

## 2012 BECC Conference: Poster Presenter Abstracts

Presenter: Geoff Morrison, UC Davis

Other Contributors: C.-Y. Cynthia Lin

### ***Peer Influence on Energy Use in the U.S. Military: A Commuting Case Study***

This paper explores the cultural norms that exist in the U.S. military and their effects on automobile use of troops. After controlling for typical predictors of travel behavior such as socio-economic, demographic, family-related, immigration, transit availability, and built environment variables, military personnel are still more likely to drive to work than civilian counterparts. We investigate a number of incentives for driving to base such as discounted gasoline, free parking, and lack of walkability. We find that veterans have a greater likelihood of driving to work than civilian workers after controlling for the same predictors of travel, suggesting either a self-selection of auto-oriented individuals into the military or a “peer effect” whereby military individuals are conditioned to drive to work while in the military. We find evidence of the peer effect but cannot refute the self-selection effect. This peer-effect, we suggest, is the result of strong cultural norms that exist in the military which could influence other aspects of the Department of Defense’s energy use. An inherent bias towards consumptive behavior in the private lives of military members could have major ramifications for the military’s overall energy use and environmental impact.