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Recreation-based Programming for Families of Fallen Soldiers: A Case Study

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RECREATION-BASED PROGRAMMING FOR FAMILIES OF FALLEN SOLDIERS:
A CASE STUDY

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science
Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management

by
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ABSTRACT

The involvement of United States military forces in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other areas has led to the death of nearly 7,000 service members (Defense Causality Analysis System, 2017). Although there are a number of recreation-based programs that serve military families, little research has been conducted on such programs. The purpose of this study was to describe the experiences of military families participating in a three-day recreation-based program, the Families of Fallen Soldiers camp, serving bereaved military families. This study also sought to develop an understanding of the meaning attributed to the camp experience and better understand why families elected to participate in the camp. Using a case-study approach, this study found recreation-based programs serving bereaved military families are perceived by families as meaningful, have the ability to enhance relationships and social support, serve as a respite, and allow families to engage in family leisure. Implications for practitioners working with bereaved military families are provided.
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Military Families

Military families are a unique population in the United States faced with challenges different than the typical civilian family. Unlike civilian families, military families may experience frequent relocations, multiple deployments, long tour hours, and even the injury or death of the family member serving. Despite being different from civilian families in various ways, military families, like many other American families, are very diverse. Many military families consist of the typical husband, wife, and biological children, however an increasing number of families are considered blended, intergenerational, or consist of dual-career parents (Park, 2011). Many military families include children, who face challenges as a result of having one or both parents serving in the military. Some of the challenges military children experience include: problems succeeding academically, detachment from a consistent community, difficulty adjusting to social situations, and the knowledge that their parent could be at risk of losing his or her life (MacDermid Wadsworth, Bailey, & Coppola 2016; Nicosia, Wong, Shier, Massachi, & Datar, 2017). Military spouses also face mental, social, and emotional concerns as a result of the difficult circumstances that military family life can involve. The trying situations that military families face are exacerbated when one or both parents deploy. When a parent is deployed, changes in family dynamics will occur, which can increase the strain on the family and cause disruption to family organization (MacDermid Wadsworth, 2010). In addition to the challenges related to the deployment of a family
member, military families also face the risk of the service member being killed during service.

All military families face the risk of losing a loved one serving in the military. When a military family experiences the death of a service member, the family must cope with sudden grief, as well as a loss of their identity as a military family (Holmes, Rauch, & Cozza, 2013). Bereavement can also cause family dysfunction, as the family may be unaware of how to deal with the grief and confusion of losing a loved one. In order to cope with the loss of a service member and build the skills necessary to function optimally as a family, military families may seek assistance from military or civilian community support programs. A variety of service providers may work with military families through these programs, including marriage and family therapists, mental health professionals, social workers, primary care providers, and pediatricians. In addition to more traditional therapies, an increasing number of recreation professionals are serving military families through programming tailored to meet their unique needs.

**Recreation-Based Programming**

Recreation-based programming offers an alternative way for families to improve family resilience, communication, problem solving, adaptability, and cohesiveness. Recreational activities often involve being faced with novel, challenging experiences, which can ultimately test a family’s problem solving and communication skills. The ability to solve problems as a family, and communicate effectively are important components of family functioning, as families will be faced with challenging situations on a daily basis, and they must be able to effectively and efficiently overcome these challenges.
situations. Family recreation and leisure experiences can also provide opportunities for family members to bond with one another over meaningful, shared experiences.

Recreation-based programming is an ideal intervention for military families experiencing the loss of a service member, as it utilizes a holistic approach to impact social, emotional, spiritual, and cognitive domains.

**Families of Fallen Soldiers Camp**

As an example of a recreation-based program for military families, Camp Twin Lakes’ Families of Fallen Soldiers (FOFS) camp is a three-day, family-centered camp aimed at developing connections between military families experiencing the loss of a service member and engaging participants in family recreation experiences. Unlike other programs offered for military families as a whole, this program focuses on serving military families who are experiencing the loss of a service member. The FOFS camp includes various sessions focused on engaging families in fun, recreational activities of their choosing. Sessions focused on community building among other participating families are also a significant component of the program. The camp is led by a Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist (CTRS) who specializes in working with military veterans and their families. Although programming for military families has existed for a number of years, there is a lack of research evaluating the effectiveness of these programs, particularly in regard to camps serving families experiencing the loss of a service member.

**Justification for the Study**
Several recreation-based programs throughout the country serve military families, providing them with adventure therapy, equine-assisted therapy, family recreation experiences, adaptive sport experiences, and a variety of other interventions aimed at improving physical, mental, social, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing. The FOFS camp serves as one example of a recreation-based program for military families. This camp provides a unique opportunity for military families experiencing the loss of a service member to engage in family recreation experiences and connect with other families experiencing the loss of a service member. Although a wide variety of recreation-based programs are being offered to military families, there is a significant lack of research pertaining to recreation-based programming for military families. Researchers have called for ongoing research both in terms of developing and evaluating military family programming in order to meet the ongoing needs of military families (Holmes et al., 2013). Therefore, research on existing recreation-based programs serving this population was needed to describe the experiences of families participating, understand the meaning they attribute to the experiences, and investigate why families participate in recreation-based programming. Conducting research on recreation-based programs serving military families is beneficial in helping other practitioners and researchers in the field learn more about this population, their unique needs, and aspects of recreation-based programming which they find meaningful and impactful. Research on existing programs also allows practitioners to more effectively allocate their time and monetary resources, as they would better understand which interventions are most effective with this population and could focus more resources on implementing those interventions.
Since research on military family programming is needed, but significantly lacking, this study examined a recreation-based camp serving military families. The purpose of this study was to describe the experiences of military families participating in a three-day recreation-based camp, gain an understanding of the meaning attributed to the camp, and examine the various reasons why families participate in the camp. This research added to the current knowledge base on programming for military families, and provided valuable information for recreation professionals currently working with military families, or those interested in creating additional programming to serve military families.

**Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to describe of the overall experiences of families participating in the FOFS camp. A qualitative approach was used to answer the following research questions.

**Question 1:** What does the FOFS camp mean to military families?

**Question 2:** Why do families participate in the FOFS camp?

**Question 3:** How do participants describe their experiences participating in the FOFS camp?

**Definition of Terms**

*Adaptability:* A family’s ease of adapting to changes associated with both military life, and life in a general sense (Meredith et al., 2011).
Affective involvement: The degree to which a family shows attention to the activities and interests of individual family members, and the way in which the family members show this attention (Epstein et al., 1978).

Affective responsiveness: A family’s ability to appropriately respond to affective stimuli with suitable quality and quantity of feelings. This responsiveness may be significantly impacted by certain cultural factors (Epstein et al., 1978).

Ambiguous loss: A situation of loss that is unclear to surviving family members whether the individual in question is psychologically absent or present, or, in another situation of ambiguous loss, whether the individual is alive or deceased. In this context, the term loss does not necessarily refer to traditional loss (death), but to situations in which an individual perceives another individual as physically missing (deceased, missing, deployed, etc.) or psychologically missing (dementia, PTSD, TBI, etc.), and therefore experiences grief resulting from the loss of relationships or the uncertain death of the individual.

Balance family leisure patterns: Leisure activities that are less frequently engaged in by families, and involve components of novelty and unpredictability. These activities typically last longer than core family leisure activities and require a greater investment of family resources (time, money, planning) (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001).

Behavior control: The way in which a family handles behavior in dangerous situations, situations involving psychobiological needs, and situations involving socializing (inside and outside of the family) (Epstein et al., 1978).
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Bereavement: The experience of having recently lost a significant individual through death (Stroebe, Schut, & Stroebe, 2007).

Closeness: Love, intimacy, and feelings of support within families (Meredith et al., 2011).

Cohesion: The family’s ability to perform actions as a family unit. Members are bonded together to sustain commitment to one another and to the familial goals (Meredith et al., 2011).

Communication: The verbal, written, and/or non-verbal exchange of thoughts, feelings, opinions and information (Meredith et al., 2011).

Core family leisure patterns: Leisure activities which are more frequently engaged in by families, and involve elements of familiarity and informality. These activities are typically low-cost, accessible, and are engaged in within the home environment, making them nonthreatening to parents and children (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001).

Emotional ties: Emotional bonding among family members, particularly during family leisure and recreation engagement (Meredith et al., 2011).

Family functioning: A family’s ability to function effectively in the following domains: 1) problem solving, 2) communication, 3) roles, 4) affective responsiveness, 5) affective involvement, and 6) behavior control (Epstein, Bishop, & Levin, 1978).

Grief: An individual’s emotional reactions to the bereavement process (Stroebe, Schut, & Stroebe, 2007).
Military communities: Military bases and similar military-focused communities in which service members and their military families live, as opposed to communities composed of primarily civilians.

Military family: The members of the family connected to a service member, which may include spouses, children, adult dependents, extended and binuclear family members, and the service member(s).

Military families experiencing the loss/death of a service member: Military families who have experienced the death of a service member within their family. This includes service members who have died in either hostile, or non-hostile events.

Nurturing: Encouraging positive growth and appropriate development, particularly through the use of parenting skills.

Problem-solving: A family’s ability to solve problems in a way that maintains optimal family functioning (Epstein et al., 1978).

Roles: Patterns of behavior through which family members fulfill the functions of the family (Epstein et al., 1978).

Resilience: The process of withstanding life's trials, and moving forward in the face of adversity (Walsh, 2003).

Service member: Active duty members of the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) Service branches (Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force), those serving in one of the six DoD Reserve components (Army National Guard, Army Reserve, Navy Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, Air National Guard, and Air Force Reserve), and those serving in the
Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Coast Guard and Coast Guard Reserve (US Department of Defense, 2015).

Support: Perceiving that comfort can be obtained, particularly from family members (Meredith et al., 2011).

Veteran (military): An individual who has served as an active duty member of one of the U.S. Department of Defense Service branches, and has been discharged under conditions other than dishonorable (Szymendera, 2015).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The recreation-based program under study served military families experiencing the loss of a service member. The FOFS camp provided various family recreation sessions, and community-building interventions, with the aim of creating connections among participating families. Considering the current lack of research on recreation-based programming for military families, it was important to broaden the scope and review the literature pertaining to theories, specifically those related to families and family leisure, military families, and family leisure. The literature review consisted of five main topic areas. The topic areas reviewed included 1) an overview of military families, 2) theoretical foundations, 3) bereavement, 4) family leisure, and 5) military family programming. Finally, as the FOFS camp served families experiencing the loss of a service member, studies related to this particular sub-population were discussed throughout each of the five topic areas.
Military Families

There are over 2.1 million Active Duty and Reserve personnel, over half which are married and/or have children, resulting in 1.75 million military children (US Department of Defense, 2015). Many military children are fairly young, with 37% under the age of five years old, 31% between the ages of six to eleven, 24% between the ages of 12 to 18, and 7% between the ages of 22 (US Department of Defense, 2015). All families face a variety of challenges throughout life, however military families are made unique by the situations that they may face as a result of having one or both parents involved in the military. Like civilian families, military families are subject to the daily tasks of caring for their kids and/or elderly parents, completing schooling, parenting, and choice of occupation. The military often encourages principles such as strength, courage, mental toughness, and personal sacrifice, and the responsibility to uphold military principles is taken on by the children and the spouse who are not directly enlisted in the military.

Though children and military spouses are detailed herein, it is important to acknowledge that military families differ in their makeup and structure, and what constitutes a “family” is ultimately determined by the family itself.

Military children. Several studies indicate that the children of deployed parents experience higher levels of mental, emotional and behavioral difficulties than civilian children (Barnes, Davis, & Treiber, 2007; Chandra et al., 2010; Chartrand, Frank, White, & Shope, 2008; Huebner, Mancini, Wilcox, Grass, & Grass, 2007). Military children display varying mental, emotional and behavioral changes based upon their age, including increased attention difficulties, aggression, emotional reactivity, increased
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stress levels, anxiety, depression, school- and peer-related difficulties, and withdrawal (Barnes et al., 2007; Chartrand et al., 2008; Gorman, Eide, & Hisle-Gorman, 2010; Lester et al., 2010). Adolescents, as they are even more aware of the military parent’s absence, also demonstrate greater feelings of uncertainty regarding the health and safety of the deployed parent (Huebner et al., 2007). A number of factors can influence mental and behavioral changes in military children, including the age of the child, gender of the deployed parent, marriage status of the parents, parental distress, and length of deployment (Gorman et al., 2010; Lester, et al., 2010; Lincoln, Swift, & Shorteno-Fraser, 2008). Due to the various challenges associated with having a parent serving in the military, military children are at a greater risk for mental and behavioral health conditions than civilian children, particularly when it comes to conditions such as anxiety, and depression (Barnes et al., 2007; Chandra et al., 2010; Chartrand et al., 2008; Gorman et al., 2010; Huebner et al., 2007; Lester et al., 2010). The challenges accompanying military life can also have significant impacts on the spouses of service members.

Military spouses. As of 2015, there were over one million military spouses (US Department of Defense, 2015). One of the most commonly mentioned challenges facing military spouses is the uncertainty that accompanies having a spouse serving in the military, and the powerlessness that one might feel as a result (Aducci, Baptist, George, Barros, & Nelson, 2011; Green, Nurius, & Lester, 2013; Warner, Appenzeller, Warner, & Grieger, 2009). Spouses are often concerned about the safety of their deployed spouse, and whether or not their loved one will return from deployment alive and healthy (Aducci et al., 2011; Green et al., 2013). Military spouses also face challenges related to adjusting
to life without their spouse, including experiencing feelings of loneliness, financial challenges, family stress, concerns about their children, and feeling overwhelmed by new responsibilities (Chandra et al., 2010; Dimiceli, Steinhardt, & Smith, 2010; Green et al., 2013). A study by Eaton et al. (2008) found that primary care-seeking military spouses experienced mental health problems at similar rates as their spouses returning from combat. In addition to concerns over their own mental health, military spouses are also faced with the fear of their mental health problems being mirrored by their children (Dimiceli et al., 2010). Although military spouses experience challenges as a result of having a spouse serving in the military, findings indicate that having a deployed spouse allows some military spouses to grow both domestically and professionally (Aducci et al., 2011). Although many service members safely return home, trials experienced by military children and spouses may be further complicated by the death of a service member in the family.

**Families of deceased service members.** As of mid-2017, nearly 7,000 service members were killed in Afghanistan and Iraq operations, including both hostile and non-hostile (accident, illness/injury, self-inflicted, pending) deaths (Defense Causality Analysis System, 2017). Despite the number of families and spouses experiencing the loss of a service member, few studies have been conducted on the demographics of these families. One study conducted by Cozza et al. (2017) reported that over 5,000 deceased service members left behind a dependent spouse with children within a 10-year span (September 11th, 2001-September 11th, 2011) and 80% of those families contained one to
two children (Cozza et al., 2017). In total, 12,641 children experienced the death of a parent serving in the military between 2001-2011 (Cozza et al., 2017).

Following a service member’s death, family members’ relationships with another change, and the family unit as a whole experiences immediate and long-term challenges (Walsh & McGoldrick, 2013). This loss also creates challenges for military families, which can be further complicated by a lack of accessible resources within the community in which they live. To aid military families in adapting to the loss of a service member and to lessen the possibility of long term maladaptation, support programs within both civilian and military communities should focus on improving parent physical and mental health and parenting capacity, as well as using family-focused care to improve family resilience throughout the recovery process (Holmes et al., 2013).

**Military communities and community support.** In order to cope with the challenges resulting from having a partner serving in the military, families may seek support from resources within the military community. Military families living on or near military bases have access to resources such as health care, child care programs, recreation programs and facilities, marriage and family counseling, and legal assistance, in addition to informal support networks composed of military families and friends. Military communities have shown to be helpful environments, and can sustain both family functioning, and the emotional health of the family (Cozza, Chun, & Polo, 2005; Holmes et al., 2013). Although beneficial, many families lack access to these supports as a result of living outside military communities, where few community resources may be available to support their unique needs (Cozza et al., 2005). A lack of access to
community resources is notably a concern for military families experiencing the death of a service member, as spouses and children of deceased service members were found to live an average of nearly 60 miles from the nearest military base (Cozza et al., 2017). To address the current lack of community support for military families, researchers suggest educating and training community service providers on the needs of military families, creating more community programs that provide long term support, and increasing communication between military and civilian care providers (Holmes et al., 2013; Huebner et al., 2007).

Military families face a variety of trials, which impact children, spouses, and the military family unit as a whole. Both military children and spouses can experience mental, behavioral, social, and emotional distress as a result of having a parent or spouse serving in the military. Following the death of a service member, military families are faced with the task of adapting to life without the deceased service member. Military communities and civilian community resources serve as a way to support military families, particularly those experiencing the loss of a service member.

**Theoretical Foundations**

**McMaster Model of Family Functioning.** As a result of the challenges faced by both military children and spouses, the military family unit as a whole can be impacted. The McMaster Model of Family Functioning suggests that several dimensions of family behavior should be considered in order to develop an accurate picture of a family (Epstein, Bishop, & Levin, 1978). The six dimensions of family functioning proposed in the model include: 1) problem solving, 2) communication, 3) roles, 4) affective
responsiveness, 5) affective involvement, and 6) behavior control (Epstein et al., 1978). In order to maintain an optimal level of family functioning, families must be able to effectively and efficiently solve a variety of problems, and consistently use clear and direct communication (Epstein et al., 1978). A well-functioning family also appropriately specifies family functions, responds to family members’ feelings fittingly, develops standards for acceptable behaviors, and adheres to behavior standards in a flexible manner (Epstein et al., 1978). Underlying the McMaster Model of Family Functioning is systems theory, which poses that each member of the family system is related to one another, and that the family as a whole is not simply the sum of its various members (Epstein et al., 1978).

Many domains of family functioning may be impacted and tested when a military family experiences the death of a service member. Professionals and community programs should aim to support families in maintaining and improving the six domains of family functioning, especially for those experiencing the death of a service member.

**Ambiguous Loss Theory.** When a family member is serving in the military, their whereabouts may be unknown, or a lack of information may exist regarding whether or not they are alive. Ambiguous loss transpires in situations of unclear loss, when it is unknown whether a loved one is present or absent, living or deceased (Boss, 2004). Two types of ambiguous loss have been identified; ambiguous absence and ambiguous presence (Boss, 2007). Ambiguous absence can occur when families perceive their family member as being physically absent, but psychologically present due to the fact that there is no evidence proving their permanent loss (Huebner et al., 2007). The second
type of ambiguous loss, ambiguous presence, takes place when a family member is perceived as physically present, but emotionally or cognitively missing (Boss, 2004). Many bereavement situations that result from military service are clear and defined, therefore not every military family will experience ambiguous loss. For example, in some situations where a service member dies in combat, the service member’s body may be returned to the military family, allowing the family to be certain that the service member is no longer alive, and receive closure by engaging in traditional mourning rituals.

Each family perceives situations of ambiguous loss differently, and the individual and collective perceptions surrounding these situations are referred to as boundary ambiguity (Boss, 2004). Boundary ambiguity occurs when families or individuals experience uncertainty regarding who is part of, or who is not part of, the family or relationship (Huebner et al., 2007). Ambiguous loss can result in problems structurally, through high boundary ambiguity, and psychologically, through feelings of hopelessness and depression (Boss, 2004; Boss, 2016; Huebner et al., 2007). Structural and psychological problems can lead to conflict among family members, increased stress, parental roles being ignored, and family members being cut off (Boss, 2004; Faber, Willerton, Clymer, MacDermid, & Weiss, 2008; Huebner et al., 2007). To adapt to ambiguous loss, research suggests that it is beneficial for families to share stories about the lost individual with peers, and work towards reconstructing roles and rituals within the family (Boss, 2004). In addition, it is important that interventions and therapies for families experiencing ambiguous loss focus on building resilience at the individual and family level in order to help families move forward (Boss, 2016).
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Core and Balance Model. Within family leisure, two general categories of leisure, core and balance, have been identified (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001). The Core and Balance Model suggests that each category of family leisure impacts the family in a unique way, combining to foster cohesion and adaptability within the family unit (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001). Core family leisure experiences are common, everyday activities that are often home-based, providing a sense of closeness and stability (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001). Balance leisure experiences are less frequently engaged in, and allow families to experience novelty and challenge (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001). In both recreation and everyday life, individuals strive to experience novelty, while also maintaining a sense of familiarity. This idea applies to family leisure, as a balanced combination of familiar core leisure experiences, and novel balance leisure experiences will afford families a sense of cohesion, while also encouraging adaptability in everyday life (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001). Adaptability and cohesiveness, although important for all families, may be particularly important for military families, who are faced with a number of obstacles. In order to overcome challenges as a family unit, military families must be cohesive, and have the ability to effectively adapt to challenges as needed. To further develop cohesion and adaptability among the military family population, military families should be encouraged to engage in family leisure experiences, both core and balance.

Bereavement

Bereavement is experienced differently by every individual, and responses to bereavement are impacted by a number of situational, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and
coping factors (Stroebe et al., 2007). Situational factors impacting bereavement responses include elements such as the place and cause of death and pre-bereavement caregiver strain. Interpersonal, intrapersonal, and coping factors including personality, religious beliefs, social support, economic resources, professional intervention, and emotional regulation have also been found to impact bereavement responses (Stroebe et al., 2007). Depending upon these factors, individuals may exhibit bereavement responses such as depression, anxiety, guilt, anger, loneliness, shock, denial, suicidal ideation, hopelessness, fatigue, crying, social withdrawal, loss of control and increased susceptibility to illness (Holmes et al., 2013; Stroebe et al., 2007). Military culture further impacts bereavement situations, both in negative and positive ways.

Due to the unique culture surrounding the military, military families experience bereavement differently than civilian families. For military families, the circumstances and timing of a service member’s death can make bereavement significantly more difficult. (Kaplow, Layne, Saltzman, Cozza, & Pynoos, 2013; Rolls, & Chowns, 2014). Military families must also depart from the military community following the service member’s death, resulting in family destabilization, disruption of social networks, decreased access to resources, and a loss of family- and self- identity (Cozza et al., 2005; Holmes et al., 2013; Kaplow et al., 2013; Rolls, & Chowns, 2014). Also unique to the bereavement experiences of military families are the ritualized mourning ceremonies and programs offered by the military, aimed at providing support and comfort for families experiencing the loss of a service member (Kaplow et al., 2013).
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To adapt to bereavement, researchers suggest that bereaved families share positive memories, make meaning of the service member’s death, re-establish identity, and connect with other families experiencing similar situations (Stroebe et al., 2007; Huebner et al., 2007; Walsh, 2007; Walsh & McGoldrick, 2013). Engagement in programs that support family strengths, positive parenting, effective communication, coping and resilience has also been recommended (Holmes et al., 2013; Kaplow et al., 2013). A number of programs currently exist to support bereaved military families, some of which include the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS), Not Forgotten Outreach, and the American Widow Project. In addition, recreation-based programs are also utilizing family leisure and recreational experiences to positively impact bereaved families, including the program in this study, the FOFS camp.

Family Leisure

Family leisure plays in important role in the lives of military and civilian families. Engagement in family leisure provides opportunities for families to improve problem solving and social abilities, develop and strengthen communication skills, construct and mold family identity, and foster cohesion and adaptability (Agate, Zabriskie, Agate, & Poff, 2009; Buswell, Zabriskie, Lundberg, & Hawkins, 2012; Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001). While family leisure is typically an enjoyable experience, it can also create challenges for both children and parents. In leisure and recreation, unplanned and challenging events often occur, which positively contribute to increased adaptability in families, as facing these challenges requires adaptation, and the ability to learn and change as a family system (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001). When considered in the long
term, these challenges are beneficial to overall family functioning, however in the immediate moment, challenges and unplanned events can create stress and lead to unhappiness. Parents describe their motivations for engaging in family leisure as not necessarily doing so for pleasure and satisfaction, but rather for the opportunity to develop a sense of unity within the family and to educate their children on healthy leisure habits (Shaw & Dawson, 2001).

A large amount of literature on family recreation is based on conclusions drawn from observation of families with two parents. However, select studies focusing on leisure patterns in single-parent families show that single-parent families experience a multitude of constraints to leisure participation, ranging from constraints on time, to constraints on money. Single-parent families were found to participate less than dual-parent families in both core and balance family leisure (Hornberger et al., 2010). In single-parent families, core family leisure patterns play a greater role in overall family functioning and appear to be more crucial to family functioning in these families, in part due to the fact that these leisure experiences fulfill the need to spend consistent time together (Hornberger et al., 2010). Although family leisure patterns between dual and single-parent families differ, these two types of families have been shown to function similarly (Hornberger et al., 2010).

Many military families experiencing the loss of a service member are led by a single parent, and therefore may participate in family leisure experiences less frequently due to financial and time constraints impacting family leisure participation. Considering the positive outcomes associated with family leisure engagement, and the mental, social,
emotional and behavioral problems facing military families, it would be beneficial for military families to participate in family leisure on a regular basis. Recreation-based programs serve as one way to provide opportunities for military families to engage in family leisure.

**Programming for Military Families**

Currently, there are a wide variety of community programs and interventions targeting military families, some of which focus on serving families experiencing the death of a service member. These programs and interventions serve as a helpful way to construct a support system within military families (Krasny, Pace, Tidball, & Helphand, 2014). Overall, programs for military families have varying goals, which can include providing practical support, building resilience, improving family functioning, and connecting military families with their peers.

One heavily researched program offered to military families, Families OverComing Under Stress (FOCUS), has been implemented to enhance resiliency in military families exposed to significant levels of stress or the loss of a loved one serving in the military (Saltzman et al., 2011). Findings indicate that this brief, family-centered intervention is successful at reducing parent and child distress, improving adaptive functioning, and enhancing family resilience (Saltzman et al., 2011). Recreation-based programming serves as an additional option for military families seeking community support. One example, the Family Battle Buddies Program (FBBP), is an evidence-based recreational therapy program which uses recreational experiences and equine-assisted
therapy to promote resiliency and family-to-family support in post-deployment National Guard families (Dawson, Gilbert, Gilbert, Beckmeyer, & McCormick, 2017). Project Sanctuary, an organization which serves military families, also offers recreational therapy programming, retreats, counseling, and education. Considering that military culture encourages strength and resilience, and urges members to seek support from members inside of the group, military families may be hesitant to seek support from traditional healthcare professionals (Dawson et al., 2017). Recreation-based programming can be provided in outdoor settings, and often utilizes a strengths-based approach, therefore serving as an ideal alternative for military families hesitant to seek help from traditional healthcare providers (Hawkins, Townsend, & Garst, 2016). In addition to providing support for all military families, some programs specifically serve families experiencing the loss of a service member.

**Programs for families of deceased service members.** As military families may experience distress and maladaptation following the loss of a family member serving in the military, it is important for community service providers to offer programs and services to families such as these. Cozza et al. (2017) found that half of the families experiencing the loss of a service member between 2001-2011 lived over 60 miles away from the nearest military instillation, suggesting that these families may not have adequate access to military resources. To provide support to families experiencing the loss of a service member, programs such as TAPS and the Not Forgotten Outreach offer recreational experiences, retreats, seminars, educational programs, youth programs, and expeditions. Ideal programs for families experiencing the loss of a service member are
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tailored to the individual family’s strengths and risk factors, provide opportunities for family-to-family interaction, and promote the factors which lead to family adaptation and resilience (Boss, 2004; Holmes et al., 2013; Walsh, 2007; Walsh & McGoldrick, 2013).

**Promoting resilience through recreation-based programming.** Some military families with higher resilience and may not face significant negative impacts associated with being part of the military community, however other families may experience difficulties (Meredith et al., 2010). Evidence indicates that there are six distinct family-level factors which promote resilience, including: emotional ties, communication, support, closeness, nurturing and adaptability (Meredith et al., 2010). Programs hoping to improve military family resilience should focus on addressing these six factors, either as a preventative measure, or to help families recover from distressing experiences that have already occurred (Meredith et al., 2010). Family leisure positively impacts many of the factors that enhance family resilience, such as communication, adaptability, emotional ties, support, and closeness. Therefore, it would be beneficial for military families to engage in recreation-based programs which provide family recreation and leisure experiences.

Programs providing support to military families in military and civilian communities serve a vital role in preventing distress in military families, and helping families recover from distress if it does occur. Despite the wide variety of programs in existence, there is a notable lack of literature regarding their effectiveness and outcomes. Researchers in a variety of fields have called for continued research on programs serving military families (Holmes et al., 2013; Meredith et al., 2010; Park, 2011).
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Literature Review Summary

In the US, there are a large number of active duty and reserve personnel currently serving the country, and over half of these service members are married and/or have children (US Department of Defense, 2015). Unlike their civilian counterparts, military children are at a greater risk for developing mental, emotional, and behavioral problems such as anxiety, depression, withdrawal, and peer- and school-related difficulties (Barnes et al., 2007; Chandra et al., 2010; Chartrand et al., 2008; Gorman et al., 2010; Huebner et al., 2007; Lester et al., 2010). Similarly, military spouses face challenges such as mental health problems, feelings of loneliness, uncertainty and powerlessness, and concerns over the wellbeing of their children (Aducci et al., 2011; Chandra et al., 2010; Dimiceli et al., 2010; Green et al., 2013). Although military families hope for the safe return of their service members, nearly 7,000 service members have been killed in recent Afghanistan and Iraq operations (Defense Causality Analysis System, 2017). Military families experiencing the death of a service member will exhibit a range of physical, mental, social, and emotional bereavement reactions (Holmes et al., 2013; Stroebe et al., 2007). Bereavement can be further complicated when families experience situations of ambiguous loss (Boss, 2004; Boss, 2016). To adapt to the challenges that they face, military families may seek support from military and civilian community programs.

Military and civilian community programs are frequently used to improve family functioning and resilience, provide opportunities for military families to connect with their peers, and help military families adapt to the loss of a service member (Dawson et al., 2017; Saltzman et al., 2011). Recreation-based programs are one type of program
currently being offered to military families, and can act as a valuable alternative to traditional, clinical programs (Dawson et al., 2017). Programs located within civilian communities, both recreation-and non-recreation based are particularly important resources for military families experiencing the loss of a service member, as they experience numerous short and long term challenges and live primarily outside of the military community (Cozza et al., 2017). Ideal programs for families experiencing the loss of a service member are tailored to the family’s strengths, foster positive parenting, provide opportunities for family-to-family interaction, and promote the factors which lead to family adaptation, optimal functioning, and resilience (Boss, 2004; Holmes et al., 2013; Kaplow et al., 2013; Meredith et al., 2010; Walsh, 2007; Walsh & McGoldrick, 2013). Despite the number of programs offered to military families, there is a significant lack of evidence-based programming, and a similar lack of research regarding the outcomes and effectiveness of military family programs (Holmes et al., 2013; Meredith et al., 2010; Park, 2011).

Chapter 3: Methods

Methodology

The focus of qualitative research is to discover how people construct the world around them, how experiences are interpreted, and what meaning is attributed to these experiences (Merriam, 2009). Case study as a qualitative method was deemed to be the most appropriate for addressing the proposed research questions. Case study research is best suited for answering “how” and “why” questions, particularly in contemporary
contexts where the researcher does not have control over events and behaviors (Yin, 2013). This method is used to develop an in-depth understanding of a specific case or multiple cases, which is completed through the collection of multiple sources of evidence (Creswell, 2012). The intent of conducting a case study can vary, as can the design of the case study (Creswell, 2012). Defining the “case” to be studied is a critical component of case study research (Yin, 2013). The “case” can be an individual, event, program, or small group, however it is important to define the boundaries of the “case” in order to determine the scope of the data (Yin, 2013). A case might be selected because it provides an example of a particular issue, process, concern, or because it is particularly unique or interesting (Merriam, 2009). The “case” in this study was the FOFS camp. The camp itself was chosen as the case for this study due to the unique population served, and the uniqueness of the program within the recreation field. The case itself was bounded by time, a three-day time frame, and place, Camp Twin Lakes. In order to further differentiate case study research, case studies are often categorized by type or function (Merriam, 2013). Yin (2013) identified three types of case studies, including explanatory, exploratory, and descriptive case studies. A descriptive case study seeks to describe a particular case within the context of the real-world (Yin, 2013). In this study, a descriptive case study was undertaken, as the purpose of the study was to describe the experiences of families participating in the FOFS camp. Within this case study, multiple sources of data were collected. Collecting multiple sources of data is important in case study research, as it allows for data triangulation (Yin, 2013). Data triangulation can allow for the convergence of evidence (Yin, 2013). In this study, data sources included:
observations, visual documents, and interviews. Visual documents were integrated into the interview context, using a technique known as photo elicitation (Harper, 2002).

**Setting**

Established in 1993, Camp Twin Lakes provides year-round, fully-accessible programming to individuals with disabilities, children and adults with serious illnesses, veterans, and military families. Camp Twin Lakes offers four types of veteran and military family-specific programs, each with a distinct focus and target population. The FOFS camp, one of the four types of military-family specific programs offered, was located at Camp Twin Lakes’ Will-A-Way location in Winder, Georgia. This facility was located within Ft. Yargo State Park and features a medical lodge, fully accessible playground, beachfront, arts and crafts building, amphitheater, various outdoor activity stations, and camper cabins.

During the fall of 2017 (November 17th-19th), Camp Twin Lakes implemented a three-day camp for military families. The program, titled “Families of Fallen Soldiers”, aimed to provide opportunities for families to engage in family recreation, as well as connect with other military families experiencing the loss of a service member. The camp involved a combination of family leisure sessions, and sessions designed to encourage the development of connections among families experiencing the loss of a service member. The camp was led by a CTRS, whose role was to coordinate recreational and community-building sessions. The CTRS also led a number of family recreation sessions herself. Volunteers and Camp Twin Lakes seasonal staff were on-site to aid in the provision of family recreation sessions and family meals. The CTRS leading the camp specialized in
providing programs to military families, and all volunteers and seasonal staff members received specialized training prior to working with camp participants, helping to ensure that all military families had a safe and enjoyable experience throughout the weekend.

Day one of the camp included family check-in, session sign-ups, introductions among participating families, and a group campfire to allow for conversation among participants. During the first half of day two, families engaged in a family leisure session. During the family leisure session, families self-selected activities in which they were interested in participating. Activity choices included: fishing, arts and crafts, basketball, zip-line, boating, climbing, mini-golf and yoga. During the second half of the day, children attended a child-specific program, while parents attended a separate adults-only session. Unlike other camp sessions focused on developing connections among or within families, these sessions allowed connections to be formed among child and parent peer groups. Following these parent and child-specific programs, all participating families regrouped and attended two sessions designed to foster connections among families. On the final day of the FOFS camp, families engaged in an additional family leisure session.

Participants

Participants in the FOFS camp included families experiencing the death of a service member. It was predicted that the structure and traits of participating families will differ considerably. In total, there were eight families participating in the three-day FOFS camp at Camp Twin Lakes. Study participants were selected from the group of families participating in this program. Purposeful sampling is commonly used in case study research to select cases that demonstrate different perspectives on an issue (Creswell,
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2012; Merriam, 2009). A total of three families were chosen for participation in the study using purposeful sampling. These families were chosen on the basis of providing differing perspectives on the camp, which included having a unique family structure (blended, extended, etc.), or including older or younger children than those in previously selected families. Choosing a small, purposeful sample allowed the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the case, and consequently gain an in-depth understanding of military family participation in recreation-based programming.

Data Collection

Upon arrival to Camp Twin Lakes, families were introduced to the researcher by the Survivor Outreach Services Coordinator, with whom the families were familiar. Initial observations (See Appendix A) (Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009) were made throughout the first quarter of day two in order to allow the researcher to determine whether the family would be an appropriate participant for the study. After being selected for participation, three families participated in interviews, the photo elicitation component of the study, and were observed throughout the remainder of the weekend. During day two of the camp, the three participating families were given electronic tablets capable of capturing photos. Upon receiving a fully charged tablet, participating family members will be asked to capture photos that represent their experience as a participant in the FOFS camp. Along with this, family members were asked to note the two photos which they felt best captured their experience as a participant in the FOFS camp. Photo elicitation was used to integrate these participant-captured photos into the interviews on days two and three.
During the second half of day two and at the beginning of day three, study participants were asked to complete interviews with a member of the research team. Interviews involved all members of the family, including children in the family, when appropriate. The interview protocol (See Appendix B) was developed after reflecting upon research questions. The interviews included a photo elicitation component, which was accomplished by incorporating the photos captured on day two into the interview and discussing participant-selected photos with the participant him or herself (Harper, 2002). The interviews were conducted in-person, at Camp Twin Lakes. Interviews were semi-structured, and audio-recorded in order to be transcribed following the interviews. Transcriptions were compared to the recorded interviews in order to verify the accuracy of the transcriptions. The length of interviews ranged from three to twenty minutes.

Collecting data through observation, visual documents (photos) and interviewing allowed the researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of families’ experiences engaging in the camp.

**Data Analysis**

To begin the data analysis process, interviews were transcribed and handwritten observations were converted into text files. Transcriptions were reviewed to ensure that obvious mistakes had not been made. After organizing the data, the researcher read through transcripts and observation notes in order to gain an understanding of the data as a whole. During this process, the researcher began to pull out key ideas and topics through the use of memoing. Memos included written hints, suggestions, and thoughts that the researcher considered during the initial data interpretation (Yin, 2013). Data was
then re-reviewed and coded using an open coding process. The codes were developed on the basis of information that emerged from the participants, rather than using predetermined codes. Axial coding was utilized to group open codes with similar meanings (Merriam, 2009). The codes from the data were merged, and patterns were developed into themes. After solidifying themes, items coded according to these themes were copied and electronically filed under a document containing all items related to this theme (Merriam, 2009). A case study database was developed, which included a compilation of all the data collected for this case study (Yin, 2013). Finally, a rich description of the setting, participants (families), and events of the camp was developed.

**Limitations**

As families voluntarily participated in the camp, it is possible that participants shared an interest in spending time with their family members. Validity of the data collected throughout the study partially depended upon the participants viewing the research team as trustworthy. To develop a trusting relationship with participants, the researcher was introduced to participants by the camp coordinator, and the Survivor Outreach Services Coordinator, with whom the families were very familiar. Further efforts were made to establish validity through data triangulation. This study collected data from three sources (observations, interviews, and photos), which allowed for a greater understanding of the participating families, and was further used to verify themes and concepts. Generalizability is not the purpose of this study, however efforts were made to maximize transferability. A rich, thick description of the case was provided to aid potential readers in determining whether findings from this study can be applied to
their particular situation (Merriam, 2009). In addition, purposeful sampling was used to maximize variation in the sample, allowed for a greater range of applications by potential readers.
Recreation-Based Programming for Families of Fallen Soldiers: A Case Study

Abstract

The involvement of United States military forces in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other areas has led to the death of nearly 7,000 service members (Defense Causality Analysis System, 2017). Although there are a number of recreation-based programs that serve military families, little research has been conducted on such programs. The purpose of this study was to describe the experiences of military families participating in a three-day recreation-based program, the Families of Fallen Soldiers camp, serving bereaved military families. This study also sought to develop an understanding of the meaning attributed to the camp experience and better understand why families elected to participate in the camp. Using a case-study approach, this study found recreation-based programs serving bereaved military families are perceived by families as meaningful, have the ability to enhance relationships and social support, serve as a respite, and allow families to engage in family leisure. Implications for practitioners working with bereaved military families are provided.

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Journal of Leisure Research

Keywords: Bereavement, Military Families, Recreation, Relationships, Identity, Family Leisure
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Introduction

Unlike civilian families, military families may experience frequent relocations, multiple deployments, long tour hours, and even the injury or death of the family member serving. In addition, military families face the risk of the service member being killed during service. When a military family experiences the death of a service member, the family must cope with sudden grief, as well as a loss of their identity as a military family (Holmes, Rauch, & Cozza, 2013). To cope with the loss of a service member, military families may seek assistance from military or civilian community support programs. In addition to traditional therapies and support programs, an increasing number of recreation professionals are serving military families through programming tailored to meet their unique needs. In spite of the wide variety of recreation-based programs being offered to military families, there is a significant lack of research pertaining to recreation-based programming for military families, specifically bereaved military families. Researchers in a variety of fields have called for continued research on programs serving military families (Holmes et al., 2013; Meredith et al., 2010; Park, 2011). Considering the lack of research concerning recreation-based military family programming, the purpose of this study was to describe the experiences of military families participating in a three-day recreation-based camp, the meaning attributed to the camp, and the reasons families participated in the camp.

Literature Review

Military Families and Bereavement

In the US, over half of active duty and reserve personnel currently serving are married and/or have children (US Department of Defense, 2015). Though many military families consist of a husband, wife, and biological children, an increasing number of families are considered blended, intergenerational, or consist of dual-career parents (Park, 2011). Unlike their civilian
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counterparts, military children and spouses face the risk of developing feelings of loneliness and powerlessness, as well as mental, emotional, and behavioral problems (Aducci et al., 2011; Barnes et al., 2007; Chandra et al., 2010; Chartrand et al., 2008; Dimiceli et al., 2010; Gorman et al., 2010; Green et al., 2013; Huebner et al., 2007; Lester et al., 2010). Military families hope for the safe return of their service members, however nearly 7,000 service members have been killed in recent Afghanistan and Iraq operations (Defense Causality Analysis System, 2017). Military families experiencing the death of a service member will exhibit a range of bereavement reactions such as depression, anxiety, guilt, anger, loneliness, shock, denial, suicidal ideation, hopelessness, fatigue, crying, social withdrawal, loss of control and increased susceptibility to illness (Holmes et al., 2013; Stroebe et al., 2007). Military families must also depart from the military community following the service member’s death, resulting in family destabilization, disruption of social networks, decreased access to resources, and a loss of family- and self-identity (Cozza et al., 2005; Holmes et al., 2013; Kaplow et al., 2013; Rolls, & Chowns, 2014).

To adapt to bereavement, researchers suggest that bereaved families share positive memories, make meaning of the service member’s death, re-establish identity, and connect with other families experiencing similar situations (Stroebe et al., 2007; Huebner et al., 2007; Walsh, 2007; Walsh & McGoldrick, 2013).

Programming for Military Families

Recreation-based programming serves as one of the many options for military families seeking community support. One specific example, the Family Battle Buddies Program (FBBP), is an evidence-based recreational therapy program aimed at promoting resiliency and family-to-family support in National Guard families (Dawson, Gilbert, Gilbert, Beckmeyer, & McCormick, 2017). Considering that military culture urges members to seek support from members inside of
the group, military families may be hesitant to seek support from traditional healthcare professionals (Dawson et al., 2017). Recreation-based programming can be provided in outdoor settings, and often utilizes a strengths-based approach, serving as an ideal alternative for military families hesitant to seek help from traditional healthcare providers (Hawkins, Townsend, & Garst, 2016). In addition to providing support for all military families, several programs specifically serve bereaved military families. Ideal programs for bereaved military families are tailored to the individual family’s strengths and risk factors, provide opportunities for family-to-family interaction, and promote the factors which lead to family adaptation and resilience (Boss, 2004; Holmes et al., 2013; Walsh, 2007; Walsh & McGoldrick, 2013). More specifically, it has been suggested that programming for military families address the six distinct family-level factors which promote resilience, including: emotional ties, communication, support, closeness, nurturing and adaptability (Meredith et al., 2010). Family leisure positively impacts many of the factors that enhance family resilience, such as communication, adaptability, emotional ties, support, and closeness. Thus, it would be beneficial for military families to engage in recreation-based programs which provide family recreation and leisure experiences.

**Theoretical Foundations**

**McMaster Model of Family Functioning.** The McMaster Model of Family Functioning suggests that several dimensions of family behavior should be considered in order to develop an accurate picture of a family (Epstein, Bishop, & Levin, 1978). The six dimensions of family functioning proposed in the model include: 1) problem solving, 2) communication, 3) roles, 4) affective responsiveness, 5) affective involvement, and 6) behavior control (Epstein et al., 1978). Many domains of family functioning may be impacted and tested when a military family
experiences the death of a service member, therefore professionals should aim to support families in maintaining and improving the six domains of family functioning.

**Ambiguous Loss Theory.** When a family member is serving in the military, their whereabouts may be unknown, or a lack of information may exist regarding whether or not they are alive. Ambiguous loss transpires in situations of unclear loss, when it is unknown whether a loved one is present or absent, living or deceased (Boss, 2004). Many bereavement situations that result from military service are clear and defined, therefore not every military family will experience ambiguous loss. To adapt to ambiguous loss, it is important that interventions and therapies for families experiencing ambiguous loss focus on sharing stories, reconstructing roles and rituals, and building resilience at the individual and family level (Boss, 2016).

**Core and Balance Model of Family Functioning.** The Core and Balance Model proposes two general categories of leisure, core and balance, both of which impact the family in a unique way, combining to foster cohesion and adaptability within the family unit (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001). Core family leisure experiences are common, everyday, home-based activities providing a sense of closeness and stability. Balance leisure experiences are less frequently engaged in, and allow families to experience novelty and challenge (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001). For families, a balanced combination of familiar core leisure experiences, and novel balance leisure experiences will afford a sense of cohesion, while also encouraging adaptability in everyday life (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001). Adaptability and cohesiveness, although important for all families, may be particularly important for military families, who are faced with a number of obstacles.
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Methods

Methodology

Case study as a qualitative method was deemed to be the most appropriate for addressing the proposed research questions (Yin, 2013). This method was used to develop an in-depth understanding of a specific case, the FOFS camp, which was completed through the collection of multiple sources of evidence (Creswell, 2012).

Setting

During the fall of 2017, Camp Twin Lakes implemented a three-day camp for military families. The program took place at a Camp Twin Lakes facility within the Fort Yargo State Park in Georgia, USA. The FOFS camp was led by a Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist (CTRS), whose role was to coordinate the recreational, debriefing, and community-building sessions. An in-depth description of the setting and camp events is provided within the results.

Participants

Participants in the FOFS camp included families who had experienced the death of a service member. In total, eight families participated in the three-day FOFS camp at Camp Twin Lakes. Three families were selected from the group of families participating in this camp using purposive sampling (Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009). Families were chosen on the basis of having unique family structures (blended, extended, etc.), and included children of differing ages.

Data Collection

Upon arrival to Camp Twin Lakes, families were introduced to the researcher by the Survivor Outreach Services Coordinator, with whom the families were familiar. Initial observations were made throughout the first quarter of day two in order to determine appropriate
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participants for the study (See Appendix A) (Creswell, 2012; Merriam, 2009). After being selected for participation, three families participated in interviews, the photo elicitation component of the study, and were observed through the remainder of the weekend. Each family received one electronic tablet and were asked to capture photos that represented their experience as a participant in the FOFS camp in the beginning of day two. Throughout the second half of day two, and the first half of day three, interviews (See Appendix B) were conducted in-person with the three selected families, and included all members of the family, when appropriate (See Appendix B). The interviews included a photo elicitation component by incorporating the photos captured on day two into the interview (Harper, 2002).

Data Analysis

Photos captured by participants were grouped into electronic folders, interviews were then audio-recorded and transcribed, and handwritten observations were converted into text files, and reviewed for errors. Data was first coded using an open coding process, in which codes were established on the basis of information that emerged from the participants. Axial coding was utilized to group open codes with similar meanings (Merriam, 2009). The codes from the data were then merged, and patterns were developed into themes. Data triangulation was used to verify themes across all data sources. A case study database was also developed, which included a compilation of all the data collected for this case study. A rich, thick description of the case was provided to aid potential readers in determining whether findings from this study can be applied to their particular situation (Merriam, 2009). In addition, purposive sampling was used to maximize variation in the sample, allowing for a greater range of applications by potential reader.
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Results

A total of three families chose to participate in the study. A total of four interviews were conducted, which included one interview with Family 1, two interviews with Family 2, one with the adult and one with the child, and one interview with Family 3. Interviews ranged in length from three minutes with the teenager from Family 3, to approximately twenty minutes in length with Family 1, Family 2 (adult), and Family 3.

Case Description

Setting. The FOFS camp, which took place in late Fall, 2017, occurred at Camp Twin Lakes’ Will-A-Way campus in Ft. Yargo State Park. The area was surrounded by large trees and dense vegetation, and featured a lake at the edge of the camp. The camp location featured camper and staff cabins, a medical lodge, a large indoor gym, cafeteria, archery range, fishing pier, campfire ring, boat dock, arts and crafts room, high ropes course, zip line, oversized swing, climbing wall, and several hiking and biking paths.

Events. All three participating families arrived in the late evening on the first day of camp. Scheduled camp activities began at the start of day two. Families began day two by eating breakfast in the cafeteria, after which they were given the option to participate in a variety of “open” activities. After engaging in activities, all participants gathered for lunch. Following lunch, adults and children were directed to different sessions, allowing the adults to talk and engage in group initiative activities, and children to engage in activities with peers. Later in the afternoon, families reunited for a group kickball game, followed by dinner in the cafeteria. For the remainder of the evening, participants took part in the Fall Festival, which included eight activity stations located within the gym, as well as a hayride around the camp grounds. The start of day three began like the previous day, with families coming to breakfast at their leisure.
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During breakfast, families were introduced to a guest speaker, a motivational speaker who was an individual living with a double-amputation. After a question and answer session with the guest speaker, participants participated in a final “open” activity session. Following a brief lunch, participants packed their belongings and departed. Appendix C details the complete FOFS camp schedule.

Participants. Family 1: Family 1 consisted of three African-American family members, as well as an additional sibling, who did not attend this camp. Participating family members included a mother, one daughter (13 years old), and a younger daughter (unknown age) who elected not to participate in the family interview. The mother from Family 1 lost her spouse, a member of the United States Armed Forces. Family 1 participated in the FOFS Weekend the previous year, and also participated in similar programs held for military families. Family 2: Family 2 consisted of five African-American family members, however only two family members attended camp. The two family members in attendance included a mother, and her daughter (12 years old). The member of Family 3 did not disclose their relationship to the fallen service member. The family attended FOFS in the past, and also attended other programs held by Gold Star Families and the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors organization. Members of Family 2, the mother and daughter, were interviewed separately due to their availability at the time of the interview. Family 3: Family 3 consisted of four Caucasian family members, including a grandmother and her three grandchildren. Their legal guardians were not present during camp; therefore, the children from Family 3 were not interviewed or observed. Members of Family 3, including the grandchildren, did not live together and resided in different states. In addition, members of Family 3 were not all biologically related, and one grandchild had been adopted into the family. The grandmother from Family 3 lost her son, who served in the United States Armed
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Forces. Similar to other families, the grandmother from Family 3 described having participated in FOFS in the past, and stated that they engage in other military-related events and programs.

Findings

Several themes and subthemes emerged through the data analysis pertaining to participants’ experiences as campers at the FOFS program (see Table 1 for a description of themes).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meaningful for Participating Military Families</strong></td>
<td>Each family interviewed was found to view the FOFS camp as meaningful. The FOFS camp provided a way in which relationships were built and maintained, a way to memorialize and honor the fallen soldier, and a context in which families could take part in family leisure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationships and Social Support were Enhanced</strong></td>
<td>Observations, photographs and participant narratives demonstrated the role in which developing and maintaining relationships played in the FOFS experience. Relationships were developed between adults, between children, within families and between camp participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Camp was a Respite</strong></td>
<td>All families, including both children and adults, found the FOFS to be a respite from their everyday lives, and a respite to engage in both familiar and novel experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leisure was an Important Camp Experience</strong></td>
<td>Participants’ days at camp were primarily filled with both familiar recreation and leisure experiences such as campfires and art, as well as unique experiences such as the rock wall. Throughout such activities, participants could be seen exhibiting positive emotions, a primary one of which being hope, which were also captured in photos and interviews.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Theme 1: FOFS is Meaningful for Participating Military Families.** The experience of participating in the FOFS camp appeared to be meaningful for each family member interviewed. Overall, developing and maintaining relationships with others appeared to be exceptionally significant to all families. Each family shared a slightly different narrative in regards to what the
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FOFS camp meant to their family. For Family 1, coming to camp meant that they would have the opportunity to be out of the house, engage in fun activities, connect with families from similar backgrounds, and share different experiences with other families. The adult from Family 2 shared a similar view of what the camp meant to her family:

I know…I’m going to meet some of the same families that I’ve met before and it’s an opportunity for us to catch up from where we may have not seen each other for a little while or the last event that we may have been at and then again…I get to see some people who I haven’t…met before, get to learn their background, and share some of their experiences…

The adult from family 3 also provided a narrative on what the camp meant to her family:

It is the way for us to keep my son’s memory alive in the family. Cause all they [the children in her family] remember is a picture of him and then what we refer to as Uncle [name] is at Arlington….It’s just a way to keep the military in the middle of our lives.

In addition, participants valued the relationships built through the FOFS camp.

Theme 2: Relationships and Social Support Are Enhanced Through FOFS

Developing, maintaining, and strengthening relationships played a central role in the FOFS camp. Relationships between adults, between children, within families, and among participants were impacted.

Subtheme 1: Relationships between adults. To the partners and mothers of fallen soldiers, the FOFS camp served as an opportunity to bond and form relationships with adults experiencing similar losses. A session designed specifically for adults attending the FOFS camp facilitated interactions among adults, and allowed for the adults to discuss their children, provide advice and support, and examine more serious topics, such as coping with the death of a service
member. One adult shared a story about her fallen soldier and how she copes with his loss in front of other adult participants, after which several adults surrounded her with a supportive group hug. The adult from Family 1 described how this portion of camp adds meaning to her experience, stating “…when we have our adult time and we talk to one another…I’m able to take back with me advice that’s given from other adults about how they cope with what they are going through…” Adults not only supported one another and shared advice while at camp, but also supported each other via social media and during other programs for military families.

**Subtheme 2: Relationships between children.** Throughout camp activities, downtime, and mealtimes, young participants could be seen walking together in front of their parents, eating together at child-only tables, and engaging in activities with one another while parents engaged in different activities. Children were also observed supporting one another during challenging camp experiences, such as climbing the rock wall or swinging on the oversized swing. In addition to observational evidence, children also discussed building relationships with others throughout their interviews, and hoped to stay connected with their new friends via social media.

**Subtheme 3: Relationships within the family.** Whether they had been together since birth, or were recently joined through the adoption process, the FOFS camp served as an opportunity for family members to bond with one another over both novel and familiar camp activities and experiences. Families spent much of their time engaged with other participating families; however, were observed participating in recreational activities with their own family. Within family relationships also presented itself in photos (Figure 1) and their subsequent descriptions, as described by the grandmother from Family 3:
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So we don’t have very many photos of the four of us together, because [Family 3 child] only been in our family for the last 3 years. She was adopted 3 years ago …I like that one...all four of us on the bikes…

Additional, camp was seen as a setting in which parents and grandparents could convey family morals and values to their children, such as sharing, teamwork, and resilience. The adult from Family 2 described how the FOFS program allows her to teach her daughter about teamwork:

…everyone is engaging and you know, having fun… showing each other how to do stuff that they don’t…normally do on a given basis… just working together. Even like this one [pointing to photo of family in art room (Figure 2)] because they were working together to make the bracelets…
Subtheme 4: Relationships between camp participants. All connected by having lost a loved one serving in the military, the families participating in the FOFS program repeatedly emphasized the importance of developing relationships with one another. The adult from Family 2 stressed this theme in her statement, “Because not only do me and my daughter, you know, get to bond and have fun, we get to meet new people or some of the families that [we] met last time and just have fun.” The adult from Family 1 echoed this sentiment in her interview, when she expressed, “Well, I’ll say I feel like I’m amongst family rather than I am when I’m around, I guess, other people that haven’t experienced what we’ve experienced…I guess like a big family reunion.”

The theme also presented itself in photos captured by participants, such as when Family 2 captured a photo of themselves, a volunteer, the researcher, and the camp pet (Figure 3).

![Figure 3. Photo of Camp Participants. This picture, taken by Family 2, displays themselves, in addition to the camp pet, a volunteer, and the researcher.](image)

Theme 3: Camp as a Respite. A concept mentioned by all interviewed family members, both children and adults, was that camp served as a respite from the day to day activities,
boredom, stress, and responsibilities associated with life at home. For some, the excitement of camp, and the activities which take place at camp provided a much needed break from the boredom experienced at home and school. For others, relaxing camp activities and the quiet, natural environment surrounding the cabins provide a respite from the hurried pace of everyday life and work. The mother from Family 2 extensively described the concept in her interview, stating:

It’s just uplifting, fun, you...get to forget about what you had done at work or what may have transpired in your life you know a few hours before you came to camp, you just get to really have fun and enjoy the vibes that are going on at camp. Once we hit that Yargo State Park, it’s camp. It’s camp. Everything else is outside the Yargo State Park.

Both the adult and child from Family 1 alluded to this concept in their interview as well, with the adult stating that camp provided, “excitement that we usually don’t get while we’re at home,” and the child stating that she prefers the scenery of camp, “instead of being cooped up in the house all day.” Additionally, the adult from Family 3 described the serenity and beauty of camp as captured in the picture she took of the camp fishing pier (Figure 4). When asked how this picture describes her experience at camp, she explained, “Because it’s just so serene, it’s just, its beautiful, and its everybody out together.” Though not mentioned by children and adults, observations made throughout the two days of camp indicated that phones and technology were absent from the hands of adults and teens during camp activities. Considering their near-constant usage in everyday life, the lack of technology present in the setting indicates that camp also serves as a respite from technology and the stress that may come with it.
Theme 4: Leisure is an Important Camp Experience. For both adults and children, the FOFS weekend serves as an environment in which they learned new skills, engaged in unique, and challenging recreation activities and leisure, and experienced a plethora of positive emotions, including hope.

Subtheme 1: Unique recreational activities and leisure experiences. The significance of engaging in novel recreation activities and leisure experiences was evident both in the interview and observation data, as well as evidenced in participant photos. Throughout camp, participants took part in challenging, unique experiences which they had not participated in previously, and that are often unable to be accessed in a home environment. For example, on the final day of camp, children from Family 2 and Family 3 rode on the oversized swing and climbed the rock wall, which provided opportunities to challenge themselves, as well as support their peers, and strengthen bonds formed over the first two days of camp. In addition to the unique, and challenging recreation activities and leisure experiences camp provides, participants also enthusiastically described first time recreation experiences, such as going fishing and canoeing.
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In her interview, the grandmother from Family 3 stated, “Well, none of the girls had even been in a canoe, so…[granddaughter’s name] caught this big huge bass- 10 pound bass!” The story of the 10 pound bass was publically mentioned three times throughout the remainder of the weekend by Family 2 and Family 3, demonstrating the impact that such novel recreation experiences can have on the camp experience, and the mutual discussions that such experiences can foster. Family 1 also expressed the significance of unique recreation and leisure experiences through the photo they captured of themselves, as well as their assigned volunteer, boating on the lake (Figure 5).

Subtheme 2: Positive emotions expressed during recreation and leisure. Throughout the interviews and frequently when engaging in recreational activities and leisure experiences, participants could be seen smiling, laughing, expressing feelings of joy and happiness, and displaying feelings of hope. When asked to describe her experience participating in camp and the feelings experienced during camp, a child from Family 1 stated,
I love all of the activities that we do…the art room is my favorite (Figure 6). I love going there…it makes me feel…like everything I do there is just good cause everyone is so supportive about everything I make. I also like the campfire cause its always really funny and there’s always jokes going around. It’s just a lot of fun.

Positive emotions were also evident in the pictures participants captured and described by all families. When asked to describe her experience participating in camp, the adult from Family 1 stated, “I just enjoy myself when I come here. I get to be a big kid.” As a whole, observations and participant reports also point towards participants feeling hopeful and having an overall positive outlook, rather than appearing hopeless, as bereavement literature suggests individuals may feel (Stroebe et al., 2007). One example of participants exhibiting hope was found in a statement made by the grandmother from Family 3, when she stated, “…we are going to be able to go on and do things even though [her husband/the grandchildren’s grandfather] is not with us, because, you know, that’s just the way it is. So it’s very important that they know that, even
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though our family is going to change again, that they will still be safe and secure and things will still go on, and we’ll get through this.” For families seeking hope and positive emotions following the loss of service member, the FOFS program and the leisure and recreation experiences provided throughout the program, appeared to provide an appropriate context in which these feelings may have been found.

Discussion

Through the use of a descriptive case study, this study aimed to gain an understanding of the meaning attributed to the FOFS camp, examine the various reasons why families participate in the program, and describe the experiences of military families participating in the program. Below, findings, in addition to relevant literature and theory, are discussed.

Meaning

Each family participating in the study was found to provide a slightly different narrative related to what the camp meant to their family. Though participant narratives differed, all revolved around the idea of developing relationships, being immersed in military culture, and maintaining family identity as “military families.” Following the loss of a service member, military families may feel isolated and disconnected from military culture (Cozza et al., 2005; Holmes et al., 2013). The feelings of disconnection from the military community help to explain why participants found it meaningful to be around individuals similar to themselves. Considering the isolation that military families experience, ongoing support networks such as those developed in the program can serve a vital role in the positive adjustment of bereaved military families (Holmes et al., 2013; Huebner et al., 2007; Stroebe et al., 2007). Literature also suggests that engaging in programs that honor those who have been lost facilitate healing, growth, and resilience (Boss, 2010; Walsh, 2007). Participating in the FOFS camp then not only provided
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military families with the opportunity to reaffirm their identities as military families, it also facilitated growth, connectedness, and making meaning of loss as a result. Furthermore, the opportunities to reaffirm identity, grow and make meaning of loss appeared to foster feelings of hope among participants.

Family Leisure

The FOFS program served as an opportunity to engage in family leisure, which families indicated they did not frequently do at home. Throughout the program, participants predominately described themselves, and were observed, engaging in balance family leisure patterns, however engagement in core family leisure patterns was also observed. The drive to experience both stability and novelty explains families’ desires and motivations to participate in a program which provides opportunities to engage in both patterns of family leisure. Engagement in family leisure throughout the weekend also resulted in several shared memories and stories, displaying how family leisure experiences can foster cohesiveness, bonding, and strengthened attachments, a concept supported by the literature (Zabriskie & McCormick, 2001). Families’ motivations to attend the program led them to not only experience a respite, but also resulted in gaining additional positive outcomes associated with family leisure participation. Additionally, participants described and exhibited concepts such as emotional ties with others, support, problem solving, communication and adaptability. Many of these positive outcomes associated with family leisure intersect with the family-level resilience factors suggested by Meredith et al. (2010) as well as the domains of family functions proposed by Epstein et al. (1983). This indicates that the program had the ability to further develop such family-level resilience factors and domains of family functioning.
Comparison to Similar Programs

The experiences in which participants described engaging are similar to those experiences provided in recreational therapy programs for military families, such as the Family Battle Buddies Program (FBBP) (Dawson et al., 2017). However, the FOFS program differs from the FBBP, and programs such as FOCUS, in that it was less structured, and did not involve therapy sessions (Dawson et al., 2017; Saltzman et al., 2011). However, the focus on serving military families in a natural, outdoor setting, fostering family-to-family connections, providing adult- and child-specific sessions, providing a respite, and emphasizing recreation was present in both the FBBP and FOFS camp (Dawson et al., 2017). Considering the current literature describing programming for military families, serving military families in a natural setting, offering both child-and adult-specific sessions, and fostering resilience through programming are common elements of military family programs (Dawson et al., 2017; Saltzman et al., 2011).

Implications

Implications for practitioners. The findings described in this study provide several important implications for practitioners. As described in the literature (Holmes et al., 2013) and seen in this study, families experience isolation within their civilian environments, therefore practitioners may wish to consider focusing on increasing family-to-family connections among participants by providing programming uniquely for bereaved military families. Considering its positive outcomes and the interest in which families displayed regarding the topic, programs for military families are also encouraged to provide opportunities to engage in both core and balance family leisure. Participants in this study also cherished the serene, outdoor setting in which the program was held, further supporting current literature which suggests the importance of serving military families in natural settings (Dawson et al., 2017; Hawkins et al., 2016; Saltzman et al.,
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2011). As well as providing implications for practitioners, this study also provide future direction for researchers.

**Implications for future research.** The findings from this study highlight areas needing further study and exploration. FOFS participants in this study described engaging in experiences that promoted resilience and family functioning. Future studies examining recreation-based programming for military families should focus on determining what, if any, impact programs such as these have on resilience and family functioning in families experiencing the loss of a service member. In addition, it is suggested that future studies with this population place a greater focus on determining whether a family is experiencing ambiguous loss, and if so, explore how recreational therapy and recreation-based programming may impact their adjustment, resilience, and functioning. The theory of ambiguous loss is not commonly referenced in recreational therapy literature, however, considering the positive outcomes of family leisure, it is clear that recreational therapy has a place in serving military families experiencing ambiguous loss.

**Conclusion**

The FOFS camp, a recreation-based program for families experiencing the loss of a service member, serves as one example of the wide variety of programs offered for families who have lost a service member. With the lack of research in this area, this study sought to begin setting the groundwork for future study into programs serving these military families. The findings from this study indicate that recreation-based programs serving families experiencing the loss of a service member have the potential to foster hope, encourage connections between families, provide an opportunity for families to reaffirm their “military family” identity, and allow families to engage in family leisure. Throughout the program, families engaged in
activities which have the potential to positively impact family functioning and family-level resilience factors, suggesting two areas deserving of further research. Though the findings from this study cannot be generalized to all programs serving families experiencing the loss of a service member, it was discovered that programming for these types of families can play a vital role in providing families with respite and opportunities to build relationships with families experiencing similar situations. Programs seeking these intended outcomes should aim to provide ample opportunities for relationship-building (both family-to-family opportunities, and adult- and child-specific sessions) and engaging in family leisure in a relaxed setting. Determining outcomes and impacts that recreation-based programs have on these types of families will allow for a greater understanding of the connection between specific program elements and tangible outcomes, which can then be used to further advance and strengthen programming for this population.

Limitations

Validity of the data collected throughout the study partially depended upon the participants viewing the research team as trustworthy. To develop a trusting relationship with participants, the researcher was introduced to participants by the camp coordinator, and the Survivor Outreach Services Coordinator, with whom they were very familiar. Further efforts were made to establish validity through data triangulation. This study collected data from three sources (observations, interviews, and photos), which allowed for a greater understanding of the participating families, and was further used to verify themes and concepts. Generalizability is not the purpose of this study; however efforts were made to maximize transferability.
References


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Appendices
### Observational Protocol

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Activity:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Description of Activity:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of Activity:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Participants:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Families:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Descriptive Notes</strong>&lt;br&gt;(descriptions, quotes)</td>
<td><strong>Reflective Notes</strong>&lt;br&gt;(feelings, reactions, initial interpretations, speculations)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Physical Space:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activities:</td>
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<td>------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participants:</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## FAMILIES OF FALLEN SOLDIERS

- **Interactions:**

- **Conversation:**
- **Researcher (personal) Behavior:**

- **Additional information:**
Appendix B

Interview Protocol: Families of Fallen Soldiers Camp

Obtain consent from participants to take part in, and audio-record the interview. Remind participants that their responses are confidential, and that this interview will last approximately 30-60 minutes.

Time of Interview:

Date of Interview:

Interviewer:

Family Name:

Questions for Families(s) (Note: Parents and children will be interviewed together. Questions for parents and children are marked as such):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question:</th>
<th>Participant Response (note which parent and/or child is responding):</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. PARENTS and CHILDREN: How many family members participated in the program with you?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. How many children do you have?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. What are their ages?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
2. PARENTS: Why did you wish to participate in the Families of Fallen Soldiers Weekend program?

   a. Have you participated in similar programs in the past?

   b. What led you to attend the program?
3. **CHILDREN:** How did you feel when your parent(s) told you about coming here to participate in the Families of Fallen Soldiers Weekend program?

   a. Why did you feel this way?
4. **PARENTS**: How would you describe your experience participating in the Families of Fallen Soldiers Weekend program?

   a. What feelings did you experience while participating in the program?

   b. What events in the program made you feel that way?

   c. Did you make any new connections during the program?
5. **CHILDREN**: Tell me about your experiences participating in the program:

   a. What feelings did you experience during the program?

   b. What events or activities in the program made you feel that way?

   c. Did you meet any new people during the program?
### 6. PARENTS: What does this program mean to you and your family?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>What events added meaning to your experience?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i.</td>
<td>Why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>With whom did you experience these events (family members, other participants, etc.)?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. **CHILDREN**: What does this program mean to you?

   a. What events meant the most to you?

   b. Who were you with when these events occurred?
8. PARENTS: Photo elicitation component: (Provide each family member with the iPad they used on day two. Allow each family member to locate their two selected pictures.)

   a. Tell me a little bit about the two pictures that you selected. (Who is included, what is depicted in the picture, when was it taken, etc.)

      i. Photo 1:

      ii. Photo 2:

      iii. Repeat for each parent (if multiple parents attended).

   b. Why did you choose to share these pictures?
c. You were asked to take photographs that you felt described your experience as a participant in the Families of Fallen Soldiers Weekend. How do these pictures describe your experience?
9. **CHILDREN: Photo elicitation component:**
(Provide each family member with the iPad they used on day two. Allow each family member to locate their two selected pictures.)

a. Tell me a little bit about the two pictures that you selected. (Who is included, what is depicted in the picture, when was it taken, etc.)

   i. Photo 1:

   ii. Photo 2:

   iii. Repeat for each child (if multiple children attended).

b. Why did you choose to share these pictures?
| c. You were asked to take photographs that you felt described your experience as a participant in the Families of Fallen Soldiers Weekend. How do these pictures describe your experience? |

Thank the families for participating in this interview. Assure the family that their responses are confidential.
## Appendix C

**FOFS Camp Schedule**

### Families of Fallen Soldiers Weekend 2017

**November 17-19**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
<th>Sunday (picture after breakfast)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:00</td>
<td>Early Riser Activity (Yoga-gym, Fishing)</td>
<td>Breakfast Open (8:00am – 9:30am)</td>
<td>Breakfast Open (8:00am – 9:30am)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:00</td>
<td>Early Riser Activity (Yoga-gym, Fishing)</td>
<td>Open Sessions (9:00 – 12:30)</td>
<td>Open Sessions (9:00 – 12:30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00</td>
<td>Breakfast Open (8:00am – 9:30am)</td>
<td>Boating</td>
<td>Boat, Archery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30</td>
<td>Open Sessions (9:00 – 12:30)</td>
<td>Climbing</td>
<td>Archery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00</td>
<td>Family Art (Arts &amp; Crafts)</td>
<td>*Sports Equipment</td>
<td>*Basketball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00</td>
<td>Pinewood Derby (11:00 at Pavilion)</td>
<td>*Basketball</td>
<td>*Basketball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Campfire Cooking (11:30 at Beach)</td>
<td>*Basketball</td>
<td>*Basketball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Happy Hour</td>
<td>Happy Hour (CA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30</td>
<td>Free Time</td>
<td>Parent GI Session</td>
<td>Closing and Departure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:30</td>
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<tr>
<td>3:30</td>
<td>5pm: Family Check-In and Meet your Host (excursion sign-up)</td>
<td>Kids Only Session (Drop Kids off in Gym)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:30</td>
<td>Open Sessions</td>
<td>Happy Hour</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Family Kickball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:00</td>
<td>Dinner</td>
<td></td>
<td>Center Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:00</td>
<td>Icebreakers (DH)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:45</td>
<td>Fall Festival in the Gym (Face Paint, Fall Games, Hayride)</td>
<td>Campfire and S’mores (Amphitheater)</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:00</td>
<td>Movie Available (DH)</td>
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<td>Movie Available (DH)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Open Sessions**
- Basketball
- Fishing
- Horse Shoes
- Bocce Ball
- Playground

**Sign Up Activities**
- Family Art (Arts & Crafts)
- Pinewood Derby (11:00 at Pavilion)
- Campfire Cooking (11:30 at Beach)
- Boating
- Archery
- Climbing
- *Sports Equipment
- *Fishing
- *Horse Shoes
- *Bocce Ball
- *Playground

**Other Activities**
- Family Kickball (Center Green)
- Family Weekend Schedule (November 2017)