men's everyday

- experiences and perceptions of family time. *Leisure Sciences*, 14, 271- 286.
- Shaw, S. M. (1997). Controversies and contradictions in family leisure: An analysis of conflicting paradigms. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 29, 98-112.
- Shaw, S. M., & Dawson, D. (2003). Contradictory aspects of family leisure: Idealization versus experience. *Leisure/Loisir*, 28(3-4), 179-201.
- Shenton, A. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, 22, 63-75.
- Shores, K., & Scott, D. (2005). Leisure constraints among military wives. *Journal of Park and Recreation Administration*, 23(3), 1-24.
- Skomorovsky, A., & LeBlanc, M. (2017). Intimate partner violence in the Canadian Armed Forces: Psychological distress and the role of individual factors among military spouses. *Military Medicine*, 182(1), 1568-1575.
- Smith J. A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: Theory, method and research*. London, UK: Sage.
- Smith, J. A., & Osborn, M. (2003). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. In J. A. Smith (Ed.), *Qualitative psychology: A practical guide to research methods* (pp. 53-80). London, UK: Sage.
- Smith, J. A., Eatough, V. (2006) Interpretive phenomenological analysis. In G. Breakwell, S. Hammond, C. Fife-Schaw, & J. Smith (Eds.) *Research methods in psychology* (3rd ed., pp. 322-341). Thousand Oaks. CA: Sage.
- Smith, J. (2003). Research & commentary. *Pediatric Nursing*, 15(8), 12-36.
- Statistics Canada. (2012). *Portrait of families and living arrangements in Canada: Families, households and marital status, 2011 census of population*. Catalogue no. 98-312-

X2011001 Retrieved from Statistics Canada:

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/catalogue/98-312-X2011001>

- Strain, L. A., Grabusic, C. C., Searle, M. S., & Dunn, N. J. (2002). Continuing and ceasing leisure activities in later life: A longitudinal study. *The Gerontologist, 42*, 217-223.
- Thompson, S. (1999). *Mother's taxi: Sport and women's labor*. Albany, State University of New York Press.
- Trussell, D. E., & Shaw, S. M. (2007). "Daddy's gone and he'll be back in October": Farm women's experiences of family leisure. *Journal of Leisure Research, 39*(2), 366-387.
- van, Manen, M. (2017). *But is it phenomenology?* Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications.
- van, Manen, M. (2016). *Researching lived experience: Human Science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. New York: Routledge.
- Wang, Z., Aitken, N., & CAF Family Research Team. (2016). Impacts of military lifestyle on military families: Results from the quality of life survey of Canadian Armed Forces spouses. Director General Military Personnel Research & Analysis, Defense Research and Development Canada Scientific Report.
- Walker O'Neal, C., Mallette, J., & Mancini, J. (2018). The importance of parents' community connections for adolescent well-being: An examination of military families. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 61*, 204-217.
- Ward, P. J., & Zabriskie, R. B. (2011). Positive youth development within a family leisure context: Youth perspectives of family outcomes. *New Directions for Youth Development, 2011*(130), 29-42.
- Waters, J. (2002). Flexible families? 'Astronaut' households and the experiences of lone mothers in Vancouver, British Columbia. *Social and Culture Geography, 3*(2), 117-134.

- Weins, T. W., & Boss, P. (2006). Maintaining family resiliency before, during and after military separation. In C.A. Castro, A. B. Adler, & C. A. Britt (Eds.), *Military life: The psychology of serving in peace and combat. Vol. 3: The military family* (pp. 13-38). Westport, CT: Praeger Security International.
- Werner, T., & Shannon, C. (2013). Doing more with less: Women's leisure during their partner's military deployment. *Leisure Sciences*, 35(1), 63-80.
- Whyte, S. A., & Grant, B. C. (2003). Leisure in the life of a military spouse. *World Leisure Journal*, 45(4), 30-36.
- Zabriskie, R. (2001). Family recreation: How can we make a difference? *Parks and Recreation*, 36(10), 30-42.
- Zabriskie, R., & Freeman, P. (2004). Contributions of family leisure to family functioning among transracial adoptive families. *Adoptive Quarterly*, 7(3), 49-77.
- Zabriskie, R., & McCormick, B. (2001). The influences of family leisure patterns on perceptions of family functioning. *Family Relations*, 50(3), 281-289.
- Zabriskie, R., & Kay, T. (2013). Positive leisure science: Leisure in family contexts. In T. Freire (Ed.), *Positive leisure science* (pp. 81-99). Dordrecht, the Netherlands: Springer.

Appendix A: Interview Guide

Interview Guide

I would like to begin by asking you for the record if it is okay to tape record this interview. This interview will last approximately 60 to 90 minutes. I will ask you a variety of questions about your family leisure experiences as a mother and as a military spouse. Please feel free at any time to tell me that you wish to "pass" on a question. If a question is not clear, or a translation is required, do not hesitate to ask me to clarify or explain further.

The purpose of this study is to **understand mothers who are military spouses' experiences with family leisure**. Central to this investigation will be the **exploration of how mothers facilitate family leisure including the factors that enable and constrain that facilitation, how the purpose of family leisure changes across military life circumstances, and how mothers personally experience family leisure**.

Introduction

1. I'd like to start by getting you to tell me a little bit about yourself and your family.

Probes: How many children do you have? What are their ages? Are you currently employed or engaged in paid work? Do you come from a military family yourself? Tell me about your experiences of being in a military family growing up.

Military Family & Spouse

2. If someone did not know anything about living in a military family, how would you describe what it is like living in a military family based on your experience?

Probes:

3. Describe your experience, of being a parent, in a military family?
4. What have been some of the high points for you and your family?
5. What have been some of the low points for you and your family?
6. Describe your experience, as a spouse, in a military family.

Probes: what roles do you have that support your family unit? How do these roles change or shift during postings or deployment? What does it mean to you to be a mother who is also a military spouse? Does being a mother and a military spouse present any challenges? How do you go about managing these challenges?

Family Leisure

7. How would you define or describe family leisure?
8. Describe what your family leisure experiences are.

Probes: What do you tend to do together as a family on a fairly regular basis? What are some of the special things that you do as a family now and then? if not described in answering the previous two questions – where do you tend to engage in family leisure (home, community facilities, in the neighborhood; at the home of family/friends); when

do you tend to engage in leisure as a family (evenings, weekends, vacation); with whom do you engage in family leisure (just the nuclear family unit or with other family members; with friends); are there times when you do things with family members, but not everyone is included].

9. How do your family leisure experiences feel to you?
10. What experiences do you enjoy most? What experiences do you not enjoy?
11. How does family leisure change and remain the same during a posting?"
12. How does it change and remain the same during a deployment?"

Facilitating Family Leisure

13. What do you do as a parent to make family leisure happen? Describe your experiences facilitating family leisure.

Probes: Do you create or suggest experiences; Do you plan or organize experiences; Do you keep an eye out for community activities that might be fun for your family; What are those tasks and roles like for you?

14. Describe your experiences facilitating your family's leisure during these military stages?

Probes: Do you take on different roles to support your family leisure?

15. Describe the military resources that you use to facilitate your families' leisure.

Probes: How do you locate these resources? What resources do you find most useful in terms of supporting your family leisure experiences?

16. What has your experience been in accessing military resources that support your family leisure?

Probes: Are there resources that are easier to access than others? What resources are most beneficial? What resources do you struggle to access that you feel would support your families' leisure experiences?

17. Describe the community resources that you use to facilitate your families' leisure.

Probes: How do you locate these resources? What resources do you find most useful in terms of supporting your family leisure experiences? What resources do you struggle to access that you feel would support your families' leisure?

18. What has your experience been in accessing community resources that support your family leisure?

Probes: Are there resources that are easier to access than others? What resources are most beneficial? What resources do you struggle to access that you feel would support your families' leisure?

19. You have answered all the questions that I had. However, I might not have asked you about something that you feel is really important related to your family leisure. Is there anything additional that I should know about or understand?

Debriefing Remarks: Thank you for taking time to participate in my research project and sharing with me your lived experiences. After reviewing the audiotaped interview, and completing some edits, I will provide you with a written transcript of this interview. To ensure that I accurately

captured your lived experiences, you are encouraged to review and potentially make changes to your transcript. Please note that if I do not hear back from you after two weeks of sending out the transcript, I will assume no changes and proceed into my data analysis. You may choose to withdrawal your information at any time. All responses will be anonymized for purposes of writing my thesis. Neither your name, nor the name of your business will be included in the thesis.

The results of this study will be published in the form of a Master thesis. Upon your request, I would be happy to provide you a digital or hard copy of the thesis document. Again, thank-you for your participation.

Appendix B: Consent Form



Participant Consent Form

A study of Military family leisure: Exploring mothers' experiences

Principal Investigator

Carlee Schaefer
 MA Sustainable Leisure Management
 Department of Recreation & Tourism Management
 Vancouver Island University
 cmas@uvic.ca

Student Supervisor

Jackie Oncescu, PhD.
 Professor
 Department of Kinesiology
 University of New Brunswick
 Jackie.oncescu@unb.ca

I am a student in the Masters of Sustainable Leisure Management at Vancouver Island University (VIU). My research, entitled "*Military family leisure: Exploring mothers' experiences*" aims to reveal the lived experiences of mothers who are also military spouses to military personnel, specifically (a) how women who are MSMP experience family leisure (during and outside periods of deployment) personally; (b) how mothers create family leisure, what factors enable and constrain both the efforts involved in creating family leisure and to enjoy the experience themselves; (c) how the purpose of family leisure may change across life circumstances. The intention of this research is to address this gap in the literature.

Research participants will be asked to complete a face-to-face research interview. If you agree, you would be asked questions concerning your personal experiences as a mother and a military spouse, your facilitation strategies and perspectives towards providing family leisure opportunities to your family, and the constraints enabling your family leisure participation. With your permission, the interview would be audio recorded and later transcribed. Your participation would require approximately 60-90 minutes of your time.

All records of your participation will be confidential. Given that participation will remain anonymous, you will be assigned a pseudonym that will be used to identify you in the thesis document. Only my supervisor, Dr. Jackie Oncescu, and I will have access to information in which you are identified. At your request, you will be provided a copy of the transcript and invited to make changes to the transcript as you wish (e.g. if you would like withdraw a particular statement you made during an interview). Audio data will be immediately transferred onto a password-protected computer and deleted from my phone, following the interview. Signed consent forms and any paper copies of interview transcripts will be stored in a locked cabinet in my home. Data will be deleted and shredded at the end of the project, approximately April 31st, 2021.

The results of this study will be published in my Master's thesis, and may also be used for

conference publications, presentations, and published in peer-reviewed journals.

Your participation is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time where practicable, for any reason, and without explanation. If you would like to review and potentially make changes to the transcript of the interview, you may withdraw up to two weeks from the time of being provided a copy of the transcript. If you decline to review the transcript, you may withdraw up to two weeks from the date of our interview. If you choose to withdraw from the study, all information you provided during the interview would be withdrawn from the study and destroyed.

If you find that you require emotional support services following this interview, the following resources and organizations are available to help. Below are location specific resources and their contact information.

Comox, BC

Military Family Resource Centre – phone: 250-339-8290 | email: info@comoxmfr.ca

Health Promotion Services – phone: 250-339-8211 ext. 8577 | email: 19WHP@forces.gc.ca

Crisis Line – phone: 1-888-494-3888

Edmonton, AB

Military Family Resource Centre – phone: 250-339-8290 | email: info@comoxmfr.ca

Health Promotion Services – phone: 780-973-4011 ext. 6146 | email:

healthpromotionedmonton@forces.gc.ca

Distress Line – phone: 780-482-4357

Esquimalt, BC

Military Family Resource Centre – phone: 250-363-2640 | email: emfrc@shaw.ca

Health Promotion Services – phone: 250-363-5621 | email: Claire.grant@forces.gc.ca

Crisis Line – phone: 1-888-494-3888

I have read and understand the information provided above, and hereby consent to participate in this research under the following conditions (please circle):

I consent to the interview being audio recorded. Yes No

I consent to having my personal identity disclosed in the products of the research. Yes No

I consent to being quoted in the products of the research. Yes No

Participant Name _____

Participant Signature _____

I, Carlee Schaefer, promise to adhere to the procedures described in this consent form.

Principal Investigator Signature _____ Date _____

If you have any concerns about your treatment as a research participant in this study, please contact the VIU Research Ethics Board by telephone at 250-740-6631 or by email at reb@viu.ca.

Appendix C: Certificate of Completion

Appendix D: Invitation Script



Research Project Title: Military family leisure: Exploring mothers' experiences

Principal Investigator: Carlee Schaefer

My name is Carlee Schaefer and I am a Masters student at Vancouver Island University. I am conducting research to explore the lived experiences of mothers who are spouses to military personnel (MSMPs) and their perceptions of facilitating family leisure activities for their families. The aim of the research is to obtain a deeper understanding of how MSMP's create family leisure experiences, and what enabling and constraining factors are involved in creating these experiences. Given the environmental context of a military lifestyle, I am interested in learning how the purpose guiding family leisure participations changes, specifically when preparing for an up-coming posting, following a posting, during periods in-between postings and during times of deployment.

The information you provide will contribute to both the theory and practice, providing insight for current and future community recreation providers. Additionally, this research will create an opportunity to close the literature gap in family leisure. As the primary investigator, I am seeking volunteers to participate in this study. If you are interested in participation, it will be asked that you participate in an interview with myself with a date and time that is most

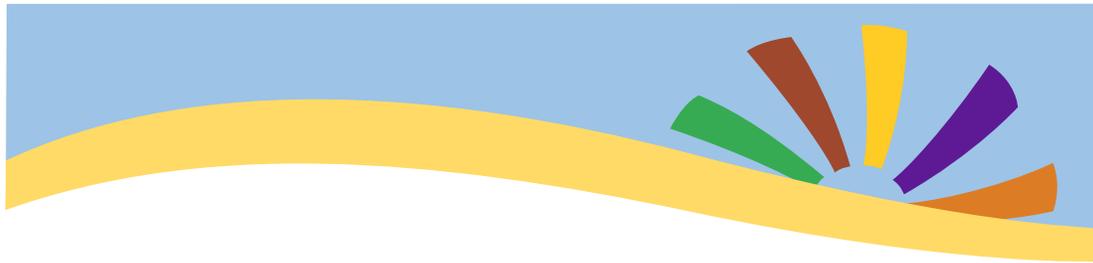
convenient for you and your family. During the interview, you will be asked to answer questions about your lived experiences as a mother and military spouse, and to express your perceptions of military family leisure.

Thank you for your time and consideration in reviewing this invitation. I would like you to know that there are **no consequences** of declining this invitation to participate. However, if you decide to participate or have any other questions regarding the process, please contact me at (250) 589 9769 or email me at cmas@uvic.ca. Thank-you again for taking the time to learn about this research project and I look forward to hearing from you.

King regards,

Carlee Schaefer

This research has been approved by the Ethics Board at Vancouver Island University. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the VIU Research Ethics Officer, by telephone at 250-753-3245 (ext. 2665) or by email at reb@viu.ca.

Appendix E: Recruitment Poster

Volunteers Needed for Research Study



*Project Title: Military family leisure:
Exploring mothers' experiences

Criteria: Mothers who are military spouses to military personnel

Participation: You will be asked to participate in a casual interview. The types of questions will be about military family leisure experiences and the role mothers' play in these experiences

Time Commitment: The interview will take 60-90 minutes

Those interested in participating in the study can contact Carlee Schaefer (primary researcher) for further information.

250-589-9769 or cmas@uvic.ca

