A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE IMPACTS OF MORALE WELFARE AND RECREATION (MWR) ON SOLDIERS DURING OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF)

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This study examined the phenomenological impact of military Morale Welfare and Recreation (MWR) on individual and troop readiness. This study utilized both a quantitative survey and a qualitative interview process. A basic model was proposed and supported through an analysis of previous literature. This model purports that MWR offers increased levels of perceived organizational support and self efficacy which leads to the phenomenon of increased readiness. Readiness is then defined as cohesion, commitment and motivation/effort. Each individual participating in the study filled out a survey determining base line MWR usage. Then they were interviewed using a protocol designed to expose the phenomenon of MWR and readiness. This study found that participation in MWR during OIF does positively impact soldiers in a number of ways. However, it did not support the link between MWR and readiness, and several alternate models are developed and proposed to replace the original.
“It is not just a bunch of soldiers out there fighting a war, it is family members, people with parents and brothers and sisters. They (MWR) are making life better for people in Iraq. MWR actually cares; they care about the welfare of the soldier.”

SPC Tyron Kim

May 16, 2005
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the brave men and women of the 89th MP Brigade who daily faced death, in order to make Iraq a safe and free country. I also dedicate this book to the members of MWR all over the world who dedicate their lives to soldiers. Finally, this thesis is dedicated to my father, Col David D. Phillips who is and always has been my hero!
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INTRODUCTION

“We didn’t have any computers for like the first part of my tour, six months I wasn’t in Baghdad (no access to MWR). I was in Takrit, so it was pretty rough. We didn’t have like movie night we didn’t have stuff like that. We didn’t have like the AFFEES (Military General Store), every time I went to AFFEES they didn’t have anything. So, it was kind of hard, the phones we only had one phone for the company of maybe about a hundred people. So everyone was there trying to use the phone. And then I had to go so our mission was like 14 hours long so when I got back home I didn’t do like anything. So that first six months was hard for me, especially compared to the second six months (having access to MWR). It was a big difference. I totally forgot where I was at. Like you know I knew I had a mission I knew what I was doing but I knew that there was something to do and something to look forward to. Those first six months were miserable.” SPC Charlene Rivas

As the above quote illustrates, Morale Welfare and Recreation is very important to Army soldiers. The reader will be provided with a basic understanding of what the US Armed Services Division known as Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) is, what it offers, who it serves, and what are its mission and goals. This introduction will also give a detailed history of the development and importance of MWR to the Army soldier. A breakdown of the leadership and organization as well as the funding sources of MWR will be reviewed. MWR will be examined for its implications in a war context as well as its impacts and importance in association with troop¹ and unit² readiness. There will be

¹ Military service member
a brief examination of past research which will point out and assist in the explanation of the importance of this research. Finally, the research questions will be discussed.

What is Morale Welfare and Recreation?

MWR is a comprehensive network offering support and leisure activities designed to enhance the quality of lives for service members, civilian employees, military retirees, and their families. MWR was first conceived and established because of the military is concerned about its personnel and families. In the belief that all military members should have access to leisure services that can meet and exceed the standards of all services offered in a civilian context it offers a multitude of activities to include family, child, and youth leisure programs, recreation sports, entertainment, and travel.

MWR’s mission is to serve the needs, interests and responsibilities of each individual in the military community for as long as they are associated with the military, regardless of global location. This study focuses primarily on Army MWR and its impact on soldiers’ readiness during war time. MWR spans all branches of the military: Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, and Coast Guard. For the purpose of this study the research will focus on only the Army. While each armed service entity strives to meet the same needs, each deals with a different type of military service member; thus, the specific programs and objectives change with each military branch.

In order to meet and exceed this mission MWR has developed five goals to work towards a cohesive Army. First to establish a military community, MWR supports and

2 A group of troops with a common mission
sponsors community activities, events, and celebrations in an attempt to bring people together. Second, considering personal growth to be critical to each person associated with the military, it attempts to continually offer programs designed to increase learning, discovery, self-enrichment, and personal growth. These programs are not aimed only at the soldier, but at the family as a whole, and thus will better prepare them for the future. Third, is the idea of creating within the soldiers and their families' peace of mind, MWR strives to be a ‘safety net’ for families and soldiers alike by seeking to establish and strengthen stability. Fourth, understanding the strong need for each person to recharge, refresh, and rejuvenate; MWR is committed to the idea of renewal, such as experienced by the soldier in the quotation at the beginning of this section. This goal is to achieved through a number of programs and recreational activities specifically designed to revitalize the user, both mentally and physically. Finally, MWR seeks to establish a feeling of self-reliance, by offering the beneficiaries everything from arts-and-crafts centers where classes teach the basics in building personal items, to automotive skills centers where a soldier or family member can have access to all tools necessary for basic auto maintenance (Caliber Associates, 2003).

In furthering these goals MWR has a specific philosophy. It believes that “Soldiers are entitled to the same quality of life as is afforded the society they are pledged to defend. Keeping an Army ready to fight and win takes more than hard work and training. Soldiers need a balance of work and play and MWR strives to create and maintain “first choice” products and services for the American Army, essential to a ready, self-reliant force” (U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center Employee Handbook, 2002, p2).
MWR Services and Programs

Next examples of MWR services and programs will be explained. MWR affords movie theaters, with first-release movies at a minimal rate. MWR fitness centers and gyms offer personal training, aerobics classes, first rate equipment, and sports fields, in addition to intramural sports for all ages. MWR also offers day care for children and after-school programs for youth. MWR youth centers conduct a variety of instructional programs ranging from fitness to ballet classes. They are a refuge for youth seeking a safe environment to grow and learn. Additionally, these centers supply video game equipment, outdoor roller hockey rinks, and play grounds. MWR maintains arts and crafts facilities where one can take classes in stained glass, wood working, and ceramics, to name a few. Equally popular are MWR auto care facilities, in which classes on basic car maintenance are conducted with tools and by an expert car repair person. Furthermore, MWR has an extensive network of night clubs, special event halls, and restaurants for both officers and NCOs (Non Commissioned Officers). MWR provides fast food restaurants and upscale restaurants, all designed to offer first rate food and service at a low cost. Similarly, MWR runs and operates base thrift stores as well as arts and crafts stores. Parks and outdoor recreation centers are supplied by MWR where soldiers and their family members can rent outdoor equipment for camping. Fully functioning marinas and riding stables are also available. More importantly, MWR strives to involve the entire military community by designing large scale special events.
In order to provide quality facilities and services as well as financial management, MWR has a comprehensive action plan designed to make sure that MWR programs and services are current. MWR also has developed a long-term comprehensive capital reinvestment plan. When money is made, it is invested wisely so that the money can grow for future use. MWR also has a very strict policy optimizing asset management. MWR attempts to stay current with new technology and trends, from having up-to-date equipment, to offering services that are new and popular.

MWR creates an environment that fosters innovation. It has developed and maintains standardized and sound business practices. It has implemented standardized Army-wide MWR employee assessments and financial management practices with comprehensive business and marketing plans. Finally, MWR continually assesses its performance and implements corrective actions where necessary.

MWR is a comprehensive global network of recreational and leisure facilities and services. Its aim is to offer the soldiers and their families with support and leisure services that enhance the quality of life. It does this through an MWR “think-tank” as well as comprehensive participation from all level of employees.

History of MWR

MWR has undergone, and continues to undergo, major changes and restructuring; however, it has been shown that throughout history, soldiers at war have always relied on civilians for leisure and morale support. Historical records reveal that as far back as American history, soldiers have found ways, through the help of civilians,
of boosting troop morale, and keeping in shape while facing the harsh adversities of war recreation (U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center Public Affairs Office, 2004).

During the Revolutionary War soldiers gambled, raced horses and played music. These soldiers found that the simplest of civilian leisure practices vastly improved their emotional and physical well-being. They started to present skits and plays for the camps and even did practical jokes as a means of relieving stress and tension. Later on, during the Civil War, these soldiers were known to carve homemade pipes from brier root. Archeologists have also uncovered hand carved pine chessman used by soldiers to relieve boredom. They played baseball, organized boxing tournaments, held foot races, and even enjoyed performances by civilian minstrels and comedians. Soldiers, even then, recognized the vital importance of morale, welfare, and recreation (U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center Public Affairs Office, 2004).

During the beginning of World War I President Woodrow Wilson, acknowledging the vast importance of these types of leisure activities and the need for some sort of standardized morale services, appointed Dr. Raymond Fosdick to further explore this military morale phenomena. Dr. Fosdick, in 1918, found that troop morale was low due to extremely poor living and quality of life conditions that the American Expeditionary Forces were facing. In a formal report to the president Dr. Fosdick wrote of his findings; “Morale is as important as ammunition and just as legitimate a charge against the public treasury” (U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center Public Affairs Office, 2004, p6).
Because of these findings President Wilson established the Morale Branch in 1919, naming Dr. Fosdick the director of the Commission on Training Camp Activities. His mandated goal was to provide facilities and means for entertainment, education and recreation for the thousands of soldiers undergoing training throughout the United States. Civilians rushed in to help meet these needs and goals. From the American Red Cross, which physically went overseas doing everything from baking donuts to providing books to the troops in combat, to the Young Women’s Christian Association whose efforts provided soldiers with home-knit socks, fresh bandages, and the like. The Salvation Army and the Knights of Columbus also offered their aid. Organizations like these provided the primary forms of recreation and leisure services to soldiers until a core group of recreation programs was established and staffed by active duty military and civilians between 1946 and 1955. (U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center Public Affairs Office, 2004)

On July 1, 1966 the Army Special Services Program was formed to meet the needs of soldiers during the Vietnam War. It was composed of several branches including men, and women, civilians and military personnel. All volunteers were obligated to serve a one year tour in Vietnam. Their services generally fit into four specific categories: arts and crafts, entertainment, library services, and service clubs. In March of 1970 the Special Services was centralized into the United States Army Vietnam Special Services Agency. They were staffed by approximately 99 civilians who managed 31 craft centers and photography labs, 6 entertainment offices, 23 service clubs, and 39 libraries in Vietnam (Department of the Army Overseas Recruitment
Center Film, 1970). It is estimated that between 1966 and 1972, 300-600 civilians, 75% of whom were female, volunteered their time to the Special Services in Vietnam. In the mid 1980's the Special Services branch was dissolved. However, acknowledging its vital importance, civilians continued to operate these programs with military oversight. After numerous reorganizations, the original Morale Branch was developed into MWR as its present. Today MWR offers and supports soldiers in a very structured way. The following chart illustrates its current organization structure. (See Illustration A)

MWR Managerial Practices

Organizational Breakdown of MWR


Illustration A
Illustration A shows the structure of MWR’s broad range of activities and facilities on an individual base. Each Army base has an overall MWR director who supervises the six major areas of operation - Athletic/Fitness Division, Recreation Division, Food and Beverage Division, Golf Division, Child and Youth Services Division, and Marketing/Leisure Services Division – each of which works under a manager. It is important to note that not all bases operate with the full six divisions. Some Army bases are not large enough to support, for example, a Golf Division.

Each of the six divisions is in charge of several specific MWR functions. The Athletics/Fitness Division is responsible for all aquatics, community activities, gymnasiums, intramural sports programs, fitness and wellness programs and recreation centers. The Recreation Division oversees auto hobby centers, community outreach programs, riding stables, and all outdoor recreation. The Food and Beverage Division is in charge of all food and beverage services, bingo, as well as catering. The Golf Division monitors all golf operations and tennis operation, grounds maintenance, membership programs. The Child and Youth Division operates all child and youth services and facilities. Finally, the Marketing/Leisure Services Division monitors all marketing and graphics, information tickets and tours services, rental and retail services, as well as the frame shops. Not all bases, stateside and abroad, operate all of these facilities and programs.
MWR Funding Sources

MWR functions on two major types of funding, APF (appropriated funds) and NAF (non-appropriated funds). Illustration B should be used as a visual model of how MWR is broken down into categories which receive either APF or NAF. APF are monies which the US Senate delegates to MWR for the support of the US Military. APF essentially come from tax payers and are given to MWR in order to offer basic mission essential programs. NAF funds are the monies which MWR generates through its programming and facilities fees. MWR charges the least amount possible to keep facilities and programs running. All profits generated by MWR is turned into NAF funding which is put back into MWR facilities, programs, and staff training.

Breakdown of MWR Funding


Illustration B
As stated earlier, the only areas of MWR which are funded by APF (appropriated funds) from the government are those that are deemed mission-essential. Mission essential is defined as anything which is a basic quality of life necessity in maintaining unit support, morale, and readiness. MWR is broken down into three categories: A, B, and C. Category A is the Mission Essential branch, funded by APF and containing the following areas of MWR; Aquatics, Sports, Remote Site Operations, Fitness and the Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers (BOSS) program. The BOSS program offers facilities and special programs designed to enhance the quality of life for unmarried soldiers.

Category B includes Outdoor Recreation, Information Tickets and Tours, auto skills, Child Services, and Family Child Care. In this category, most MWR facilities and programs are considered to be non-essential and thus function on NAF funds. Each of these programs must be self-sustaining or else it is closed. For example, if an Auto Skills center is not making enough money to cover its own costs of operation, then it is shut down. Any money that it makes after its cost of operation is turned into NAF funding which pays salaries and allows for upgrades in facilities and the development of new facilities as well.

Category C which includes all of the financial entities such as accounting and investments also receive some APF. However, they are supported primarily by NAF (non-appropriated funds) funds. For the purpose of this study only Category A, APF funded, activities will be examined.
Importance of MWR during Wartime

MWR offers respite during war. It allows soldiers avenues of recreation and leisure which help maintain morale and welfare. This is especially important in terms of the war in Iraq. Iraq is a country with harsh conditions. The average temperature during the daytime in the summer ranges from 99°-120° Fahrenheit. Along with this intense heat comes a harsh environment with desert-like conditions. During war times MWR becomes essential in increasing troop and unit readiness. Readiness is a multi-dimensional term which indicates that the individual soldier as well as the unit is properly equipped and motivated to carry out tasks. In history, soldiers during all wars have always needed recreations, and MWR is essential to the mission of the Army. Without these valuable recreational opportunities, there would be a much higher likelihood of individuals and units burning out thus resulting in decreased readiness (Caliber Associates, 2003). Again the quotation at the beginning of this section offers a perfect reflection of MWR in action. In order for the Army to properly do its job while at war, MWR must offer recreational services to soldiers

Research Questions

Although studies have been conducted on the topic of MWR and its impacts, no large scale research aims to understand from a soldier’s perspective what MWR does and means. Most studies on the topic of MWR and its impacts have gathered
quantitative data as will be discussed at length in the literature review. The research focused on the actual, physical outcomes of MWR and their implications. The researcher found no formal studies which gathered qualitative data. This research attempts to look at the phenomenon of MWR.

The main research question for this thesis is: What are the phenomenological impacts of MWR on readiness during Operation Iraqi Freedom? Examining the phenomenon associated with experiencing MWR allows the researcher a better understanding of the soldier’s views. Some sub-questions are: What do the soldiers really gain from MWR? Do soldiers feel as though MWR is meeting their personal needs and goals? What specific areas of readiness are being impacted by which MWR programs and activities? The overarching phenomenon associated with MWR and its impact on readiness may be resolved through this study. In conducting this research the researcher sought to develop deeper understanding of the lived MWR experience.

Summary

This introduction gave the reader an understanding of MWR in terms of its scope of service and constituents. Next, it examined the mission and goals of MWR and provided a detailed history of the organization. Two organizational charts were introduced and discussed as well as an explanation of MWR funding, both NAF and APF, was provided. Finally, MWR was examined for its implication in the context of war and the basic known associations it has with troop and unit readiness.
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In order to understand the impact of MWR on soldiers during war, it is essential to have a basic understanding of previous research conducted on this topic. Most scholarly research that is examined is not from the military sector. In fact, the vast majority of research is from the civilian sector and is examined by the researcher for its possible implications in a military MWR setting. As MWR seeks to offer the best services possible and thus the majority of their funding is put into programs, leaving little funding for research. Due to this lack of funding there have been no large scale scholarly research projects conducted in order to determine the purpose and impact of MWR from the soldier’s perspective. A vast majority of the scholarly research collected is from the civilian sector. Most scholarly research that is done explores the influences of programs similar to MWR and these impacts are then viewed from an MWR context. Following an explanation of previous research the basic impacts of MWR are outlined. An operational definition of readiness in relation to MWR follows. A model is proposed and the following sections will further break down and explain the validity of this model. The idea of individual vs. group readiness is examined. The ways in which readiness is reached through perceived organizational support and self-efficacy is discussed. Finally,
the three main components of readiness are addressed: unit cohesion, commitment, and motivation/effort.

At this point it is important to point out that a great deal of the research examined in this section comes from an organization called Caliber Associates. Caliber Associates was commissioned by the Army to do its scholarly research. Thus almost all research conducted specifically examining MWR has been collected by Caliber Associates. Caliber Associates was asked by the Army to develop a model explaining quantitatively how MWR impacts troop and unit readiness. The purpose of these studies was to validate government spending on MWR. Having this knowledge, it is important to note that all of the research conducted by the military has a surprisingly positive tone. All of the studies are focused on the positives of MWR and neglect looking at any possible negative outcomes.

Operational Definition of Readiness

For the purpose of this study readiness is operationally defined as “the extent to which an individual is prepared, able, and motivated to perform his or her job as part of the larger military mission” (Caliber Associates, 1995, p4). Caliber developed a visual model of this multi-termed definition of readiness. Having studied both their model and Campbell’s model of job performance (Campbell, McCloy, Oppler, & Sager, 1992), the researcher simplified and combined the two in developing Illustration C. This model breakdown of readiness is very similar to Campbell’s model of job performance in that it not only examines readiness as a multifaceted term, but also studies readiness in its
contextual execution (Campbell et al, 1992). This illustration is a visual depiction of the MWR/Readiness model that was used for the purposes of this study. In written terms MWR programs impact readiness through perceived organizational support and self efficacy, resulting in an increase in unit cohesion, commitment and motivation/effort. These three categories are defined operationally below.

Unit Cohesion: Includes morale, teamwork and esprit de corps as well as the differences between unit cohesion and individual cohesion (Caliber Associates, 2003). According to Caliber Associates the best way of breaking down the components of cohesion is to examine them in terms of task cohesion and social cohesion.

Commitment: The strength of an individual’s identification with and involvement in the work organization (includes allegiance, determination, and intent to remain in the Army) (Caliber Associates, 2003, p6). Commitment will be examined through the differences and similarities between continuance, affective, and normative commitment.

Motivation/Effort: The consistency of an individual’s day-to-day effort at work and the frequency with which he/she engages in organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs), such as the exertion of extra effort and willingness to continue working under adverse conditions (Caliber Associates, 2003, p6) OCBs are operationally defined as sportsmanship, civic virtue and helping behaviors (Caliber Associates, 2003).
First, it is necessary to examine the existing literature that supports the idea that MWR can and does impact the workplace. In terms of this study the war zone of Iraq is the workplace. The following scholarly studies have helped to define and explain some of the basic outcomes of MWR programs as well as some of the readiness impacts of MWR.

It is important to note that a great deal of the information relates the impacts of MWR not only to troop readiness, but also to family readiness. Family readiness vastly impacts the overall level of individual troop readiness. If a soldier knows that his/her family is taken care of, then that soldier is much more likely to be able to focus on the mission at hand. A study conducted by Schumm and Bell (2000) found that soldiers deployed overseas who worried about their families back home were much more likely
to report that these concerns interfered with their daily tasks and overall missions while deployed.

Likewise, two military studies focused on The Army Family Team Building (AFTB) program. The AFTB conducted research focusing on the implications of MWR readiness for the past several years. “AFTB is an official Army program aimed at improving soldier and family readiness and family self-sufficiency through education” (Caliber Associates, 2003, p17). The data collection aimed at the soldier, family, leadership, as well as MWR practitioners indicated that AFTB programs have direct impacts on family readiness. These impacts are also evident in individual family readiness when a loved one is deployed. Lederer and Shaefer (1996) who conducted one of these studies revealed that AFTB programs helped family members learn to deal with stress and manage their finances more efficiently. It was found that dependents who participated in AFTB programming felt better prepared for the deployment of their spouse (Caliber Associates, 2003). AFTB program participants found that they have a familiarity with Army life and a greater attitude of self-sufficiency (Caliber Associates, 2003). In a 2002 study Caliber Associates found that dependents that were better prepared for their spouses’ deployment caused less mission distraction on rear detachments as well as a strengthened and cohesive community. The ability of a family to adjust to military life is a great indication of a soldier’s individual readiness (Schumm, Bell, & Resnick, 2001). Internal and external family adaptations to army life directly impact readiness and retention. Conversely, family stress can negatively impact a soldier’s individual readiness. This study also found that contributing to family
readiness and offering family support is “a cost-effective way to enhance readiness” (p 154).

In 1997 Koopman and Goldhaber studied Navy MWR and its implications on satisfaction with Navy life. The overall findings concluded that as a sailor became more satisfied with MWR programs, their level of overall satisfaction with the Navy also increased. Further supporting this idea are the findings from the Survey of Army Families IV, again undertaken by Koopman and Goldhaber, which found that MWR programs contribute to a positive outlook of Army life. Positive experiences with MWR offer the participant an improved outlook on military life in general (1997).

MWR strongly focuses on offering fitness/athletic activities and facilities. These activities and initiatives are studied by a number of scholars who are not associated with the military, including Aldana (2001) and Pelletier (1988). They examined fitness facilities in a civilian setting and the findings can be examined for their similarities in a military context. These researchers concluded that having fitness programs reduces injuries and health care costs while increases the overall morale of employees (Aldana, 2001; Pelletier, 1988). By providing fitness initiatives to soldiers, MWR is increasing overall readiness in a multitude of ways, from decreasing overall costs associated with injuries to increased levels of physical fitness.

Another widely studied impact of MWR is on job performance. In 2001 Judge, Thoreson, Bono, & Patton found that job satisfaction directly correlates with job performance. Schumm and Bell’s (2001) report also found that satisfaction with Army life impacts strongly on the decision to re-enlist. Similarly, private sector research found that an organization with family programs that aid in adaptation help increase
commitment to the organization and increased job performance (Calabria, 1999). There is also research suggesting that components of commitment are greatly influenced by worker motivation and effort (Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1997). In fact, Yagil (1995) found that there are strong correlations between unit cohesion and not only motivation but also morale (Yagil, 1995). Again this supports the notion that programs such as those that MWR offers increase not only a soldier’s readiness, but also their family’s readiness, and their overall satisfaction with military life. Researchers in both the civilian and military sectors found that “expecting employees to cope with their non-work difficulties alone, with no involvement by the teacher/organization, is not effective” (Cohen & Schwartz, 2002, p 1229). The emergence of work assistant programs such as MWR, and work-life initiatives have shown to significantly impact on family obligations, work performance, and personnel retention. (Caliber Associates, 2003).

In addition to examining the broad scope of MWR impacts, it was important to examine the aspects of readiness as it pertained to this current study. The reason for this is that Caliber Associates developed a model supporting the MWR readiness link. In supporting this model there was a thorough examination of specific literature from both the military and civilian sectors.

Perceived Organizational Support

According to Caliber Associates, MWR programs can be directly linked to increased readiness. How does this link occur? The answer is through perceived organizational support and efficacy. Perceived organizational support is the worker’s
perceived support from an organization. Levinson (1965) first noted that workers view a company’s policies and decisions as impacting organizational intent. Offering programs such as recreation facilities, family services, and childcare can generate positive perceived organizational support. Many companies now are developing programs which attempt to help the employees balance work and family life, leading the employees to believe that the companies truly do care about their personal well-being (Lambert, 2000). Guzzo, Noonan, and Elron in 1994 first reported that “perceived organizational support is positively related to pay equity in the workplace and to perceived sufficiency of family-oriented policies and actions” (Guzzo et al., 1994, 620). This report is viewed from a global standpoint, meaning that all workers generally have the same feelings of support (Eisenberger et al., 1990). Likewise in a military context, MWR programs can be viewed by soldiers and their families as ways that the military shows care and support for its troops. Again according to Caliber Associates, perceived organizational support can, and often does, lead to positive outcomes of MWR. If a soldier feels as though the military truly cares about them and their family, they are much more likely to show increased readiness. This perceived organizational support does not necessarily indicate actual support.

Perceived organizational support then represents the overall belief of employees “concerning the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being” (Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski, & Rhoades, 2002, p565). Perceived organizational support not only affects increased readiness, but also more specifically the individual areas of readiness as will be explained by the following research. For example, Orthner and Pittman (1986) found
that if employees feel high levels of perceived organizational support for themselves and their families, they are much more likely to show high levels of job commitment. In fact, effective organizational commitment, or actual organizational support, is directly associated with increased levels of perceived organizational support (Eisenberger et al., 1990; Guzzo, Noonan, & Elron, 1994; Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997). These same studies also support the idea that increased levels of perceived organizational support decrease turnover levels as well as absenteeism. Research also suggests that personnel seem to demonstrate more well-being when their supervisors and organizational culture are perceived as supportive (Galinsky, Bond, & Friedman, 1996; Greenhaus, Bedeian, & Mossholder, 1987). Military based research also found that as positive perceptions of Army support for families increase, job-related problems decrease (Burnman, 1992).

Rousseau found in a 1995 study that if employees felt that they were unrewarded for their performance and unappreciated they were likely to decrease their work efforts. Thus, if an employee feels as though they are appreciated and valued by an organization they are more likely to go above and beyond the call of duty due to the need to give back to and support the organization. In the 1995 Caliber model increased job satisfaction was also heavily impacted by perceived organizational support. When a soldier believes that they are supported by the military their general overall job satisfaction increases (Caliber Associates, 1995). Numerous studies have also confirmed that if a worker feels that they are supported by their employer then they are more likely to feel job satisfaction (Cropanzano, Howes, Grandney, & Toth, 1997; Randall, Cropanzano, Borman, & Birjulin, 1999; Witt, 1997). MWR is in effect one of the
Another way in which MWR programs increase readiness is through the idea of efficacy. Efficacy is defined as the judgments made by both individuals and groups regarding their abilities to carry out specific tasks, missions, and goals (Peterson, Mitchell, & Thompson, 2000). “Typically, self efficacy reflects a belief about the individual’s abilities to organize and execute tasks, while collective efficacy represents the collective perceptions of members of a group concerning its ability to perform” (Caliber Associates, 2003, p8). MWR programs can increase efficacy which, can lead to an increase in overall readiness. Thus studying the idea of efficacy and how MWR direct impacts levels of individual and group efficacy are vital to understanding how MWR increases readiness.

Increased efficacy can and does facilitate increased levels of job satisfaction. Higher efficacy is directly related to improved coping in work situations especially if the worker feels that their control over their job was high (Schaubroeck, Lam, & Xie, 2000). A study in 1999 by Marks found that higher levels of both personal and group efficacy led to increased group performance during mock drills (Marks, 1999). High levels of efficacy have also been found to help in mediating relationships between workers. It allows workers to see past personal differences and increase their job performance (Chen, Casper, & Cortina, 2001; Phillips & Gully, 1997). Feelings of not only personal
but also collective agency efficacy can allow the worker to better negotiate strain and stressors in the workplace (Jex & Bliesse, 1999). Jex and Bliesse also found that workers who reported high levels of efficacy were better able to adjust to not only physical but also psychological job pressures. In 1998 Gardner and Pierce found that increased personal efficacy can also be directly linked to job effort. Individuals who have high levels of efficacy are more likely to be persistent and better workers. Therefore, efficacy can and does lead to increased readiness. MWR can be seen as an example of an activity that produces increased efficacy and thus readiness. If a person feels that they are able to perform their tasks, then they will do so in a ready manner.

The next areas to be evaluated are the sub-units of readiness. In order for efficacy and perceived organizational support to increase readiness, readiness must be broken down into measurable units. Thus unit cohesion, commitment, and motivation/effort are explained so that the reader has a better understanding of how readiness is defined.

Unit Cohesion

The first component of readiness is unit cohesion (See Illustration C). Research has show that cohesion can be viewed in two separate ways: task cohesion and social cohesion (Carron & Brawley, 2000). These two constructs examine not only the individual’s ability to carry out a task, but also that individual’s view of being able to carry out that task within a group setting.
“The two social perceptions are (1) an individual’s beliefs about the degree of unity and level of closeness the group experiences and (2) group members' individual perceptions of how the group handles needs, members' level of attraction to the group, and their desire to remain a part of the group. The two foci include (1) social concerns, or relations within the group, and (2) task concerns, such as collective performance and There is a great deal of current research that supports the idea that task cohesion is more often associated with positive job performance, than is its aggregate, social cohesion” (Caliber Associates, 2003, p26)

Studies found that groups were more likely to be successful in the completion of a task, not if their group had high levels of social cohesion, but more often when the individuals all had high levels of task cohesion (Mullen & Cooper, 1994; Griffith, 1997; MacCoun, 1993; Segal, 2002). It has also been found that if a group sees the same goal of a common task (task cohesion), they are more likely to later experience social cohesion during the process of completing a task (Segal, 2002). Therefore, task cohesion can be seen as a key element in obtaining group and mission success. The military seeks to promote and maintain unit cohesion overall because increased unit cohesion causes missions to be carried out in a successful manner.

Any activities which force a group or team to work towards a common goal can improve their social and task cohesion. Examples of activities that actively do this are athletics, specifically team sports that force a group to work as a whole to accomplish a goal. In 1995 Jandzinski conducted a study of the ways in which MWR affected Air Force personnel during Operation Desert Storm. He conducted this study after the
soldiers had come back from being overseas. He found that by participating in team
sports events organized by MWR, units constantly showed increased elements of
cohesion. MWR programs have proved to be an essential element in maintaining unit
and task cohesion.

Commitment

Another element of readiness that is of importance to this study is that of
commitment (See Illustration C). The idea of commitment is one that has received a lot
of attention over the past few years as the number of soldiers re-enlisting is falling.
Caliber Associates (1995) first defined commitment as “the strength of a person’s
identification with and involvement in the organization” (p12).

Several groups of researchers have devoted themselves to understanding
commitment and they have developed the idea of three different constructs of
commitment: affective, normative, and continuance commitment (Irving, Coleman, &
Cooper, 1997; Meyer & Allen, 1997). Affective commitment is an individual’s emotional
connection to an organization. This refers to how strongly a soldier is emotionally
connected to his/her individual branch of the military. Normative commitment is the
extent to which the soldier has accepted their military branch’s values and norms as
their own. Finally, continuance commitment is the cost that a soldier believes they would
have to pay were they to no longer be a part of a military organization (Irving et al.,
1997).
Employees tend to feel higher levels of affective commitment when they perceive that their organization cares about them and invests in them (Tsui, Pearce, Porter, & Tripoli, 1997). Settoon, Bennett and Liden (1996) found that perceived organizational support, operationally defined as a global belief about the organization’s commitment to its members, can lead to increased overall organizational commitment, including normative and continuance commitment. In 1995 when Caliber Associates first started studying MWR and its impacts they concluded, based on the above research, that MWR affects all three of these types of commitment (Caliber Associates, 1995). MWR can, as a by-product, also affect continuance commitment in the fact that if a soldier leaves the military they will no longer get to reap any of the benefits that MWR offers.

Studies aimed at assessing the quality of life of marines have found on all occasions that MWR positively affects a marine’s decision to re-enlist (Kerce, 1995; White, Baker, & Wolosin, 1999). These studies also found that MWR can and does have a positive impact on not only commitment, but also on personal readiness as well as job performance. In 1997 Koopman and Goldhaber examined MWR programs and their impacts on readiness in an economic way. They found that for every $241 million dollars the Navy spent on MWR programs they ultimately saved $1.534 billion dollars in recruitment and training. The reason for this significant money saving is that MWR increases commitment. The more money MWR puts into its programs, the more likely sailors are to re-enlist. Because of the higher levels of reenlistment, the Navy can spend significantly less funds on recruiting and training new sailors. In this case MWR was saving the Navy billions of dollars by increasing sailors’ commitment to the Navy, prolonging their employment with the Navy, cutting down significantly on the cost of
recruiting new sailors. Schumm and Bell in 2000 also found that there were significant associations between a soldier’s satisfaction with Army life and his/her intention to remain in the army and/or re-enlist in the Army (Schumm & Bell, 2000). It is important to note that these connections are drawn based on situational contexts and are not necessarily the same for all situations.

Motivation/Effort

The final aspect of readiness to be discussed is that of motivation and effort, (See Illustration C). This is perhaps the most obvious of the three dimensions of readiness to be effected by MWR. To understand motivation and effort, it is essential to define these concepts using organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs). There are several available formats for measuring motivation and effort however, quantitatively, Organizational Citizenship Behaviors are the ways in which they will be determined for the purpose of this study. OCBs have been used by scholars as a means of determining levels of motivation/effort. OCBs are operationally defined as pro-social, altruistic behaviors that are discretionary in nature and, while not part of an employee’s formal role requirements, contribute to the effective functioning of an organization (Podsakoff, Ahearne, & MacKenzie, 1997). OCBs have been broken down into three distinct and separate dimensions: sportsmanship, civic virtue, and helping behaviors (Caliber Associates, 2003). Sportsmanship is the willingness of the soldier to accept adverse conditions without complaint (Caliber Associates, 2003). Civic virtue is defined as anything a soldier does that indicates his commitment to the ideals of the military.
Finally, helping behaviors are those actions whose sole purpose is to encourage others and attempt to combat problems faced within the unit (Caliber Associates, 2003).

OCBs affect readiness in a multitude of ways. For instance, when soldiers exhibit helping behaviors, they are in effect helping to increase the individual readiness of the recipient of their attentions. This means that as a solider helps another they are both benefiting from an increase in their personal levels of readiness by learning from one another. These types of helping behaviors can lead to a speedier acclimation into military life and can also be seen as a way of spreading training practices in an efficient manner (Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1997). This, as examined in military terms, can increase the overall unit readiness by relieving leaders of mundane training duties, allowing them instead time to focus on the mission and strategic planning initiatives (Podsakoff et al., 1997). OCBs make for a positive work environment and contribute to the attractability of the military to potential recruits. When potential recruits learn that soldiers help one another through personal motivation, they are more likely to feel they will receive that same positive attention, which makes the military an attractive option. Consequently, OCBs allow for feelings of belonging and self-worth, and are essential to increasing motivation and effort as well as the other dimensions of readiness (Caliber Associates, 2003).

Motivation/effort have been shown to have a vast impact on overall readiness. One of the main reasons military personnel actively exhibit OCBs is because they have a high level of job satisfaction (Caliber Associates, 2003). MWR can be related to non-military constituents showing that increasing the level of job satisfaction, and thus increasing the level of OCBs exhibited, can result in increased readiness (Caliber
Associates, 2003). The study by Jandzinski (1995) also found direct correlations between MWR and motivation. During Operation Desert Storm, MWR participation caused increased motivation and increased OCB behaviors, increasing overall readiness (Jandzinski, 1995). In a similar study of impacts of MWR on soldiers during Operation Joint Endeavor/Guard in Hungary and Bosnia it was found that 94% of people interviewed (N=619) felt that MWR helped them maintain mental fitness. Also, 91% felt that MWR improved unit morale (Fafara, 1998).

In conclusion, MWR has multiple positive impacts. Participating in MWR soldiers' experience increased readiness. Through perceived organizational support and efficacy MWR directly impacts this readiness. Readiness is broken down in three ways, cohesion, commitment, and motivation/effort. Having a basic understanding of this model and the literature that supports it, is essential to the further development of this study.
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

With no previous formal studies providing qualitative data or an understanding of soldiers’ perspectives of MWR, this research focused on the actual physical outcomes of MWR and their implications as well as the phenomenon of MWR’s ability to increase readiness. The main research question for this thesis was as follows: What are the phenomenological impacts of MWR on readiness during Operation Iraqi Freedom? Examining the phenomenon associated with experiencing MWR allowed the researcher a better understanding of the soldier’s views. What the soldiers really gain from MWR? Do soldiers feel as though MWR is meeting their personal needs and goals? What specific areas of readiness are being impacted by which MWR programs and activities?

In conducting both qualitative and quantitative research the researcher sought to develop deeper understanding of the lived MWR experience, in other words, the MWR phenomenon.

Social research using the direct approach has become more accepted by academia. The use of direct personal approaches to research allows for a more in-depth view of not only the phenomena but also on the variables shaping those phenomena. I have chosen this type of study primarily because it involves a more personal approach to research. I feel that studying the phenomenon of MWR, rather than quantitative data, allows for a deeper understanding of the positive impacts of MWR. This study was an attempt to expand beyond the scope of known research by
allowing a researcher to include a personal epoch in the methodology. In this type of
greece, having a researcher with this personal connection to the setting is an
advantage. A clear description of the experience of MWR must be understood before a
firm foundation of the impact of MWR can be determined. Phenomenology seeks to
understand a person’s perception of MWR and what they feel MWR offered them in
terms of positive outcomes. I am seeking to determine not just a description MWR but
detailed descriptions of the essence of the MWR experience.

“The aim of phenomenologically informed research is to produce clear and
accurate descriptions of a particular aspect of human experience” (Polkinghorne, 1989,
p42). Phenomenology utilizes data-gathering techniques designed specifically to
develop generalized descriptions of an experiential process. Because of this a
phenomenological methodology differs from that of a standardized or positivist
methodology. In phenomenology the methodology serves a general guideline and
outline for the researcher. Each phenomenological methodology is designed specifically
to tease out the essence of a particular experience. As a researcher of a phenomenon it
is important not to start the process with any preconceived hypothesis. Instead the
researcher embarks on a journey to develop and interpret “verbal portraits” of a
phenomenon (Polkinghorne, 1989, p43). The methodology for this particular
phenomenology is outlined in the following sections.
In conducting research one’s own personal experience often influences the gathering process and resulting data. Phenomenological research is gathered with the understanding that there is “no viewpoint outside of consciousness from which to view things as they exist independently of our experience of them” (Polkinghorne, 1989, p45). It is important for a researcher to examine their own experiences with the phenomenon that is being studied, ”locating the presuppositions and biases the researcher holds as well as clarifying the parameters and dimensions of the experience before beginning subject interviews” (Polkinghorne, 1989, p46). Having this awareness that the researcher’s own personal experiences can influence data collection and interpretation is in its own awareness protection against the imposition of the researchers’ expectations of the study.

I chose to pursue this area of MWR research based on my own personal experience. The following is a narrative explaining how I reached the point I am at today and how my own life experiences have shaped this research. I have grown up around the Army my entire life. I was born on January 13th, 1982 in Nuremberg, Germany. My father was an active duty military police officer. To this day he is still serving our country as an active duty army officer. Having grown up in a military community, I have considered MWR a part of my life for as long as I can remember. Whether I was living stateside or abroad, MWR was there and offered valuable quality of life services. Having lived in 12 homes before the age of 18, MWR became a staple in my life. I used the pools in the summertime and the recreation centers year round. I used the libraries
for school research and attended countless special events put on by MWR, be it an Easter egg hunt or Christmas tree lighting. Upon entering college, I decided to pursue a degree in Recreation and Tourism, knowing that I loved event planning. My father strongly urged me to pursue MWR as a career. I strongly opposed to this suggestion until, as I grew older, I learned what a valuable impact MWR had on my own life.

My father is my hero. I think that every citizen of the United States should have to serve his/her country in some way. I knew that being in the military was not within my personal interest, and thus followed my father’s advice and pursued an internship with MWR. I applied to the Navy’s intern program and was accepted, and told I would be stationed in Bahrain. I was very excited, but also somewhat dismayed that I would be going to live in the Middle East all by myself before even reaching my 21st birthday. I was dismayed because I knew that I was going to be living half way around the world from my family and friends. I was also going to be living in what to me felt like a very exotic culture in a dangerous part of the world.

When I arrived in Bahrain, it was mid-January and over 100° F. I worked and lived in this amazing country for seven months. A large part of my job while stationed overseas was to send recreation equipment into Iraq in support of our soldiers fighting in Operation Iraqi Freedom. While doing my job, I had the great honor of befriending the sailors aboard the USS Firebolt. On the morning of April 24th, 2004 three of my very close personal friends died while boarding a suspicious vessel which exploded. When the crew returned to Bahrain, my fellow MWR employees and I did our best to comfort and support the surviving sailors. On more than one occasion, individual sailors came to
thank me for my support and told me how much of a difference it made knowing that these people working for MWR were always there for them.

I was evacuated from Bahrain on July 1st, 2004 due to increased terror threat when the Navy could no longer afford to put an intern in danger. As I sat on a 32 hour plane ride back to the States, I had an abundance of time to reflect on my extraordinary experiences. As many times as I was thanked, I wished to thank each individual over there fighting for us. I feel as though they truly are the bravest men and women in the world. In the future I want to continue to support these brave men and women in any way possible. This brings me to my research. When starting graduate school the fall after my undergraduate internship, I immediately knew my thesis topic: MWR and its impacts on soldiers. As my father is in the Army, I knew that I would have direct access to the soldiers who had been in harm's way in Iraq at the same time I was stationed in Bahrain. I wanted to know if working long weekends shipping fitness equipment was really worth the effort. I wanted to know from a soldier’s perspective what his or her feelings were towards MWR. During the course of this study, my own passion for not only the US Military but also MWR has guided my research. Having grown up with MWR, I believe in MWR’s mission and hope to serve it again in the future.

I was fortunate enough to have had very good access to a specific group of soldiers, because my father is a Colonel in the US Army. He is part of the Military Police Corps. While I served in Bahrain, my father was serving with his brigade, the 89th MP Brigade. Their main missions are all on the front lines of the war in Iraq. While serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom, the solders were in charge of keeping the safety and stability
of the police stations throughout Iraq as well as raising and training a new police force. They were also responsible for all prisoners of war and detainees.

Having these personal experiences and the preconceived notion that MWR is a positive in soldiers' lives is a part of my own personal experience of the MWR phenomenon. Furthermore, this research was attempting to determine the phenomenon of experiencing MWR as it is associated with readiness. I have not experienced the phenomenon in this way. However, examining and acknowledging my biases in favor of MWR and all that it entails is important. Having this understanding has allowed me as a researcher to do my best throughout the process of this research to keep my preconceived notions detached from the results.

Development of Instruments

The first instrument was a letter handed out to and signed by each participant in the research process. This letter was briefly mentioned in the procedures section. A copy of this letter may be seen in Appendix A. This letter was mandated by BGSU’s Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB). It was printed on BGSU letterhead. The letter started out with a paragraph explaining the reason for the study, the research questions and possible benefit of participation to the soldier. The next paragraph explained the necessity of the study and that it was for thesis research. It also outlined the necessary involvement on the part of the participant. It stated how long the participation would be in terms of clock hours. The letter also told them that the recordings and all data collected would be kept for one year and destroyed after that
In the interim year all data would be kept in a locked brief case. The letter told them also that the interviews would be held at the 89th MP Headquarters unless otherwise requested and would take place at a mutually-agreed-upon time. Finally the letter verified that each participant was at least 18 years of age to participate and explained that in participating they were facing no more harm than they would on a regular day. The final paragraph explained that their identity would be kept confidential unless expressed permission was given otherwise. In regards to this permission, at the bottom of the letter they had to initial either “quote me/no name”, or “quote me/use name”. Thus offering each individual the control to either have their identities used or protected. It stated that the ranking officer would not have any access to any data collected. Thus they would in no way be penalized for not participating and/or anything they said or did during the data collection process. Finally, the letter gave phone numbers and contact information for both the thesis committee head and the HSRB board director. With this information was the expressed advice for the participants to contact either of these people, were they to feel uncomfortable or pressured in any way. The researcher kept copies of this document with their signatures and gave the participants a blank copy for their records.

The second instrument used in this thesis, previously employed by MWR when conducting baseline quantitative research on its own impacts during all deployments, was taken directly from the Operation Joint Endeavor/Guard 1997 MWR Customer Satisfaction Survey (Fafara, 1998). This survey was used to collect baseline quantitative data and help in determining if the participants were applicable for the interview process as well as demographic data. Thus in using this survey there was an assurance that the
collected data was a replica of those that the Army and MWR had collected for all of their research. The survey was utilized by Farfara after Operation Joint Endeavor/Guard in 1997, and was also used by Caliber Associates in the 2000 *Triennial Needs Assessment Study*. This survey, having been used in previous research studies, has proven to be highly researched and validified by the data collected. In stating this, it is important to note that, as all MWR deployment operations are funded by APF, all research and materials associated with these deployments becomes public property. Thus the use of this survey is not limited to only MWR but also the public, including researchers, as it is a part of the public domain.

A copy of this survey can be found in Appendix B of this thesis. The survey begins with personal profile questions such as rank, gender, age, and time spent overseas. Next, the soldiers were to indicate if they used MWR, how often they utilized it, and if they had access to MWR. In addition, the soldiers were asked to indicate what types of MWR activities they used and how often such activities were used. Some of the activities mentioned in this section are Sports Facilities, Arts & Crafts, AFN (the Army’s Television Network), Movies, Recreation Centers, Music/Live Entertainment, Commercial Phones, Special Events Programs, Libraries, AAFES (the Armed Forces Exchange Services), and R&R Leave (Rest and Relaxation).

Next, they were asked to list their three favorite MWR activities in order of importance. Following this, they were asked to list three MWR activities/equipment that they would like to have seen offered but were not. The next section was not necessarily of great importance in terms of this study; however, these questions were used in order
to maintain the integrity of the survey. They asked if the soldiers had access to enough books and newspapers and how important they felt this access to be.

The next section was of vast importance because it asked the soldier to indicate how important they felt MWR was at providing certain quality of life initiatives. These points were as follows: helping to relax, helping to escape boredom, meeting others with similar interests, helping stay physically fit, helping to stay mentally fit, helping cope with stress, providing opportunities for self expression, providing fun and entertainment, providing breaks from routine, providing quiet alone time, improving morale, and improving unit esprit de corps. Finally, it asked the soldier to indicate how satisfied they were overall with MWR while they were deployed and a section for any comments or concerns was also offered.

The final instrument used was the interview protocol. The researcher developed a list of eight open-ended questions that she felt delved into a deeper qualitative understanding of the phenomena of MWR impacting readiness. Each of the questions was asked for a specific purpose. A copy of this interview protocol can be found in Appendix C of this thesis. These questions were developed by the researcher in order to begin an open-ended semi-structured dialogue between the researcher and the subject as well as to focus the interview on specific situations of MWR/readiness phenomena versus generalized opinions. Each question was designed to get the soldier talking about times he/she had experienced the MWR/readiness phenomena. In phenomenological research the researcher is allowed to ask questions for clarification and elaboration purposes and this was completed throughout the interview process. It was not essential that each soldier was asked exactly the same questions, and the
protocol simply served as a guideline for discussion. A generalized approach to all phenomenological research (1989), was developed by the researcher using both Polkinghorne’s (1989) and Colizzi’s (1978) methodologies. It was then agreed upon by the researcher’s thesis committee.

Participants

I chose to focus my study on the 89th MP Brigade not only because of the fact that I had access to them, but also for multiple other reasons as well, such as the following. These men and women served in Iraq while I was in Bahrain, thus were directly impacted by the remote site support that I offered. These soldiers used the fitness equipment I shipped, watched the movies I procured for them, and also played the video games I purchased to send them. Thus, I know that these soldiers were directly impacted by the job that I did and were a great target group.

As stated earlier, this group of soldiers were at the front lines of the war; therefore, they faced the possibility of death everyday. MPs tend to be stationed with all of the other Army soldiers. There are MPs with the infantry, with the artillery, and with the military intelligence, just to name a few. Thus they experienced a broad range of the Army’s overall mission. Furthermore, these soldiers, arguably in the most dangerous places on earth, are the typical example of soldiers MWR seeks to support.

Having obtained permission to conduct this study by the Human Subjects Review Board at Bowling Green State University, I contacted my father, the soldiers’ commander, and sought formal approval which was granted. I was assigned a soldier
whose job was to escort me into the different areas of work in order to find the test subjects. As will be further explained in the procedures section these soldiers were back in the United States and served actively at Fort Hood, Texas. As I was taken to different working areas, I asked for volunteers who had utilized MWR and served in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Based on the initial MWR usage survey, which will be explained further in this section, I selected interviewees who had most strongly utilized MWR and associated strongly with it. While this can slightly tend to bias the outcomes, it was necessary to select participants who had in fact experienced MWR since in selecting participants for phenomenological research only two elements are required: (1) the people interviewed have truly experienced the phenomenon, and (2) they are articulate (Polkinghorne, 1989). Accordingly, the participants’ verbal skills necessary to convey their experiences with MWR was determined through the quantitative survey and by the researcher’s observations.

The next part of selection involved obtaining a diverse sample. While it is not necessary in phenomenological research to have diverse subjects, the researcher wanted to make sure that people from a wide variety of experiences were interviewed. When conducting phenomenology, it is important to limit the number of participants due to the in-depth nature of the study. The number of participants in a phenomenological study can vary greatly, from three participants to as many as 30 (Polkinghorne, 1989). For the purpose of this study and within the time constraints, I chose 10 individuals – 6 male and 4 female soldiers – who I felt embodied the military police soldier. I also interviewed 4 African American people, 4 Caucasian people, and 2 people of Hispanic background as well as 6 specialists, 2 sergeants, and one staff sergeant. I felt I needed
a representative sample of 9 to 1, enlisted to officer rank; therefore, I also interviewed one officer, a first lieutenant. Each of these individuals served on different missions. Additionally, the interview targeted individuals who had vastly different wartime experiences. For example, two of my interviewees were directly involved with the security of Col David D. Phillips. One of the soldiers worked as a guard at a prisoner detainee camp. Another worked primarily in the Green Zone – an area of Baghdad completely under the leadership of the US and served as a neutral area.

The sample was very diverse and representative overall of the Military Police Corps in that it provided for a wide variety of experiences and personalities. Having this difference in experience and personality allowed for a wide variety of experiences with MWR again taking not only the issues of gender and race into consideration, this study also focused on rank and job/mission tasks. In doing so not only is the group representative of the Military Police Corps, but also diverse in its phenomenological experiences. In order to determine the true essence of the MWR phenomenon it is necessary to choose participants coming from a wide variety of backgrounds (Polinghorne, 1989).

Procedures

The MWR/Readiness model was developed as a framework in which the phenomenon of MWR and readiness could be better examined. In asking the original research question of how MWR impacts readiness it was necessary to define a framework of readiness. The model served as a guideline for viewing and collecting
data. The researcher determined that she needed to do not only qualitative interviews to determine the phenomenon but also needed to collect quantitative data in order to determine baseline MWR usage. Thus, both interview protocol and a MWR usage survey were developed.

Formal approval was granted by Bowling Green State University’s Human Subject Review Board. Written approval was obtained in letter form from Col. David D. Phillips allowing me access to the 89th MP Brigade soldiers. This letter contained the caveat that I was not to allow any information of a sensitive nature. Because of this caveat I will not be referring to specific locations of soldiers or action due to the military sensitivity of their nature.

In the summer of 2005 I flew to Fort Hood, Texas and collected data at Fort Hood from May 10th – May 17th. I was escorted by a military police soldier at all times. I was taken to five different work areas to select participants. At each work area I had 2-3 people volunteer to participate. Each participant was given a letter of consent to sign before taking the quantitative survey. It is important to note that in this letter of consent each soldier who participated in the study indicated that they wished to be addressed by his/her name and not a pseudonym. This process took about 30 minutes for each individual surveyed.

Having administered all of these surveys, I then determined if the soldiers were eligible for further study. I made these determinations in a number of ways. In 1969 Adrian van Kaam developed six criteria that each individual participant in a phenomenological study must meet. For the first criterion, ability to express themselves linguistically with ease, when talking to the soldiers about the study I observed how they
communicated linguistically. If they were hesitant to say much then I noted this and used it to potentially eliminate them as candidates for further inquiry. The second criterion is the ability to sense and express feelings and emotions without shame. This is difficult to determine; thus, if the soldier indicated on the survey that they found MWR to be important to their overall mental state, I took this as an indication of a willingness to express their feelings. In accordance with the third criterion, the ability to express the organic experience associated with such feelings, each of the soldiers in the survey was asked to indicate which MWR service they utilized the most, thus proving their ability to link a service of MWR (organic experience) with their feelings. Fourth, is that each participant should express a spontaneous interest in their experience. Each soldier surveyed expressed interest in MWR experiences simply by participating in the survey to begin with. None was eliminated by this criterion. The fifth criterion was that the participants must have experienced the phenomenon being studied within a relatively recent date. All of the soldiers surveyed had been to Operation Iraqi Freedom and utilized MWR within the past six months. None was eliminated due to this criterion. Finally, the soldiers must have the ability to report on their experience. All of the soldiers were able to do this in that they filled out the survey in the beginning. Thus, overall, the main criterion for elimination was an inability to verbally express the MWR/readiness phenomenon.

With 10 interviewees selected from the group that had taken the surveys, the interview dates were established. In all cases the interviews took between 15-20 minutes. They were administered in the 89th MP Brigade Headquarters. Two were administered in restaurants and two more were administered in working areas.
Data Analysis Procedures

The quantitative data collected were analyzed by taking the surveys to the BGSU’s Statistical Consulting Support Service. The process of tabulating response frequency took approximately one week and provided frequencies of answers given by subjects and the percentages of respondents who responded to each question. The qualitative data were analyzed using the steps developed by both Polkinghorne (1989) and Colaizzi (1978). The steps are outlined and detailed below.

1. Development of Epoch

   The first step in the analysis of the qualitative data is to determine the researcher’s own personal epoch. Having done this during the development of the methodology, the researcher simply needs to make sure that throughout the following steps the epoch is always in mind. As previously explained one’s own personal epoch can and will skew data; therefore, in order to minimize this, it is important to constantly refer back to the epoch and how it could be causing the researcher to interpret data in a certain way.

2. Horizontalization

   The next step in the qualitative data analysis process is called horizontalization of the data. During this process each of the transcribed interviews is read and any pertinent statements are extracted and written down. When this process is complete the researcher goes through all of these statements and eliminates ones that are not deemed necessary due to redundancies. What the researcher is left with is a long group of unrelated
statements that are each individual and all refer back to the phenomenon of MWR.

3. Clustering

The next step in the analysis process is to examine the remaining statements and group them into clusters of meanings. For the purpose of this study the data were grouped according to the individual dimensions of readiness. The data were broken down into ten groups: efficacy, perceived organizational support, task cohesion, social cohesion, normative commitment, continuance commitment, affective commitment, sportsmanship, civic virtue, and finally helping behaviors.

4. Textual Descriptions

The statements that were left in each of the ten clusters are finally broken down into a textual description. What it means is that each of the individual statements was combined into one statement that incorporates all of the different aspects associated with the cluster.

5. Structural Description

The final step in the qualitative data analysis is to develop an overall structural description of the MWR phenomenon. Each of the textual descriptions is combined into one overall description which results in the essence of the lived MWR phenomenon.
RESULTS / DISCUSSION

Questionnaire Results

As discussed in the methodology section the quantitative data were collected for two primary reasons. The first of these was to determine if the participants utilized MWR and subsequently experienced the phenomena being studied. Secondly, by examining the results of these data, some overarching generalizations were made. These data will assist the researcher in answering two of the research questions: What do the soldiers really gain from MWR? Do soldiers feel as though MWR is meeting their personal needs and goals? The answers to these questions will allow for an even deeper understanding of the phenomenon of MWR.

Demographic Data

There were twelve surveys collected; 7.69% of those soldiers surveyed were First Lieutenants (1LT), 30.77% were Sergeants (SGT), 46.15% were Specialists (SPC), 15.38% were Staff Sergeants (SSG). In other words, the vast majority of these respondents were either Sergeants or Specialists. This breakdown in ranks is typical of a military unit. There was a fairly even split between male and female respondents; 46.15% were female and 53.85% were male.

As for the ages of respondents, 76.92% fell within the age groups from 18-29 years old, while the remaining 23.08% of respondents were 30-39 years of age. This is
a fairly representative sample of the Army; the lower-enlisted soldiers are generally between the ages of 18-29 years old, while the higher enlisted soldiers are generally older in age, falling between 30-39 years old. While there are some soldiers older than 39 and some younger than 18, for the purposes of this study, the general age range of 18-39 is where most soldiers in the Military Police Corps fell.

Having discussed demographic data, the following sections will be broken down into basic MWR usage and impacts of MWR. These sections are based upon the different questions in the survey as outlined in the methodology section. Following these two sections there will be a discussion of the implications of quantitative data as they pertain to this study.

*Basic MWR Usage Data*

Each respondent was asked how long they were “in theater”; that is, actively living and working in a combat zone. Only three respondents were in theatre for less than one year. One respondent was in theatre for 8 months and another two were in a combat zone for 11 months. Additionally, one respondent served overseas for 14 months. The vast majority of respondents (69.23%, N=9) spent exactly 12 months in a combat zone. This is the average time overall for the MP Corps that a soldier generally spends in a combat zone. There data were useful in that it allowed the researcher to determine if the soldier had spent enough time in combat to have truly experienced the phenomenon of MWR. The adequate amount of time for the purposes of this study was 6 months, as determined by the researcher.
The next question asked was if the soldier had access to MWR while overseas. Again, this question was used as the major selection criterion for participation in the interview process. An overwhelming 100% of those surveyed responded that they did have access to MWR services. In addition to this question the soldiers were asked specifically which MWR services they utilized while overseas. The responses to these questions will be organized based on the order in which they appeared on the questionnaire (see appendix 3). Of the soldiers surveyed, 92% utilized sports facilities. Approximately two-thirds of the soldiers also used the recreation centers. Only one third of these soldiers used the libraries which were also provided by MWR.

Perhaps the least used of all of the MWR activities listed was the arts and crafts center; only one respondent indicated the use of this center during the service time overseas. A reason for this finding may be that there was limited availability of this type of center. Conversely, whenever live music and entertainment were offered, 92% of respondents attended these events. In additions, AAFES, the Army and Air Force Exchange System, which in layman’s terms is like a small convenience store, was used by 100% of all respondents. It is important to note that, although stateside AAFES is its own entity, it is greatly supported by MWR during wartime and, therefore, is included as one of MWR’s offerings.

AFN, the Armed Forces Network, is a TV station set up and run by the government in support of its troops. Only 61% of soldiers indicated that they did, in fact, view AFN; however, one major reason for this is that AFN was only offered in select areas. Not all outposts had access to the technology required to receive this service. As another service, MWR sets up and operates several phone stations and banks which
allow soldiers to place calls using phone cards or morale support calls free of charge. MWR in association with Wal-Mart gave out significant numbers of free phone cards allowing for an increased access to phone services. Eighty-four percent of respondents indicated that they did indeed utilize these phone services.

Another service offered by MWR is called R&R, which means rest & relaxation. R&R leave is a short period of time where the soldier is transported from their normal duty station to some place considered safer, for example, the Green Zone, which is the main base in Baghdad for coalition officials in Iraq, or down to Qatar. This leave, normally lasting anywhere from 2 days to one week, allows the soldiers time to relax and participate in MWR programs and events intended to revitalize/re-energize them. Seventy-six percent of the soldiers surveyed had the opportunity to attend one of these MWR R&R sessions.

The next service involved movies. MWR provides and shows first-run movies overseas. Eighty-four percent of the respondents indicated that they took advantage of the movies offered by MWR. Additionally, Special Events offered by MWR consist of everything from Salsa Night at the recreation center, to talent shows. Sixty-one percent of soldiers indicated that they participated in special events while overseas. Having determined which MWR activities they utilized, the soldiers were next questioned about how often they utilized these services. Fifty-three percent said that they used MWR at least weekly while the remaining 46% used MWR daily. Again this question was also used in determining if the participants met the criteria for the interview portion of the research study. In order to have solid recollections of the MWR phenomenon MWR services needed to have been experienced regularly.
The next set of questions asked the soldiers to list their favorite MWR activities. The top preference was “sports”, followed by “phones” and then “AAFES”. When asked to come up with three things MWR did not offer that they would have liked, only three respondents stated: additional phones, indoor basketball courts, and access to some sort of college classes. Most of the soldiers later interviewed said that they could not think of anything MWR did not offer that they would have wanted.

For the next question, seventy-six percent stated that they had ample access to books and 92% had access to newspapers. When asked to rate the importance of this access, of the soldiers who responded, 76.9% said that access to books was either “very” or “moderately important”. The same 76.9% also said that access to newspapers was “very” or “moderately important”.

**Impacts of MWR Services**

The final set of quantitative questions involved quality of life initiatives. For a visual depiction of these data please see Illustration D. For the first quality of life initiative, eighty-four percent of respondents felt that MWR was “very important” in terms of providing relaxation and the remaining 16% felt that it was “important”. The “alleviation of boredom” was again “very important” to 84% of respondents and “important” to the following 16%. The responses regarding the next quality of life initiative offered slightly different results. The importance of MWR in “meeting new people” was “not important” to 30% of soldiers, “important” to 53% and “very important”
to only 17%. As far as MWR and providing the opportunities to “maintain physical fitness”, 92% of respondents felt that this was either “important” or “very important”. Surprisingly 7%, one respondent, felt that MWR was “not important” in terms of maintaining physical fitness. Again, the same results were found for maintaining mental fitness. Ninety-two percent of soldiers felt MWR was “important” or “very important” in the “maintenance of mental fitness”, and 7% felt MWR was “not important” in this endeavor.

MWR was noted to as being “very important” to 76% of respondents in terms of “helping alleviate stress” as well as “vary routine”. The remaining 24% felt MWR was “important” in providing for both of these initiatives. The responses about the next initiative produced diverse results. Thirty percent of soldiers felt that MWR was “very important” in “allowing for self expression”; 46% felt it was “important” and the remaining 24% felt that MWR was “not at all important”. As for “allowing fun”, 100% of respondents felt that MWR was “important” or “very important”.

Offering “quiet time” was the next quality of life initiative offered by MWR in the survey. Of those soldiers interviewed 69% felt this to be a “very important” aspect of MWR and the remaining 31% felt it was simply “important”. Responses to the final two questions about “morale” and “unit esprit de corps” were similar: 76% of soldiers felt that MWR was “very important” and the remaining 24% felt MWR was “important”. The last quality of life initiative was “maintaining and developing esprit de corps”. Seventy-six percent again felt that MWR was “very important” in this regard, with the remaining 24% feeling it to be “important”.

The final question in this survey asked the soldiers to indicate how satisfied they were with the MWR services offered while they were in an active combat zone. Sixty-nine percent of soldiers felt “very satisfied” with MWR and 31% felt “satisfied” with MWR. Overall, the data collected from this survey allow for some basic baseline data to be drawn about MWR usage and importance through the eyes of the soldier.

Discussion of Questionnaire Results

The data, while similar to Farfara’s (1998) in indicating the soldiers’ considerable exposure to the MWR phenomenon, will be examined in two ways: first whether or not
they support Caliber Associates model of MWR/Readiness and secondly, how soldiers perceive the actual benefits that MWR renders them. The data collected support certain aspects of the MWR / Readiness Model. First of all four of the dimensions of the model are correct, according to this questionnaire. The first of the dimensions is that of self efficacy. Very high percentages uphold the idea that MWR allows a soldier to relax, alleviate boredom, de-stress, as well as maintain mental fitness, all of which can and do lead to increased feelings of self efficacy (Caliber Associates, 2003). These two quality-of-life initiatives are also vital factors leading to feelings of increased self efficacy. Through the data collected in this survey it can be found that MWR causing increased feelings of self efficacy are valid.

The next dimension of the MWR / Readiness model that this survey supports is the idea of increased task cohesion. This survey found that all of the soldiers interviewed found that MWR was “important” or “very important” in their maintenance of both mental and physical fitness, two quality-of-life initiatives that allow for an individual to be better-prepared and able to carry out task-specific missions based on their current work situations and thus lead to increased task cohesion.

The third dimension of the model that this survey supports is the idea of increased social cohesion, which can be highly impacted by the following quality of life initiatives: esprit de corps and meeting new people. Meeting new people allows soldiers to better understand one another and network with their fellow soldiers allowing for increased social cohesion. Likewise, esprit de corps leads to feelings of camaraderie among soldiers which is of large import in terms of social cohesion.
The fourth and final dimension of the MWR / Readiness model that was supported by the qualitative data was the idea of sportsmanship. With the model defining sportsmanship as the willingness to accept any working environment without complaint, the idea of individual morale is of great import. Soldiers indicated that MWR was “very important” in terms of providing them with increased levels of morale, which means they are much less likely to complain about their current work environment. Thus, the data support the notion that MWR participation causes increased sportsmanship.

However, it also becomes clear that the qualitative data alone cannot and does not support the MWR / Readiness Model in its entirety. For example, in order for increased readiness to be present, the soldier must experience it in three ways: increased commitment, increased motivation/effort, and increased unit cohesion. Therefore, readiness is not an outcome of MWR if viewed solely from these data. Illustration E is a visual depiction of a possible model that can be drawn from these data.

What do the soldiers really gain from MWR? Do soldiers feel as though MWR is meeting their personal needs and goals? First of all, the data support the idea that soldiers gain all of the quality-of-life initiatives outlined in the survey with the top three preferences as “phones”, “AAFES”, and “gyms/sports”. Similarly, 70% of soldiers surveyed indicated that they were “very satisfied” with MWR and the remaining 31% were “satisfied”. This survey allowed the researcher to examine the MWR / Readiness Model, determine the answer to two of the research questions and determine if the individuals surveyed had experienced the phenomenon of MWR.
The phenomena developed will be examined regarding the model of MWR/readiness. The following sections will be a textual description of each phenomenon within its framework of the model, followed by a discussion of the implications of each. This section will conclude with an overall structural description of MWR.


Textual Description of Efficacy

Participating in MWR events and programs allowed me to escape from the everyday stresses of war, and re-energize in a non-stressful everyday kind of environment. It helped keep me not only mentally stable but also gave me the renewal needed to properly make decisions during missions. MWR enabled me to take my mind off, and separate myself from, fighting and working everyday.

Discussion of Efficacy

The textural description of self efficacy above relates strongly with the MWR / Readiness model. It helps validate the fact that participation in MWR does in fact allow for increased feelings self efficacy, and this research thus does support the Caliber Associates research (2003). In 2000, Schaubroeck et al. found that higher efficacy is directly related to improved coping in work situations especially if the worker feels that their control over their job was high. The textural description supports this research in that MWR allows for the soldier to cope better with their job environments. Jex and Bliesse found that workers who reported high levels of efficacy were better able to adjust to not only physical, but also psychological job pressures (1999). Again the textural description indicates that soldiers are better able to de-stress from the pressures of war and consequently focus more on the job at hand. As part of my own personal epoch, I believe that activities like MWR allow for the participants to simply
have fun which in turn allows them to focus on the job tasks at hand. In this respect
MWI participation does promote efficacy.

Textual Description of Perceived Organizational Support

Anything that I could possible want to do, MWR provided me a way to do it. MWR also made sure that we all had access to information letting us know when
activities were available. It was nice to know that someone cared enough about us to be on the front lines of war with us. Additionally, MWR gave us something to look forward to.

Discussion of Perceived Organizational Support

This finding is supported by the research done by Caliber Associates (2003) who discovered that MWR offers soldiers the feeling of high levels of perceived
organizational support. The textual description above indicates that MWR made the soldiers feel as though someone really cared about them and what they were doing. Lambert, 2000, discovered that many companies now are developing programs which attempt to help the employees balance work and family life, leading them to believe that the companies truly care about their personal well-being. Similarly, MWR is a program developed to allow the soldiers avenues of recreation and leisure and thus, as found by this research study, leads soldiers to believe that the Army cares about their well-being.
Research also suggests that personnel seem to demonstrate more well-being when their supervisors and organizational culture are perceived as supportive (Galinsky, Bond, & Friedman, 1996; Greenhaus, Bedeian, & Mossholder, 1987). This textural description shows the MWR does in fact give the soldiers feelings that their organizational culture is supportive of them in that MWR actually cares. Military-based research found that as positive perceptions of Army support for families increase, job-related problems decrease (Burnman, 1992). This research shows that MWR does increase positive perceptions of the Army and thus further supports Burnman’s study as well. In conclusion, participation in MWR does allow for feelings of increased perceived organizational support.

Textual Description of Unit Cohesion

The first outcome of increased readiness is that of unit cohesion. This can, in turn, be broken down into unit and social cohesion.

I know MWR services made me relax, which made me do my job better because my head was not clouded with other issues. It was easier to do my job knowing that, when I didn’t have to do my job, there were other things I could do to help pass my time. MWR offered something to look forward to doing so that, when the time came, I was better able to focus on my mission.

The second element of cohesion is social.
MWR gave me something to do with the people that I worked with. It also allowed me to see sides of people that I never would have and thus connect with them on a more personal level. You connected with people that may not be your rank but are into the things you are into. This transcendence of rank and ability to play with my fellow soldiers allowed me to become friends with the people I worked with, creating a family within the military. MWR helps bring your team or platoon or company so much closer because you are cheering for a common goal or working together.

Discussion of Unit Cohesion

This research supports that of Caliber Associates which says the participation in MWR leads to increased unit cohesion as seen through both task and social cohesion (2003). Studies found that groups were more likely to be successful in the completion of a task, not so much because their group had high levels of social cohesion but more often when the individuals all had high levels of task cohesion (Mullen & Cooper, 1994; Griffith, 1997; MacCoun, 1993; Segal, 2002). The textural description supports this research idea. Segal found that if a group sees the same goal of a common task (task cohesion) they are more likely to later experience social cohesion during the process of completing a task (2002). The textural description support these findings as well, in that participation in MWR impacts both task and social cohesion positively. In 1995 Jandzinski found direct correlation between MWR programs and cohesiveness. Again this current research study supports the idea that participation in MWR does cause increased levels of both task and social cohesion.
Textual Description of Commitment

Commitment is broken down into three areas: normative, affective and continuance. After conducting this research, it was found that normative commitment and civic virtue, which is an element of motivation/effort, are one and the same. Thus normative commitment will be eliminated in order to avoid redundancy.

I had never been deployed before and did not know that MWR existed. Being overseas and having MWR made me realize that the Army actually does care about me as a soldier. MWR makes me feel like the Army is my family. I am not just a nameless soldier, but someone’s brother, sister, parent and friend. Having MWR has allowed me to better accept the Army values and belief systems as my own. I did not feel as though I was losing any valuable time by being overseas because of MWR.

Discussion of Commitment

The textural description of commitment supports the idea that MWR participation leads to increased affective commitment. However, I do not feel as though it can support that MWR leads to continuance commitment. In fact several soldiers interviewed said that they would not consider going to war or re-enlisting just because of MWR. This finding is very interesting. When Caliber Associates (2003) conducted their initial research, the Army was not yet involved in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Continuance commitment was not really a large issue with the military, as they had no problem recruiting the numbers that were necessary. However, now that Operation Iraqi
Freedom is up and running, individuals are more likely to not re-enlist in order that they not have to go back to war. Thus, commitment is much more of a key issue today than it was when Caliber first started developing the MWR / Readiness model. This is an area in which MWR is clearly not making as much of a difference as predicted. As a part of my own personal epoch, I do not believe that having MWR will entice someone to join or stay in the Army because everything that MWR offers is available in the civilian world. MWR does a lot of good; however, I do not believe that it can ensure continuance commitment.

Studies aimed at assessing the quality of life of Marines have found on all occasions that MWR positively effects a marine’s decision to re-enlist (Kerce, 1995; White, Baker, & Wolosin, 1999). Kerce’s study has proven to be outdated. The soldiers interviewed clearly indicated in their interviews that MWR was not a decisive factor for re-enlistment. In 1997 Koopman and Goldhaber examined, from an economic standpoint, MWR programs and their impacts on commitment. They found that the commitment levels increased by MWR ultimately saved the military millions of dollars in training and recruitment. This would most likely no longer be the case, based on this phenomenological study. In summary, this study has found that MWR participation does increase affective commitment but does not increase continuance commitment. The impacts of normative commitment are not discussed here because it was eliminated due to redundancy as it means the same thing as civic virtue.
Textual Description of Motivation/Effort

The last part of readiness is that of Motivation/Effort. As explained in detail in the literature review, Motivation/Effort is best measured through Organizational Citizenship Behaviors. These OCB’s can be broken down into three categories: sportsmanship, civic virtue, and helping behaviors. Information from the interviews indicated that all three of these phenomena resulted from MWR participation.

Sportsmanship is the willingness of the soldier to accept adverse conditions without complaint (Caliber Associates, 2003).

MWR made my time overseas tolerable. MWR made me feel as though life wasn’t military all of the time. MWR allowed for energy renewal and stress release, making life in the Middle East much more endurable. Morale picked up once MWR got to our area of Iraq. There was just a complete change of attitude. We didn’t look at Iraq as a crappy place, instead we figured it could be better, and MWR made it not the worst place in the world. I would look forward to MWR activities all week, and that made life much more tolerable.

Civic virtue is defined as anything a soldier does that indicates his commitment to the ideals of the military.

MWR made me feel like I was living in a civilized environment. This made me want to make sure that all of my fellow soldiers got to participate in MWR with me. This sense of civilization enabled me to build stronger relationships with my fellow soldiers. Knowing that the Army cares enough about me to support and provide MWR makes me more likely to connect with the Army in a personal, even familial way.
Helping behaviors are those actions whose sole purpose is to encourage others and attempt to combat problems faced within the unit (Caliber Associates, 2003).

I so appreciated MWR and what it offered that I wanted to make sure that my fellow soldiers knew about MWR as well. I took every opportunity to coax others to join me in MWR activities. When new units would arrive, we would make sure to take them with us to MWR functions. I would encourage others to use MWR gyms because it is hard to stay motivated to maintain your physical fitness. I wanted to help keep people motivated and make sure they were using these great facilities.

Discussion of Motivation/Effort

The textural descriptions support the idea that participation in MWR causes increased levels of motivation/effort as experienced through organizational citizenship behaviors. The interview data support the study done by Podsakoff and Mackenzie in 1997 which found that these types of helping behaviors can lead to a speedier acclimation into military life and can also be seen as a way of spreading training practices in an efficient manner. The study by Jandzinski (1995) also found direct correlations between MWR and motivation. During Operation Desert Storm, MWR participation caused increased motivation and increased OCB behaviors, thus augmenting overall readiness (Jandzinski, 1995). This qualitative research found the same link. During OIF the interview research supports the fact that MWR participation caused increased motivation and effort as measured through OCB behaviors.
Structural Description of the MWR Phenomenon

Participating in MWR events and programs allowed me to escape from the everyday stresses of war, and re-energize in a non-stressful everyday kind of environment. It not only helped keep me mentally stable but also gave me the renewal needed to properly make decisions and respond during missions. MWR enabled me to take my mind off, and separate myself from, fighting and working everyday.

Anything that you could possible want to do, MWR provided you a way to do it. They also made sure that we all had access to information letting us know when activities were available. It was nice to know that someone cared enough about us to be on the front lines of war with us. MWR gave us something to look forward to.

I know MWR services made me relax, which made me do my job better because my head wasn’t clouded with other issues. It was easier to do my job knowing that when I didn’t have to do my job there was other stuff I could do to help pass my time. MWR offered something to look forward to doing so that when the time came I was better able to focus on my mission.

MWR gave me something to do with the people that I worked with. It also allowed me to see sides of people that I never would have and thus connect with them on a more personal level. You connected with people that may not be your rank but are into the things you are into. This transcendence or rank and ability to play with my fellow soldiers allowed me to become friends with the people I worked with creating a family within the military. MWR, helps bring your team or platoon or company so much closer because you are cheering for a common goal or working together.
I had never been deployed before and did not know that MWR existed. Being overseas and having MWR made me realize that the Army actually does care about me as a soldier. MWR makes me feel like the Army is my family. I am not just a nameless soldier, but someone’s brother, sister, parent and friend. Having MWR has allowed me to better accept the Army values and belief systems as my own. I did not feel as though I was losing any valuable time by being overseas because of MWR.

MWR made my time overseas tolerable. MWR made me feel as though life wasn’t military all of the time. MWR allowed for energy renewal and stress release, making life in the Middle East much more tolerable. Morale picked up once MWR got to our area of Iraq. There was just a complete change of attitude. We didn’t look at Iraq as a crappy place, instead we figured it could be better, but MWR made it not the worst place in the world. I would look forward to MWR activities all week, and that made life much more tolerable.

MWR made me feel like I was living in a civilized environment. This made me want to make sure that all of my fellow soldiers got to participate in MWR with me. This sense of civilization allowed me to build stronger relationships with my fellow soldiers. Knowing that the Army cares enough about me to support and provide MWR makes me more likely to connect with the Army in a personal, even familial way.

I so appreciated MWR and what it offered that I wanted to make sure that my fellow soldiers knew about MWR as well. I took every opportunity to coax others to join me in participating in MWR. When new units would arrive we would make sure to take them with us to MWR functions. I would encourage others to use MWR gyms because it
is hard to stay motivated to maintain your physical fitness. I wanted to help keep people motivated and make sure they were using these great facilities.

Conclusion to the Results

As a conclusion to this research study, it has been found and proven that MWR does and can impact a soldier’s welfare through the ideas outlined in the MWR / Readiness model. However, I do not feel as though the research can support the idea that MWR participation increases readiness. In order for increased readiness to be present, all of the dimensions of readiness must exist for each soldier. This was not the case. In fact, not all of the dimensions were impacted. For example, continuance commitment was not present as a part of the MWR phenomenon. With this said, I would like to propose that the research supports a new model, one that takes fewer broad leaps in conclusions. (See Illustration F)

The new model shows that MWR does lead to increased efficacy and perceived organizational support. Because of these two elements the soldiers experience increased task and social cohesion, which make up overall unit cohesion. The soldiers participating in this research indicated that they experience increased levels of affective commitment. Finally, they did experience increased levels of sportsmanship, civic virtue, and exhibit helping behaviors. All three of these are what make up the idea of organizational citizenship behaviors, by which motivation/effort can be measured. Ultimately, this model started depicting MWR as increasing readiness and then the other elements were impacted accordingly. However, this study has shown that MWR
actually causes these sub-elements, such as civic virtue, to occur, which can lead to broader effects such as increased motivation/effort and unit cohesion.

Nevertheless, since not all of the elements that define readiness are present for each soldier, I do not feel that it is safely stated that MWR participation results in increased readiness. Specifically, in order for increased readiness to be present, each individual soldier must experience increased unit cohesions, commitment, and motivation/effort along with all of their sub-elements. This is simply not the case as this study cannot support the idea that participation in MWR impacts all of these factors for each soldier.
Conversely, it is interesting to note that this study does support the idea that MWR meets its five goals. The first of these goals is to establish a military community.
The structural description of the MWR phenomenon evidences that MWR participation leads to increased feelings of community. This can be clearly seen when the soldiers indicated that MWR allowed them to view the Army as a family. Second, MWR considers personal growth to be critical to each person associated with the military. This goal is met in that each soldier said that MWR allowed them to maintain their mental well-being. They are able to grow through increased levels of efficacy.

Third, MWR strives to be a ‘safety net’ for families and soldiers alike. MWR clearly succeeds in this goal, based on the data found. The soldiers indicated that MWR served as a spot of normalcy in a war-torn country. MWR was for them a safe and home life environment which allowed for rejuvenation. Fourth, MWR is committed to the idea of renewal. MWR understands the strong need for each person to recharge, refresh, and rejuvenate. This idea was emphasized multiple times by each soldier and is a key element of the structural description of the MWR phenomenon. Finally, MWR seeks to establish a feeling of self-reliance. MWR is successful in this as well, since it allows for increased efficacy. Another model can be developed and that is one where participation in MWR leads to the five goals of MWR (See Illustration G).
Illustration G

MWR impacts soldiers through perceived organizational support and efficacy. These, in turn, allow for task cohesion, social cohesion, affective commitment, and OCBs. While this study does not support the original MWR / Readiness model, it does allow for other variations. In addition to this, the structural description of the MWR phenomenon supports the idea that during OIF MWR was successful in establishing its five goals.
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The one thing that would have been changed were this study to have undergone again is the sample group. If this research were conducted again, the researcher should have no personal connection to the data set being interviewed. As per the current situation, I did not know any of the people I interviewed; however, their connection with my father was bound to make some differences in the data collected. Even though it was stated thoroughly in the introductory letter that he would have nothing to do with the data collected, the knowledge of how I was associated with him could still have impacted data.

I believe that there are several avenues of research that could be pursued in order to further the understanding of MWR and its impacts. The first of these studies would mirror many studies done shortly after the Vietnam War. These studies focused on whether experiencing violent war situations caused later increased aggression. It would be really interesting to research into how MWR possibly impacts this increased aggression associated with participation in war. Similarly, MWR should be studied for its impacts specifically on increasing mental health, from a psychological point of view.

Countless studies have measured the impacts of therapeutic recreation, and MWR is in essence a form of this therapeutic recreation in a war setting. It would be fascinating to delve more deeply into some of the underlying psychological impacts of war and how MWR combats the negative ones. For example, several soldiers stated explicitly that MWR kept them from going crazy. Most of the soldiers meant this in a very literal sense. In fact, there are several soldiers that I personally know who had to
be sent home due to mental instability brought on by the harsh realities of war. MWR is attempting to combat these negative possible outcomes. In association with a vast overview of MWR impacts, it would be valuable to try and link specific programs and equipment usage with outcomes. I feel that, to truly do a thorough research study on the impacts of MWR, MWR should be broken down. For instance, I would like to know the impact of sports events vs. reading. It would be very beneficial because learning the specific impacts of each of these areas would assist in knowing what areas of MWR to constantly improve.

Another research possibility would be to conduct the same study as mine but with different areas of the Army. For example, I interviewed the Military Police, but it would be interesting to do this survey on infantry, cavalry, and signal soldiers as well. In addition, it would be wise to branch outside of the Army to the Navy, Air force, and Marines. Each of these branches has its own MWR entity and thus each offers slightly different programs and equipment. Hence, each branch is most likely experiencing the phenomenon of increased readiness in different ways. Such a study would further validate the readiness model.

As MWR is funded almost entirely by the government and its own generated income, it does not have much funding left over for research initiatives. It would be very valuable for the military to sponsor some of the MWR research with its funding, as it has proven to be essential to the military mission overall. Finally, if soldiers are found to be in a higher state of readiness then they are more likely to successfully complete their missions. In conclusion, more funding should be allocated to MWR research overall.
REFERENCES


Department of the Army Overseas Recruitment Center film, Special Services: Where the Action Is, 1970.


APPENDIX A

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY
Army Morale, Welfare and Recreation
Bowling Green State University
Customer Satisfaction Survey

Your Personal Profile:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank/Grade</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Time in Theater</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>________</td>
<td>________ Male</td>
<td>________ Years</td>
<td>________ Months</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Did you have access to one or more MWR activities

| ________ | ________ Yes | ________ No |

Please Check the Army MWR activities/programs used during your time in theater:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sports Facilities</th>
<th>Recreation Centers</th>
<th>Libraries</th>
</tr>
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<td>________</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arts &amp; Crafts</th>
<th>Music/Live Ent.</th>
<th>AAFES</th>
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<tr>
<th>AFN</th>
<th>Commercial Phones</th>
<th>R&amp;R Leave</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movies</th>
<th>Special Event Programs</th>
</tr>
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<td>________</td>
<td>________</td>
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</table>

How often did you use Army MWR activities?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>________ Daily</th>
<th>________ Weekly</th>
<th>________ Monthly</th>
<th>________ Infrequently</th>
<th>________ Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Of the Army MWR activities you used, which 3 were your favorites. List in order of importance

1) ______________________________________________________
2) ______________________________________________________
3) ______________________________________________________

4) ________ None

What Army MWR activities/equipment would you have liked to have that are NOT available in Iraq? List in order of preference

1) ______________________________________________________
Did you have access to enough:

Paperback Books

Newspapers

How important were these reading materials to you?

How important to you are the Army MWR activities on this deployment for:

Overall, how satisfied are you with Army MWR activities during this deployment

Any Additional Comments:
APPENDIX B

LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS
March 20, 2006

Dear Interview Participant:

You are invited to be in a research study on the effects of Morale Welfare and Recreation on soldiers during war time. As part of my work on a master's degree in Leisure and Tourism in the School of Human Movement Sport and Leisure Studies at Bowling Green State University, I am conducting a research study of 89th MP Brigade soldiers who utilized MWR during their time in Baghdad, Iraq. This study may benefit other soldiers in the future; by giving MWR a more in depth idea of what services are needed and how they are perceived.

This study is being conducted for a thesis. The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon of participating in MWR activities during war. I am requesting you to first fill out a survey, which should take no more than 15 minutes, in order to determine if you qualify for further participation. I will be determining qualification for further research based on your initial survey answers. If it is determined that you actively participated in MWR activities and utilized MWR facilities and also that you viewed the activities to be of a high importance then you will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview to be tape-recorded that will last approximately 35-45 minutes. This interview will be set up to take place at a mutually agreeable time and will take place in the 89th MP Brigade Headquarters. All participants must be at least 18 years of age. The anticipated risks to you are no greater than those normally encountered in daily life.

Information you provide will remain confidential and your identity will not be revealed unless your permission is granted to do so. Confidentiality of you as a respondent will be protected throughout the study and publication of study results. Only members of the research team will have access to the data / information you provide. I will keep all hard copies of paperwork and tape recordings in a locked brief case at my private residence. All computer documentation will be password protected. I will also destroy all tapes at the end of the thesis defence. The ranking US Army officer will not have access to any data collected. Finally, if you have any questions, comments, or concerns regarding the ethics of this study or rights of research participants please feel free to contact the Chair of Bowling Green State University's Human Subjects Review Board at 372-7716. You may also contact Dr. Julie Lengfelder my thesis advisor for with any specific questions regarding this research at (419)372-6908. Finally you may also contact me for any additional information at (254)423-0315.

Sincerely,

Noelle Phillips
Graduate Student- Leisure and Tourism

By signing the following you voluntarily consent to participate in this research investigation. You may refuse to participate in this investigation or withdraw your consent and discontinue participation in this study without penalty and without affecting your relationship to Bowling Green State University, MWR, or the United States Army.

Print Name________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________ _______________________________
Signature         Date

Please select one of the following options and initial on the line.

_______ Quote Me/ No Name

_______ Quote Me/ Use Name
APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
MWR Interview Protocol

Describe a positive MWR experience that you had while overseas.

Describe how participation in MWR has impacted your commitment to the US Army, and the War in Iraq.

Did participating in MWR activities make you feel more connected to home? Why or Why not?

Having been actively involved in MWR did you find yourself encouraging others to do the same? (Did you make MWR activities available to soldiers under your command?)

Explain how you felt while participating in an MWR event or using MWR facilities.

Describe how participating in an MWR event/utilizing MWR facilities improved cohesion within your unit.

Do you feel that MWR had a positive impact on your level of overall morale, why or why not?

Read the following: “Our mission as members of Army MWR is to serve the needs, interests, and responsibilities of each individual in the Army community with support and leisure services designed to enhance the quality of their lives for as long as they are associated with the Army, no matter where they are.” Do you feel that MWR was successful in this mission while you were overseas?
APPENDIX D

TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEWS
Interview with Leanne Griggs

May 11, 2005  9:45AM

Noelle: Describe a positive MWR experience that you had while overseas.

Leanne: Okay, there are so many. Um like I was saying earlier just stuff like the bike rides where you could go do that or there were a lot of volleyball tournaments or basketball tournaments set up so you could get a team together and you know have that healthy competition but also you know that fun aspect of it. So you weren’t as stressed out and you had something to enjoy.

Noelle: Describe how your participation in MWR has impacted your commitment to the US Army and the war in Iraq. If it has?

Leanne: Um, it definitely helped take the stress away and helped you escape a little bit from everything that was going on. So that when you actually have to go on a mission it is easier to focus because you are not drained from all of the stress. You got to release some of it you got to have some fun so, when it is mission time you can focus.

Noelle: Did participating in MWR activities make you feel more connected to home? Why or why not?

Leanne: Yeah it does a little bit, just because you are doing stuff that you do when you are at home so its not all military all the time. You know you’re not just living in some tent or some smaller building on the tock. You get to go out and play basketball or volleyball, go swimming stuff that you would normally do at home. So that helped.

Noelle: Okay! Having been actively involved in MWR did you find yourself encouraging others to do the same?
Leanne: Definitely. As a platoon leader when I have 30 soldiers if I can find a way for them to relax and release some of their energy or stresses. You know that is probably one of the best things you can do for them and for your team as a whole.

Noelle: Explain to me how you felt while participating in MWR activates or using MWR facilities.

Leanne: Um, definitely more relaxed you know you are happy just because you are doing stuff that’s enjoyable that’s not all work or mission focused. So you can kind of let loose and have a good time.

Noelle: Describe how participating in an MWR event/utilizing MWR facilities improved cohesion within your unit, if it did.

Leanne: Um, just being able to say alright, the squad or the team is going to sign up for the basketball tournament or these people within the company. And then your company can go cheer on that team. You know it helps bring your team or platoon or company so much closer because you are cheering for on common goal and working together.

Noelle: Okay, do you feel that MWR had a positive impact on your level of overall moral and why or why not?

Leanne: Definitely because I think if the MWR assets were not available I would have gone crazy. You know just because your friends and your family from home only send you so many books or… Your family and your friends your supporters can only send you so many Frisbees or whatever so this way you have a bike that you can go ride or you know brand new movies that are out that they are seeing at the same time back at home so it gives you something to write about too. You know hey did you see that movie, or you don’t feel like you are loosing something for loosing time by being there.
But yeah definitely to help take away the stress or just to relax and feel a little bit of normalcy in a war zone. It was definitely a good thing and helped to focus on the mission a lot better.

Noelle: Okay great! Now the last thing I'm going to do is ready you MWR’s mission statement and I want you to tell me if you feel as though they lived up to this during your stay in Iraq. “Our mission as members of Army MWR is to serve the needs, interests, and responsibilities of each individual in the Army community with support and leisure services designed to enhance the quality of their lives for as long as they are associated with the Army, no matter where they are.”

Leanne: I definitely agree with that just because there was so much diversity in what was offered, books movies entertainment, r and r phones, afn just something for everybody. So every soldier could get some piece of home or some relaxation or some down time and enjoy themselves. And yeah I was there at the beginning of the war and you know the first couple of months were really rough. But definitely morale pick up once MWR got there once we had moves to go see and stuff like that. There was just a complete change of attitude. It wasn’t this place is really crappy, you know it came to yeah, its not the greatest place but a least we have a place to escape to or things to do so we are not so bored. So definitely I definitely think you guys fulfilled your MWR mission while I was there.
Interview with SSG Sonja Martin

May 11, 2006  10:05 am

Noelle: Describe and explain a positive MWR experience that you had while overseas.

SSG Martin: Um, for one the MWR rec center, we had a Christian Women’s Group that met in the chapel on Fridays, but one particular Friday our Chaplain’s Assistant didn’t open the door for us. So we couldn’t get in and we didn’t have any other place to go, so we went over to the MWR center again. Now normally we know that there are a lot of times because of religion and stuff they don’t allow people to use it, but the manager there said no problem, here is an area over here. They had plenty of room, tables, space enough for us to use. And it was very nice. And actually there were two different occasions when we were able to use the MWR facility itself. And they had a special room, they had a room that was off to the side, that was secluded so we had privacy and we weren’t interrupted or anything and they were very very nice it.

Noelle: Describe how MWR has impacted your commitment to the Army and the war in Iraq.

SSG Martin: I think mostly that the things that the MWR provides in order for the soldiers to not feel so far away from home to provide things that remind soldiers of being home; to have places for them to go to use the internet, to use the phones, they can even use the pool tables, or a place just to relax from work. And I think that helps there attitude. That the military is saying, hey okay we’re looking at these guys so we’re going to do something for them. And I think that’s what the MWR provides.

Noelle: Did participating in MWR activities make you feel more connected to home? Why or why not?
SSG Martin: Yes it did, absolutely. It just gives you a sense that I know I am here fighting a war but there is a little small piece that reminds me of home over here. And so that it don’t feel so detached from being home. We still have some of the things that we would have at home here, it may not be on the same grand scale as being home, but you know on a smaller scale its enjoyable just the same.

Noelle: Having been actively involved in MWR did you find yourself encouraging others to do the same?

SSG Martin: Yes, absolutely! We would tell all our soldiers, the new units coming in, hey MWR has reading rooms, they have internet, they have telephones, you can go there and eat popcorn and watch the big screen TV, they have movies, they even had some exercise classes at one point. They had aerobics. We would just tell any and everybody, hey enjoy them so they wouldn’t be bored, so they wouldn’t come there. Because a lot of the, a lot of them didn’t know. They didn’t know cause the units didn’t say hey we’ve got an MWR here doing it. So just by word of mouth and if someone new come into the DFAC “dining facility”, hey you tried the MWR, where is it, oh its over here.

Noelle: Explain how you felt while participating in an MWR event or using MWR facilities.

SSG Martin: I felt really good. We had a um, the MWR sponsored a gospel talent show. It wasn’t just for gospel, it was more geared towards gospel, but everyone was invited to participate. And they did, and um, our choir sang, we sang a couple of times, and it was just great. Our whole Camp Victory, was there, and it was great. I thought it was just a wonderful thing.
Noelle: Do you feel as though it allowed you to sort of to, I don’t want to say escape what was going on around you, but was it…

SSG Martin: yeah, that’s what it was.

Noelle: Was it? Okay 😊

SSG Martin: That’s exactly what it was. It was an escape from all the noise that brought hassle stuff that you were working on, on constant a day to day basis, the stress that we were going through, throughout our busy day. For that little, one, two hour three hour small event, you know, it just, it reenergized you. Like after coming off a uh mission, we may have been shot during that day or whatever, but when we come back and MWR is hosting this event, you know, comedy show or what have you, you go there, laugh and you know forget the troubles that you’ve experienced maybe four or five hours earlier. It was just a great release. It was excellent.

Noelle: Describe how participating in MWR events or using MWR equipment improved cohesion within your unit. So did you notice that your unit gets along better or…

SSG Martin: Yeah, the soldiers weren’t as stressed. They weren’t as stressed because they had a place that they could go to release you all that stuff that they’d had build up from whatever they had gone through while they were out, outside the wire. So um, MWR was there to provide you know, a comfort or a safe-haven, for soldiers just to unwind, you just to relax and you know feel free.

Noelle: Do you feel that MWR had a positive impact on your overall level of morale? And why or why not, laughter, I think we’ve figure it has but….
SSG Martin: Yeah it has you know, just by being there, just by providing different outlets for soldiers to be able to have things to be able to go and do… Because you know if not soldiers will be there just working, sleeping, working, sleeping and that’s it.

Noelle: That’s not good!

SSG Martin: No, that’s not good.

Noelle: Okay, just the last question that I have is um, I’m going to read MWR’s mission statement, and then if just you can tell me if you feel that they were successful in this while you were overseas. It says um: “Our mission as members of Army MWR is to serve the needs, interests, and responsibilities of each individual in the Army community with support and leisure services designed to enhance the quality of their lives for as long as they are associated with the Army, no matter where they are.” So do you feel that they were successful in that?

SSG Martin: I think they were very successful, I mean especially in Iraq, where things are so limited, and for MWR to have provided the things they provided, they provided a vast array of so many things it is totally different from OIF1. In ah, where we had virtually nothing, and yet only two, uh it just provided great release for soldiers. And I think their mission statement; they’ve lived up to it and beyond.

Noelle: Well, I think that’s it unless you have any other comments or anything…

SSG Martin: No, I just think MWR did a great job, and they are continuing they are constantly doing work, and are constantly improving so it’s going to be even better for the soldiers that are there and that are coming.
Interview with SGT Stephen Dorsey

May 17, 2005 11:10am

Noelle: Describe a positive MWR experience that you had while overseas.

SGT Dorsey: Um, I would say the usage of the gyms, when they started building gyms for us over there. We were in Baghdad so when we first got there we had rocks and stuff that were left over from the palaces with sticks on the end. People were using like water jug bottles and stuff like that to lift. You know water jug boxes. So it was really nice when they got the gym in there, they had a lot of good equipment, like brand new equipment. So it was real good. That was definitely definitely a positive. They also had like uh, rooms with pool tables in them and stuff like that. So soldiers could go over there and use the pool tables, rent movies, DVDs, all that good stuff so…

Noelle: Cool! Describe how MWR has impacted your commitment to the Army and the War in Iraq, if it has made an impact.

SGT Dorsey: Um, well actually just because the MWR is there is probably not going to make me want to go back over. Cause we got gym X down the street and some nice gyms on post so we don’t have to worry about getting blown up, while trying to rip some sets on the bench press. Yeah, not much of an impact but it is definitely a positive to have over there.

Noelle: Laughter… Did participating in MWR activities make you feel more connected to home? Why or why not?

SGT Dorsey: Um, yes, I do believe it did because it was like um, time when you could actually feel like you are back at home, when you can get away from the work environment, which can get really really stressful over there at times. And having a
facilities like that was definitely a positive for getting the effect that you were back in a little bit of civilization I guess you could say. So for me it did definitely because it was time where I could just set work aside to just work out, go watch a movie, jump on the internet, whatever you have to do you know, it just did its best and it was very helpful.

Noelle: Okay, great! Having been actively involved with MWR did you find yourself encouraging others to do the same?

SGT Dorsey: Oh yeah definitely! Like when I first started to go to the gym and stuff it took some time to get other guys to get involved and go with, but once they started going then the same concept which was why I was going, to get away from things. So yeah I think I definitely influenced people to also use the facilities. Some people more than me, there was like dance clubs and stuff like that, so people who were into dancing and stuff I’m sure that was really good for them, because it put them right back into the club. So, it was good, definitely good.

Noelle: Okay, explain how you felt while participating in an MWR event or using MWR equipment. Did it allow you to sort of escape what was going on around you or…

SGT Dorsey: Right, of course, just going back on feeling like in a sense of a being a civilized environment for a little bit. Like going back home for a little bit. That’s kind of what I felt like and it was just uh, a good place to relieve stress and that. I mean I really just used the gyms but that’s how I am. Some people might relieve stress by watching a movie or something and I know not everyone had access to watching movies over there so MWR was good and even if they did have access, it might be around their company and they just wanted to get the hell away from everybody they work with and just go be by themselves. And that’s what I think it is all about.
Noelle: Describe how participating in an MWR event or utilizing MWR equipment improved cohesion within your unit. If you feel that it had any effect on that. Did it improve the way your unit got along?

SGT Dorsey: It probably made us get along a little bit less actually because there was a lot of us that would go to the gym on our spare time and there was a lot of people who wanted to just sit around and not do anything physical. And you know it is really tough over there to keep up physical condition. When we have downtime over there which was very minimal, it just depended on how you were using it so I guess I don’t know if it really helped cohesion. I guess you saw a lot of people who didn’t want to use anything and they just wanted to sit around and isolate themselves all the time and you know how that happens people are going to clash about that.

Noelle: Right, okay… Do you feel that MWR had a positive impact on your level of overall morale?

SGT Dorsey: Sure, I defiantly do believe that. My morale stayed pretty good anyway, cause we got lucky that way, our team was pretty good and worked really well together. I mean yeah, if that stuff wasn’t there, if I just had to eat, read, sleep every single second for twelve months with just the people that I work with and never got the chance to get out or do anything on my own, I think I would go crazy. I mean anybody would I would imagine. So like I said it was really positive to have the MWR facilities over there. And like I said it didn’t really come till like half way towards the end of our tour, but it was definitely needed, definitely needed. They had things over there where you could like go away for a weekend and stuff like that.

Noelle: Yeah, like down to Qatar and that.
SGT Dorsey: Qatar was one they actually had one in the Green Zone that was really really nice. That was close to where we were we were at so I got to get over there for like four days on a four day pass. But they had everything over there like swimming pools and sumo wrestling and all kinds of good stuff. Those guys were really great over there. They were really all about having the soldiers let loose and let their hair down, and that was what they were really all about.

Noelle: Great! This is my last question. I am just going to read MWR’s mission statement and if you can just tell me if you feel they were successful in that mission. “Our mission as members of Army MWR is to serve the needs, interests, and responsibilities of each individual in the Army community with support and leisure services designed to enhance the quality of their lives for as long as they are associated with the Army, no matter where they are.”

SGT Dorsey: You bet! I strongly believe that MWR has really put a good effort forward to hit that statement right on the head. They are not going over for anything except soldiers. They are everywhere I mean they are in the worst places in the world to go. To give soldiers morale, and esprit de corps and whatever it does for them I mean and everyone is going to take it differently but I’m sure it helps. But I mean even someone says it didn’t it had to have effected them some how, they just don’t see it, but it did. It effected them in a positive way.
Interview with SGT Kyle Picha

May 16, 2005 11:00am

Noelle: Can you describe a positive MWR experience that you had while overseas.

Sgt Picha: Uhm, I think like the celebrities and stuff that they bring over and the concerts that they hold, I think that is a positive thing.

Noelle: Okay, like who all did they bring over, just out of curiosity…

Sgt Picha: I know they brought, where were staying they had the millionaire guy, Evan Marriott or whatever his name was, and like the Miller Light Cat Fight Girls and then uh, right before we came back we saw a dance team called the perfect angels I think and then like some wrestlers and baseball players and stuff.

Noelle: Oh cool, okay, Describe for me how MWR has impacted your commitment to the US Army, and the War in Iraq. Did it have an impact on your commitment.

Sgt Picha: Um, I don’t think so I mean I it just kind of didn’t really know what MWR was until I joined so…

Noelle: Oh, okay, did um participating in MWR activities make you feel more connected to home? And like why or why not…

Sgt. Picha: Um, yeah I mean it kind of like took you back to that safe place. Where you know this feels like home, or I would maybe do this when I was back home you know. And like the phones and computers and stuff that helped out a lot too.

Noelle: Having been actively involved in MWR did you find yourself encouraging others to do the same? Did you encourage other people to uh…
Sgt Picha: Yeah, you know after there was like a couple things that some people didn’t go and like next time someone was coming or an event was happening you know you would be like hey, it was fun last time so it is something to kind of pass the time.

Noelle: Okay, great! Can you explain to me how you felt while participating in an MWR event or using MWR equipment? Did it help you like escape at all or um like, just how did you feel while using MWR?

Sgt Picha: I mean it was fun I guess, you know uh it did it kind of took you away from what was going on there for a little bit which was always helpful. And uh, it usually was fun stuff to do you know.

Noelle: Describe how participating in MWR events or utilizing MWR facilities improved cohesion within your unit. So did you feel that people within your unit got along better having participated in these things, did it have any effect at all?

Sgt Picha: I don’t know if it really effected that at all, I mean yeah it gave you something to go do with the people that you worked with but I’m not sure that it made that big of an impact.

Noelle: Okay, lets see, do you feel that MWR had a positive impact on your level of overall morale, and why or why not?

Sgt Picha: I believe so, I believe that it offered soldiers something to do while we were over there for a year. It allowed for people to see people that they would never have seen or do things that they had never done before. So I think it was positive in that.

Noelle: Great! My last question I am going to read you MWR’s mission statement and if you can tell me whether or not you think they were successful while you were overseas.

“Our mission as members of Army MWR is to serve the needs, interests, and
responsibilities of each individual in the Army community with support and leisure services designed to enhance the quality of their lives for as long as they are associated with the Army, no matter where they are.” Do you feel that they were successful in that? Sgt Picha: Uhmm, I think so. I think that you know its kind of a hard place to have certain things go on so I mean yes I think they did everything in their ability to help soldiers out. To kind of give the soldiers something to look forward to doing while they were over there.
Noelle: Describe for me a positive MWR experience that you had while overseas.
SPC Rivas: One of the positive things we had were probably the defact, I mean not the defact the shopette, no not the shopette, the you know like…
Noelle: Like the AFFEES sort of?
SPC Rivas: Right right, they had AFFEES there so that was pretty good, that helped us a lot.
Noelle: Describe how MWR has impacted your commitment to the Army and to the War in Iraq.
SPC Rivas: The MWR it has a lot for us to do. When we first got there in Kuwait they had like games and movies, it helped us get our minds off the things that actually made, it made life seem like normal. It helped take your mind off the situation you would be in the next day, so it was great.
Noelle: Okay, um, did participating in MWR activities make you feel more connected to home, and why or why not?
SPC Rivas: Yes! Well it did because um, I was able to basically not think about you know where I’m at. It was like everyday life; come home you get to go to the store, you know that was my thing, I love the store cause I love to go shopping. That’s what I like to do. And you know if you want to go catch a movie they had movies for us so that was good.
Noelle: Having been actively involved with MWR did you find yourself encouraging others to do the same?
SPC Rivas: Yeah basically, they had Latin Night at MWR they had Latin Night, so it was like a little club so most people that like to dance. Anyways on Friday they had Latin night on Saturday Hip Hop night. So it was you know trying to get people to go.

Noelle: Great! Okay, now explain to me how you felt while utilizing MWR. Did it allow you to escape what was going on around you or….

SPC Rivas: Basically, you know like I said, it just I din’s have to you know I knew there were things to do, they had awesome information. They had like boards they had all the tings that you could look up. So basically I was like ah, tonight they have this movie, you know so it kept me from thinking aw man I have to go out there tomorrow. I knew when I got back from our mission I knew there was something for us to do, I didn’t have to just sit there not being able to do anything. I mean they had like pool tables, right where we lived so that was a good thing. So as soon as I got home I was like ah, let’s play some pool, get on the computer. It wasn’t like we weren’t connected. We didn’t have any computers for like the first part of my tour, six months I wasn’t in Baghdad. I was in Takrit, so it was pretty rough. We didn’t have like movie night we didn’t have stuff like that. We didn’t have like the AFFEEs, every time I went to AFFEES they didn’t have anything. So, it was kind of, the phones we only had one phone for the company of maybe about a hundred people. So everyone was there trying to use the phone. And then I had to go so our mission was like 14 hours long so when I got back home I didn’t do like anything. So that first six months was hard for me, especially compared to the second six months. It was a big difference. I totally forgot that where I was at. Like you know I knew I had a mission I knew what I was doing but I knew that there was something to do and something to look forward to. The first six months were miserable.
Noelle: Okay, let's see, describe how participating in an MWR event or using MWR equipment improved cohesion within your unit. Do you feel they got along better or...

SPC Rivas: Right, we bonded a little more and played sports so we probably were a little aggravated with each other too at times. But you know it helped us, with just everything. It was like a family. You go out to work and then you come home and you have things to do. So it made it as positive experience.

Noelle: Okay great! Do you feel that MWR had a positive impact on your level of overall morale, and why or why not?

SPC Rivas: It did because I said it just helped me forget about everything, I mean I have children so it was basically a little harder for me. But just being with my team over there it was just helped.

Noelle: Great, now to my last question. I'm going to read you MWR's mission statement and if you can just tell me if you think that they were successful in this mission while you were overseas. “Our mission as members of Army MWR is to serve the needs, interests, and responsibilities of each individual in the Army community with support and leisure services designed to enhance the quality of their lives for as long as they are associated with the Army, no matter where they are.” Do you feel that they were successful in that?

SPC Rivas: Oh definitely! Uhm, I mean we really didn't know who to thank. I mean like personally thank you each one. I mean it really was, it helped us a lot!
Interview with SPC Maylen Rodriguez

May 11, 2005  9:45AM

Noelle: Describe a positive MWR experience that you had while overseas.

SPC Rodriguez: Yeah, they used to do like Salsa Nights on Friday nights, and that was pretty good because they had Country Night and R&B Night and those used to get out of hand. So, so far the Salsa night was pretty well, they had um…

Noelle: Under control…

SPC Rodriguez: They had like chaperones and everything so it was usually it went pretty smooth. It was someplace to go where you could relax for a couple of hours after being there for a long time.

Noelle: Oh, that's good.

(Phone Interruption)

SPC Rodriguez: Yeah, we thought it was pretty nice. My husband was stationed was over there at the same time I was.

Noelle: Oh, that's no kidding, that works out nicely!

SPC Rodriguez: That was something nice for just the two of us to go and not have to worry about a baby sitter. Yeah, that was pretty good.

Noelle: Describe how your participation in MWR has impacted your commitment to the US Army and the war in Iraq. Has it made an impact on your commitment at all?

SPC Rodriguez: It gave us a place to relax and go to the gym and you know, so that kind of took your mind off work and what was going on.

Noelle: Did participating in MWR activities make you feel more connected to home? Why or why not?
SPC Rodriguez: Yeah, because um you could get the newspaper and some magazines and uh, it wasn’t work. You know you went out of work and that was pretty nice that they had a pretty nice setup. Like the Rec. Center they had uh like game rooms and board games and stuff we had a pool table and everything upstairs, so it was pretty nice.

Noelle: Okay! Having been actively involved in MWR did you find yourself encouraging others to do the same?

SPC Rodriguez: Oh yeah! I used to try to take them with me when I used to go so that way they didn’t stay in their rooms. Because all we had you know was uh, we didn’t have regular TV so we had to get DVDs. So we used to go and do a little shopping and get the haggis underground copies.

Noelle: Nice! I think I’ve got a few of those myself.

SPC Rodriguez: so we used to go and get those. But you know there are only so many movies that you want to watch. So we used to try to get a little group to walk over there or take the bus or whatever, and it made the time pass, so that was something for us to just hang out.

Noelle: Yeah, Great! Just sort of explain to me how you felt while participating in MWR activates or using MWR facilities. Like did you, were you able to forget what was going on around you or was that always there?

SPC Rodriguez: Well, it was always there only because a lot of times you would hear the booms. So and um, nah, we used to wear our PTs but we still had to have our full gear on. So we were walking with Kevlar, our vest with everything on it, and our weapon on. So no matter what I don’t think you could ever really escape that. But it still gave you a little time to relax.
Noelle: Describe how participating in an MWR event/utilizing MWR facilities improved cohesion within your unit. Like did you get along better with the people within your unit based on…

SPC Rodriguez: We, I think we got a little closer. Maybe not the section but different people, within the company. We did, we needed someone to rely on or something happened we would go knock on that door, and make sure that person comes out. You know we always looked for us. We, about six or seven of us, no matter what when we heard a boom we would always try to look for each other or we knew there was something going on at the MWR we would always try to tell each other. So we could go together. That was great, that was good.

Noelle: do you feel that MWR had a positive impact on your level of overall moral and why or why not?

SPC Rodriguez: Yeah I think so, it made our spirits go up a lot of times so um, like I said it didn’t make you forget, but it did make you pass the time and um, relax a little. For the time like that one hour or little bit of time it definitely made you feel better.

Noelle: Okay great! Now the last thing I’m going to do is ready you MWR’s mission statement and I want you to tell me if you feel as though they lived up to this during your stay in Iraq. “Our mission as members of Army MWR is to serve the needs, interests, and responsibilities of each individual in the Army community with support and leisure services designed to enhance the quality of their lives for as long as they are associated with the Army, no matter where they are.”

SPC Rodriguez: I think so. I think that um, being able to find MWR over there was amazing enough. And in the position that you are, you have civilians taking care of it,
because we couldn’t provide the soldiers for it, so that said a lot right there, that you could bring someone that was willing to go to the place that we were. And you know keep up the place, you know as trashy as we sometimes could make it, it was always clean it was well-maintained. That was really good.
Interview with SPC Frank Thayer

May 17, 2005 10:40 am

Noelle: Describe a positive MWR experience that you had while overseas.

SPC Thayer: I like the uh gym and weight room and the pools that we had. That was kind of cool.

Noelle: Oh, you had swimming pools over there?

SPC Thayer: Yeah, I think it kind of, the British and Australians kind of done it, but they let us use it so I guess that is part of the MWR, that and the PX area.

Noelle: Oh, okay! Describe how MWR has impacted your commitment to the US Army, and the War in Iraq. If at all...

SPC Thayer: Uh, my commitment, I don’t know, I guess I’m kind of already committed. You know to the Army, so I guess it really didn’t.

Noelle: It didn’t, okay… Did participating in MWR activities make you feel more connected to home? Why or why not?

SPC Thayer: Um, yeah I guess it kind of did cause it took your mind off you know fighting and working every day. So it kind of had you step out sort of.

Noelle: Okay, having been actively in involved with MWR did you find yourself encouraging others to do the same?

SPC Thayer: Yeah, cause it kind of helped relieve stress. We would get up and go do something.

Noelle: Um, lets see, explain how you felt while participating in an MWR event or using MWR equipment.

SPC Thayer: How I felt?
Noelle: Yes.
SPC Thayer: Relaxed I guess.
Noelle: Okay, did it allow you to sort of escape at all or…
SPC Thayer: Yeah, escape! Take my mind off of everything else. Kind of just separate myself from what we were doing.
Noelle: Okay, um, Describe how participating in an MWR event/utilizing MWR facilities improved cohesion within your unit.
SPC Thayer: A lot of time we would have like cookouts and volleyball, stuff like that so it kind of like brought us together. They tried to do it like twice a month sometimes once a month. And that brought us all together as a group so we could have fun as a team.
Noelle: Laughter… Do you feel that MWR had a positive impact on your level of overall morale?
SPC Thayer: Yeah, Like I said it kept us stress free.
Noelle: Okay and the last question I have I’m just going to read MWR’s mission statement and I just want you to tell me if you think that they were successful in that while you were overseas. “Our mission as members of Army MWR is to serve the needs, interests, and responsibilities of each individual in the Army community with support and leisure services designed to enhance the quality of their lives for as long as they are associated with the Army, no matter where they are.” Do you think they were successful?
SPC Thayer: Yeah, they tend to be up there with us. I mean they really don't have any kind of protection or anything. I mean it is sort of like AFFEES you know, they say we go where we go. I think it does.
Interview with SPC Tyron Kim

May 16, 2005 11:15am

Noelle: Can you describe for me a positive MWR experience that you had while overseas.

SPC Kim: There were many positive aspects of MWR for the length of my… I think uh the best one that I and the other soldiers enjoyed are the MWR in VICTORY had many different club nights so to speak. They had like Salsa night R&B night Country night, and it was just a nice kind of club atmosphere for the soldiers to just relax, enjoy, dance, listen to music, hang out and have fun with other soldiers.

Noelle: Okay, great! And can you describe for me how MWR has impacted your commitment to the US Army and the War in Iraq, if it has impacted that…

SPC Kim: It has affected. I feel that because of the effort that they push, MWR program, they care more about the soldiers’ welfare. Its not just about a bunch of soldiers out there fighting a war its family members, you know people with parents and brothers and sisters out there, you know making the way of life for people here and people in Iraq so. It was like they actually care, and they care about the welfare of soldiers.

Noelle: Did participating in MWR activities make you feel more connected to home? Why or why not?

SPC Kim: yes it did, because I mean back here (TX) we have the on post intramurals sports programs and there then you have kind of the on base intramural sports program going on where like flag football, competitions against all the companies and other brigades. And you know just it made us feel like actual people, we are still people
instead of just machines out there fighting. It made us feel more, it made it feel a little more homey.

Noelle: Great! Having been actively involved in MWR did you find yourself encouraging others to do the same?

SPC Kim: Oh yes all the time! I mean when we were not, when we had some down time, lets go to MWR you know, we’ll pick up a book, or play pool, or playstations, basketball, just something to you know keep us going and our mind off while we are there the people we are leaving behind just to relax and have a good time.

Noelle: Okay. Explain how you felt while participating in an MWR event or using MWR equipment; like did you feel. Did it all you to sort of escape at all, or…

SPC Kim: Yes, I mean uh, of course we all still cognizant of the situation we are in, but uh you it kind of took us away from that. It kind of just pushed it to the side. For instance playing a game of basketball, it is just a group of guys out there playing basketball, having fun, you know just enjoying each others camaraderie, not just you know go to work, and then go do nothing, feeling miserable about being away from family and friends. It just you know kind of pushed the efforts; you know the war efforts in Iraq to the side just a little bit; to help you relax. And like I said feel more human.

Noelle: Great! Describe how participating in MWR events or using MWR equipment improved cohesion within your unit. Did you feel that your unit got along better based on having participated in MWR? Did it impact that at all… or…

SPC Kim: It did to an extent. The people that used the equipment or participated in the activity with you were the guys that were you know your closer nit band of buddies because you go outside the wire and fight together, and then you come back relax and
play together. But at the same time it did you know help the unit overall because I think a lot of people were less stressed because they had other things to go do. You know like we had the MWR equipment in our building that we were able to use and you know people got some down time in the office you know they would go play some ping pong or you know just relieve some of the stress and tension of the situation. So it had a great impact as far as unit morale and welfare.

Noelle: Okay, that ties right in to my next question, Do you feel that MWR had a positive impact on your level of overall morale.

SPC Kim: Oh yes it did very much so.

Noelle: My next question I’m going to read MWR’s mission statement and if you can tell me if you feel they were successful in this mission. “Our mission as members of Army MWR is to serve the needs, interests, and responsibilities of each individual in the Army community with support and leisure services designed to enhance the quality of their lives for as long as they are associated with the Army, no matter where they are.”

SPC Kim: Yes, I feel that that was fulfilled and it really showed that part of “wherever they are” because they are out there on the front lines with us. You know at the different FOBs and bases setting up gyms and everything. I feel that you know they are all over the world, wherever soldiers are they are there and they are fulfilling the mission. Yeah, they just did a great job, and they even had like halo nights. They just Halo and they would have people go play Halo for hours. They had you know, that much downtime they would just go play just compete with people from other units and other companies and just reach out to more of your fellow brethren and you fellow brothers and sisters at arms. It was just great that they were there.
Interview with SPC Wallace

May 11, 2005  9:45AM

Noelle: Describe a positive MWR experience that you had while overseas.

Wallace: Um a positive MWR experience while I was overseas. I would say going to the gym the gyms were very very very well equipped at least the ones we had and it was great to get in there and you know to actually work out.

Noelle: Describe how your participation in MWR has impacted your commitment to the US Army and the war in Iraq. If it has?

Wallace: it gives you a bright spot when you are at war, it is a home where you can watch movies or do whatever. So I think it is great. Nothing better than coming back and trying to hit hip hop night or salsa night or something like that. So it was really good for that.

Noelle: Did participating in MWR activities make you feel more connected to home?

Why or why not?

Wallace: Yes, just for the simple fact that you are doing stuff that you would do at home. It is not the same, but you know you are going to play basketball and just like you there are a group of guys going to the gym you know.

Noelle: Okay! Having been actively involved in MWR did you find yourself encouraging others to do the same?

Wallace: Oh yeah, a lot of times we would invite people to go to the gym with us because over there after being out in the heat all you want to do is go to sleep and get something to eat and so yeah we definitely tried to get people to go to hang out and go to the movies and dances and to the gym.
Noelle: Explain to me how you felt while participating in MWR activates or using MWR facilities.

Wallace: It felt great.

Noelle: Okay, did it allow you to sort of escape at all or…

Wallace: Um, yeah, especially where we were at we were all stuck in the same building pretty much so you got to get away go eat, lift some weights. You could sit by yourself when you ate instead of having to be by the same people every day so yes it definitely ate the time away.

Noelle: Describe how participating in an MWR event/utilizing MWR facilities improved cohesion within your unit, if it did.

Wallace: um, the chance to get away. You kow like the last one, when you are around someone too long you just get irritated with them. Also you connected with people that may not be your rank but are into the things that you are into. You know It want’ anything unusual to go with a higher ranking person to the gym or something like that.

Noelle: Okay, do you feel that MWR had a positive impact on your level of overall moral and why or why not?

Wallace: Yes!!! Just like I say everything you can go eat any time, well not anytime, but close to anytime you want to eat. You know go play video games. Just anything you wanted to do MWR provided you a way to do it. Like I just said I wish there were indoor basketball courts over there 😊

Noelle: Okay great! Now the last thing I’m going to do is ready you MWR’s mission statement and I want you to tell me if you feel as though they lived up to this during your stay in Iraq. “Our mission as members of Army MWR is to serve the needs, interests,
and responsibilities of each individual in the Army community with support and leisure services designed to enhance the quality of their lives for as long as they are associated with the Army, no matter where they are."

Wallace: Yes! There are everything that you just read!
Interview with SPC Welsh

May 11, 2005  9:45AM

Noelle: Describe a positive MWR experience that you had while overseas.

Welsh: I would have to say the internet area as well as the telephones that enabled us to keep in contact with family and friends. It makes things easier that way.

Noelle: Describe how your participation in MWR has impacted your commitment to the US Army and the war in Iraq. If it has?

Welsh: Well, I know by MWR services they made me to relax which made me do my job better because my head wasn't clouded with other issues. So it was easier to do my job knowing that when I didn't have to do my job there was other stuff I could do to help pass my time.

Noelle: Did participating in MWR activities make you feel more connected to home? Why or why not?

Welsh: Well it did and it didn't. Watching sports events on AFN was kind of nice because I know I didn't think I was going to be able to do that when I first left so it reminded me of being back home but I mean it was Iraq. There is not much more I can say about that.

Noelle: Okay! Having been actively involved in MWR did you find yourself encouraging others to do the same?

Welsh: Well, I didn’t really encourage people because most people encouraged me. I really didn’t do that much until people told me to come out. So it was a good way to relax and meet some people so it was fun.
Noelle: Explain to me how you felt while participating in MWR activates or using MWR facilities.

Welsh: Well I realize that a lot of MWR equipment is donated by civilian agencies and it makes me feel good knowing that these people are happy with what we do and they support us. Like I used the gym equipment a lot and I know that they contribute a lot of that and uh, we all appreciate everything that they did for us and that was nice.

Noelle: Describe how participating in an MWR event/utilizing MWR facilities improved cohesion within your unit, if it did.

Welsh: Well, I know by using some of their sporting equipment you could use like their basketball equipment and you could become friends with people not just work with them you got to see what they were like outside of work and that was always good. You got to build relationships better that way by meeting them doing a mutual thing you both like better than being at work.

Noelle: Okay, do you feel that MWR had a positive impact on your level of overall moral and why or why not?

Welsh: I think it did just because if those facilities weren’t there then we would be bored all the time, thinking about things we didn’t want to think about and MWR actually allows you to focus not on work, but to just relax.

Noelle: Okay great! Now the last thing I’m going to do is ready you MWR’s mission statement and I want you to tell me if you feel as though they lived up to this during your stay in Iraq. “Our mission as members of Army MWR is to serve the needs, interests, and responsibilities of each individual in the Army community with support and leisure
services designed to enhance the quality of their lives for as long as they are associated with the Army, no matter where they are."

Welsh: I think that they accomplished what they set out to do. Me personally, I didn’t really know much about MWR because I’ve never been deployed before. But now I know about some of the things they do for soldiers that I know I really appreciated while I was over there.