

Research Articles and Essays

The Resolute Resistors:

How Vulnerable Populations Are Not As Vulnerable As Assumed

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Abstract

Disabilities or being of vulnerable populations does not serve to restrict societal contribution. Three themes will be addressed regarding an individual with disabilities or of a vulnerable population: human resource knowledge, skills, and abilities for job hiring or retention; input of specific knowledge for the emergency management community; and accentuating personal experience.

Keywords: vulnerable, disability, KSA

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A school guidance counselor, professional human resource (HR) manager, or career transition personnel will ask two relatively standard questions of an individual. What do you want to be when you grow up or graduate, and ultimately will you have the means in which to retire? Do you have something to contribute that will benefit a process or society? These professionals want to identify, develop, match, and use each person's knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) to direct that individual toward a functional career path.

But when these questions are asked of an individual with disabilities or an individual of a vulnerable population, are or should the responses be the same? Obviously, every answer will most likely be different based upon the individual, their disability, or vulnerable situation. The answer will be dependent on each person's understanding of their ability to gain knowledge to learn a skill to accomplish a task. Some people have diminished skills and limited ability but have immense underlying knowledge. Some have the skills and knowledge but lack the ability to accomplish a task. Some have the ability but lack the specific knowledge or skills. How well an individual sees and understands their disability or vulnerable situation will help identify their KSAs. How an employer defines a disability or vulnerable population can differ from the individual view and can impact how KSAs are used for jobs.

The definition from the U.S. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), 42 U.S.C. §12102 (1)(A), is widely accepted and even used as a template for other countries. It reads, in part, that a disability is "a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual" (ADA, 2008, p. 3555). The term "vulnerable population" has become more widely accepted as an in-vogue and less dismissive phrase and

which is more inclusive as a descriptor beyond referencing just physical, mental, or medical disabilities. Yet actions or policies developed from these terms sometimes assume certain limitations. To state a person in a wheelchair can likely not climb stairs is a reasonable assumption which affords a reasonable accommodation. But to say a person in a wheelchair cannot be part of a disaster planning group because they are in a wheelchair is an unreasonable and perhaps irrational reaction.

From a HR management perspective, having a disability or being of a vulnerable population should not restrict one's contribution to society, especially when they have pertinent KSAs to contribute. A soldier with 25 years of service trained in defusing anti-tank mines lost a leg in an explosion. This soldier now has a prosthetic and expresses the desire to be treated as a normal [sic] person living a normal life, but also wants to get back to their unit because "I need to pass my experience to the other guys" (Lawrence, 2023, p. 1).

Accomplished classical composer and musician Ludwig van Beethoven experienced diminished hearing by around age 30 and eventually had complete hearing loss. Even though he retained the knowledge and ability of a pianist and composer, some might express doubt about his ability to produce music due to hearing loss. Some interpreted from a writing known as his Heiligenstadt Testament that Beethoven had contemplated suicide (Knittel, 2002), saying "only art it was that withheld me, ah, it seemed impossible to leave the world until I had produced all that I felt called upon to produce" (Mitchell, 1980, p. 7). Beethoven continued composing for another 20-plus years, even writing most of the well-known Fifth Symphony after losing his hearing (Budden & Knapp, 2023).

These two examples address the core HR inquiry of contributing your experience to benefit a process or society. An individual with a disability has likely developed numerous

adaptations. Daily routines make take a bit more time, and they plan a route to the office so their wheelchair can avoid curbed intersections or stairs. By necessity, a disabled individual may need to be more ready for unexpected events. For example, someone may plan the timing of medications needed throughout the day and keep extra batteries to power medical equipment needed during a power outage. Lathrop suggested in a study after the 1989 Loma Linda, CA, earthquake, based on the daily dealings of local situations and physical obstacles regularly encountered in daily life, that persons with disabilities “have a psychological advantage” (Lathrop, 1994, as cited in Alexander et al., 2012, p. 390). He suggested this resulted in a reduced likelihood of distress during and in the aftermath of the earthquake.

With this in mind, the following research question evolved: How vulnerable is the vulnerable population? This paper will review three themes on contributions of individuals with born, developed, or incurred disabilities: Theme 1, recognize what knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) should be focused on for job hiring or retention; Theme 2, understand why specific knowledge is needed as input into the emergency management fields of preparation, response, and recovery; and Theme 3, how to accentuate personal experience for others to learn. For this paper, the author used extensive military-related research studies and included examples of military members, also known as wounded warriors, based on their publicly available information. The core human resource elements remained applicable to military or civilian employment for individuals with disabilities or of vulnerable populations.

Literature Review

The Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM, 2023) defines KSAs as employment competencies and qualities needed to perform work. KSAs are not a stagnant function as they need to be continually developed and new ones learned. The U.S. Office of

Personnel Management (OPM, 2023) encourages employees to enhance their KSAs, listed as talent management competencies, to be productive members for their government agency. Cegielski and Jones-Farmer (2016) found business school graduates met basic KSAs for entry-level business analytics positions, however, would not be suitable for strategic or organizational level decision-making. From a disaster management aspect, Said and Chiang (2020) identified a critical need for nurses, beyond the normal competencies, to enhance their knowledge and skills in psychological preparedness before major destructive disasters to care for both the victims and themselves. KSAs are critical to define job requirements at all levels as well as to determine a job applicant's eligibility or competency (Cegielski & Jones-Farmer, 2016; Said & Chiang, 2020; Saunders, 2020). People with disabilities cannot change the KSA requirements for a particular job but of course may be able to improve the KSAs they possess to be more marketable and eligible for the job.

The formal designation of KSAs for many jobs is a relatively modern concept. Peter Drucker's 1959 book, *The Landmarks of Tomorrow*, describes the transition during the mid-20th century from industrial workers who had skills and abilities to do manual tasks to a new class of workers who "require a habit of continuous learning" or knowledge, labeling them "knowledge workers" (Drucker, 1994, p. 8). Some knowledge work can be derived from the skills used in manual labor while a lack of other knowledge skills could preclude a person from certain fields of work. Merely having the ability and skills but not the knowledge would not allow someone to hold certain jobs (Drucker, 1994). Drucker noted this change in social structure during the lead-up to World War I and resulting from World War II, most significantly in the discipline of management "to make knowledges productive" (Drucker, 1994, p. 18). This is how employers met the needs of the Department of War, which met the needs of the nation. As the Department of War transitioned to the Department of Defense

(DoD), expansion of opportunities for this knowledge worker became foremost.

Specific to the modern DoD, Werber (2021) reviewed 31 RAND Corporation studies that highlighted the need for “knowledge worker talent management” (p. xii) in the hiring and retention of military civilian workers. This review also found challenges within DoD regarding which competencies/KSAs were needed in certain fields, due to “imprecise definitions of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) to estimate workforce requirements” (p. 9). One study specifically looked at civilian employment barriers in DoD for individuals with disabilities. This study recommended targeted outreach or awareness campaigns to encourage individuals with disabilities to become DoD civilian employees (Matthews et al., 2018e, 2021). The candidate pool includes active and reserve military members transitioning out of uniform, either with or without visible and invisible disabilities (Ainspan, 2011).

For active and reserve military members, the U.S. military maintains stringent and long-standing medical and physical requirements (Ainspan, 2011; Krull et al., 2019; Duquette, 2022). While some options are available for members of the military to remain on active duty, those jobs or opportunities are limited (Dalzell et al., 2019; Duquette, 2022), and many are based on the medical fit-for-duty evaluation (Ainspan, 2011; Duquette, 2022; Krull et al., 2019; Rennane et al., 2022). One post-World War II study recommended retention and “utilization of physically handicapped officers in Navy billets,” specifically citing their loss as a “waste of experienced and trained... personnel” (Mather, 1949, p. 1). Duquette repeated this sentiment 73 years later stating, “retaining injured and disabled talent is especially pertinent as the military faces recruitment and retention barriers” (Duquette, 2022, p. 7). Moreover, wounded warriors discharged or retired with visible or invisible medical issues have encountered significant problems in post-employment (Ainspan, 2011; Dalzell et al.,

2019; Duquette, 2022; Matthews et al., 2018; and Werber, 2021).

Employment barriers due to identified disability or being from a vulnerable population are seen in all facets of the business world and the government, not just the military. Earlier policies and procedures for disaster mitigation, planning, response, and recovery operations reflected these same assumptive limitations (GAO, 2008; Fjord & Manderson, 2009; Flanagan, 2011; Post-Katrina, 2006). Continuing efforts have changed some of these policies and procedures with input from people with disabilities and of vulnerable populations, but more work is needed (Duquette, 2022; FEMA-NRI, n.d.; FEMA, 2016, 2017, 2019; Post-Katrina, 2006).

Theme 1

Recognize which knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) should be the focus for job hiring or retention. Understand KSAs are important from both the employer and employee viewpoints but are key for individuals with disabilities or of a vulnerable population in gaining or retaining employment.

Evidence Theme 1

In the HR arena, KSAs are the foundation for any job description; likewise, knowing one's personal KSAs is key for current or prospective employees (Cegielski & Jones-Farmer, 2016; HRM, 2023; OPM, 2023; Said & Chiang, 2020; Saunders, 2020; SHRM, 2023; Stevens & Campion, 1994; Werber, 2021). Awareness of one's personal KSAs can help one identify strengths, weaknesses, what may be needed to continue to move up a career ladder, and even eligibility for a job (Cegielski & Jones-Farmer, 2016; Drucker, 1994; HRM, 2023; Stevens & Campion, 1994; Said & Chiang, 2020; Saunders, 2020; Werber, 2021).

Chapter 7 of the Oxford Handbook of Personnel Assessment and Selection provided the context for the following definitions of KSA: *Knowledge* can be defined as the information or education needed to do a task; *skill* is the measurable proficiency of psychomotor functions at conducting a task; and *ability* is the potential or capacity to perform a task (Brannick et al., 2012). Thus, an individual with a disability may possess the knowledge but have limited ability, which precludes a skill or may require an adaptation to allow an individual to perform a task. Citing a well-known example, after being diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, with appropriate accommodations, Stephen Hawking continued to serve as a professor, teaching and writing papers for many years. (Hawking, 2013).

Beyond the KSAs, individuals with disabilities or of a vulnerable population face additional challenges with employment and retention in the workforce (Ainspan, 2011; Dalzell et al., 2019; Duquette, 2022; Matthews et al., 2018; Rennane et al., 2022). While Ainspan (2011) noted a 10% unemployment rate for Americans, 14.5% was noted for those with a disability, and some reports reflected 40%–90% unemployment for those with hidden disabilities. Determining how many individuals with disabilities work for an organization depends on is asked and how disability is defined, both by the organization and the individual. The Americans with Disabilities Act Amendment Act of 2008 broadly expanded the definition of disability (ADA, 2008), expanding the number of those who may be considered disabled. This had unintended consequences. Since this redefinition increased the number of disabled already employed, an organization would not necessarily need to hire new individuals with disabilities to meet an existing standard or goal.

Some companies and government entities have targeted goals for hiring and retaining individuals with disabilities. In 2017, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

issued a rule, 29 CFR part 1614, setting a representation goal for the federal workforce of 2% covering people with targeted disabilities (EEOC, 2017). Authors of a 2018 RAND Corporation study said they could not determine if the 2% set by EEOC was accurate, over representative, or under representative (Matthews et al, 2018) because they could not establish the prevalence of the targeted disabilities in the population. In 2022, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimated 26% of U.S. adults have some type of disability (CDC, 2022).

Looking specifically at DoD data from 2017, the RAND study found DoD did not meet the EEOC 2% goal. The department had achieved less than 1% representation. But nearly 46% of the civilian workforce were veterans, and 10% had a disability rating over 30% (Matthews et al., 2018, Table 5.1). More than 57,000 veterans were hired by the federal government in 2017, yet only half (28,500) disclosed a disability, and only 19,000 had a disability rating over 30% (OPM, 2018, Table 3). The study authors noted veterans were reluctant to disclose disabilities when applying for federal jobs, a significant finding from this data. Ainspan (2011) noted employers may have conscious or unconscious fears and misconceptions of people with invisible disabilities and thus may choose to discriminate and avoid them. Alleviating these fears through education of an employer can send a clear directive of support for hiring individuals with disabilities who possess applicable KSAs (Matthews et al. 2018).

KSAs and Contributions to Society

When asked, “What is your ultimate goal?” Kristin Duquette responded: “Am I helping others? Am I contributing to the greater good?” (Garrity, 2016, p. 1). A competitive swimmer with muscular dystrophy, Duquette experienced discrimination from a head coach

when she was asked to leave the team and was mistaken by event officials “as an audience member rather than a competitive athlete” (Duquette, 2016, p. 1). She became a Team USA paralympic swimmer and served as director of diversity and inclusion for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)'s Women's Leadership Forum. She is now a preparedness officer for FEMA Transportation Security Grant Program and published her master's thesis on how the military can feasibly use wounded warrior individuals with disabilities in non-kinetic warfare at the Naval Postgraduate School (FEMA, 2020; Duquette, 2023). Through gaining more knowledge and improving skills, she became a highly regarded specialist, leveraging her experience with disability to contribute to disaster emergency management.

Summary Theme 1

Being cognizant of the relation between one's KSAs and the KSAs necessary for job retention or for a desired employment position is critical to taking advantage of potential employment opportunities, as is recognizing potential employer perceptions.

Theme 2

Needles from vulnerable populations may have specific knowledge that is needed as input into the emergency management fields of preparation, response, and recovery. But often missing is their input on the threats, assets, vulnerability, and risks to inform preparation, response, and recovery efforts in disaster emergency planning.

Evidence Theme 2

While often used interchangeably, vulnerability is not the same as vulnerable population. As a noun, vulnerability means a susceptibility to danger (Oxford, 2023) while,

as an adjective, vulnerable expands an associated noun, in this context, a population most likely to be affected by a danger (Oxford, 2023). From an emergency management viewpoint, vulnerability “is the extent to which persons or things are likely to be affected” (Flanagan et al., 2011), which includes people, buildings, internet, cities, infrastructure, crops, social networks, culture, and other assets (FEMA-NRI, n.d.; Alexander, 2015; FEMA, 2016, 2017, 2019, 2022-2026). Thus, the vulnerability of a population creates a vulnerable population.

Many words or euphemisms, sometimes offensive, are often used for inclusion (Waisel, 2013; Rukmana, 2014; EEOC, 2017). A current functional definition of vulnerable population was established as requirements in human subject research. In 1964, with amendments through the present day, the World Medical Association (WMA) adopted its Declaration of Helsinki regarding medical research. This defined vulnerable individuals or groups as ones that “may have an increased likelihood of being wronged or of incurring additional harm” (WMA, 2022, p. 1). This clean and succinct statement can indicate three situations:

1. Many individuals with disabilities are considered vulnerable.
2. Being vulnerable does not automatically include all disabilities.
3. Vulnerable populations may not be as vulnerable as some may assume.

For disaster planning and response, FEMA uses a National Risk Index and Social Vulnerability rating score to indicate “susceptibility of social groups to the adverse impacts of natural hazards, including disproportionate death, injury, loss, or disruption of livelihood.” (FEMA-NRI, n.d.). Researcher Bruce Gordon put vulnerability more simply as “the risk of some sort of harm beyond that of other persons in the same” circumstance (Gordon, 2020, p. 35). He said vulnerability is also not a constant nor a definitive “all or none” but rather a

sliding scale based on the situation (Gordon, 2020); for example, a person identifying as able-bodied using crutches for a broken leg would be assigned a temporary higher vulnerability.

Risk, threat, and vulnerability are basically synonyms with the same meaning: An asset is in danger. Yet each word describes a unique piece in disaster planning. Risk is the resultant loss from what can happen, threat is how something can happen, vulnerability is the susceptibility of an asset, and asset refers to what is affected (FEMA-NRI, n.d.; FEMA, 2016, 2017, 2019). Flanagan (2011) described the formula “Risk = Hazard * (Vulnerability - Resources)” (p. 1), with hazard used in place of threat and resources referring to assets that are used to reduce the impact of the threat. The Threat Analysis Group uses the equation $A+T+V=R$ to depict the relationship (Threat, 2010). The relationship between these terms could be expressed in the sentence: How (threat) is this (asset) susceptible (vulnerability) to loss (risk)? For an individual with disabilities or of a vulnerable population, what impact does all this asset, threat, vulnerability, and risk mean and what can they do about it?

Good emergency planning—even when applying asset, threat, vulnerability, and risk factors—does not always go as expected during real events. Hurricane Katrina in 2005 was a turning point in many ways. It was a stark display of how vulnerable populations were viewed from previous disaster management procedures or policies (Fjord & Manderson, 2009; Flanagan, 2011). Emergency managers want to rescue everyone, but the preventive mitigation measures and evacuations for disabled or vulnerable populations were developed from ableist or non-vulnerable viewpoint. Congress directed the emergency management system to change that view (Post-Katrina, 2006; GAO, 2008). A disaster study by Fjord and Manderson (2009) asked: “Why not place disability-centered approaches at the core of disaster planning and ensure the probable needs of most residents are accommodated?” (p. 65). The HR professional wants to link an individual with appropriate KSAs to an applicable

career that infers the questions: Why do we have non-disabled people creating solutions for disabled issues? Did anyone ask disabilities or of vulnerable populations what they think? This is where an individual with disabilities or of a vulnerable population can make an impact.

Preparedness includes the development of preventive mitigation measures and is such an area where the knowledge from individuals with disabilities and of vulnerable populations is needed. Disasters affect vulnerable populations more than others (Alexander et al., 2012; Alexander, 2015; Fjord & Manderson, 2009); they know what resultant damage will look like for themselves. They can define the problem and help develop the functional mitigation to aid themselves. Another part of preparedness is understanding the limitations of individuals with disabilities and of vulnerable populations for evacuation. How do people move and are there challenges in maneuvering in the area? What is needed to see and hear announcements. Are additional measures needed to express directions and post appropriate signage? What other adaptive equipment and resources will be needed. A typical city transit bus can seat 30 people but only 2 wheelchairs (City-Transit, 2022), which is no good when only one bus is sent to evacuate 30 wheelchair-bound people from one facility. An understanding of the result is needed to enable appropriate planning; thus, more individuals with disabilities should be involved in exercise and training events to help make such events more realistic and effective.

Summary Theme 2

Adaptations of the response, rescue, and post-event recovery procedures are needed based on the skills within the vulnerable population. Simulations with a non-disabled person placed in a wheelchair or putting on a blindfold for a disaster exercise obviously does not

truly reflect the realities a disabled person may experience. Instead of waiting for an exercise to obtain this input, individuals with disabilities or from vulnerable populations should be hired for planning jobs at the emergency management office. A disability coordinator was created at the FEMA administration level (Post-Katrina, 2006) with subsequent specialists at each of the 10 U.S. FEMA regions, but their influence is mostly to consult and provide guidance to ensure a process or plan has addressed disabilities. Referencing Theme 1, this could be construed as filling the token disability employment checkbox but without the employee truly involved in the full disaster management process. To accurately capture the specific experiences and views from individuals with disabilities or of vulnerable populations, regular staff members, including contingency plan developers, exercise planners, response trainers, and executives at federal, state, regional, and local levels, need to be individuals with disabilities or of vulnerable populations.

Theme 3

This theme is concerned with how to accentuate personal experience for others to learn. Theme 3 focuses on examples of how U.S. military members with incurred disabilities can be retained by the service based on their existing, redeveloped, or newly learned KSAs to further benefit the military or be released from duty then transferred, redeveloped, or taught new KSAs to benefit their society.

Evidence Theme 3

All six U.S. military services currently use medical criteria and kinetic tests—the physical push-ups, sit-ups, and run—as simple measures of combat readiness to perform military service and for general long-term medical health (DoD, 2018, 2022). However, some individuals with disabilities are much more capable of non-kinetic work than current non-

disabled service members (Ainspan, 2011; Reynolds, 2019; Duquette 2022). Some U.S. service members with incurred visible or invisible injuries can meet these kinetic physical requirement measures, yet basic policy states they are no longer eligible to serve in uniform (Ainspan, 2011; DoD, 2020; Duquette, 2022). Duquette (2022) noted no U.S. Code or Code of Federal Regulation specifically prohibits individuals with disabilities from being a part of the military services, but respective service secretaries are afforded discretion to determine what is acceptable based on role-specific KSAs. Ainspan (2011) noted changes in military culture, newly developed technology in disability accommodations, and better overall awareness of the capabilities of individuals with disabilities now allow members to remain in the service versus automatic medical retirement or separation. While the core military medical retention policy remains, flexibility is more available for each service to determine if, for example, a wounded warrior is eligible to remain on active duty (Ainspan, 2011; Reynolds, 2019; Rennane, et al., 2022).

Some studies question if military services should even use ‘fitness’ standards (Reynolds, 2019; Matthews, et al., 2022; Duquette, 2022). Non-kinetic warfare—which does not rely on physical force—is regaining new life in cyber warfare with more psychological functions desired and even reduction in the war planning ideas of physical hand-to-hand combat (Mather, 1949; Reynolds, 2019; Werber, 2021; Duquette, 2022). Performing strenuous physical exercises are not required to be a cyber-specialist who can debug a program from a secure room or remotely control a drone from thousands of miles away. Individuals with autism spectrum disorder level 1 have been defined as being quite successful at reviewing algorithms or creating computer scripts, tasks many people may deem tedious (Reynolds, 2019). Approximately 200,000 members leave military service annually (DoD, 2023). As of September 30, 2020, over 2 million members were receiving retired pay (DoD,

2021, p. 16). Yet only 128,911 were listed as disabled (p. 22) and of the 45,149 new retirees in 2020 (p. 39) only 5,316 were disabled (p. 46). As these numbers reflect only members receiving retired pay and not medically separated members, it would appear there is a pool of disabled military candidates who could be retained in service, if their KSAs allowed.

As a demonstration of this theme, publicly available information was reviewed on six wounded warriors with incurred disabilities to see how they were retained on active duty based on their existing KSAs or if they achieved other positions in society through transferred, redeveloped, or newly learned KSAs.

Staff Sergeant Kevin Nguyen enlisted in 2011 and developed the ability and skills of a rifle specialist before loss of a foot in combat. He then was retained on active duty as an instructor with the Army Marksmanship Unit. A World Para rifle shooting champion, Para Pan American Games champion, and 2020 Paralympian, Nguyen currently has 12 years active duty (Team USA, 2022). Sergeant First Class Elizabeth Marks enlisted in 2008, developed the KSA to be a health care specialist before sustaining bilateral hip injuries in combat. Using swimming as rehabilitation to return to 'fit-for-duty' status, she became a 2016 and 2020 Paralympian, received the 2016 Pat Tillman Award for Service, was named a member of the 2023 Paralympics Swimming National Team, and currently has 15 years active duty (Team USA, 2022). Staff Sergeant John Wayne Joss, III, enlisted in 2004 then developed the skills and ability to become an indirect fire infantryman before loss of a lower leg in combat. He asked to remain on active duty as a mortar gunnery instructor with the Army Marksmanship Unit, became a U.S National rifle shooting champion and record holder, World Shooting Para Sports medalist, 2016 and 2020 Paralympian, and currently has 19 years active duty (Team USA, 2022). All three service members were injured during combat operations, remained on active duty based on the KSAs learned in their respective

military occupational specialty and, with appropriate accommodations, because of their skills and performance, were retained in the Army World Class Athlete Program.

After loss of a right arm in combat, U.S. Army captain and recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honor Daniel Inouye used his KSAs to study law. He was elected to the Hawai'i Territorial House of Representatives, become the first U.S. representative for Hawai'i, then served as U.S. senator for 31 years. His service culminated in his selection as president pro tempore of the U.S. Senate (Inouye, 2023). After incurring a double leg amputation from combat injury, Tammy Duckworth used KSAs to remain in the military and retire as an Army lieutenant colonel, was appointed as an assistant secretary of Veterans Affairs, elected as a U.S. representative, and serves as an elected U.S. senator for Illinois (Duckworth, 2023). After their military service, both members used their KSAs and experience to advocate for individuals with disabilities in high-level policies.

Having already served over 20 years as a pilot in the U.S. Navy, Kyle Cozad was a two-star rear admiral leading the Naval Education and Training Command when an at-home accident resulted in paralysis from the waist down. Therapy and support for necessary accommodations helped him return to his duties where he continued to command as a wheelchair user. He retired two years later, became CEO of the Naval Aviation Museum, and wrote a book based on his experience (Faram, 2019; Cozad, 2022). This is an example of ways in which appropriate accommodations allow one to continue to contribute.

Summary Theme 3

The debate over military medical and fitness standards has been a continuing point of interest and will be subject to further studies as the services project their future needs. In the ensuing time, service members will continue to incur or develop combat and non-combat

related visible or invisible injuries. They should receive an appropriate evaluation to determine whether they are to remain on active-duty service for the military based on established objective standards as well as subjective KSAs they possess. The six examples presented, of course, are not exhaustive nor are they representative of all; same time, they clearly suggest that individuals with appropriate KSAs, when given appropriate accommodations, can continue to serve.

Conclusion

With appropriate accommodations, many with visible and/or invisible injuries continue to serve, depending on each case, filling a specific job, remaining in their primary role, transferring to an alternate profession, or transitioning to non-work status. The focus should be on what knowledge, skills, and abilities are needed for hiring or retention. In particular, the specific KSAs and unique experiences of individuals with disabilities or of vulnerable populations are greatly needed in the emergency management field for the preparation, response, and recovery phases of a disaster.

Continued research should review the military accession and release processes to determine how members with functional and needed KSAs should be eligible to apply or remain in uniform. A more in-depth review of emergency management staffing should be conducted to consider the benefits of having individuals with disabilities or of vulnerable population included as staff members. Nearly everyone wishes to make a contribution, whether in uniform or as a civilian, and individuals may not be as vulnerable as others assume.

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